

Response to David Palm on the Galileo Issue

By Robert Sungenis

The following is taken from a series of posts by Catholic apologist David Palm, originally posted on the Catholic Answers forums in the thread "Catholic Heliocentrism" (September 2010). "Cassini" is a geocentrist to whom Palm is answering objections. Robert Sungenis answers Mr. Palm's assertions.

David Palm: Cassini, I can certainly appreciate your desire to defend the Church's integrity, but I'm not sure you're seeing the full ramifications of what you're saying. You speak very generally of "they" and "them", without acknowledging that you are speaking of a whole succession of Popes and all the bishops in communion with them.

Over in another thread you explicitly admit that you believe that this "heresy" will harm the faith of the faithful. Is it really true, then, that the entire hierarchy themselves hold a heresy and allow it to spread unchecked for centuries without one word or action to check it? And this has been the status quo for centuries? Notice what happened to Pope Honorius I who, in reply to an heretical letter penned by Sergius the Patriarch of Constantinople, utilized the phrase "one will". Most scholars agree that he did not hold the heresy to which he was responding. But he was formally condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council and this condemnation was affirmed by Pope Leo II: "We anathematize the inventors of the new error, that is, Theodore, Sergius, ...and also Honorius, who did not attempt to sanctify this Apostolic Church with the teaching of Apostolic tradition, but by profane treachery permitted its purity to be polluted."

Here you tell us that not siding with the condemnation of Galileo will cause tremendous harm to the Church's credibility, indeed will undermine her claim to infallibility.

So then, what does siding with the pronouncements against Galileo do? For almost three hundred years now, not one word has been said by any bishop or any Pope in condemnation of this "formal heresy". This includes even the sainted Pius X and the beatified Pius IX and John XXIII. More than that, this "formal heresy" has been openly taught in Catholic grade schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and pontifical institutions. This "formal heresy" has been presented as established fact in numerous articles and books written by Catholics and for Catholics, many of which bear the Church's imprimatur and nihil obstat. It is believed by the vast majority of the Catholics of the world—that includes the world's bishops and priests, not to mention the Pope. The Magisterium has given the faithful not one hint that there is any problem whatsoever in believing this "formal heresy", let alone actively and repeatedly warn them away from it. More than that, a Pope has publicly apologized for the treatment of Galileo, which could do nothing but bolster the view that this belief is perfectly legitimate for the faithful to hold.

I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but typically within the testosterone-drenched apologetics of those like Sungenis, the only reason anyone could possibly fail to teach

openly against a "formal heresy" is if he's either a simpleton or a coward. Which again tars the entire Catholic magisterium for the past 300 years as either dupes or traitors.

R. Sungenis: "Testosterone-drenched apologetics"? "Simpleton or coward"? It's unfortunate that Mr. Palm feels the need to categorize his opponents with these epithets. But I'm not going to fall into the trap of making this a personal issue. I only want to answer Mr. Palm's assertions point-by-point because I take this subject very seriously and I desperately want to clear away the errors Mr. Palm has given in his reply to Cassini so that others are not unnecessarily drawn away from geocentrism. As I do, we will find that not only does Mr. Palm misconstrue the last "300 years," but in his attempts to save this manufactured period from being filled with "dupe and traitors," he inadvertently brings the same aspersions on the 1700 years prior, and thereby severely undermines the Catholic faith.

The first thing we need to say is that Mr. Palm's "300 year" period, which I assume stretches from 1700 to 2000 and is the period he believes the Church switched from geocentrism to heliocentrism, is completely erroneous. We can prove this quite easily. In 1833, less than 180 years ago, the Catholic editors Jacquier and Le Seur put a disclaimer on Newton's *Principia* stating:

"Newton in his third book assumes the hypothesis of the earth's movement. The author's [Newton's] propositions could not be explained except on the same hypothesis. Hence we have been obliged to put on a character not our own. But we profess obedience to the decrees made by the Supreme Pontiffs against the movement of the earth."¹

This shows that Catholic academia, two hundred years after heliocentrism was declared a "formal heresy" in 1633, was proud to proclaim to the world in one of the most popular books of physics known (The *Principia Mathematica*), that they continued to give their allegiance to the Church's official teaching of geocentrism, regardless what the world was teaching. The "Supreme Pontiffs" that Jaquier and Le Seur must have been referring to would have included **Pius V** (who taught geocentrism in the Tridentine catechism of 1566); **Paul V** (who approved his Commission's recommendation that heliocentrism is "formally heretical" in 1616); **Urban VIII** (who again approved the conclusion that heliocentrism was "formally heretical" in 1633); **Alexander VII** (who attached his papal bull to the Index that condemned the books of Copernicanism, Galileo, Kepler in 1664); **Benedict XIV** (who kept Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler on the Index in 1741 and 1758 and said that any publication of Galileo's book would have to be hypothetical and also contain the condemnation of Galileo and heliocentrism were given in 1633, thus showing the Benedict believed he was bound by the 1633 tribunal and Pope Urban VIII approval of it). It would also implicitly ignore the imprimatur given to canon Guiseppe Settele in 1822 for his book on

¹ *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, Isacco Newtono, PP. Thomæ Le Seur & Francisci Jacquier, Genevæ, MDCCXXXIX [1739]. Original Latin: "DECLARATIO: Newtonus in hoc tertio Libro Telluris motæ hypothesim assumit. Autoris Propositiones aliter explicari non poterant, nisi eâdem quoquæ factâ hypothesi. Hinc alienam coacti sumus gerere personam. Cæterum latis a summis Pontificibus contra Telluris motum Decretis nos obsequi profiteamur." Above translation taken from Rev. William W. Roberts in *The Pontifical Decrees Against the Doctrine of the Earth's Movement*, p. 53.

heliocentrism, since imprimaturs do not set aside papal teachings, especially since, as we will see later, Settele's imprimatur was obtained by gross malfeasance and subterfuge.

Additionally, in 1850, 160 years ago, the Vatican commissioned Prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, Marino Marini, to write an updated apologetic work on the Galileo affair. The book's title was *Galileo e l'Inquisizione* ("Galileo and the Inquisition") and was published by the press of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome. Marini's purpose was to demonstrate that the Catholic Church had saved Europe from heresy and that the Inquisition's punishment of Galileo, which most assuredly did not include torture, was mild compared to what Protestant churches and state courts were known to do against rebels. Marini concludes that the Inquisition handled the trial of Galileo in "justice, wisdom and moderation," and that "we must affirm that perhaps there has never been a judicial action as just and as wise as this one." Marini paid special attention to the meetings that the Tuscan ambassador, Francesco Niccolini, had with Pope Urban VIII in 1632, in which the pope stressed the importance of silencing Galileo, and which papal resolve was reported to Duke Cosimo II, and from which Urban VIII implored Cosimo's help in curtailing Galileo's cosmological heresies.

Then, less than 70 years ago, in 1942, The Pontifical Academy of Science commissioned Pio Paschini, a priest and professor of ecclesiastical history in Rome, to write a biography of Galileo for the third centenary of his death. After completing the work three years later, Paschini submitted it to the Pontifical Academy of Science but it was rejected by both the Academy and the Holy Office, mainly because it was judged to be too favorable to Galileo. The manuscript sat on the shelves of the Academy for the next twenty-two years until it was given to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Paul VI. Paschini had since died, but it was decided that as long as the manuscript was revised it could be published, which it eventually was. One interesting statement from Paschini in his letter to Deputy Secretary Montini (who would later be elected Paul VI in 1963) reveals that his opponents at the Vatican were voicing with one accord the same historical facts that the president of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Agostino Gemelli, had stated in 1941, namely, "...although Galileo did not provide a decisive demonstration of Copernicanism, neither did Newton, Bradley, or Foucault."² Paschini concurred with: "They oppose me with the already superseded difficulty that Galileo had not advanced conclusive proof for his heliocentric system."³

Additionally, less than 50 years ago, the Vatican was still not willing to exonerate Galileo and heliocentrism. *Gaudium et spes*, often cited by Galileo and heliocentric proponents as evidence of a change in the Church's stance, in actuality made no reference to Galileo or heliocentrism, and the stated reason was that it did not want to admit any error on the Church's part. Monsignor Pietro Parente, co-president of the commission on *Gaudium et spes*, saw to it that any reference to Galileo was eliminated from the first schemas, stating: "[It is] not appropriate to speak of it in this document – so as not to ask the Church to say: I have been wrong."⁴ Whatever Parente's motivations, even if it were to save face for the Church that he personally thought had erred, is really of no consequence in the final

² The words of Finocchiaro in *Retrying Galileo*, p. 278.

³ *Retrying Galileo*, p. 322.

⁴ *Ibid.*

analysis, since, as those who understand Catholic protocol know, ecumenical councils are guided by the Holy Spirit. As such, it would have been erroneous to say that the Church made an error in her condemnation of Galileo and heliocentrism. If heliocentrism was correct, this was the perfect opportunity for the Holy Spirit, through the Church, to clear the air, as it were. The fact that it never happened shows once again that the efforts of the popes of the 17th century to eliminate the "formally heretical" view of heliocentrism from Catholic doctrine still reverberate today, although in much more subtle tones.

So we see quite easily that Mr. Palm's "300 years" has no evidence to support his contention. The only other possible evidence Mr. Palm could use is John Paul II's 1992 speech to the Pontifical Academy Science, but as we will see later, even that event did not officially exonerate Galileo or heliocentrism.

But for the sake of argument, let's take Mr. Palm's figure of "300 years" as true. That being the case, Mr. Palm wants to exonerate Catholicism in this 300 year period, but he seems to have no problem implying by consequence that the prior 1700 years of Catholic tradition was "duped," since, according to his view, they were all falsely led into thinking that Scripture taught geocentrism and equally wrong in making it a matter of faith. As such, in order to save face for his arbitrary "300 years," Mr. Palm puts egg on the face of 1700 years.

David Palm: It seems amazing to me that you would be willing to uphold the logical conclusion of your position, namely that all the Popes at least from Benedict XIV (1740) up through Benedict XVI (present), along with all the bishops in communion with them, have utterly failed to exercise the vigilance their office demands of them. According to your position they "did not attempt to sanctify this Apostolic Church with the teaching of Apostolic tradition, but by profane treachery permitted its purity to be polluted."

R. Sungenis: Although I hesitate to depart from the subject of geocentrism, this may be a good place to ask the fair question: is it possible for popes of the 20th century to be misled into thinking one way about a particular issue when they should have been thinking the exact opposite? Implied in this question, of course, is the proposition that, if there were any popes who were privately harboring heliocentric views in the 20th century (even though no pope ever came out and officially stated that either he or the Church believed in heliocentrism) they may have been misled into believing so. Yes, it's certainly possible.

Let's take the case of the Fatima consecrations as a good example, which can apply regardless of which of the two views of the consecrations we accept. The traditionalist view says that all seven popes from Pius XI to Benedict XVI have failed to do the required consecration (or do it properly), even though all were told to do so, directly or indirectly, by Our Lady in multiple visitations in the 20th century. The seven popes are: Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI. The conservative view holds that Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul I failed to do a proper consecration, which is why it is said that John Paul II was convinced he had to rectify their negligence and do a consecration in 1984. So even in this less stringent scenario, we have five popes out of seven who failed to do what heaven asked. Logically, the very fact that John Paul II did a consecration in 1984 in obedience to the Fatima revelations means he

believed that the previous popes of the 20th century failed to do what they were supposed to do. (The traditionalists believe John Paul II also failed to do a proper consecration since he never named the country of Russia that was stipulated by Our Lady). In any case, there was death and heartache all over the world because of the negligence of these popes, since heaven warned of unimaginable slaughter that would spread if the consecration was not done. In a word, they were all “duped” into thinking that they could ignore what heaven requested.

David Palm: Now there are very good reasons not to hold that the motion of the earth is a “formal heresy”. But the indefectibility of the Catholic Church is without a doubt a dogma of the faith. I see no way your position can be held in light of that dogma and thus, to be blunt, it seems to me that it is you who are flirting with heresy. GrannyH and others have demonstrated that it is relatively easy to harmonize the indefectibility of the Church with a mistake made by a theological commission, even one approved by the Pope. It is far easier to see that terrestrial motion is a matter of scientific belief and not a matter of faith and morals, to believe that a commission of theologians erred in their judgment of Galileo, than that the entire Church, hierarchy and faithful, have been plunged into this “formal heresy”.

