COPERNICANISM AS A RELIGIOUS CHALLENGE AFTER 1616. SELF-DISCIPLINE AND THE IMAGINATION IN LIBERTUS FROMONDUS' ANTI-COPERNICAN WRITINGS (1631-1634)

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Abstract

Between 1631 and 1634, the Low Countries were home to a print debate on the reality and legitimacy of Copernicanism. Unlike the more famous events which simultaneously unfolded in Rome, participants of this debate were not only separated by cosmological positions, but also by confessional allegiances. This paper focuses on the contributions to the debate of the Catholic theologian Libertus Fromondus (1587-1653). Fromondus' anti-Copernican writings are often held to illustrate the extent to which, by the second quarter of the 17th century, Catholic attitudes towards Copernicanism were overdetermined by confessional polemics and Rome's socio-cultural interests in maintaining a monopoly on Scriptural exegesis. This paper argues for a more nuanced reading of Fromondus' concerns over Copernicanism, which takes into account his specific interpretation of human salvation and its relation to human reason and the Church. For Fromondus, there was nothing inherently dangerous about Copernicanism; even after Galileo's 1633 inquisition trial, he repeatedly suggested that there was room for Copernicans in the Catholic Church. However, he did think that Copernicanism could encourage an erosion of true human *religio* towards God if used imprudently and with unbridled imagination and enthusiasm, and that it could open the door to heresy and atheism. His anti-Copernican writings addressed perceived challenges of the use of human reason on the possibility of salvation, not the potential impact of doctrinal or exegetical disobedience on Roman authority.

Key words: Libertus Fromondus – Galileo Galilei – Copernicanism – Catholicism – religion – Low Countries

1. Introduction[1]

Between 1631 and 1634, the Louvain professor of theology Libert Fromondus (1587-1653) published two anti-Copernican treatises.[2] The immediate occasion

[1] I kindly thank Michel-Pierre Lerner, Dirk van Miert, and the anonymous referees of this paper for their helpful comments on earlier versions. Various audiences in Ghent, Nijmegen, and Vienna substantially helped me to refine the argument developed here. Any remaining errors or shortcomings are mine.

[2] Libertus Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus sive Orbis-Terrae Immobilis, liber unicus. In quo decretum S. Congregationis S.R.E. Cardinalium anno MDCXVI adversus Pythagorico-Copernicanos*

Lias 42/1 (2015) 67-88. doi: 10.2143/LIAS.42.1.3092397

for Fromondus' venture was the first-ever defense of Copernican cosmology for a general audience, which the Calvinist minister Philips Lansbergen had published in Dutch in 1629.[3] One year later, a young Dutch astronomer called Martinus Hortensius translated Lansbergen's *Bedenckinghen* into Latin. A copy of this version soon reached the desk of the Louvain professor Erycius Puteanus, who passed it on to his colleague Fromondus. The latter was so incensed by Lansbergen's book that he immediately penned an anti-Copernican *Ant-Aristarchus*, which was ready by 2 October 1630 and came off the Antwerp presses of Balthasar Moretus in the first months of 1631.[4] Although Philips Lansbergen had died in the meanwhile, the latter's son Jacob Lansbergen soon took it upon himself to defend his father's position in an *Apologia* which came out in Middelburg in 1633. In the next year, Fromondus issued a counter-reply called *Vesta* (1634), at which point the Lansbergen-Fromondus debate seems to have stopped.

Written at a time when Galileo's affair with Rome began to unravel, Fromondus' treatises are commonly used to illustrate the extent to which confessional polemics and the Roman desire to maintain a monopoly on scriptural exegesis, shaped the Catholic response to Copernicanism in this period.[5] In view of

editum defenditur, Antwerp: Balthasar Moretus, 1631; Libertus Fromondus, *Vesta, sive Ant-Aristarchi Vindex, Adversus Iacobum Lansbergium Philippi Filium Medicum Middelburgensem. In quo Decretum S. Congregationis S.R.E. Cardinalium anno MDCXVI & alterum anno MDCXXXIII adversus Copernicanos terrae motores editum, iterùm defenditur,* Antwerp: Balthasar Moretus, 1634. On Fromondus and Copernicanism, see: G. Monchamp, *Galilée et la Belgique. Essai historique sur les vicissitudes du système de Copernic en Belgique*, Bruxelles, 1892, pp. 34-53, 72-112; A. Favaro, 'Gli oppositori di Galileo. II Liberto Fromondus, *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*, VIIa ser., vol. 4, 1893, pp. 731-745; various essays in A.-C. Bernès, ed., *Libert Froidmont et les résistances aux révolutions scientifiques. Actes du Colloque Château d'Oupeye, 26 et 27 septembre 1987*, Haccourt, 1988; T. van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-faced Janus: The Comets of 1577 and 1618 and the Decline of the Aristotelian World View in the Netherlands*, Leiden, 1998; K.J. Howell, *God's Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science,* South Bend, IN, 2002; I. Pantin, 'Libert Froidmont et Galilée: l'impossible dialogue', in: J. Montesinos and C. Solis, eds, *Largo Campo di Filosofare. Eurosymposium Galileo 2001,* La Orotava, 2001, pp. 615-635; T. van Nouhuys, 'Copernicanism, Jansenism, and Remonstrantism in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands', in: J. Brooke and I. Maclean, eds, *Heterodoxy in Early Modern Science and Religion*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 145-168; F. Gómez Crespo, *Un astrónomo desconocido. El debate copernicano en El Escorial*, Valladolid, 2008; R. Ariew, *Descartes and the Last Scholastics,* Leiden and Boston, 2011, chapter 6; L. Petrescu, *Meteors and mixtures. Problems of hylomorphic composition in Aristotelian natural philosophy*, PhD thesis, Ghent University, 2014.

[3] On Lansbergen and Dutch Copernicanism in general, see R. Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans. The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575-175°,* Amsterdam, 2002.

[4] This is the sequence of events narrated in Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus* (as in n. 2), fols *4^{v}-**^{r}.

[5] For Galileo's lifelong affair with Rome, see W.R. Shea and M. Artigas, *Galileo in Rome. The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius*, Oxford and New York, 2003.

Fromondus' extensive if non-committal engagement with Copernican cosmology in his youthful *Saturnalitiae coenae* (1616), older scholarship tended to portray him as a modernizing philosopher whose wings were clipped by Roman discipline after 1616. This has now made way for a portrait of Fromondus as a theologian who willingly sought to defend the doctrinal obedience imposed by the anti-Copernican Roman decree of the Index (1616). Isabelle Pantin thus showed that our theologian never had clear 'Copernican inclinations', and that the treatises of the 1630s simply developed an anti-Copernican position which had at least been in place since 1618.[6] Scholars have also argued that *Ant-Aristarchus* and *Vesta* were less interested in Copernicanism as such, than in Copernican's heterodox refusal to follow traditional Roman standards of scriptural exegesis.[7] According to Kenneth Howell, Fromondus saw 'Calvinism and Copernicanism as two sides of the same coin'.[8] Tabitta Van Nouhuys claims that Fromondus chose 'as one of the means of ridiculing [Lansbergen's] Calvinism, to attack Copernicanism'.[9]

Was Fromondus' anti-Copernicanism simply another avenue for defending doctrinal and exegetical obedience to Rome, propelled by local confessional rivalries between Catholics and Calvinists? There can be no question that the spectre of heterodoxy strongly shaped his concern over Copernicanism. As this paper argues, however, this did not automatically entail an identification of Copernicanism with 'heterodoxy' or 'heresy'. Neither did it imply that Copernicanism was primarily approached as an underminer of the people's allegiances to Rome. Far from interpreting Copernicanism as a direct challenge to Roman discipline, Fromondus saw this as a potential challenge to the human possibility of salvation. For him, Copernicanism was only a cause for concern to the extent that it could form a potential source of erosion for the human capacity to receive intellectual and spiritual guidance from the divine speech of Scripture. His critique was driven by the vision of a worst-case scenario in which human opinion would supplant divine enlightenment, in which a man-made simulacrum of divine worship would surreptitiously overtake true *religio*, and in which the Church would no longer assist men in their communication with God, but would instead become a patron of human inventions.