R. Sungenis: Not only can we give the botched Fatima consecrations as evidence of the prelature being misled on a particular topic, we can also use the example of a very popular but erroneous doctrine taught today in many Catholic institutions across the world, from the Pontifical Biblical Commission to the University of Notre Dame to the *Good News Bible for Catholics*. It is the heretical belief that Scripture is inerrant only when it speaks on matters of salvation. Our Catholic tradition never taught such a thing, yet the majority of Catholic theologians in the 20th century hold to it. Why? Because a group of liberal Catholics got the bright idea that they could modify Church teaching by claiming that *Dei Verbum* 11 at Vatican II allowed them to do so. They made their modification on the flimsiest of evidence. *Dei Verbum* 11 states:

“Since , therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.”

Liberals, who were predisposed to change the Church’s traditional doctrine of unrestricted inerrancy, seized on the phrase “for the sake of our salvation” and convinced everyone that this phrase meant Scripture is only inerrant when it speaks about salvation, and they further stipulated that since the history portions of the Bible are not about salvation, therefore, they are not inerrant. Instead of interpreting *Dei Verbum* 11 in line with the previous tradition so that we could say God wrote all of Scripture “without error” so that we could have a truthful testimony “of our salvation,” these liberals turned the passage upside down and with it the whole tradition of the Catholic Church. As a matter of fact, I would say that today just as many people in the Catholic Church believe the heretical doctrine that Scripture contains errors as do those who believe in heliocentrism.

This phenomenon is no coincidence. Most Catholics today believe that since the 16th - 18th century popes were mistaken in condemning heliocentrism, this leads inevitably to the

conclusion that “the Bible is only inerrant in matters of salvation.” Since Scripture, read literally, says the sun moves and the earth does not, liberal Catholics who accepted popular science’s teaching on heliocentrism logically concluded that Scripture could not be factually true when it spoke on cosmology, which then led to the idea that Scripture is only inerrant when it deals directly with salvation, not science or history. They then used this manufactured interpretation of *Dei Verbum* 11 (taking it totally out of its context and ignoring the 1900 years of prior traditional teaching), to support both heliocentrism and biblical errancy. In other words, the whole push for restricted Scriptural inerrancy being taught today in most circles of Catholicism is due directly to the same rejection of the medieval Church’s decisions against Galileo and heliocentrism! Even more interesting is the fact that the main argument Cardinal Bellarmine gave for his and the pope’s rejection of heliocentrism is that a denial of geocentrism would necessarily mean that Scripture is errant in its historical data. As we can see, the issue of biblical inerrancy and cosmology are two sides of the same coin.

The main point being made here is that it is possible for a significant portion of Catholics to be led astray into thinking that it has a better belief system than the Church of Tradition. The real question Mr. Palm should be asking himself is: how is it possible for the Church of almost two millennia to believe and teach geocentrism, and only a small part of the unofficial Church for the last century or so to finally “get it right” and believe in heliocentrism? Mr. Palm should realize that he is putting the cart before the horse, since Catholic Tradition is the pace setter for what we believe in Catholicism, not liberal theologians at the tail end of the Church’s history who think they have a better idea.

David Palm: It would seem that those who hold this extreme position with respect to geocentrism are like a monkey grasping a pebble in a precious Ming vase, unwilling to give up his prize and willing instead to smash the jar in order to have it. Or perhaps more like a man who would burn down a whole building, with all the people in it, just to kill a rat.

R. Sungenis: Unfortunately for Mr. Palm, killing the rat at all costs is precisely the image he has created for himself when he insists on destroying almost two millennia of Tradition to save face for modern Catholics who have accepted heliocentrism. As I state in *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, the moment we declare that former magisteriums and their abiding tradition were wrong in their teaching of a particular doctrine, we automatically open up the possibility that the present magisterium could be wrong as well (especially about its claim that the former magisteriums were wrong). What is good for the goose is good for the gander. And in that very process, we destroy the whole Church, since now anyone can be wrong. Take your pick. In the end, Mr. Palm’s logic is futile. He doesn’t help the Church, he destroys it. If doctrine changes in the Church after almost two millennia of consistent and abiding belief it’s because of spiritual malaise or apostasy, not because of a mistaken Tradition. If Mr. Palm can believe that all the Fathers, all the medievals, hundreds of cardinals, at least half a dozen popes, and the Tridentine catechism, could all be wrong on one of the most vociferous and prolonged issues in the Church, namely, the belief in geocentrism and the condemnation of heliocentrism, then he has done more to destroy the Church than he thinks he has done to save face for it.

David Palm: I'd prefer simply to note again that the actions of the Church do make it clear that a rejection of geocentrism is not "formal heresy".

R. Sungenis: Certainly, but that's about as good as saying that the Church's actions make it clear today that a rejection of the Catholic religion is not a formal heresy. Most people today reject Catholicism out of ignorance or cultural barriers. Will God judge them for that rejection? It all depends on whether they knew what they were doing and did it deliberately. The point remains that at one point in the past the rejection of Catholicism was declared a formal heresy (Boniface VIII and Eugene IV). And this is even reiterated in lighter tones today, for *Dignitatis Humanae* ¶1 holds that Catholicism is the only true religion, and thus each man has a moral obligation to be a member of the Catholic Church, but the Church has also taught that a man will not be condemned if he fails to join out of ignorance. In the same way, each man has a moral obligation to heed the Church's teaching on geocentrism, especially since the Church has never officially rescinded that teaching, but he won't be condemned if he rejects heliocentrism out of ignorance or scientific cultural barriers.

David Palm: And I would point out again that you did not harmonize your view with the dogma of the indefectibility of the Church.

R. Sungenis: First, indefectibility would only be relevant if Mr. Palm could prove that heliocentrism is a fact, since only then could Paul V and Urban VIII have "defected" from the truth. But has Mr. Palm proven heliocentrism? No, he merely accepts it as true because that is what he has been taught since childhood, and because he trusts a large portion of today's scientists to give him the truth. My guess is that Mr. Palm has never really studied what goes on in scientific academia.

Second, Mr. Palm is putting the wrong shoe on the wrong foot. If anyone has a claim to "indefectibility" it is the almost two millennia of Catholicism that taught geocentrism prior to the waning of that belief in the 20th century. But Mr. Palm, so influenced is he by a devotion to popular cosmology, thinks that because the majority of today's Catholics believe in heliocentrism, this constitutes the only body of believers who are able to defend the doctrine of "indefectibility" and thus they must conclude that the entire history of the Church's cosmology for the previous 1900+ years was erroneous. Instead of taking the position that to remain indefectible the Catholics of the 20th century should abide by what the Church explicitly taught on geocentrism for the previous 1900+ years, ironically Mr. Palm is suggesting that we reject the official decisions of the previous prelature (ergo, make them defectible) so that we can keep the Church at large indefectible! And even if Mr. Palm somehow managed to convince us that there was just a minor glitch of defectibility caused by the previous prelates who condemned heliocentrism, what is he now going to anchor his indefectibility to, since the whole Church prior to these previous popes also believed in geocentrism?(See *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, pages 273-285).

[Cassini] I thought the Church was protected by the Holy Ghost in such matters as papal decrees.

David Palm: This, I believe, is the error which has caused so much difficulty. The Church has never taught that every papal decree is protected by the Holy Ghost. The Catholic Encyclopedia summarizes well the acts of the Congregation of the Index against Galileo:

Can it be said that either Paul V or Urban VIII so committed himself to the doctrine of geocentrism as to impose it upon the Church as an article of faith, and so to teach as pope what is now acknowledged to be untrue? That both these pontiffs were convinced anti-Copernicans cannot be doubted, nor that they believed the Copernican system to be unscriptural and desired its suppression. The question is, however, whether either of them condemned the doctrine *ex cathedra*. This, it is clear, they never did. As to the decree of 1616, we have seen that it was issued by the Congregation of the Index, which can raise no difficulty in regard of infallibility, this tribunal being absolutely incompetent to make a dogmatic decree. Nor is the case altered by the fact that the pope approved the Congregation's decision in *forma communi*, that is to say, to the extent needful for the purpose intended, namely to prohibit the circulation of writings which were judged harmful. The pope and his assessors may have been wrong in such a judgment, but this does not alter the character of the pronouncement, or convert it into a decree *ex cathedra*.

R. Sungenis: This is the usual excuse used by modernists who have accepted heliocentrism as a fact of science, but it won't work. Not only is it true (as I stated above) that "infallibility" could only be used if these modernists have proof that heliocentrism is true and geocentrism is wrong, most of the Church's doctrines have never been issued by an infallible papal decree. Most have been issued and sustained under the Ordinary Magisterium. As I said to David Amrstrong:

If that is the case, let's ask Mr. Armstrong if he believes and practices things in his Catholic faith that have never been taught infallibly by the Church? If he knows anything about his Catholic faith he would have to give a hearty affirmative to that question. In fact, most of what Catholics believe and practice today has never been stated infallibly. Most of our faith and morals comes from the Ordinary Magisterium, and the Ordinary Magisterium is rarely singled out as infallible *ex cathedra* dogma. There have been only two definite instances of the exercise of papal infallibility. The first was in 1870 when the doctrine of papal infallibility was decreed as a doctrine in itself, and the second was in 1950 when the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was decreed. Every other teaching by the popes, past and present, has never been officially defined as an *ex cathedra*, infallible and irreformable teaching. Of course, the Church could go back and analyze various teachings of past popes in order to decide whether one or the other was teaching infallibly on a given issue, but she has never done so, and thus there is no list of infallible papal teachings. Suffice it to say, Mr. Armstrong has no way of knowing whether the decrees against Galileo were not infallible, since the Church has never officially stated they were not infallible. He can only go by his own judgment which, of course, is fallible.

We must also realize that there have been only a few questionable instances in which a pope gave a teaching from the Ordinary magisterium that was later officially judged as false. The case of Pope Honorius I was one, but even then, there is debate whether his letter to Sergius was actually a teaching from the Ordinary magisterium as opposed to being his own private opinion in a private letter. In any case, in order for the decisions from the Ordinary magisterium of Paul V and Urban VIII against heliocentrism to be judged

erroneous, an Ordinary or Extraordinary magisterium of a later time would need to officially state that Paul V and Urban VIII were in error, but that has never happened.

David Palm: As to the second trial in 1633, this was concerned not so much with the doctrine as with the person of Galileo, and his manifest breach of contract in not abstaining from the active propaganda of Copernican doctrines.

R. Sungenis: It was precisely the other way around. The first thing the 1633 tribunal did was make heliocentrism a formal heresy by these two decrees:

“The proposition that the sun is the center of the world and does not move from its place is absurd and false philosophically and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to the Holy Scripture.”

“The proposition that the Earth is not the center of the world and immovable but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is equally absurd and false philosophically and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith.”⁵

The second thing it did was state that Galileo was “vehemently suspect of heresy.” The “heresy,” of course, was that the sun moved around the earth. Galileo was only said to be “vehemently suspect” instead of “guilty of heresy” because the tribunal wasn’t certain whether Galileo really believed it in his heart.

David Palm: The sentence, passed upon him in consequence, clearly implied a condemnation of Copernicanism, but it made no formal decree on the subject, and did not receive the pope's signature. (Galileo; my emphasis)

R. Sungenis: “implied a condemnation of Copernicanism”? The Church doesn’t imply condemnations. She says them directly, as we can easily see from the two condemned propositions above from 1633. Mr. Palm also claims that the Church made “no formal decree on the subject.” But not only did the pope approve the formal decree of the 1633 tribunal, he sent the decree all over Europe. As one author puts it:

“Pope Urban had no intention of concealing Galileo’s abjuration and sentence. Instead, he ordered copies of both to be sent to all inquisitors and papal nuncios that they might notify all their clergy and especially all the professors of mathematics and philosophy within their districts...”⁶

Another says:

In the summer of 1633 all papal nuncios in Europe and all local inquisitors in Italy received from the Roman Inquisition copies of the sentence against Galileo and his abjuration, together with orders to publicize them. Such publicity was unprecedented in the annals of the Inquisition and never repeated. As a result, many manuscript copies of Galileo’s sentence and abjuration have survived in European archives. By contrast, no copies of the full text of the Inquisition’s

⁵ *Galileo E L’Inquisizione*, Antonio Favaro, 1907, p. 143.