My argument will proceed as follows. First, I turn to *Crisis* (1636), a theological text which contains Fromondus' most extensive discussion of the relation

[6] Pantin, 'Libert Froidmont' (as in n. 2), pp. 626, 628-629, 632, 634-635.

[7] Howell, *God's Two Books* (as in n. 2), pp. 155-166; Van Nouhuys, 'Copernicanism' (as in n. 2), pp. 164-167.

[8] Howell, *God's Two Books*, p. 156.

[9] Van Nouhuys, 'Copernicanism', p. 166.

between man and truth, of the role of the Church in this relation, and of the specific challenges awaiting human mediators of this relation, but which has never been compared to his Copernican critiques. Next, I show how Fromondus' approach to the disciplines of astronomy and philosophy was fully integrated in the ecclesiological and soteriological views of *Crisis*. I also point out that his basic diagnosis of Copernicanism and prescriptions for its proper treatment are similar to Fromondus' analysis of heresy in *Crisis*. Finally, I demonstrate that despite such similarities, Fromondus resisted an identification of Copernicanism with heresy. Even after the Galileo affair, he earnestly believed that there was room for Copernicans inside the Catholic Church. This unexpected position allows us to more accurately capture Fromondus' concerns with Copernicanism, and his core motivations in authoring *Ant-Aristarchus* and *Vesta*.

2. Scripture, the Church, and human enlightenment in Fromondus *Crisis* (1636)

In 1629, the troops of Stadtholder Frederik Hendrik of Orange captured the Brabant city of 's-Hertogenbosch. At the instigation of the theologian Gisbertus Voetius, attempts to Calvinise this city were soon initiated. By 1630, the Louvain *regius* professor of theology Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638) had been recruited to defend the local Catholic clergy as representatives of the true faith. Jansenius soon obliged with *Alexipharmacum* (1630), a vigorous attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Calvinist ministry which was made available in Latin, French, and Dutch. *Alexipharmacum* marked the beginning of a protracted print controversy, waged between 1630 and 1645, which attracted some of the finest minds in Netherlandish Catholic and Reformed theology: Cornelius Jansenius, Gisbertus Voetius, Libertus Fromondus, and Martinus Schoockius. Shortly after Fromondus published his anti-Copernican *Vesta* (1634), his friend Jansenius recruited him to continue the ongoing debate with Voetius. Fromondus obliged by authoring *Desperatae Causae Crisis* (1636), a response to Voetius' *Desperata Causa* (1635), which had sought to rebut Jansenius' earlier *Notarum Spongia* (1631).[10]

Fromondus himself saw important connections between his Copernican critiques and the Den Bosch controversy. *Vesta* and *Crisis* occasionally deployed

[10] On the initial phases of the controversy, see M. Lamberigts, 'Voetius versus Jansenius', in: J. Van Oort, ed., *De Onbekende Voetius: voordrachten wetenschappelijk symposium, Utrecht, 3 maart 1989*, Kampen, 1989, pp. 148-167. A more extensive treatment is currently under preparation by Dr. Diana Stanciu. For a more general overview of the controversy, focusing on Fromondus' contributions, see A. Roets, *Libertus Fromondus (1587-1653), Leuvens Hoogleraar, en zijn polemiek tegen de Calvinisten,* PhD thesis, K.U. Leuven, 1948. Somewhat less useful is A. Roets, 'Libertus Fromondus (1587-1653) en het kerkelijk gezag', *Sacris erudiri*, vol. 2, 1949, pp. 335-366.

the very same metaphors for characterising their opponent's attitudes to the literal surface of Scripture.[11] Near the end of *Vesta* (1634), Fromondus even advised Jacob Lansbergen to consult one of Jansenius' attacks on Voetius, the *Notarum Spongia*, for a better understanding of the relation between Scriptural truth, Church magisterium, and heresy.[12] What were Fromondus' own views on this relation shortly after the Copernican debate? As our point of entry into this question, we may turn to chapter 21 of *Crisis*, where Fromondus addressed Voetius on the subject of Scriptural exegesis and Church magisterium. Characterising Scripture as words 'handed over by the Apostles to the Church of Christ'[13], Fromondus singled the Word out as:

> '[...] a lantern which sends out the light of faith, teaching us what we must believe and do for us to attain eternal life. Hence she is called a light before our feet because she directs our steps, showing which precepts it is fitting to follow [...]. She is sufficiently perspicuous, but only if meaning and interpretation are sought out amongst the Holy Fathers and the Catholic Church; Scripture herself suggests and commends this when she calls the Church "a column and foundation of truth".'[14]

Far from approaching Scripture as a background guarantee for the Church's power to determine proper scriptural meanings and religious beliefs, Fromondus consistently prioritized the direct relation between ordinary believers and the Word. At the same time, he also emphasized a single obstacle to this relation: man's default tendency to seek guidance from their imagination instead of truth. Likewise, Fromondus frequently warned his audience against the human tendency to take the ultimate source of truth, the literal sense of Scripture, as a projection surface for the inventions of their own imagination:

> 'And so, my dear Voet, unless you receive the Catholic Church and the commentaries of the Holy Fathers in your welcoming hands, Scripture will only speak obscurities

[11] Compare Fromondus, *Vesta* (as in n. 2), p. 97 with Id., *Causae desperatae Gisberti Voetii […] adversus Spongiam […] Domini Cornelii Iansenii […] Crisis*, Louvain: Petrus Sassenus & Henricus Nempaeus, 1665, p. 112.

[12] Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 170.

[13] Fromondus, *Crisis* (as in n. 11), pp. 102-103. I refer to this later edition, which appears to be identical to the original edition of 1636.

[14] Fromondus, *Crisis*, p. 105: 'Igitur Scriptura sacra lucerna est, quia fidei lumen nobis fundit, & ea docet quae credere & agere debemus, ut perveniamus ad vitam aeternam. Unde *pedibus nostris lucerna* dicitur, quia gressus nostros regit, monstrando per quae praecepta incedere oporteat, ut tandem pertingamus ad felicem illam metam. Satis etiam lucida est, sed si sensus eius & interpretatio à SS. Patribus, & Ecclesia Catholica petatur; quod Scriptura ipsa nobis suggerit & commendat, cùm Ecclesiam *veritatis columnam & firmamentum* vocat.'