⁶ Dorothy Stimson *The Gradual Acceptance of the Copernican Theory of the Universe*, 1917, pp. 67-68.

sentence against Giordano Bruno survive, even though his crime...and his penalty...were much more serious....From the replies of the nuncios and inquisitors, there is concrete evidence that the sentence circulated in the manner intended. Letters of reply have survived from the nuncios to Naples, Florence, Venice, Vienna, Paris, Brussels, Cologne, Vilnius, Lucerne and Madrid, and from the inquisitors of Florence, Padua, Bologna, Vicenza, Venice, Ceneda, Brescia, Ferrara, Aquileia, Perugia, Como, Pavia, Siena, Faenza, Milan Crema, Cremona, Reggio Emilia, Mantua, Gubbio, Pisa, Novara, Piacenza, and Tortona. The most common reply was a brief acknowledgment of receipt and a promise that the orders would be carried out. However, in this case the standard response was not sufficient for the Inquisition. It expected to be notified that the orders had in fact been carried out. Those who did not send such a follow-up letter were soon reprimanded and had to write back to Cardinal Barberini to explain the oversight of the delay....The quickest promulgation occurred in university circles.⁷

As for Mr. Palm's claim that the decree had to have the pope's signature, where does he have proof of that stipulation? In actuality, there is a long-standing myth that says a pope's decree is not valid unless he signs it, but I don't know of any place the Church has officially taught that position.

David Palm: Another article spells out the distinction in authority between decrees from Roman Congregations approved in *forma communi* and in *forma specifica*:

As regards the doctrinal value of Decrees of the Holy Office it should be observed that canonists distinguish two kinds of approbation of an act of an inferior by a superior: first, approbation in common form (*in forma communi*), as it is sometimes called, which does not take from the act its nature and quality as an act of the inferior. Thus, for example, the decrees of a provincial council, although approved by the Congregation of the Council or by the Holy See, always remain provincial conciliar decrees. Secondly, specific approbation (*in forma specifica*), which takes from the act approved its character of an act of the inferior and makes it the act of a superior who approves it. This approbation is understood when, for example, the pope approves a Decree of the Holy Office *ex certa scientia, motu proprio, or plenitudine suae potestatis.*" (The Roman Congregations.)

R. Sungenis: The author of this particular article in the Catholic Encyclopedia admits that the distinction between these two venues has been formulated by "canonists," not the Holy See. Until it is officially endorsed by the Church, the fact remains that the Catholic Church, barring an infallible *ex cathedra* decree from the pope (which wasn't officially available in either 1616 or 1633 since the doctrine of papal infallibility had not yet been defined until 1870), put the full weight of her Tradition, the Ordinary magisterium, and her rights of due process in a canonical tribunal, as support for the condemnation of heliocentrism, and she has never rescinded any of it. Mr. Palm cannot just whisk away these magisterial decrees simply because few people pay attention to them anymore or because he can raise doubt about their authority because of the form they were issued. What Mr. Palm misses is that

⁷ *Retrying Galileo*, pp. 26-28.

these popes were faithfully continuing the Tradition that was passed down to them, and they could do no other. To go against the constant and abiding Tradition of the Church would have required absolute irrefutable scientific evidence that heliocentrism was true and geocentrism was false. But no such evidence existed in the 1600s and it still doesn't exist today, as Cardinal Bellarmine so wisely predicted to Galileo. If Mr. Palm thinks otherwise, I will be happy to entertain any irrefutable scientific proof he has found for heliocentrism.

David Palm: Thus the 1616 decree from the Congregation of the Index may not be cited as creating a dogma binding on the universal Church for this was not only beyond the competence of the Congregation but also did not receive the papal confirmation that would be necessary.

R. Sungenis: "Did not receive the papal confirmation that would be necessary"? Mr. Palm is engaging in historiography, not history. Here are the historical facts about Paul V and the 1616 decree:

- Paul V assembled eleven cardinals who condemned the Copernicanism of Fr. Foscarini in 1615 as being "formally heretical."
- Paul V was heavily involved in 1616 creating the canonical injunction forbidding Galileo to speak or write about Copernicanism.
- On February 25, 1616, Pope Paul V ordered Cardinal Bellarmine to summon Galileo and, "in the presence of a notary and witnesses lest he should prove recusant, warn him to abandon the condemned opinion and in every way abstain from teaching, defending or discussing it."
- This was followed by a formal decree issued on March 5, 1616. According to the wording of the decree, Paul V's and Bellarmine's rejection of Copernicanism was not considered some private affair between them and Galileo. The decree stated very clearly that its information was to be "published everywhere" and that its specific audience was the "whole of Christendom." Note these words:

"Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the most Illustrious Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church specially delegated by Our Most Holy Lord Pope Paul V and the Holy Apostolic See to publish everywhere throughout the whole of Christendom." (Decretum Sacrae Congregationis Illustrissimorum S.R.E.Cardinalium, a S.D.N. Paulo Papa V Sanctaque Sede Apostolica ad Indicem librorum)

That Paul V and Cardinal Bellarmine were of one mind on Galileo and heliocentrism was revealed no better than in a letter written by the Tuscan ambassador in Rome, Piero Guicciardini, to Grand Duke Cosimo II, dated March 4, 1616. According to Finocchiaro's assesment, "Guicciardini appeared to have some inside information about the proceedings [against Galileo], since his position as ambassador gave him direct access to the pope himself as well as to cardinals and other well-connected diplomats." After verifying Guicciardini's factual knowledge of the pope's mind, Finocchiaro concludes: "The letter

observes that Pope Paul V and Cardinal Bellarmine agreed that Copernicanism was erroneous and heretical. This was and remains precious information.”⁸

The significance of the pope’s part in the proceedings and the strictness of the admonition given to Galileo are made even more relevant in a second document Bellarmine wrote, a document that was rediscovered sixteen years later under the reign of Pope Urban VIII. This particular document mentions the “Commissary of the Holy Office,” Michelangelo Segizzi, “in the name of his Holiness the Pope,” as giving Galileo a legal “injunction” to refrain from asserting that the Earth moves. It reads:

Friday, the 26th of the same month [February 1616], at the palace, the usual residence of the said Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, and in the chambers of His Most Illustrious Lordship, and in the presence of the Reverend Father Michelangelo Segizzi of Lodi, O. P., Commissary of the Holy Office, having summoned the above-mentioned Galileo before himself, the same Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal warned Galileo that the above-mentioned opinion was erroneous and that he should abandon it; and thereafter, indeed immediately, before me and witnesses, the Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal himself being also present still, the aforesaid Father Commissary, in the name of His Holiness the Pope and the whole Congregation of the Holy Office, ordered and enjoined the said Galileo, who was himself still present, to abandon completely the above-mentioned opinion that the sun stands still at the center of the world and the earth moves, and henceforth not to hold, teach, or defend it in any way whatever, either orally or in writing; otherwise the Holy Office would start proceedings against him. The same Galileo acquiesced in the injunction and promised to obey.⁹

David Palm: It is for the Church to decide what is and is not taught infallibly by the universal and ordinary Magisterium. And I think it is very clear that the Church does not hold geocentrism to be infallibly taught by her own Magisterium. Here is an explicit indication of that from an encyclical from Benedict XV:

If the progress of science showed later that that conception of the world rested on no sure foundation, that the spheres imagined by our ancestors did not exist, that nature, the number and course of the planets and stars, are not indeed as they were then thought to be, still the fundamental principle remained that the universe, whatever be the order that sustains it in its parts, is the work of the creating and preserving sign of Omnipotent God, who moves and governs all, and whose glory risplende in una parte piu e meno altrove; and though this earth on which we live may not be the centre of the universe as at one time was thought, it was the scene of the original happiness of our first ancestors, witness of their unhappy fall, as too

⁸ As stated in *Retrying Galileo*, pp. 158-159. The March 4, 1616 letter from Guicciardini to Cosimo II was not published until 1773 by Angelo Fabroni in *Lettere inedite di uomini illustri*, Florence, two volumes, 1773-1775.

⁹ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, pp. 321-322, translated by Annibale Fantoli in *The Church and Galileo*, pp. 119-120; the same version in Maurice Finocchiaro’s *The Galileo Affair*, p. 147. An *injunction* is a formal order from a court of law or canonical court ordering a person or group to do or not do something.

of the Redemption of mankind through the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. (In Praeclara Summorum 4; my emphasis)

This encyclical proves, at the very least, that Catholics are perfectly free to reject geocentrism without any fear of being tainted by a “formal heresy”.

R. Sungenis: “Proves”? Hardly. I find it surprising how Mr. Palm puts such weight on the very few words of Benedict XV yet minimizes the volumes written by Paul V, Urban VIII, Alexander VII, or even of Pius V’s Tridentine Catechism upholding geocentrism. Apparently, just a glimmer of hope in one small phrase from Benedict XV leads Mr. Palm to make his case that no one should be pursuing the geocentric doctrine, no matter what definitive statement the Tradition has given us. Although Mr. Palm is quick to say that Paul V and Urban VIII were in error to condemn heliocentrism, the thought never crosses his mind that Benedict XV could be misled in even suggesting otherwise. Why? Because Mr. Palm has placed his faith in popular science, even though he gives the impression that he bases his decision on the *sensus fidei* of the Church. No wonder the Protestants laugh at us. The whole apologetic on the Galileo issue for the last hundred years is not only laughable, it is pathetic, and Mr. Palm is now teaching a whole new generation to continue this illogical approach.

The truth is, little if anything can be extracted from Benedict XV’s encyclical for Mr. Palm. First, the encyclical is not purporting to be a treatise on either cosmology or cosmogony, and it is the understanding of the Church that no dogmatic teachings are to be gleaned from an ecclesiastical document unless said document specifically addresses and defines the issue at hand. In this case, the encyclical is merely an exoneration of Dante and his works, not a teaching on whether the Earth is the center of the universe. Popes may often gather popular sentiments or ideas from the surrounding culture in order to enhance the basic message they wish to teach, but they have no dogmatic standing whatsoever.

Second, the pope himself is aware of the conditional and speculative nature of his reference to cosmology since he carefully couches his appeal with the subjective word “may” in the sentence: “and though this earth on which we live may not be the center of the universe as at one time was thought.” To say that the Earth may not be the center is as equally indicative as saying that it may be the center. In actuality, the fact that the pope did not confirm the scientific consensus, which by this time (1921) firmly believed in heliocentrism, means that he was not allowing himself to be pressured by the scientific community into adopting a non-central Earth as an indisputable fact. Although the pope may have known about the decrees of 1616 through 1664, he was probably under the impression, as many are today, that those decrees had been relaxed somewhat in 1822 and 1835 (yet it is safe to say that he was not aware of the subterfuge behind those two latter events that we have documented above). Since he put no particular study into the question, it is only reasonable that he might have a hesitancy regarding the Church’s official position on the matter. This is to be expected since it is common for most Catholics to have inadvertently but speciously relied on the 1822 and 1835 decisions to exonerate heliocentrism to a status of scientific fact that it should not have.

Technically speaking, discussions regarding whether the Earth is the center of the universe must take into account the difference between the geometric center and the center of mass. In the Aristotelian model from which Dante is working, little was known about the center of mass. Barring Ptolemy's use of the equant and deferent, which, giving the illusion of an off-center pivot point which, in turn, affected the speed of the revolving body in relation to the Earth, the Aristotelian universe comprehended the Earth as it would the center of a circle. Modern physics understands the center in two ways, however: one as the center of a circle, the other as the central point of all the mass in the system. The center of mass is what causes a tennis racket to wobble if it is thrown into the air. The reason for this erratic gyration is that the center of mass for the tennis racket is not in the geometric center but more toward the heavier end of the racket. All the mass of the racket will rotate proportionately around the center of mass, not the geometric center, regardless of how the racket is shaped. In the same way, the Earth may be the center of mass of the universe but not the geometric center. Hence Benedict XV's reference to the Earth perhaps not being "the center of the universe" could possibly be true from the geometric perspective employed by Aristotle, Ptolemy, and even Tycho Brahe, but not true from a center of mass perspective. If that is the case, Benedict's statement makes perfect sense, even in its conditional form.

David Palm: I have always been inspired by the humility of Bishop Karl Joseph von Hefele who opposed the definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council. He was criticized afterwards for his submission to the definition:

It is true that I stood on the side of the opposition. But thereby I made use of my right; for the question was proposed for discussion. However, once the decision had been made, to tarry in the opposition party would have been inconsistent with my whole past. I would have set my own infallibility in the place of the infallibility of the Church (cited in the Karl Joseph von Hefele; my emphasis)

I would urge you, Cassini, to consider whether your present position really can be harmonized with the dogma of the Church's infallibility and be humble enough to relinquish your position in light of her teaching. The long and short of it is that this is an area in which the Church has given us freedom and we should not unnecessarily chain ourselves, especially if in doing so it would destroy (were that possible) the very Church that we love.

R. Sungenis: No, in reality the modern Church has given no specific and official "freedom" to believe in heliocentrism. Whatever "freedom" exists it has come from under the table, as it were. The 1633 canonical tribunal against heliocentrism has not been overturned, and thus the decree relegating heliocentrism to a "formal heresy" still abides legally. What has happened is that the modern Church has conveniently side-stepped these decrees by allowing an implicit but unproven position to take hold, namely, that science has shown the early and medieval Church was wrong, and thus we must capitulate to science in silence to save ourselves from public embarrassment. But the truth is, the modern Church has been bamboozled by popular science into believing that heliocentrism has been proven. In reality, heliocentrism has, in all practicality, been disproven by modern science. All one need do is read the scientific literature in my book to find out that the cherished "Copernican principle" has been effectively falsified by the evidence from the isotropy of the CMB, GRB's, Quasars,

and just about any other form of matter or energy in the universe. And it's not me making the conclusion, for the admission of earth's centrality come from the top astrophysicists, astronomers and physicists in the world today (e.g., Hawking, Hubble, just to name a few). The real truth is, as I stated earlier, was what the president of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Agostino Gemelli, saw in 1941, and which Mr. Palm should see today, if he would only study the science: "...although Galileo did not provide a decisive demonstration of Copernicanism, neither did Newton, Bradley, or Foucault."¹⁰

[Cassini] One also learned as a Catholic that no papal decree can be overturned without an act of abrogation, an explanation as to why the decree is being officially abandoned.

David Palm: On a little more reflection, it seems to me that the answer to this is to be found in the distinction laid out by the canonists on papal approval of various acts of Congregations in *forma communi* and in *forma specifica*. The 1616 decree was approved by the Pope in *forma communi* and hence, if my own understanding is correct, the character of this decree remains that of a duly approved act of the Congregation itself, i.e. it was not a papal act *per se*. Hence such acts of Roman Congregations do not require an explicit papal abrogation.

R. Sungenis: First, the categories created by "canonists" are not necessarily what the Church has approved or will use, especially in cases like this where, unless it can be proven that Paul V and Urban VIII made a doctrinal mistake, it is superfluous to dissect the condemnation of heliocentrism into "communi" or "specifica" forms. We must remember here that Mr. Palm's apologetic is based on an unproven premise, namely, that science has proven heliocentrism to be true, and thus we are forced to find some reason why our popes (who are supposed to be led by the Holy Spirit when formulating doctrine) could be led into an error and are equally obliged to find some category in which we can safely place their error without upsetting the indefectibility of the Church at large. As such, Mr. Palm's apologetic seeks to make the Holy Spirit present in "specifica" but not "communi" forms, but what he should be showing us is the scientific proofs he has amassed that show the popes were wrong about heliocentrism.

Second, where do even the "canonists" say that a decree by the Sacred Congregation need not be abrogated by a pope in order to be abrogated? Even if the pope were not required, then someone else of ecclesiastical authority is required, since decisions by canonical decrees and tribunals don't go away by themselves. In fact, when Joseph Lalande went to Rome in 1765 to have Galileo's name taken off the Index by citing the fact that the 1758 Index had withdrawn the general ban on books about Copernican cosmology if corrected, the head of the Congregation of the Index promptly told Lalande that since the prohibition against Galileo and his *Dialogo* was precipitated by a *canonical trial*, the sentence pronounced against Galileo would first have to be revoked in order for any lifting of the prohibition to occur.¹¹

¹⁰ The words of Finocchiaro in *Retrying Galileo*, p. 278.

¹¹ As stated verbatim by Finocchiaro in *Retrying Galileo*, p. 154, with citation to Lalande's 1764 work, *Astronomie*, second edition, vol. 1, pp. 536-41, ¶¶ 1103-4. Also cited in Karl Gebler's *Galileo and the*

Third, where is it stated that the approval by the popes (Paul V and Urban VIII to the conclusions of their Sacred Congregations and the Inquisition) was not done? I have shown above how intricately involved Paul V was in the whole process, from start to finish. Urban VIII, whom I have not detailed yet, was even more involved.

David Palm: This would also explain something you mentioned in another thread now unfortunately deleted, namely, that this decree does not show up in Denzinger. Was this part of the great conspiracy, as you said there, or does it admit of a less insidious explanation?

R. Sungenis: It seems that whatever he can grasp, Mr. Palm will take, no matter how innocuous it is. On the one hand, he ignores things like Pius V's Tridentine Catechism that teaches geocentrism and instead opts for a 1854 Catholic history (which itself admits that it was selective in its choosing from the "sources of Catholic dogma") as his proof that geocentrism was insignificant (yet he doesn't give the exact reason; rather, it seems he just wants to place doubt in Cassini's head). Well, by the same token, Denzinger chooses Honorius' letter to Sergius (¶251: "Hence, we confess one will of our Lord Jesus Christ"). Are we to conclude Denzinger wanted to promote heresy? The point is, not everything in Denzinger's book is dogmatic, and not everything left out is non-dogmatic. Mr. Palm is just giving an argument from silence. Denzinger's book hardly contains half of what the popes wrote on various subjects.

David Palm: Again, don't have my Denzinger handy, but I suspect that there are many, many decrees of various Roman Congregations approved in forma communi that do not appear in Denzinger precisely because, lacking the fullest papal approbation, they do not lend to the theological topic at hand the sort of ecclesiastical authority that Denzinger normally documents. The acts of Roman Congregations approved in forma communi do not in themselves represent binding theological definitions. Decrees authorized in forma specifica would do so and I suspect that one will find those assiduously documented by Denzinger.

R. Sungenis: Alexander VII's *Speculatores Domus Israel* attached to the Index of Forbidden Books condemning the works of Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler is a forma specifica venue, but Denzinger doesn't have it. In fact, there are other such forma specific venues you will not find in Denzinger. In any case, what does the stress on "forma specifica" do for Mr. Palm's previous argument that we only need be concerned about ex cathedra decrees of the pope when it concerns whether we should believe in geocentrism? I don't know of any list of "forma specifica" decrees that have been officially declared as ex cathedra infallible statements (except perhaps in 1854 and 1950), so perhaps we can ignore them, too, as we supposedly can ignore a "forma communi" decree. This argument is going nowhere for Mr. Palm, especially since it is based on the unproven premise that heliocentrism has been scientifically proven.

David Palm: And as for the 1633 decree, it was about what was and was not to be on the Index...

Roman Curia, 1879, p. 313, and Walter Brandmüller's *Galilei e la Chiesa, ossia il diritto di errare*, 1992, p. 162.

R. Sungenis: No, the 1633 trial had little to do with the Index. Foscarini's book promoting heliocentrism as a thesis was already condemned in 1615 and put on the Index. Galileo did not have a book yet to be placed on the Index, since he did not yet treat heliocentrism as a thesis in a book. What was at issue in 1616 for Galileo was his Letter to Christina and Letter to Castelli in which he treated heliocentrism as a thesis. The issue in 1633 was his book *The Dialogue Between the Two Great World Systems* for which he surreptitiously obtained an imprimatur in 1631, having disobeyed the injunction he received in 1616 not to even speak about heliocentrism, much less defend it in writing. As I stated earlier, the paramount issue in 1633 was the declaration of the Holy Office, with the approval of Urban VIII who attended the trial and ordered it to be published to the world, that heliocentrism was reiterated from the 1616 consensus to be a "formal heresy."

David Palm: ...which we all agree was a disciplinary matter...

R. Sungenis: No, since disciplinary matters don't declare and define erroneous beliefs to be "formally heretical." After heliocentrism was reiterated from the 1616 investigation to be a formal heresy, this conclusion was upheld in 1633 and Galileo was thus branded as one who was "vehemently suspect" of holding that very heresy. That decreeing a doctrine heretical is not a "disciplinary" action was proven once again when Pope Urban sent out the tribunal's decree to all the papal nuncios and universities of Europe demanding their allegiance. They were told to capitulate to the Pope not as a matter of discipline but as a matter of doctrine because heliocentrism had been condemned as a formal heresy by the highest office in the Church, with the approval of the reigning pope.

David Palm: ...a disciplinary matter that could be and was changed by later Popes, on any number of issues besides geocentrism.

R. Sungenis: Not so. No pope has ever rescinded the decrees stemming from the canonical trial of Galileo in 1633 where heliocentrism was condemned as a formal heresy. The only thing close to an official change was when administrators under Gregory XVI were led astray into taking Galileo off the Index in 1835 by a report that stellar parallax had been discovered (stellar parallax was thought then to be a proof for heliocentrism). In the end, it was revealed to be a false report of stellar parallax. As astrophysicist Owen Gingerich reviews the matter:

While it soon became apparent that Hooke's handful of observations had not established a convincing annual parallax, further attempts led James Bradley to the discovery of stellar aberration, published in 1728. This phenomenon, easily explained in terms of a moving earth, did not have the historical cachet that the quest for parallax had. Hence, ironically, what persuaded the Catholic Church to take Copernicus' book off the Index was an ultimately false claim for the discovery of an annual stellar parallax. The new edition of the Index appearing in 1835 finally

omitted *De Revolutionibus*, three years before a convincing stellar parallax observation was at last published.¹²

Even if the report on stellar parallax had shown itself to be true, we now know today that stellar parallax does not prove heliocentrism, since it can be shown equally well from the geocentric system. Hence, the only official change Mr. Palm could possibly point to is one in which the papal congregation (in 1835) was deceived into thinking that heliocentrism had been vindicated.

I have also discovered a more likely reason Gregory XVI was erroneously led to take Galileo off the Index. The Galileo historians Brandmüller and Greipl in their book *Copernico Galilei E La Chiesa* (1992) show that the same person who deceived Pius VII into overriding Cardinal Anfossi's refusal in 1822 to give Settele an imprimatur for his book on heliocentrism, namely, Maurizio Olivieri, is the same person who persuaded Gregory XVI to take Galileo off the Index. Prior to him assuming the name "Gregory XVI," he was known as Bartolomeo Capillari. Capillari had served in the same group as Olivieri in securing an imprimatur for Settele. So what did Olivieri use to override Cardinal Anfossi? Nothing more than a lie. He told Pius VII that the 1616 and 1633 Holy Office did not actually condemn Copernicanism, but only a Copernicanism without the elliptical orbits of Kepler! But the 1616 and 1633 magisterium said no such thing. They stated quite clearly that any model of cosmology that made the sun stand still and the earth move was "formally heretical" and "contrary to Scripture." It didn't matter whether the model contained elliptical orbits or not. In fact, Kepler's book on elliptical orbits was put on the Index in 1664 by Alexander VII, a fact that Olivieri obviously ignored.

David Palm: Summary: I have just three main points and then what I can contribute to this discussion is pretty much tapped out. I want to clarify exactly what I'm saying here. I am arguing that no explanation of the movement of the heavenly bodies is *de fide* in the Catholic Church.