> and errors to you, and that touchstone which you perpetually invoke, will only give you what your sorry imagination rather than the Holy Spirit inspires.'[15]

By diagnosing heresy as rooted in man's epistemic imprisonment in the imagination, and stimulated by the vice of pride, Fromondus primarily traced the difference between the heretical and the orthodox to one's successful overcoming of the imagination and the outer bark of Scriptural speech. Unlike the Protestants, Fromondus recommended ecclesiastical magisterium, not Scriptural perspicuity, as man's main aid in doing this.[16] Accordingly, Church magisterium was interpreted as an epistemic aid, not as a disciplinary instrument:

> 'To summarize the entire matter: Sacred Scripture speaks clearly to us because we have lighted upon the Catholic Church and the Holy Fathers as our interpreter. She speaks most obscurely to you because you seek to understand without such a commentary. And so it happens that everyone fashions a meaning for himself, in accordance with the fancy of his soul or a preconceived opinion, through his own effort and human conjecture. It would be easy to find another seemingly favorable passage in so many sacred books, which is believed to articulate a false meaning of one's own. And so a plurality of diverse and contradictory meanings of the same Scripture comes about, even where the same context of words is respected.'[17]

Fromondus' emphasis on undeception and the fragility of a relation to truth can also be discerned in his interpretation of the Church as a whole. On the one hand, Fromondus described the Church as a stable institution with a functional differentiation between representatives and the common flock.[18] On the other hand, he approached the Church as a historical phenomenon: a homogeneous space which gradually extended itself over the surface of the inhabited world,

[15] Fromondus, *Crisis*, p. 113: 'Itaque mi Voeti, nisi Ecclesiae Catholicae & SS. Patrum Commentarios in manum accipitis, tenebras tantùm & errores vobis loquentur Scripturae, & tribunal istud vestrum quod perpetuò iactatis, non quod Spiritus sanctus, sed quod vara imaginatio vestra ei inspirabit, respondebit.'

[16] For general references to the notion of Church magisterium, see M.A. Fahey, 'Magisterium', in: *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, G. Mannion and L.S. Mudge, eds, New York and London, 2008, pp. 524-536.

[17] Fromondus, *Crisis*, p. 111: 'Ut uno verbo omnia absolvam: Scriptura sacra nobis clarè loquitur, quia interpretem Ecclesiam Catholicam & SS. Patres nacti sumus, vobis autem obscurissimè, quia sine tali Commentario intelligere eam vultis. Hinc enim fit, ut unusquisque studio suo & humanis coniecturis sensum secundum animi sui libidinem, aut opinionem qua antea imbutus est, sibi fingat; aliamque Scripturam in tot sacris Libris facilè reperiat, quae in speciem ei faveat, & per quam adulterinum suum sensum explicare se posse credat. Et hinc etiam tot diversi ac in contrarium abeuntes sensus eiusdem Scripturae, etiam ubi idem per omnia verborum contextus servatur, ut iam ostendimus, & tot alijs exemplis ostendi potest.'

[18] See Fromondus, *Crisis*, pp. 44-45, 154.

transforming and vivifying men as it engulfs them.[19] On closer inspection, Fromondus' *Crisis* turns out to privilege the latter approach.[20] This is particularly clear in his liberal use of river metaphors, through which Fromondus articulated the conditions under which fallen men could be touched by a single, pure source of spiritual elevation. Borrowing from Jansenius' *Notarum Spongia*, Fromondus adopted the Catholic notion of *successio cathedrae* for this purpose, and described it as follows:

> 'For that series and concatenation of pastors is like a necessary bridge through which apostolic doctrine may reach out and come down to us from those first authors.'[21]

Accustomed as we are to the (Protestant) notion of truth contents being archived in texts, thus rendering spatial distance irrelevant, the importance of Fromondus' imagery of a necessary and sufficient social bridge cannot be underestimated. Not unlike contemporary musicians who trace their lineage back through generations of teachers, Church ministry was conceptualised and evaluated as a participant in the transformative effects of an original event, like a leaf that is rocked by ripples in a pond.

The emphasis on *successio cathedrae* was therefore embedded in a specific interpretation of the relation between Church, truth, and history. This is confirmed in Fromondus' understanding that *extra ecclesiam nullam esse salutem*. This saying is sometimes taken to refer to the necessity of adherence to the representatives of the Church in doctrinal and ritual matters, in exchange for guaranteed salvation in the afterlife. Contrary to this vision of a social order built on adherence and discipline, however, Fromondus described the Church as a 'space' where humans could be 'transformed' through gradual self-understanding, emulation, and grace.[22] It was inevitable that the Church should have vice in its ranks – what mattered was that it also opened up a relation to salvific teaching.[23] Relative to this, the main goal of the Church was to function as a purveyor of fertile seeds in which a divine offering of doctrines and graces could blossom.

[19] See Cornelius Jansenius, *Notarum Spongia quibus Alexipharmacum […] nuper propinatum aspersit Gisbertus Voetius*, 2nd edition, Louvain: Jacobus Zegerus, 1641, pp. 371-373; Fromondus, *Crisis*, pp. 2, 165.

[20] This point is also made by Roets, 'Libertus Fromondus' (as in n. 10), pp. 355-356.

[21] Fromondus, *Crisis*, p. 186: 'Nam series illa & catenatio Pastorum est pons quidam nobis necessarius, per quem doctrina Apostolica à primis illis authoribus ad nos traijcere & pervenire debuit'. Cf. Roets, 'Libertus Fromondus', p. 346; Lamberigts, 'Voetius versus Jansenius' (as in n. 10), p. 163.

[22] Fromondus, *Crisis*, pp. 1, 32.

[23] *Ibid*., pp. 33, 97.

The contrast with Voetius' contributions to the ministry debate is striking. By and large, Calvinist pastoral work prioritized the protection and maintenance of a hard-won *relation to* God as the central task of Christian care for the soul. Fromondus, on the other hand, prioritized the self's ongoing transformation in God, devoting most of his efforts to the task of *minimising* human error inside this process. The distance between Fromondus' emphasis on the ongoing incarnation of truth by a homogeneous and ever-expanding social body, and Voetius' emphasis on the transmission and circulation of truthful contents in an atomized and spatially delimited social body, point at widely divergent conceptions of the object of pastoral action which cannot simply be classified in terms of 'traditionalism' or 'reform'.[24]

For our present purposes, the important element concerns Fromondus' characterisation of Church functionaries as mere channels through which the sources of apostolic faith and doctrine could flow down into new regions of the world, history, or society. Likewise, their social pre-eminence was described in terms of their capacity to leave such sources *incorrupt* as they flowed through them, not in terms of an expert knowledge on what to believe and how to be saved.[25] The immediate effect of a successful channeling of these sources was twofold. On the one hand, it transfigured a natural 'blindness of the soul' through external divine stimuli and illumination by the 'light of orthodox faith', allowing the truth to be individually seen and understood.[26] On the other hand, it also transformed individual humans into localised sources for the further downward flow of salutary teachings and exempla.

3. Sailing a sea of errors

Reading *Ant-Aristarchus* and *Vesta* against the background of *Crisis* has the benefit of bringing out two central elements in Fromondus' Copernican critiques. First of all, it highlights how the activity of philosophizing was seen as burdened by the imagination, and how the Word was approached as a unique aid in countering human epistemic deficiency. Secondly, it shows how philosophizing (like theological reasoning) was construed as a dangerous activity, in that it could lead to the complete erosion of human *religio* with God. This section explores the first dimension, while section 4 will consider the latter.

In his dedication of *Ant-Aristarchus* to the court physician Andrea Trevisi, Fromondus described Trevisi as properly acting 'the Christian Physician and

[24] See Gisbertus Voetius, *Desperata causa papatus,* Amsterdam: Joannes Jansonius, 1635, pp. 403-407.

[25] Fromondus, *Crisis*, pp. 186-187.

[26] *Ibid*., pp. 2, 6, 8.

Philosopher' by first considering God, and only then His creatures and handiwork.[27] Another passage of the same treatise described the Christian philosopher as a being which did not force the Word to conform to its own opinions, but which took the Word as a protective shield with which 'to safely navigate this sea of errors'. Fromondus immediately contrasted this with the example of Copernicans who 'first deformed the system of the world through their imagination', and who only considered Scripture as an afterthought, a malleable surface which could be fashioned into a spokesman for their inventions.[28]

Apparently, Fromondus approached philosophers and Copernicans in much the same way as *Crisis* approached Church representatives and heretics. Copernicans and heretics alike tended to privilege their imagination as a primary source of guidance, where both should turn to the divine speech of the Word as a unique resource against deception. In a recent paper on Fromondus' *Meteorologicorum libri sex* (1627), Geert Vanpaemel pointed out how the Louvain theologian wedded criticism of Aristotle with a skeptical attitude towards the human ability to positively determine natural truths.[29] If anything, such skepticism had become even more pronounced by the early 1630s. Consider the end of *Labyrinthus* (1631), which was published simultaneously with *Ant-Aristarchus*, and usually sold and bound along with it:

> 'When we look about in nature, what, I ask you, do we not gaze upon through a dark veil? It is useless to enumerate magnetic virtues, occult powers of drugs, and countless other things. Just look at the light, colours, and those very things which, so we like to claim, are sounded by the most noble and penetrable sense of the eyes – how little do we understand of those? Where our eye-sight penetrates the deepest, it barely touches the skin. […] Through these mists of nature, God prepares the minds of the wise of this world (who, as St. Jerome reminds us, are usually most contumaciously borne to Christ) to enter the darkness of Faith with more obedience. She reminds them that they wander about through mere human disciplines.'[30]

[27] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, fol. *2^{v}.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 35.

[29] G. Vanpaemel, 'Comets, Earthquakes, and Gunpowder. School Philosophy in Libertus Fromondus' *Meteorologicorum libri sex* (1627)', *Lias*, vol. 41, 2014, pp. 53-68, esp. p. 64.

[30] Libertus Fromondus, *Labyrinthus sive de compositione continui liber unus,* Antwerp: Balthasar Moretus, 1631, pp. 193-195: 'Dum oculos, inquam, per naturam circumferimus, quid, quaeso, est quod non per caliginem adspicimus? Magneticas virtutes, & occultas medicamentorum vires, & infinita alia nil attinet recensere: ecce lumen, colores, & ipsa ista quae nobilissimo & maximè penetrabili oculorum sensu haurire dicimur, quàm parum comprehendimus. Ubi altissimè acies nostra penetrat, in summâ tamen cute haeret. […] Per tenebras etiam istas naturae praeparat Deus mentes sapientum huius saeculi (qui contumacissimè ad Christum, D. Hieronymo teste, attrahi solent) ut obedientiùs Fidei caliginem intrent, qui per eam, inter humanas etiam disciplinas ambulasse meminerunt.'

These basic convictions also shaped Fromondus' approach to the business of astronomy. From astronomers' divergence in their estimates of the circumference of the earth, Fromondus drew the following conclusion:

> 'But I do not reject the beautiful inventions of the Astronomers, my dear Lansbergen, which I have admiringly favoured since my youth. But they are only opinions, amongst which the principal winner is that which errs as little as possible from the truth.'[31]

It is in this epistemic framework that Fromondus also inserted his Copernican interlocutors, whom he diagnosed as taking their imagination rather than truth as their guide:

> 'What else [are] almost all of the Copernicans [doing], when, having closed off the lights of their eyes, they turn their eye-sight inward, and prefer the little flame of a foolish imagination to the light of such a manifest truth?'[32]

Just as he would soon do with Voetius in *Crisis*, Fromondus portrayed the Lansbergens as suffering from an unregimented imagination. Such default epistemic weaknesses made them prone to deforming truths divinely imparted through the Book of Nature, as well as Scripture. On the one hand, *Ant-Aristarchus* spoke of the Copernicans as men who tended to 'deform the system of the world for themselves'.[33] On the other hand, it portrayed Copernicans as men who approached Scripture as a wax-like material for their own inventions:

> '[...] this sect has mostly affected men who are alienated from the Catholic faith. Although not wholly contemptful of the Sacred Scriptures (which they at least consider to be Copernican), they are overly free in their interpretation, treating it as wax-like and leading them wherever they please.'[34]

Also consider Fromondus' reply to a long passage where Philips Lansbergen, keen to demonstrate God's unwillingness to teach natural science through

[31] Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 86: 'Astronomorum tamen *praeclara inventa*, mi Lansbergi, non *explodo*, quibus à iuventute meâ mirificè semper favi. Sed sint opiniones tantùm, inter quas princeps sit & palmaria, quae proximè aberrat à vero.'

[32] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 108: 'Quid aliud omnes ubique Copernicani, dum clausis oculorum luminibus, aciem totam in interiora convertunt, & fatuellae imaginationis luculam tam manifestae veritatis luci anteponunt?'

[33] *Ibid*., p. 35.

[34] *Ibid.,* fol. *4^{r}: 'Fidei tamen Catholicae alienos praecipuè haec secta invasit, qui licet sacrarum Scripturarum (quae minimè Copernicanae esse videntur) non omnino contemptores, interpretationis tamen liberiores, eas cereas magis habent, ut quocumque libuerit ferè ducant.'

Scripture, pointed out how Scripture gave the values of 30/10 or 21/7 for the ratio of a circle's diameter to its circumference, where Archimedes had offered 22/7. Armed with this example, Lansbergen went on to assert the uselessness of Scripture for geometry:

> '[...] which of these proportions is closer to the truth? I should answer that this is the Archimedean one, which rests upon the most secure foundations of Geometry; not that which the Holy Spirit, who had a different enterprise [*institutus*] in mind, was content to give according to popular and received custom. Hence it is evident [...] that things which pertain to Geometry should be demonstrated from herself, not from Sacred Scripture.'[35]

In chapter 7 of *Ant-Aristarchus*, Fromondus replied that the Scriptural *locus* which gave '21/7' for the ratio between the diameter and circumference of the circle was a basic but unrefined teaching, not so much an instance of erroneous popular science:

> 'And so it is true that one cannot receive the precise and Archimedean proportion of the diameter and its circle from that Scriptural passage [2 Chronicles 4:2; 1 Kings 7:23]; but some mechanical and unrefined [proportion] can be had. [...] Whoever reads the first days of the creation of the world, Ecclesiastes, the book of Job, and some other scattered places, along with the patristic commentaries, is manifestly false in claiming that Scripture teaches nothing of value for the cognition of natural things. Did not St. Ambrose, following Basil, find in Isaiah that the nature of the heavens was not solid, but subtle like smoke? [...] Not from Aristotle but from Scripturethese men were taught the nature and the figure of the heavens.'[36]

There was more going on here than a simple defense of the admissibility of Scripture as a source of knowledge of the natural world, and indeed as a source superior

[35] Philips Lansbergen, *Commentationes in motum terrae diurnum, & annuum; et in verum adspectabilis caeli typum,* Middelburg: Zacharias Romanus, 1630, p. 12: 'Quod si quaeras, utra harum Proportionum Veritati propior sit? Respondebo, proximam esse *Archimedaeam*, quae certissimis innititur *Geometriae* fundamentis; non illam, quam *Spiritus Sanctus*, alteri instituto intentus, populari & recepto more contentus fuit referre. Quare evidens est vel hoc exemplo, quae ad *Geometriam* pertinent, ex Hâc, non ex Sacra Scripturâ esse demonstranda: sequitur *alterum.*'

[36] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 38: 'Verum igitur est, ex eo Scripturae loco colligi non posse praecisam & Archimedeam proportionem quae est inter diametrum & circulum eius; sed potest tamen mechanica quaedam & rudis […]. Nihil autem, quod in rerum naturalium cognitionem quidquam referat, à Scriptura doceri, manifestè falsum dicet, qui primos dies creationis mundi, Ecclesiasten, & librum Iobi, ac alia quaedam sparsim, cum SS. Patrum commentarijs leget. Quid? Nonne S. Ambrosius post Basilium, ex Isaiâ naturam caeli non solidam, sed instar fumi subtilem esse collegit? […] Ecce isti non ab Aristotele, sed è Scripturâ sacrâ, caeli naturam & figuram didicerunt.'

to the human intellect. On one side, we have Lansbergen, who espouses an archival focus on the conformity of propositions to a stable knowledge which is guaranteed by the foundations of geometry, and who classifies anything which fails to conform to this standard as 'popular' and void of a relation to truth. On the other side, we have Fromondus, who focuses on Scripture as a superior unveiler of unknown truths, an oral source of transformative enlightenment whose trustworthiness is not attributed to this medium's capacity to archive truth, but to its speaker's inability to deceive (even where it only offers 'unrefined' sayings).