R. Sungenis: That conclusion, of course, depends on the context one is using the term "de fide." If "de fide" to Mr. Palm means an *ex cathedra* infallible and irreformable teaching of the papal office, he is correct. If "de fide" means the constant and abiding faith and doctrine of the Church's tradition that the popes upheld, he is incorrect. First, Pius V understood that geocentrism (and its implications for the inerrancy of Scripture) was a matter of faith, since he taught geocentrism in the Tridentine catechism, which the Preface says was written specifically "to clarify Catholic doctrine." Paul V and St. Bellarmine condemned Galileo on the basis that, since Scripture said the sun moved and the earth did not, any contradiction of that would be a contradiction of the inspired and inerrant word of God, and therefore a matter of faith. Bellarmine told Foscarini that to deny the inspired truth of the earth's non-movement would be the same as denying that Jacob was the grandson of Abraham. Urban VIII said the same. In his letter to the Duke of Tuscany he states that Galileo was creating a "false religion" and "destroying the faith of the Catholic Church." All of this is documented in my book, *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, Volume 2. Mr. Palm's only defense

¹² Owen Gingerich, at St. Edmunds Public Lecture series, titled: "Empirical Proof and/or Persuasion," March 13, 2003, taken from Pierre-Noël Mayaud, S.J., *La Condamnation des Livres Coperniciens et sa Révocation: à la lumière de documents inédits des Congregation de l'Index et de l'Inquisition*.

against this is to say that these popes and cardinals were wrong, and somehow the Holy Spirit took advantage of the fact that they didn't teach their position in what "canonists" have approved as the proper venue.

David Palm: I am arguing that the Church gives us freedom to explore these things and come to conclusions based on the best scientific evidence.

R. Sungenis: Yes, you can explore science all you want, but the Church has always held that unless science has proof of its theories, then we are to adhere to the Traditional doctrines of the Church. The truth is, modern science has no proof for heliocentrism, and, in fact, they have amassed voluminous evidence that we are in the center of the universe and that the earth does not move. Mr. Palm needs to read my book in order to find out these things. They are quite astounding.

David Palm: I am asserting that the Catholic Church does not propose any one conclusion as a matter of faith, the denial of which is formal heresy.

R. Sungenis: That depends on what period of history one is referring to. The Catholic Church of the late 16th - 18th centuries taught geocentrism as a matter of faith, for that is the only reason she could call heliocentrism a "formal heresy." Heresy deals only with matters of faith. The Catholic Church of the 20th century, even though a large part of its membership has been deceived by popular science to abandon these previous decrees of the faith, has not officially changed any decree that was uttered in either 1616 or 1633, thus they remain in force, even if no one is courageous enough to say so.

David Palm: I am not entering into the relative merits or lack thereof of any scientific theory. In my limited study I find that geocentrism, like "young earth creationism", has certain major implausibilities which prevent me from embracing it. But I am not an expert and I am not addressing the scientific questions.

R. Sungenis: Until Mr. Palm decides to grapple with the scientific evidence, he will never understand why Paul V and Urban VIII were led by the Holy Spirit to condemn heliocentrism. He will go on in his darkness thinking that the Holy Spirit left the Church of the 17th century in the midst of one of the most written about issues in Holy Scripture. Moreover, now we find out that Mr. Palm is also an evolutionist, and probably for the same reason – he has put his trust in popular science and has begun to mistrust his Catholic tradition. What will be next?

David Palm: What concerns me is the assertion that geocentrism is de fide and that the denial of it is therefore "formal heresy". This I think is fraught with theological difficulties.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm's argument is with the 16th - 18th century Magisterium of the Church, not me. Apparently, those pontiffs, cardinals and their CDFs saw no problem in saying that geocentrism is a matter of faith due to its direct relation to the veracity of Scripture, and that deviations from that position are heretical. What puzzles me is, if Mr. Palm is not sure of the science aspects of this issue, then what is making him so strong in his rejection of what Paul V and Urban VIII decreed and facilitated?

David Palm: Point #1: It Has Happened in the History of the Church that “It’s Not Infallible” is the Truthful and Correct Answer

Although Cassini denigrates the “but it’s not infallible” approach, the fact is that when one surveys Church history there are a few—a remarkably small number but still a few—instances in which one examines all the facts and has to conclude that what was said even in an official capacity was wrong, but that it was not proposed infallibly and so does not negate the Church’s claim.

The most famous of these is probably that of Pope Honorius. Gerry Matatics and Tim Staples in public debate argued that Honorius was not wrong and they were soundly defeated by a knowledgeable opponent. Robert Sungenis was all set to try the same approach, but Steve Ray and David Palm convinced him that the approach to the question taken by the famous patristic scholar Dom John Chapman was the correct one: “The Pope and the Council were in agreement as to the necessity of condemning Honorius, and they were certainly right in doing so under the circumstances” (Chapman, *The Condemnation of Pope Honorius*, p. 9). Chapman goes on to argue that, although this was indeed an official papal document and did address a doctrinal matter, Pope Honorius did not convene the Roman Synod, did not invoke the authority of St. Peter, did not do any of the things Popes of his day were wont to do when authoritatively addressing a doctrinal issue. He was wrong on a doctrinal matter, but he manifestly did not bind the Church to his error.

R. Sungenis: Yes, Mr. Palm is correct. He, Steve Ray and I agreed in a phone conversation before my debate with James White that it is best to say that Honorius made an error but did not do so while invoking papal infallibility. But Mr. Palm’s mistake here is his attempt to tie that issue to the Galileo issue. The reason is, unlike geocentrism, no one before Honorius taught that Christ had one will, but all the Fathers taught geocentrism, without exception. No one after Honorius taught Christ had one will, but all the medievals, all the saints, all the theologians, all the popes, cardinals and catechisms taught geocentrism for the next thousand or more years. No pope or council condemned what the Tradition taught on geocentrism, nor condemned or rescinded any decree against geocentrism issued by Paul V, Urban VIII, Alexander VII or Benedict XIV, but all of them condemned the idea that Christ had one will.

In fact, when there is a long-standing tradition behind the pope for a certain doctrine, *Lumen Gentium* 25 teaches this:

“This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest mind and intention, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.”

The bottom line is, if Mr. Palm attempts to implicate Paul V and Urban VIII to be in the same category as Honorius I, then he has given himself an impossible task, since he will

also have to implicate every Father, saint, pope, cardinal, theologian, catechism, not to mention the Ordinary magisterium, in his accusation of being incorrect due to fallibility, since they all taught geocentrism.

Conversely, the Church teaches in Lumen Gentium 12, if the belief is held in the Tradition without fail, then that Tradition itself becomes infallible.

The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office: it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips praising his name (cf. Heb. 13:15). The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20 and 27) cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (sensus fidei) of the whole people, when, "from the bishops to the last of the faithful" they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (magisterium), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God (cf. 1 Th 2:13), the faith once for all delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3). The people unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life.

As it stands, I can think of few doctrines that have been held as long and by so many in the Church as the doctrine of geocentrism. The only objectors are those in the 20th century who have rejected this long-standing Tradition for the unproven theories of popular science, as Mr. Palm apparently has.

Of course, Mr. Palm might be tempted to argue, as he did earlier with his arbitrary "300 year" period, that he could use the principle of Lumen Gentium 12 and posit that the Holy Spirit is now teaching the "People of God" that heliocentrism has been correct all along. But that notion, of course, is impossible, since the "People of God" could not have been "aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth" into believing that geocentrism was correct for the greater part of two millennia and then have the Spirit suddenly change His mind to teach them the opposite. It would make the Holy Spirit a liar, which is certainly impossible. The reality is, if the "People of God" were led to believe that geocentrism was the truth, and which was, according to the stipulations of Lumen Gentium 12, "guided by the magisterium" to confirm their consensus, then there is simply no possibility that a change in their belief could be understood as a movement of the Holy Spirit. That elimination, of course, only leaves two other possibilities – man himself or the devil as being the source of the origin of heliocentrism.

David Palm: Point #2: The decrees against Galileo were from Roman Congregations, approved only in forma communi. They were not papal decrees and therefore, all the more, were not immune from error.

R. Sungenis: We have already answered this above. I will add again that, Paul V and Urban VIII, and the rest of the popes to which Jaguier and Le Seur submitted in regards to geocentrism, were steadfastly following the Fathers and the Tradition laid down for them. The obligation to the Tradition was the highest argument that Bellarmine gave to Galileo,

and he backed it up by an appeal to Trent which said that we could not depart from the Fathers if they held a doctrine in consensus. Trent stated:

Furthermore, in order to curb impudent clever persons, the synod decrees that no one who relies on his own judgment in matters of faith and morals, which pertain to the building up of Christian doctrine, and that no one who distorts the Sacred Scripture according to his own opinions, shall dare to interpret the said Sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which is held by Holy Mother Church, whose duty it is to judge regarding the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scriptures, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, even though interpretations of this kind were never intended to be brought to light. (Council of Trent, 1563).

These popes could no more depart from geocentrism than John Paul II could depart from decreeing that only men could be priests, for in 1994 John Paul II stated in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that he could not change the law on male priests since it was a long-standing tradition held by the Church that even he, as pope, did not have the authority to change. This decree was never officially declared to be an ex cathedra infallible and irreformable teaching of the Extraordinary magisterium, but only an official statement from the pope that he was required to uphold the long-standing tradition of the Ordinary magisterium barring women from the priesthood.

David Palm: As I have already demonstrated, the 1616 and 1633 decrees concerning Galileo were not “papal decrees”. Period. They were issued by Roman congregations. A papal decree and a decree from a Roman congregation are two different things. No amount of cajoling can make one into the other. In fact, the Catholic Encyclopedia states that the 1633 decree “did not receive the pope’s signature”.

R. Sungenis: As we stated, even if it is correct that neither Paul V or Urban VIII signed the decrees (for Mr. Palm shows no proof that they didn’t), there is no ecclesiastical law that says papal signatures are required to make or enforce decrees that were originated by the will of the pope. If Mr. Palm knows of one, perhaps he can show us. The pope can either write or speak a decree. It is his discretion. Just because many decrees are signed by the pope does not mean the pope is limited to signing his name. A signature only makes the pope’s view clearer and easier to verify, but it does not limit the pope in how he may issue a decree. If it can be shown that the pope’s solemn will in making a decision on doctrine was manifested, it is as legal as if he signed his name.

David Palm: I had to smile when in another thread Cassini insisted that, “It was the Church itself that insisted the decree was papal, not I” and then stated, “Here the minutes of Galileo’s 1633 trial to prove it” (my emphasis). So now not only the decree of a Roman congregation, but even its minutes represent the authentic and authoritative voice of the Church! I am quite certain that any number of instances could be cited from various Roman congregations, much less their minutes, which Cassini would be very happy indeed to agree are not de fide, are not to be simply equated with the voice of the Church.

R. Sungenis: I think Mr. Palm missed what Cassini was saying. Cassini appears to have meant that the “minutes” state that the pope issued a decree. He did not mean that the minutes have an authority all their own.

David Palm: The Catholic Encyclopedia points out that even non-Catholics scholars have reasonably conceded that the actions of these congregations in the Galileo case did not commit the whole Church to the positions taken:

Nor is this only an opinion of theologians; it is corroborated by writers whom none will accuse of any bias in favour of the papacy. Thus Professor Augustus De Morgan (Budget of Paradoxes) declares:

It is clear that the absurdity was the act of the Italian Inquisition, for the private and personal pleasure of the pope — who knew that the course he took could not convict him as pope — and not of the body which calls itself the Church.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm is trying to rest the whole case on a single pope. As I said above, geocentrism was a constant and abiding doctrine of the Church, from the Fathers onward, without deviation. The popes of the 17th century were merely formalizing what the Tradition had given them. Mr. Palm's argument is against almost two millennia of consistent teaching on geocentrism, and the fact remains that the Church has never seen fit to reverse any of the legal decisions against heliocentrism, or state that the Fathers and mediavals were wrong. Unless the Church finds scientific proof that geocentrism is wrong, then she is bound to her Tradition, and no amount of faulting a pope for not speaking the Tradition in an infallible venue is going to change any of the historical facts. Coming to the argument assuming heliocentrism is correct is the perennial problem of people like Mr. Palm, which argument then devolves into all the hairsplitting concerning infallibility, forms, and the like.

David Palm: And von Gebler ("Galileo Galilei"):

The Church never condemned it (the Copernican system) at all, for the Qualifiers of the Holy Office never mean the Church.