Even in the domains of astronomy and philosophy, then, deception in a sea of errors came naturally to humans. Accordingly, Fromondus was more interested in identifying credible sources of undeception than he was in determining orthodox doctrine. One such source was Scripture, as is clear from chapter III.2 of *Vesta*, where Fromondus approvingly quoted Francisco Vallès' *Sacra Philosophia* (1595). Here, Scripture appeared less as a (partial) source of natural-philosophical doctrine, than as a unique guide in rising beyond (self-)deception, due to the superior reliability of its teacher:

> 'Since some naturalia, he [=Vallès] says, are woven into the very texture of the speech [of Sacred Scripture], I hold all of these to be most truthful; as is natural for those things which have been dictated from on high by the true spirit of God, and which have flown from the very Author of nature, who cannot hide anything. [...] For no pious son of the Catholic Church will consider this to deviate by even a hair's breadth from the truth, or will think that the thing came to pass differently than is narrated [...]. God did not intend to teach us the causes and origins of natural things, the certain knowledge of which does not pertain that much to eternal salvation. For this reason, he did not further elaborate on them; but when he touches on something in passing, why would he deceive us? Surely He cannot deceive nor be deceived, since He is supremely wise and good.'[37]

A second source of undeception was the capacity of human authorities to assist other men in their epistemic limitations, which Fromondus portrayed as yet

[37] Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 77: 'Is in limine SACRAE PHILOSOPHIAE, quam ex variis carptim Scripturae sacrae locis contexuit, *Cùm quaedam*, inquit, *in ipso sermonum* (Scripturae sacrae) *ductu texantur naturalia, ea omnia verissima esse existimo: utpote quae à summè vero Dei spiritu dictata sint, & ab ipso Auctore naturae fluxerint, quem latere nihil potuit. Velut profectò contexta sunt in his libris quam plurima pertinentia ad historias, quae & ipsa aliorsum spectant, quam ut antiquiorum facta & gesta praelia homines noverint. Nemo tamen pius & Catholicae Ecclesiae filius putaverit, vel latum unguem à veritate deviare, aut rem aliter, ac narretur, gestam esse. Cur non ergo eodem modo censeas de historiâ naturali? Nolit enim nos Deus naturales rerum caussas & ortus docere, utpote quas nos certo scire, non adeo referat ad aeternam salutem, atque ob id, de illis non edisserat; sed eum obiter aliquid attingit, cur nos decipiat? Certe decipi non potest neque decipere: siquidem summè sapiens & bonus est*.'

another instance of divine providence and grace. The prefatory section to *Philosophia christiana de anima* (1649) thus made the following claim:

> 'I believe that divine providence acted through Aristotle, as it did through Homer and Virgil, as well as Demosthenes and Cicero [...]. Through these men, God raised those arts [of poetry and oratory] up to heights to which none of their predecessors had aspired; and those who followed developed it downward rather than upward. However, I do not adore all of Aristotle's sayings on natural things enough to consider him to be beyond error [...]. Augustine rises above everyone else, not only in divine matters, but in natural philosophy too. It is also clear that he was taught neither by Aristotle, nor by another master.'[38]

A third source responded to the challenge of human violence in articulating the messages of the Holy Spirit, which Fromondus repeatedly evoked in his Copernican critiques:

> 'It is most insolent to transfer a verb which signifies local motion to a mere image of local motion, without even the slightest indication of its insolence. If such license of translation were permitted to interpreters, the Holy Spirit would say nothing solid or reliable, but only uncertain and misguiding things.'[39]

> 'To violently divert the motion which is attributed everywhere to the sun and the stars from being a reality to being a mere image and appearance, and from being the proper meaning to being an insolent metaphor of Sacred Scripture, only because the Copernican philosophy requires this, is to countervene the law of Trent which forbids anyone *to contort Sacred Scripture to his own opinion*.'[40]

[38] Libertus Fromondus, *Philosophiae Christianae De Anima libri quatuor,* Louvain: Hieronymus Nempaeus, 1649, fols ()()2^{r-v}: 'Ego enim providentiam divinam circa Aristotelem egisse, quod circa Homerum & Virgilium, circa Demosthenem & Ciceronem, existimo. Ante Homerum & Virgilium fuerunt in Graecia & Latio Poetae, ante Demosthenem & Ciceronem, Oratores; sed per istos, in tantum fastigium artes illas evexit, quo nemo antecedentium aspiravit; & qui sequentur, non ascendendo, sed descendendo proficerent. Nec omnia tamen in re naturae Aristotelis dicta sic adoro, ut nusquam errasse putem. […] Denique, quod Aristoteles inter Philosophos, Homerus & Virgilius inter Poëtas, Demosthenes & Cicero inter Oratores, hoc S. Augustinus inter SS. Patres. Ut magno merito, SS. Patrum vertex appellatus sit. Nec tantum in rebus divinis, sed in Philosophia etiam naturali Augustinus alijs supereminet. Quam tamen nec ab Aristotele, aut alio Magistro didicisse, est in comperto.'

[39] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 35: 'Insolentissimum vero in eâ est, verbum quod motum localem significat, ad imaginem tantum motûs localis, sine levissimo etiam eius insolentiae indicio, transferri. Si vero interpretibus tanta translationis licentia permittatur, nihil solidi, nihil certi, sed incerta & lapsantia omnia nobis Spiritus Sanctus loquetur.'

[40] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 33: 'Unde motum qui soli & stellis ubique tribuitur, violenter, & solum, quia Copernicanae Philosophiae ita expedit, a veritate ad imaginem & apparentiam, a proprietate ad insolentem Scripturae sacrae metaphoram trahere, est satis manifeste in legem Tridentini committere, quae vetat quemquam *Scripturam sacram ad suos sensus contorquere*.'

In relation to this challenge, Fromondus advocated Church magisterium as a unique touchstone for detecting the presence of deformation in one's overhearing of Scripture. Fromondus did not expect magisterium to function as a doctrinal enforcer of what to believe, but as a unique epistemic aid allowing man to overcome primary guidance by the imagination in his relation to Scripture. It was valued as a divinely granted 'supreme Interpreter', whose presence guaranteed the possibility of there being more than mere projections of human opinion onto the surface of Scripture.[41] Accordingly, Fromondus read the famous Tridentine decree on the use of Scripture as providing these specific guarantees, quoting the decree in full.[42] Placed within the broader context of *Ant-Aristarchus*, the precise choice of words used by this decree stands out by its uptake of human erring as deformation, that is, as something which happens *inside* one's relation to divine teachings:

> '[...] that no-one, *contorting* Sacred Scripture to their own meanings, will dare to understand [*interpretari*] Sacred Scripture *against* that meaning which the holy Mother Church has held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true meaning and understanding of the Sacred Scriptures [...], or even *against* the unanimous consensus of the Fathers [my italics].'[43]

4. Copernicans in the Church

Fromondus thus approached Scripture, Church magisterium, and traditional authority as methodological aids for secure philosophizing. However, we should not interpret this in terms of 'secular' reason being assisted by faith. For Fromondus, human philosophizing always happened inside a human relation of *religio* with God. One example of this are *Ant-Aristarchus'* frequent anecdotes about astronomers who were attracted by heliocentrism, but whose subterraneous sense

[41] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 25.