It may be added that Riceloll and other contemporaries of Galileo were permitted, after 1616, to declare that no anti-Copernican definition had issued from the supreme pontiff. (Galileo)

R. Sungenis: Yes, if you are looking for "definitions" Paul V didn't issue one. He just accepted his Commission's conclusion that heliocentrism was "formally heretical" and gave Galileo an injunction never to teach heliocentrism again. The "definition" came in 1633 when the two propositions agreed upon by the pope and the Sacred Congregation were used to condemn heliocentrism, namely:

"The proposition that the sun is the center of the world and does not move from its place is absurd and false philosophically and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to the Holy Scripture"

"The proposition that the Earth is not the center of the world and immovable but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is equally absurd and false philosophically and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith"

Moreover, in the very wording of the 1633 Sentence against Galileo, the words "defined and decreed" are used to describe the condemnation:

And whereas a book appeared here recently, printed last year at Florence, the title of which shows that you were the author, this title being: "Dialogue of Galileo Galilei on the Great World Systems: Ptolemy and Copernicus"; and whereas the Holy Congregation was afterwards informed that through the publication of the said book the false opinion of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the sun was daily gaining ground, the said book was taken into careful consideration, and in it there was discovered a patent violation of the aforesaid injunction that had been imposed upon you, for in this book you have defended the said opinion previously condemned and to your face declared to be so, although in the said book you strive by various devices to produce the impression that you leave it undecided, and in express terms probable: which, however, is a most grievous error, as an opinion can in no wise be probable which has been declared and defined to be contrary to divine Scripture.

These "definitions" were approved by Urban VIII and the pope ordered them to be sent out to the rest of Europe for its allegiance. We have already seen the Catholic editors of Newton's *Principia*, Jacquier and Le Seur, show that such allegiance to the "Supreme Pontiffs" was alive and well two hundred years after Urban VIII declared heliocentrism "formally heretical."

David Palm: One additional decree that has been cited in this regard is Pope Alexander VII's bull *Speculatores Domus Israel* which served as a preface to the republication of the Index. Here I think that Peter Dimond, despite his errant sedevacantist position, has provided an important insight. He points out that the Pope tells us explicitly what his purpose was in including the previous decrees in the republication of the Index:

Yet it is so far retained that the class to which each book belongs will be found cited where the book is named, and also the decree by which the book was originally prohibited, in order that the whole history of each case may be known. "For this purpose," pursues the Pontiff, "we have caused the Tridentine and Clementine Indices to be added to this general Index, and also all the relevant decrees up to the present time, (Dimond, "Examining the Theological Status of Geocentrism and Heliocentrism and the Devastating Problems this creates for Baptism of Desire Arguments", p. 24, citing Roberts, *The Pontifical Decrees Against the Movement of the Earth and the Ultramontane Defense of Them*)

Dimond continues:

In promulgating this disciplinary measure, the pope did not infallibly declare that all must believe the things contained in those past decrees of the Holy Office, etc. which were attached to the Index. No, as Fr. Roberts says, Pope Alexander VII attached those other decrees "in order that the whole history of each case may be known." To have lesser decrees attached to a disciplinary measure in order that the history of each case may be known is very different from solemnly declaring (to be believed by the universal Church) all the points contained in those decrees attached to the Index. I believe that this clearly shows that the bull of Pope Alexander VII was a disciplinary measure which did not infallibly promulgate the decrees attached to that disciplinary measure (Dimond, p. 25.)

R. Sungenis: As for the doubt Mr. Dimond is raising about the “infallibility” of Alexander’s bull, again, the infallibility of a particular papal decree, whether it be a bull or an apostolic constitution, has not been decided by the Church. There is no list of infallible papal decrees. I have a whole section on this issue, including Alexander VII’s other decrees, in *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, Vol. 2, pages 224-230.

As for Mr. Dimond himself, I wonder whether he believes the Assumption of Mary is infallible, since he has more than once questioned the legitimacy of the pontificate of Pius XII. Infallible or not, as I stated above about Pius V, Paul V and Urban VIII, the main issue is that Alexander VII was following the 1600 year tradition laid down by his predecessors. Unless science could show irrefutable positive proof that the Tradition was wrong, the popes were bound by their sacred office to uphold geocentrism as a matter of faith, as every Catholic official did before them.

David Palm: And as MarianD rightly said in another thread (would that we had more catechumens like this!):

Papal bulls/decrees are simply the Pope writing a letter. It carries no weight of dogma or infallibility. They are, however, authoritative. That means that one shouldn't outright disobey it, but that doesn't mean that one can't argue against it. Arguing against a papal decree does NOT make one a non-Catholic, and the words contained within the Papal bull/decrees are not infallible dogmas and are subject to change.

As it stands, of course, the Index that Alexander VII promulgated was duly modified and eventually abandoned entirely by his successors, demonstrating that this was a matter of discipline, not of doctrine.

R. Sungenis: This is a half truth that is as good as a lie. There was only one “successor” who made any notable change, but he did so under false information, namely, someone in the papal environs of Gregory XVI decided to take Galileo’s book off the Index either because he thought that proof for heliocentrism had been documented by an appeal to stellar parallax (but this “proof” turned out to be false) and/or he was deceived by Olivieri that the 1616-1633 Church had only condemned a cosmology that did not include elliptical orbits. [The prior Index under Benedict XIV in 1741 and 1758 kept Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Foscarini and Zuniga (all of whom were promoting heliocentrism) on the Index. Galileo’s book was allowed to be published but his Letters to Christina and Castelli had to be excluded, and the condemnation of the 1633 trial had to be put at the beginning of the book. All other books that taught the Copernican system had to be published as hypothetical]. This lone “successor,” although he did what he thought was best, that is, he modified the Church’s stance on Galileo because he thought science had proven its claims, actually made a gross error, not only in accepting a false report of stellar parallax, but also in assuming that stellar parallax disproves geocentrism, which we know today is not true. Hence, it is futile for Mr. Palm to hang his case on this “successor” since the successor has been shown to have made a dubious decision.

David Palm: The bottom line is that if the Popes of that day had wished to condemn directly with their authority, or to confirm a doctrine as *de fide* directly with their authority,

for the whole Church, they were free and capable of doing so. They did not do so and I see in this the working of the Holy Spirit.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm again refers to the plural "Popes," but there was only one pope who attempted to change the course, Gregory XVI. All previous popes maintained the *de fide* status of geocentrism. More importantly, here Mr. Palm's use of "the pope didn't say it infallibly" cuts both ways, since if Gregory XVI had made an erroneous decision in taking Galileo off the Index, and did so in an infallible venue, then he would have upset the Church's doctrine of papal infallibility. Hence, the non-infallible position actually helps the geocentric cause, for it explains why the papal office of Gregory XVI could have been deceived into not following the 1800 years of Tradition placed before him.

David Palm: Point #3: The Contrary Position Cannot be Harmonized with the Dogma of the Church's Indefectibility

Finally, I have already stated that I do not believe that Cassini's is consonant with a dogma of the Faith, the indefectibility of the Church. Although he professes to be upholding the Church's authority, surely it's clear that his position destroys it.

Where on one view we have two Roman congregations, confirmed only in *forma communi*, erroneously branding a particular view as "formal heresy"...

R. Sungenis: "erroneously branding a particular view as formal heresy"? How does Mr. Palm know this? Since the entire Tradition believed in geocentrism such that it was included in the Tridentine catechism of Pius V; and since it is a fact that Trent itself said that if there is a consensus in the Fathers on a particular doctrine than we are obliged to uphold it (which is the case for geocentrism), upon what basis does Mr. Palm judge that branding heliocentrism as a formal heresy was "erroneous"? The only way Mr. Palm could possibly judge the decision as erroneous is by the same method Gregory XVI apparently tried, that is, by basing it on what he believes is the evidence from science. But we have already seen that Gregory XVI's court was mistaken about science, and we have already seen that Mr. Palm has admitted that he is "not an expert" in the science aspect of this matter. So what does he have to depend on?

So we see that the real problem here is that Mr. Palm has decided to accept the conclusions of popular science (on both evolution and heliocentrism) without much critical evaluation. This is precisely why we wrote 700 pages of science in *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*. It was to educate people just like Mr. Palm to the real truth of popular science. So far, however, he has not taken the time to read it. This doesn't surprise me. Mr. Palm's present dialogue against "Cassini" was posted on Catholic Answer's blog, of which Karl Keating is the president. I sent Karl Keating my two volume set on Galileo a few years ago, free of charge. I then contacted him about a year later and he stated that he had not read it and that he had a lot of other books to read before he could ever get to mine. I did the same for Scott Hahn, but I don't think he has read the book and he has not talked about it with me. Essentially, then, these men are happy to remain in their scientific ignorance about this issue, yet many pontificate against geocentrism with a vehemence of a street preacher. In an ironic twist, in the past there was a big joke made of the cardinals who refused to look through Galileo's telescope at the moons circling Jupiter, but today I see the "cardinals" of

the Catholic apologetics movement doing precisely the same thing. They are afraid to look at the new scientific evidence that Galileo did not possess, evidence that vindicates our Tradition for geocentrism. They prefer the views of the status quo of modern academia, and as long as they do they will be blinded by it.

David Palm: ...on the other view we have Pope after Pope and all the bishops in communion with them allowing greater and greater expression of this “formal heresy”.

R. Sungenis: No we don't. The only one who did (and did so in error) was Gregory XVI or his underling. And, as I stated earlier, 15 years after Gregory XVI's mistake the Vatican hired Mario Marini to write a history of the Galileo affair for the specific purpose of showing that the Catholic Church saved Europe from heresy. Ninety years later, in 1941, Agostino Gemelli, president of the Pontifical Academy of Science, stated that neither Galileo, Newton or Foucault had provided proof of heliocentrism. What we have is a majority of the prelatore who have decided to ignore the Church's rich history of condemning heliocentrism, but as Mr. Palm himself has recognized, most of that prelatore today is very liberal and modernistic in its views, almost to the point of apostasy. I know this because, when we were friends in the past, Mr. Palm and I would talk about these things.

David Palm: They have granted imprimaturs to books that teach this “formal heresy”.

R. Sungenis: Yes, and they have also granted imprimaturs to Fr. Raymond Brown and Karl Rahner and many other liberal theologians who have denied our Tradition in one way or another on a variety of topics. Even Galileo got an imprimatur for his *Dialogo* in 1631, at least until Pope Urban VIII rescinded the imprimatur the following year and called heliocentrism “formally heretical.” Even Canon Settele got an imprimatur for his book on heliocentrism in 1822. What few people know is that he got it by the malicious subterfuge of Maurizio Olivieri who lied to the Inquisition about why the Church in 1616-1633 had originally condemned Copernicanism. It's all in my book, Vol. 2 pages 145-151; 244-252. Settele's imprimatur was one of the most underhanded maneuvers in the annals of Catholic history.

David Palm: They have allowed this “formal heresy” to be taught in Catholic schools worldwide.

R. Sungenis: They also allow the teaching of many other “heresies” in the Church today, under the guise of a new way of seeing truth. Mr. Palm is trying to give the impression that it would only be the formal heresy of heliocentrism that would be taught in today's Catholic schools so as to make it appear as if Catholic academia is on the right course in every other area and thus we must accept its decision not to teach heliocentrism. But Mr. Palm knows that Catholic academia is fraught with heretical ideas today, and that these heretical ideas are promulgated with abandon, right under the noses of the bishops, and often fostered by the bishops.

David Palm: It is explicitly allowed in a papal encyclical that this “formal heresy” may in fact be true (cf. Benedict XV's *In Praeclara Summorum* 4, cited above),

R. Sungenis: We covered this earlier. Mr. Palm is trying to make a mountain out of a mole hill. When it is to his advantage to find some apparent weakness in the Church's resolve against heliocentrism, he shouts it from the housetops. When the evidence is against him (e.g., the patristic and medieval consensus, Pius V's Tridentine catechism, Paul V, Urban VIII, Alexander VII, Benedict XIV, etc.) he does his best to minimize their relevance.