[42] For a basic discussion of session IV of the Council of Trent (1546) and its treatment of issues of scriptural exegesis, see Richard J. Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible; Including a Translation of Foscarini's Letter on the Motion of the Earth*, Notre Dame, 1991, pp. 5-14.

[43] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 25: '[…] *ut nemo prudentiae suae innixus, in rebus Fidei, & morum ad aedificationem doctrinae Christianae pertinentium, sacram Scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens, contra eum sensum, quem tenuit & tenet sancta mater Ecclesia, cuius est iudicare de vero sensu & interpretatione Scripturarum sanctarum* […] *aut etiam contra unanimem[this is what many quotations read, but grammatically, it should be unanimum] consensum Patrum, ipsam Scripturam sacram interpretari audeat*.' Cf. Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 168. As said, this is a literal quotation from Session IV, second decree of the Council of Trent. See K. Ganzer, G. Alberigo and A. Melloni, eds, *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta. Editio critic,* Vol III*: The Oecumenical Councils of the Roman Catholic Church: From Trent to Vatican II (1545-1965)*', Turnhout, 2010, p. 16, ll. 184-190.

of *religio* suddenly barred them from fully embracing it.[44] Another example is Fromondus' concern to accurately locate the Copernican in relation to the Word and the Church, which we will now explore.

It has been suggested that for Fromondus, the heretical character of Copernicanism 'could no longer be called into question' after 1633.[45] A closer look at the facts shows that this was not the case. In chapter 5 of *Ant-Aristarchus*, on 'whether the opinion of Copernicus is to be considered heretical nowadays', Fromondus concluded that Copernicus was perhaps not to be condemned with 'apert heresy'. He went no further than to state that Copernican opinion was 'at least temerarious, and with the other foot has crossed the threshold of heresy, unless the Holy Seat decides otherwise'.[46] By the time Fromondus wrote *Vesta*, this had not substantially changed.[47] Previous research on the Tridentine classification of theological *censurae* for problematic propositions has emphasized the distinction which was made between theological error and heresy.[48] Fromondus seems to have drawn on this highly developed tradition. More specifically, Fromondus' labeling of Copernican doctrine as 'temerarious' but flirting with heresy, would probably have been understood as a qualification of theological error, but not of heresy.[49] Fromondus was clearly concerned to avoid imprudence

[44] See, for instance, *Ant-Aristarchus*, pp. 12 (David Origanus), 26 (Caspar Bartholinus), 27 (Nicolaus Mulerius).

[45] Van Nouhuys, 'Copernicanism', p. 164.

[46] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 29.

[47] Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 97. Francesco Beretta also points out Fromondus' categorisation of heliocentrism as a rash but non-heretical proposition. See F. Beretta, 'Galileo, Urban VIII, and the Prosecution of Natural Philosophers', in: E. McMullin, ed., *The Church and Galileo*, Notre Dame, IN, 2005, p. 250.

[48] On early modern Catholic degrees of heresy, and the difference with theological *notae* of error, see L. Garzend, *L'Inquisition et l'Hérésie. Distinction de l'hérésie théologique et de l'hérésie inquisitoriale: à propos de l'affaire Galilée,* Paris, 1913, pp. 69-96; J. Cahill, *The Development of the Theological Censures after the Council of Trent (1563-1709)*, Fribourg, 1955, pp. 22-25 (Melchior Cano), p. 42 (Francisco Suarez); B. Neveu, *L'erreur et son juge. Remarques sur les censures doctrinales à l'époque moderne,* Napels, 1993; M. Finocchiaro, *The Galileo Affair. A Documentary History,* Berkeley, CA, 1989, pp. 148-149; J. Speller, *Galileo's inquisition trial revisited*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 2008, pp. 26-29, 46-50.

[49] A 'temerarious' proposition seems to have been situated in the realm of theological error rather than heresy. See Neveu, *L'erreur* (as in n. 48), pp. 305-306. It is not entirely clear what Fromondus had in mind when he characterized the Copernican opinion as crossing the 'threshold of heresy'. The most likely explanation is its being used as equivalent to the twin censures *haeresi proxima* or *haeresi suspecta*. On the tendency to associate *haeresi proxima* with 'error' in Suarez (1621) and subsequent Catholic theologians, see Cahill, *Development* (as in n. 48), pp. 88-90. On the qualification of the censure *haeresi suspecta* as less grave than 'error' in Suarez, see *Ibid*., pp. 118-121. On the qualification of 'manifest heresy' as belonging to the category of erroneous proposition rather than heresy, see *Ibid*., pp. 31-32 (with reference to Jacobus de Simanca's *Institutiones Catholicae*, 1575).

in equating Copernican persuasions with heresy, leading him to carefully monitor the precise source and language of Roman pronouncements on this matter.

This was compounded by Fromondus' limited knowledge of Rome's take on Copernicanism. As late as 1634, his information appears to have been largely derived from the text of the 1616 decree, which he quoted in chapter 4 of *Ant-Aristarchus*. Significantly, the title page of *Vesta* simply presented the 1633 condemnation of Galileo as a reiteration of this decree. This squares with Fromondus' main source of information about these recent developments: a letter of the papal nuncio to Brussels, Fabio di Lagonissa, which informed the universities of Douai and Louvain of Galileo's trial and the dangers of Copernicanism. The letter, which Fromondus duly inserted in *Vesta*, presented Galileo's condemnation as a disciplinary affair curtailing the 'depravity of erroneous dogma'. It is completely silent on the precise theological censures which had been attached to the Copernican propositions, as well as on Galileo's conviction under 'vehement suspicion of heresy'. Fromondus' comments on the letter show how even at this stage, he thought that Rome was seeking to protect the subjects of the Apostolic Seat 'from a 'Pythagorean and Copernican error'.[50]

The immediate reason for resisting an outright identification of Copernicans with heretics, Fromondus explained, was because 'they do defend the authority of Scripture, albeit weakly'.[51] In *Ant-Aristarchus*' prefatory letter to the reader, he immediately emphasized that Copernicans, while taking temerarious liberties in the interpretation of Scripture, were not 'contemptful' of it.[52] Jules Speller, in a helpful survey of post-Tridentine characterisations of heresy, has pointed out that Catholic theologians defined the crime of heresy as the most serious one imaginable, for the precise reason that the heretic figured as an agent who sought to attack divine revelation itself, and not merely an interpretation thereof. Indeed, the heretic was interpreted as an enemy of the various means of human salvation, not simply of official Church doctrine. He therefore automatically became an enemy of the Church and Scripture as well. Knowingly undermining human access to God's revelation of salutary doctrine, the heretic was perceived as someone who steers humans towards 'harmful and lethal ideas', whose origins lie beyond the space of Scripture and its

[50] Along with the instruction to notify all professors of mathematics and philosophy in the Spanish Netherlands, Di Lagonissa had also received a copy of the sentence and abjuration of Galileo. It appears that Di Lagonissa did not distribute these to Douai and Louvain. See Monchamp, *Galilée et la Belgique* (as in n. 2), pp. 114-115 and 117-118. The letter of Fabio di Lagonissa to Cornelius Jansenius, dd. 1 September 1633, is edited in: Galileo Galilei, *Le opere di Galileo Galilei*, A. Favaro, ed., 20 vols, Florence, 1890-1909, vol. 15, p. 245. Fromondus' version, with minor modifications, appears in Fromondus, *Vesta*, fols ***^{v}-***2^{r}.