David Palm: an ecumenical council deplored what happened in 1616 and 1633 (Gaudium et Spes 36, citing Vita e opere di Galileo Galilei in the footnote, making it clear what was in mind),

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm needs to get up to speed with the truth and cease giving his personal historiography. First, paragraph 36 of GES does not "deplore what happened in 1616 and 1633" since it makes no direct mention of that period of history. Here is the paragraph in question, and I will underline the pertinent parts:

Now many of our contemporaries seem to fear that a closer bond between human activity and religion will work against the independence of men, of societies, or of the sciences.

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity. Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science and which, from the arguments and controversies they spark, lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed.

We can see from a fair reading of the two underlined paragraphs that no specific concessions are made to Galileo and no specific endorsements are given to heliocentrism. Although the "rightful independence of science" is acknowledged, this is not an independence that allows science to go outside the boundaries of the faith or say things that contradict the faith. In both of the above paragraphs the message that shines through is that science and faith must work together and must never oppose one another. The reason, of course, is that they have God as both their author and designer.

As for Mr. Palm's claim that Galileo was in view in GES due to the "citing Vita e opere di Galileo Galilei in the footnote," he again is telling a half truth. First, as I state in *Galileo Was*

Wrong: The Church Was Right, Vol. 2 page 284, "The resolve of Vatican II not to give any direct concessions to Galileo was made clear when, as Fantoli describes it,

During the preparatory phase of the document the proposal was put forth for a frank recognition of the errors committed by the Church with respect to Galileo, and it became partially accepted by the "joint commission" which dedicated a new paragraph (No. 40) to the question of the autonomy of culture, where a brief mention was made of the error of the condemnation of Galileo."

This event, of course, never happened, since the proposed paragraph #40 contains no mention of Galileo and no error made by the Church. Monsignor Pietro Parente, co-president of the commission, saw to it that the reference to Galileo was eliminated, stating: "[It is] not appropriate to speak of it in this document – so as not to ask the Church to say: I have been wrong."

Whatever Parente's motivations were, even if it were to save face for the Church that he personally thought had erred, is really of no consequence in the final tally, since, as those who understand Catholic protocol know, ecumenical councils are guided by the Holy Spirit. As such, it would have been erroneous to say that the Church made an error in her condemnation of Galileo and heliocentrism. If heliocentrism was correct, this was the perfect opportunity for the Holy Spirit, through the Church, to clear the air, as it were. The fact that it never happened shows once again that the efforts of the three popes of the 17th century to eliminate the "formally heretical" view of heliocentrism from Catholic doctrine still reverberate today, although in much more subtle tones.

The only allusion to the Galileo affair that appeared in the Vatican II discourse is a footnote added to paragraph 36 citing Paschini's work. But even then, as Fantoli admits, the citation of Paschini's work on Galileo

"had been made possible only by means of the changes already mentioned [to Paschini's original 1944 publication], especially those more important and drastic ones which concerned the original judgment of Paschini on the behavior of the Church in 1616 and 1633."

In other words, it was only after the Vatican severely edited Paschini's book so that it was not predisposed to support Galileo that it was then allowed as a footnote in *Gaudium et spes*.

Unfortunately, some of the more liberal sectors of Catholicism have been prone to eisegete these paragraphs from *Gaudium et spes* to reach the agenda-driven conclusion that the Church has given science full reign to propose any theory it desires, and that the Church has little or no say in what is distilled from those theories. In actuality, *Gaudium et spes* not only refuses to acknowledge any error on the part of the Church in the Galileo affair, it says nothing different than what was previously stated in the Church's tradition, for all the Church's authorities, from Bellarmine, the Council of Trent, Pius IX to Leo XIII, taught that faith and science can never conflict. Indeed, that has been the whole theme of our book, *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, since, if studied carefully and without the

atheistic agenda common in the sciences today, modern science has demonstrated quite handily that the faith of our fathers who held fast to geocentrism was not in vain.

David Palm: and another Pope publicly apologized for it.

R. Sungenis: No, Pope John Paul II did not “apologize” for the Church’s handling of the Galileo affair. Mr. Palm will not find the word “apologize” or any of its derivations in the 1992 speech to the Pontifical Academy of Science. What he will find is that the speech attributes the controversy to a “misunderstanding” in which “both sides were at fault,” and then makes an allusion to “relativity” as the means by which both sides had a bit of truth. This is precisely why the Catholic heliocentrists in academia, such as Ernan McMullin (professor emeritus at Notre Dame) were very disappointed with the 1992 speech and wrote: “the final report delivered to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the speech prepared for the pope for delivery on the same occasion were plainly inadequate from the historical standpoint,” and in closing: “There has admittedly been disappointment, grave disappointment indeed.”¹³

Incidentally, McMullin also stated the following about the 1616 decision against Galileo:

And let there be no mistake, the judgment of the qualifiers in 1616 and the language of the decree supported by it were couched in definitive terms; it was not proposed as something “reformable,” to use a term favored by some recent theologians. The decree did not say that in the absence of a demonstration, maintaining the Copernican theses would be risky (“temerarious”). It described the theses as “contrary to Scripture,” period, just as the qualifiers had “qualified” the heliocentric claim as “formally heretical.”¹⁴

McMullin also tells us why the Galileo affair was a matter of faith:

The issue was primarily an exegetical one. Should the disputed passages be understood as being accommodated to the capacity of the hearers, as the defenders of Copernicus suggested? That this was the key question was clearly grasped in Rome well before the Copernican issue came before the Holy Office for formal decision.¹⁵

David Palm: My guess is that at this point Cassini would fall back on the “but it’s not infallible” argument that he derides in other contexts. But in this thread he has done exactly what I think has to be done if one insists that the 1616 and 1633 decrees established a *de fide* doctrine, namely, he has painted all of the Popes from Benedict XIV to Benedict XVI as traitor, dupes, and cowards.

R. Sungenis: First, I guess it is to Mr. Palm’s advantage to use vilifying descriptions such as “traitor, dupes and cowards” since this will cause the reader to doubt that popes, who are not normally thought of as so devious, could stoop to such malfeasance. But the key

¹³ Ernan McMullin, editor of *The Church and Galileo*, Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 2

¹⁴ “The Church’s Ban on Copernicanism,” in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 159.

¹⁵ “The Church’s Ban on Copernicanism,” in *The Church and Galileo*, pp. 172-173.

word Mr. Palm leaves out is "ignorance." Many times popes act on what they know, but what they know is not always adequate. We saw this in the case of Gregory XVI.

Second, Benedict XIV didn't do anything out of the ordinary. He kept Galileo on the Index and said that book of Copernican theology could be published as long as they were hypothetical in nature, so I don't know why Mr. Palm thinks this is crucial to his thesis. As for Benedict XVI, he has not officially addressed the Galileo issue, so there is nothing significant there either.

Third, Mr. Palm's appeal to "Benedict XIV to Benedict XVI" is similar to his arbitrary period of "300 years" he used earlier, a period that does not take into account all the motions the Church made to uphold its historic doctrine on geocentrism. As late as 1941 the Pontifical Academy of Science admitted that modern science had provided no proof of heliocentrism, which was less than 75 years ago.

Fourth, Mr. Palm is so ready to defend the last "300 years" against charges of being "dupes and cowards," but he is willing to do so only at the expense of making the previous 1700 years of Church Fathers, Medievals, Popes and Catechisms appear as being "duped" by thinking that geocentrism was true and a matter of faith. The sad thing is that Mr. Palm doesn't even recognize that he has put himself in such a proverbial corner – implying that one part of the Church was "duped" so he can save another part from being "duped." The truth is, Church protocol only goes in one direction. The constant and abiding Tradition comes first, and any deviation from that Tradition is ignorance or apostasy. The wrong direction (which is where Mr. Palm is going) is to start with the modern consensus and use it to judge the constant and abiding Tradition. Catholicism has never worked that way.

David Palm: What has actually happened is that the Church has officially adopted as her own the principles with regard to Scripture and science as laid out by St. Augustine (*De Genesi ad Litteram* 1:19–20; 2:9), reiterated by St. Thomas (*Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 68), reiterated even by St. Robert Bellarmine (Letter to Foscarini, third point), and officially by Pope Leo XIII in *Providentissimus Deus* 19:

The unshrinking defense of the Holy Scripture, however, does not require that we should equally uphold all the opinions which each of the Fathers or the more recent interpreters have put forth in explaining it; for it may be that, in commenting on passages where physical matters occur, they have sometimes expressed the ideas of their own times, and thus made statements which in these days have been abandoned as incorrect. Hence, in their interpretations, we must carefully note what they lay down as belonging to faith, or as intimately connected with faith -- what they are unanimous in. For "in those things which do not come under the obligation of faith, the Saints were at liberty to hold divergent opinions, just as we ourselves are," according to the saying of St. Thomas. And in another place he says most admirably: "When philosophers are agreed upon a point, and it is not contrary to our faith, it is safer, in my opinion, neither to lay down such a point as a dogma of faith, even though it is perhaps so presented by the philosophers, nor to reject it as against faith, lest we thus give to the wise of this world an occasion of despising our faith." The Catholic interpreter, although he should show that those facts of

natural science which investigators affirm to be now quite certain are not contrary to the Scripture rightly explained, must nevertheless always bear in mind, that much which has been held and proved as certain has afterwards been called in question and rejected. And if writers on physics travel outside the boundaries of their own branch, and carry their erroneous teaching into the domain of philosophy, let them be handed over to philosophers for refutation.

R. Sungenis: I'm sorry to say that this is just another attempt by Mr. Palm to win the war by impressions. Although Leo XIII says that the Fathers sometimes expressed things in the ideas of their own times, he does not give any specific examples, and thus there is no direct support for interpreting Leo to be referring to cosmological passages in a non-literal fashion. In fact, it goes without saying that the Fathers would speak from their own culture and use their idiomatic vocabulary since none of them would have known the culture or the idioms of the future. In addition, Leo's remarks about "things belonging to the faith...what they are unanimous in," would technically discount the heliocentric/geocentric debate from the discussion, since all the Fathers were geocentrists.

Second, we noted earlier, Cardinal Bellarmine argued that the Earth's centrality and immobility were a "matter of faith," if not so much in the explicit sense, then simply because of the fact that God is the author of Scripture, as even Leo states later in this encyclical (e.g., ¶21: "and that God, speaking by the sacred writers, could not set down anything but what was true").

Third, it is a fact that the Fathers were unanimous in their belief in geocentrism. There was not one dissenting voice. It is perhaps the strongest unanimity the Fathers ever held on a particular topic. Hence, on both counts, faith and patristic unanimity, history shows that geocentrism is not to be included in Leo XIII's category of things to be "figuratively" interpreted or things that the Fathers expressed only "in the ideas of their times."

Also significant in the above paragraph is Leo XIII's comment about the mistakes in science and the overturning of scientific ideas, especially that of physics. He states:

The Catholic interpreter... must nevertheless always bear in mind, that much which has been held and proved as certain has afterwards been called in question and rejected. And if writers on physics travel outside the boundaries of their own branch, and carry their erroneous teaching into the domain of philosophy, let them be handed over to philosophers for refutation.

This statement has, more or less, been the clarion call of my book, *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*. If there is anything of which Catholic theologians and scientists should avail themselves, it is the scientific evidence showing that heliocentrism is at best an unproven theory. These same theologians and scientists should avail themselves to an honest study into the history of science, which starkly reveals that almost every scientific theory proposed as true has been replaced by another theory that falsifies it; and that theory awaits to be replaced by yet another. In light of the new scientific evidence available, we can easily see that heliocentrism is one of those canons of physics that "has been held and proved as certain has afterwards been called in question and rejected."

David Palm: Therefore I believe that the correct view is very simply that in this matter of "how the heavens go" we have freedom as Catholics. The contrary position, that geocentrism is proposed by the Church *de fide*, is itself an error that places the Catholic who holds it in a completely untenable position with regard to his own Church. It is, as I have said, the position of the man who would burn down a building, with all the people in it, to kill a rat.

R. Sungenis: And as I have said, the exact opposite is true. The man who is willing to trash his Catholic Tradition of almost two thousand years for a mess of pottage from popular science that he can't prove, well, that is a prime example of a man who would "burn down a building, with all the people in it, to kill a rat." That Mr. Palm can't see the utter hypocrisy of his own logic is indeed very sad. I hope after reading this rebuttal to his views he will see it differently.