[51] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 29.

[52] *Ibid*., fol. *4^{r}.

exegesis. Unlike sinners or thieves, the heretic was seen to actively oppose Scripture through positive teachings, not mere deeds.[53] Fromondus appears to have agreed. In his commentary on the Pauline *oportet et haereses esse* (1 Corinthians 11:19), he viewed the heretic as a human being driven by pride and stubbornness, and heresies as worse than schisms because they 'not only perturb Christian charity and peace, but uproot faith in Christ itself'.[54] In *Crisis* (1636), the figure of the heretic was a diabolical agent motivated by pride and hate of Rome, who re-uses the popular credibility of Scripture while eroding God's unique Church on earth.[55] As far as Fromondus was concerned, the Copernican was not quite like this. Located between the Christian philosopher and the heretic, the Copernican was primarily a philosopher who reliably adhered to a supra-confessional 'culture of the Word'.

For Fromondus, this also meant that there was room for Copernicans inside the Catholic Church, even after 1633. Consider a remarkable passage in chapter III.5 of *Vesta*, where he addresses the claim, made in Jacob Lansbergen's *Apologia* (1633), that the Roman decision to defend geostatism through Scripture would positively alienate Copernicans from returning to the Catholic Church.[56] In his response to this claim, Fromondus began by granting the Church a certain measure of discretion in deciding which philosophers would harm her ability to offer spiritual guidance to the people, and which would not. Immediately after this, however, he suggested that it might still be possible to hold Copernican opinions inside the Church:

> 'However, if it is only fear of deserting Copernicus which alienates you from the Catholic Church, then you abstain from the highest good and hope of eternal happiness through excessive fear, my dear Lansbergen. For perhaps it is still possible to be a Catholic and a Copernican. Consider these words from *Ant-Aristarchus*: "As of yet, I do not dare to accuse Copernicus of overt heresy, unless I expressly hear otherwise from the very head of the Catholic Church. For they do defend the authority of Holy Scripture, albeit weakly".'[57]

[53] Speller, *Galileo's inquisition trial* (as in n. 48), pp. 23-26.

[54] See Libertus Fromondus, *Commentaria in Sacram Scripturam*, part I: *Epistolas S. Pauli et Septem Canonicas Aliorum Apostolorum*, Paris: Jean Dupuis, 1671, p. 128a.

[55] Diabolism of the Protestant heresy: *Crisis*, pp. 64, 187; Motivation by *superbia* and hate of Rome: *Crisis*, pp. 7-8; The heretic as an outsider to the Church: *Crisis*, p. 32.

[56] Jacob Lansbergen, *Apologia pro Commentationibus Philippi Lansbergii in Motum Terrae Diurnum & Annuum,* Middelburg: Zacharias Romanus, 1633, p. 60.

[57] Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 97: 'Veruntamen, si solus metus deserendi Copernicum, te ab Ecclesia Catholica alienat, nimio forte terrore, mi Lansbergi, a summo bono & spe aeternae felicitatis abstineris. Nam Catholicum & Copernicanum esse fortassis adhuc licet: & ANT-ARISTARCHI vera ista vidisti: *Copernicum apertae haereseos condemnare nondum ausim, nisi à Capite ipso Ecclesiae Catholicae expressius aliud videam: nam Scripturae Sacrae auctoritatem, licet imbecilliter, utcumque tamen defensitant*.' Cf. Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 29.

This confirms Tabitta van Nouhuys' claim that Fromondus did not seek to attack Copernicanism as such.[58] Unlike Van Nouhuys, however, I would suggest that Fromondus sought to heal a disturbance in man's authentic human communication with God, not so much a threat to Roman religious power. Fromondus often likened his address to the Lansbergens with an attempt to heal:

> 'For he will be ashamed to change his opinion, which [Copernicans] already divulged so widely in published books, or have impressed so deeply in the soul by repeated imaginings, so that a thorough conception in the brain of a terrestrial turning, has now led them to imagine themselves to be turning. This often happens to some who are ill, who believe everything to be turning below their feet and around them, when everything stands still except for their minds, whilst sitting in their seats. What shall we do? I will do what I can with human and divine arguments. But if they will not be healed by me, I put them down, and hand them over to Hippocrates.'[59]

This emphasis on the healing effects of proper human guidance also transpires in Fromondus' positive appraisals of Godefridus Wendelinus (1580-1667), an openly Copernican Catholic priest residing in the Spanish Netherlands.[60] Fromondus presented Wendelinus as a Copernican who had grasped the essential message that a stable relation to the Word was essential in protecting philosophy and astronomy from being mere articulations of human errors inside the realm of the

[58] Van Nouhuys, 'Copernicanism', p. 166.

[59] Fromondus, *Vesta*, fols ***2^{r-v}: '*Nempe pudebit opinionem mutare, quam iam editis Libris tam late vulgaverunt, aut repetita imaginatione tam alte animo impresserunt, ut vertigine telluris cerebro penitus concepta, verti se iam imaginentur: ut in morbo quibusdam evenire solet, qui omnia sub pedibus & circa se gyrari ac ambulare credunt, cum tamen, praeter mentem eorum sedibus suis emotam, universa conquiescant. Quid facimus? Ego certe argumentis humanis divinisque quod potui. Si a me sanari nolint, depono, & trado Hippocrati.*' Compare with Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, fol. **^{v}.

[60] On Wendelinus, see: F. Silverijser, *Les Autographes inédits de Wendelin à la Bibliothèque de Bruges*, Louvain, 1932; Id., 'Godefroid Wendelen (1580-1667)', *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique liégeois*, vol. 58, 1934, pp. 91-158, and vol. 60, 1936, pp. 137-910; H.J. Zwartebroeckx, 'Wendelen (Wendelinus), Godfried' in: *Nationaal biografisch woordenboek*, vol. 4, 1970, cols 944-951; E. Jacques, 'Les dernières années de Godefroid Wendelen (Wendelinus)', *Lias*, vol. 10, 1983, pp. 253-271; P. Costabel, 'Peiresc et Wendelin', in: A. Reinbold, ed., *Peiresc, ou la passion de connaître: colloque de Carpentras, novembre 1987*, Paris, 1990, pp. 91-110; A. Welkenhuysen, 'Wendelinus versifex: the Latin poetry of a 17th-century polyhistor', in: D. Sacré and G. Tournoy, eds, *Myricae: essays on neo-latin literature in memory of Jozef IJsewijn*, Leuven, 2000, pp. 443-462. For Wendelinus as the originator of the 17th-century Provençal school of astronomers, see F.J. Baumgartner, 'The Origins of the Provencal School of Astronomy', *Physis. Rivista Internazionale di Storia della Scienza,* vol. 28, 1991, pp. 291-304.

imagination. Accordingly, Wendelinus was presented as a 'Copernican in philosophy' who nevertheless accused Lansbergen of having:

> '[...] cast off the natural light of the intellect along with the light of orthodox Faith. Where are the instruments and experiments, by which one is expected to support and affirm those new paradoxes when the old opinions are destroyed? [...] we are not of such light and futile faith.'[61]

Likewise, Fromondus presented Lansbergen as a prime example of the way in which men 'who have once rejected the light of Christian faith also lay down the lamp of natural reason'.[62] This suggests that issues of self-governance and 'method' in relation to God, Scripture, and Nature were far more important to Fromondus than the content of one's convictions about the natural world. In and of itself, Copernicanism constituted neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the erosion of such self-governance. But in the hands of astronomers who were already 'alienated from the Catholic faith', it could occasion such a process.[63] Not surprisingly, then, Fromondus saw a privileged but non-essential relation between Copernicanism and Protestantism.

As early as his initial address to the reader in *Ant-Aristarchus*, Fromondus concisely laid out the two dominant forms of human error which Copernicanism might stimulate. The first was a 'temerarious' uptake of Scripture, by which, as we have already seen, Fromondus primarily meant a tendency to defend Scripture yet treat it as a wax-like projection surface for the inventions of the imagination. The second was the natural-theological uptake of creation, which 'is not adorned [...] but undone and fouled' by the Copernican proposal, Fromondus warned.[64] Such concerns were easily elicited by Lansbergen's *Bedenckinghen*, whose second half was organised as a *grand tour* through a fold-out map of the Copernican heavens, in which Lansbergen gradually unfolded a complete commentary on the divinely implanted uses and benefits of the true structure and motions of the universe. Carefully keying the attributes of the Copernican

[61] Fromondus, *Vesta*, 156-157: '*Profecto cum lumine orthodoxae Fidei, videntur naturale lumen intellectus amisisse. Ubi instrumenta, ubi experimenta, quibus nova ista paradoxa, destructis veterum sententiis, oportebat struere & firmare?* […] *Nec tam levis ac futilis fidei sumus, ut Philippo Lansbergio, sine alia instrumentorum supellectile & arte (aut si habet, depromat) credamus*.' On Wendelen, see also *Ibid*., pp. 57, 78.

[62] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 100.

[63] *Ibid*., fol. *4^{r}.

[64] *Ibid*., fol. **^{r}: 'Ostendere [...] infinitam Dei sapientiam [...] non ornari [...] nimiâ istâ, quam captant [Copernicani], motuum simplicitate, & intelligentia facilitate, sed discingi & evilescere. Non intelligamus sanè divinas rationes, non ideò falsa sunt, imò diviniores.' The emphasis on creation as an emblem of divine *sapientia* recurs in the epilogue of *Ant-Aristarchus*, p. 109.

heavens with divine attributes, Lansbergen produced a true rhapsody of Scriptural references and associations. Far more than a mere defense of Copernicanism, then, Lansbergen's *Bedenckinghen* thus sought to lead its readers toward their Creator through a meditation on the Copernican universe.

Unsurprisingly, such spiritual exercises were occasionally inflected by Lansbergen's Calvinist theology, and it was precisely these inflections which chapter 19 of *Ant-Aristarchus* repeatedly associated with 'Copernico-Calvinism' and 'Copernican theology'.[65] This shows that Fromondus was particularly concerned with Copernicanism as a medium for privileging the imagination over the Word, not so much with Copernicanism as providing further fuel for Calvinist challenges to Roman doctrinal power. Interestingly, Fromondus did not hesitate to qualify Lansbergen's meditations on divine grace and the certainty of faith as 'heretical'.[66] Between the two dangers which Fromondus identified in the prefatory letter to the reader of *Ant-Aristarchus*, it was the natural-theological and meditative re-use of Copernican cosmology which worried him most as a stepping-stone towards heresy.

In all this, one cannot underestimate the extent to which Fromondus' concern lay with the spiritual health of the *vulgus*, rather than with the socio-cultural power and authority of Rome. In 1619, when he first heard news of the Roman decree of 5 March 1616, Fromondus immediately thought that Copernicanism could be credible to academics, but not to the *vulgus*.[67] By the time the prefatory letter to the reader of *Vesta* (1634) was written, he was far less secure in this judgment:

> '(as I recently learned from you), the persuasion of a Copernican motion is now wholly common among you, and spreads itself amongst the erudites as well as the throngs of sailors and wagoneers.'[68]

In the aforementioned passage, Fromondus' 'you' did not refer to Calvinists but the 'people of Holland and Zeeland', whom Fromondus approached as part of a broader social body of 'Belgians'.[69] Fully aware that his 'fellow Belgians'

[65] *Ibid*., pp. 100-101, 102.

[66] *Ibid*., p. 103.

[67] Fromondus, *De cometa*, pp. 122-123: 'Tales enim definitiones publicandæ maxime per Academias, ubi viri docti, quibus talis opinionis forte periculum. Nam vulgus non facile adducatur, ut se cum terra rotari, firmamentum quiescere existimet: non etiamsi fere Pontifex id constituat.'

[68] Fromondus, *Vesta*, fols **3^{v}: '*Et tamen (ut a vestris nuper audiebam) vulgaris iam paene est apud vos, & non tantum intra eruditos, sed in turbam etiam nautarum aurigarumque se sparsit Copernicani motus persuasio*.'

[69] *Ibid*., fol. **4^{r}.

numbered many 'who diverge in religion', Fromondus was nevertheless confident that they all had a better share of 'wisdom and Minerva' than the French, Spaniards, Italians, and Germans.[70] In relation to this promising raw social material, the critique of Copernicanism sought to inculcate a proper use of Copernicanism and the imagination, so that the salutary sources of the Church could continue to flow down.

5. Conclusion

At the end of a survey of the gradual association of heliocentrism with heresy in the period between 1543 and 1616, Michel-Pierre Lerner left open a basic question:

> 'In what sense can one speak of a heliocentric *heresy*? One would probably have to look very carefully at the answers to this question given by a number of Galileo's contemporaries after the publication of the decree of March 1616 and then in the months and years that followed the condemnation and the abjuration of June 22, 1633.'[71]

In this paper, we found that Libertus Fromondus' answer to Lerner's question would have been something like this: one cannot speak of a heliocentric heresy, but only of re-uses of Copernicanism which might fuel heresy.

Fromondus did not perceive Copernicans as challengers of Roman doctrinal or exegetical authority, nor did he perceive Copernicanism as one species, alongside Calvinism, of theological heresy. Instead, heliocentrism was approached as a potential spiritual danger for the possibility of human salvation. Its challenges specifically pertained to the conditions of possibility under which the Word and the Church could continue to effect their transformative benefits on fallen man. Possibly the most surprising element of Fromondus' critique of Copernicanism concerns the extent to which he isolated and focused on those conditions of possibility which lay within the realms of human reason and philosophical error. As we have seen, it is this focus which constituted a conceptual bridge between Fromondus' diagnoses of Copernicanism and Calvinism. Fromondus' critique was emphatically not a fight against heresy, but a fight against the potential effects of philosophical erring on the human practice of faith in the Word. In this fight, he made no a priori distinction between Belgians of Catholic or Calvinist persuasion. Fromondus did promote specific Catholic institutions as central tools

[70] Fromondus, *Ant-Aristarchus*, fols *4^{v}-**^{r}, p. 103; Fromondus, *Vesta*, p. 156.

[71] M.-P. Lerner, 'The Heliocentric "Heresy". From Suspicion to Condemnation', in: *The Church and Galileo* (as in n. 47), pp. 11-37, p. 26.

for this fight; however, he approached these not as sources of discipline but as means of human empowerment.

There was nothing *inherently* dangerous about Copernicanism. However, it could encourage an erosion of true *religio* towards God, if used imprudently and with unbridled imagination and enthusiasm, and it could open the door to heresy and atheism. This is the danger which Fromondus thought he perceived in the Copernican treatises of Philips and Jacob Lansbergen, and which he sought to heal with Scripture, Church magisterium, and providentially granted human authority. Accordingly, the case of Fromondus seems to call for an approach of the early modern Catholic response to Copernicanism which is much more careful about imputing concerns of socio-cultural power as the main motivator for this response. Anti-Copernican writings were not concerned with Copernican cosmology as such, but with the way in which it could provide the forms and raw material for constructing a man-made *religio*. Fromondus' critique was not an instrument for maintaining Rome's privileged relation to the Word and the people by undermining its competitors, but an instrument for securing the spiritual well-being of the people – including that of its Copernican interlocutors.

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