David Palm: Cassini, I thank you for your reply and for your view that my view on this is worthy of interaction. I'm afraid my other responsibilities are such that I cannot sustain an extended debate on this. So below will have to be what I would consider my "closing arguments".

First I would note the continued assertion that in 1616 and 1633 we are dealing with "papal decrees". This I have already rejected, with the reasons given above. It's important, I think, because it addresses a point you have made many times, namely, that formal abrogation of these decrees is required. That remains an unproven assertion.

R. Sungenis: Not according to Canon Law. The decision of a canonical tribunal must be officially and formally reversed in order to escape the conclusions of that tribunal. We have already cited the case of Joseph LaLande in 1750 as a demonstration of this truth. If Mr. Palm can show us instances in which the Church officially rejected the decision of a canonical trial without actually officially reversing the canonical trial, then he would have at least some precedent to make a case. But he doesn't have any such instances, and therefore the burden of proof remains on him and he cannot make the claim that the opposite view is an "unproven assertion."

David Palm: With regard to the 1616 decree from the Congregation of the Index and the Bull of Alexander VII in 1664 there can be no difficulty, since the Index was duly updated and eventually done away with altogether by subsequent Popes, which of course is their right.

R. Sungenis: Irrespective of Mr. Palm's distortion of the history of the Index that we cited earlier, the Index is but a small part of this whole issue. What is decisively more important is the Tradition of Church teaching, a dimension of this issue that Mr. Palm has not even addressed, much less rebutted to convince us of his position. For Mr. Palm it is apparently no sin to reject the almost two-millennia of Tradition from the Fathers, the medievals, the Tridentine catechism, and the canonical trial of Galileo which "declared and defined" the Church's traditional rejection of heliocentrism. Yet on other issues that are near and dear to him, Mr. Palm is the first to use the Tradition to defend Catholic doctrine against the boasts of non-Catholic denominations.

So what is getting in the way? It is the ultimate intimidator of mankind today – the conclusions of popular science dressed in fancy equations and obtuse vocabulary. The difference between me and Mr. Palm is that I know science and he doesn't. I was a science major in college and have been studying it ever since. So again, until Mr. Palm grapples with this dimension of the issue, he will remain intimidated and continue to believe that the Holy Spirit was somehow absent when almost two-millenia of Catholics believed that geocentrism was true and became a matter of faith due to its reflection on the veracity of Scripture.

David Palm: With regard to the 1633 decree of the Holy Office (again, not a papal decree), it is claimed (in the Catholic Encyclopedia for instance) that this never even received the Pope's signature (although there can be no doubt that he supported it, of course.)

R. Sungenis: As I said earlier, when Mr. Palm can show us an official Church document signed by the pope that says a pope's signature is required to make a doctrine binding, he can let us know.

David Palm: (Emphasis is placed by some geocentrists on the allegation that no signed copy of Pius VII's approval of an imprimatur for Settele's can be produced. So it would seem that at least some consider this sort of argument to carry weight.)

R. Sungenis: I posed this particular argument in one of my articles. Perhaps Mr. Palm, in order to be consistent, will want to grapple with the subterfuge that was used to get Settele the imprimatur, regardless whether Pius VII signed or didn't sign the order.

David Palm: At most the 1633 decree can be said to be approved in forma communi and I have yet to see any evidence that decrees from a Roman congregation with that level of papal approval must be formally abrogated by a later Pope.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm is putting the cart before the horse. Even if a decree is put in the form of "communi," this doesn't mean that it dies its own death without some equally authoritative branch of the Church declaring it so. We have seen in the case of Joseph Lalande that he was told by the Vatican that Galileo could not be rehabilitated unless his trial was reversed. And again, whatever form the condemnation of heliocentrism came, it was merely reiterating the Tradition that had been passed down to it. We have already seen from Lumen Gentium 12 that when the Ordinary magisterium certifies a universally held traditional belief, it is infallible by the mere consensus of the tradition. Mr. Palm has simply not dealt with that issue.

David Palm: On the other side, I have pointed to one papal encyclical which clearly allows for the holding of what you are calling a "formal heresy" (Benedict XV's In Praeclara Summorum 4).

R. Sungenis: No, Mr. Palm distorts the evidence again. Benedict XV merely said that he did not know whether it was true or not. It did not say that he was "holding" to the position of heliocentrism.

David Palm: And Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Providentissimus Deus (18-19), drawing upon St. Augustine and St. Thomas, gives the principles for the whole Church on which both the

witness of the Fathers and the testimony of sacred Scripture are to be considered when there appears to be a conflict between Scripture and natural science.

R. Sungenis: In addition to what I have already stated about Providentissimus Deus, St. Augustine and St. Thomas were both geocentrists, even amidst the Greek and Islamic natural science that was opting for heliocentrism from the Pythagorean school. Further, Providentissimus Deus mentions nothing about cosmology. Only people prone to accept the ideas of popular science today read into Leo's encyclical an issue about what celestial body revolves around what.

David Palm: This was reiterated by Pius XII in his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 3, reaffirming the teaching of Providentissimus Deus and of St. Augustine and St. Thomas on this specific point.

R. Sungenis: Again, Pius XII mentioned nothing about heliocentrism or geocentrism. Similar to Leo XIII's encyclical, many read into Pius XII's encyclical what they want to see.

David Palm: Again, I must emphasize that what I am arguing here is that the Church give us freedom in this area. On the matter of "how the heavens go", Catholics are permitted to hold various views without any taint of "formal heresy".

R. Sungenis: Yes, and the Jews were allowed to divorce their wives without any taint of breaking God's laws, at least for a while. They went on for centuries believing that God had given them divorce in the Mosaic law to be used as a better way toward marital relations. They used the Mosaic law to supersede the Genesis law, just as today many Catholics use modern science's "laws" to supersede the law of Catholic Tradition, and God allows them to do so, and they think they have the "freedom" to do so, just as the Jews thought they had freedom to divorce. The only problem was when Jesus came on the scene and told them that the law of divorce was given to them only because of their constant sin and obstinacy toward God. The same is true today. Many in the Catholic Church today are in the same hardness of heart as the Jews were in Israel, and God is allowing them to be blinded by the so-called "laws" of science.

David Palm: Unless I see evidence to the contrary, the teaching of these two papal encyclicals represents the official teaching of the Church on this matter and their authority trumps that of the decree of a Roman congregation which lacks formal papal ratification.

R. Sungenis: Funny how Mr. Palm sees these two encyclicals as the "official teaching" on whether geocentrism is true when, in fact, neither encyclical even mentions geocentrism or heliocentrism.

David Palm: The one thing I would emphasize from my postings at CAF is that there is no papal decree, no papal bull that condemns heliocentrism. These modern proponents of geocentrism like "Johnmartin" manifestly exaggerate and misrepresent the level of authority of the documents generated during the Galileo controversy. And they do so with no seeming regard for the completely untenable position they put themselves into with respect to the Church's indefectibility. . . .

As has already been said here, it is the plain teaching of the Popes that these matters of "how the heavens go" are not part of the deposit of faith. It does not matter how many of the Fathers were or were not geocentrists, because their testimony on a matter that does not belong to the deposit of faith, while perhaps interesting, does not bind us as Catholics.

R. Sungenis: So, in Mr. Palm's opinion, St. Bellarmine's and Paul V's use of the fact that the Council of Trent stated, infallibly, that when the Fathers are in consensus on a given doctrine (such as the case of geocentrism) then we are required to heed their consensus as doctrine, is just a totally erroneous position to adopt. And in Mr. Palm's opinion, Pope Urban's "declaration and definition" which stated that geocentrism is a matter of faith because it directly impinges on the veracity of a literally interpreted Scripture, is also a bogus teaching. In fact, all of the Tradition that taught the same for almost two millennia is also to be discarded as bogus. All because why? Because Mr. Palm has determined that "natural science" is correct about heliocentrism, yet he admits to "not being an expert on science" and just believes in his admittedly "limited study" that "young earth creationism" and geocentrism have "certain major implausibilities," whatever they are.

David Palm: Here are some of the many examples in which the Fathers are wrong on details, even from a modern geocentrist perspective. Again, these should all count against establishing any sort of patristic consensus given the standards deployed elsewhere.

Augustine: "And yet, when it pleased Him who with sovereignty and supreme power regulates all He has created, a star conspicuous among the rest by its size and splendor changed its color, size, form, and, most wonderful of all, the order and law of its course!" (City of God, Book XXI, Ch 8) But the sun is NOT conspicuous for its size and splendor. There are billions of stars as big or bigger than it.

R. Sungenis: First of all, science cannot prove that the stars are bigger than the sun, since even the strongest telescope sees every star only as a point of light. The "size" of a star is estimated based on other factors, namely, the Big Bang theory and the idea that the universe is 13.5 billion years old in age and light-year distance. But the Big Bang is not a proven fact; far from it. Second, even if we agree that Augustine was wrong here, Paul V and Urban VIII did not say there was a patristic consensus on the size of the sun that we had to obey, since Scripture doesn't say that the sun is bigger or smaller than the stars, but only that the sun moves around the earth and the earth is motionless. Augustine and the other Fathers had an absolute consensus on geocentrism because that is what Scripture said, but no one had a consensus on the size of the stars.

David Palm: Clement of Rome: "The sun and moon, with the companies of the stars, roll on in harmony according to His command, within their prescribed limits, and without any deviation." (First Epistle to the Corinthians, Ch XX). Correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is that the moon's path DOES change and the distance to the earth DOES change. Do geocentrists deny this?

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm nit-picks when it is to his advantage. The phrase "without deviation" need not refer to the cm/year that the moon apparently falls from the earth, but to the "roll on in harmony," that is, to the fact that it continually revolves around the earth without fail, year after year.

David Palm: Gregory Nanzianzus: "The sun is extolled by David for its beauty, its greatness, its swift course, and its power, splendid as a bridegroom, majestic as a giant; while, from the extent of its circuit, it has such power that it equally sheds its light from one end of heaven to the other, and the heat thereof is in no wise lessened by distance. (Funeral Orations for St. Basil, 66). Try saying that while on Mercury vs. Pluto.

R. Sungenis: So Mr. Palm expects perfection from the Fathers regarding minute scientific details in order for him to accept their absolute consensus when Scripture teaches that the sun moves around the earth and the earth is motionless? I wish Mr. Palm would be as picky about the claims of popular science today. If he was, he might not be so ready to accept evolution and heliocentrism.

David Palm: Gregory of Nyssa: "And how does earth below form the foundation of the whole, and what is it that keeps it firmly in its place? what is it that controls its downward tendency?" (Answer to Eunomius' Second Book) There is nothing pulling the earth "down".

R. Sungenis: Once again, Mr. Palm strains the gnat and swallows the camel. What he doesn't realize here is that Gregory is referring to the "downward tendency" not as an actual motion downward but as a force going against any attempt to move the earth in the opposite direction, thus allowing it to remain motionless.

David Palm: Gregory of Nyssa: "And when you look at the waning and waxing moon you are taught other truths by the visible figure of that heavenly body, viz. that it is in itself devoid of light, and that it revolves in the circle nearest to the earth" (On the Soul and Resurrection). Not a "circle", sorry. Geocentrists have for centuries had to admit that the orbits are ellipses.

R. Sungenis: Not quite right. They are not true ellipses. In fact, they are closer to circles than they are to noticeable ellipses. Let me show you what modern science has found:

The planetary orbits are not strictly ellipses, as we have so far taken them to be, because one planet disturbs the order of another through the gravitational force that it exerts....In all cases the orbits are nearly circles....It is curious that although the actual orbits do not differ in shape much from circles the errors of a circular model can nevertheless be quite large. Indeed, errors as large as this were quite unacceptable to Greek astronomers of the stature of Hipparchus and Ptolemy. It was this, rather than prejudice, which caused them to reject the simple heliocentric theory of Aristarchus....The Hipparchus theory grapples with the facts whereas the circular picture of Aristarchus fails to do so....The theory of Ptolemy, a few minor imperfections apart, worked correctly to the first order in explaining the planetary eccentricities. Copernicus with his heliocentric theory had to do at least as well as this, which meant that he had to produce something much better than the simple heliocentric picture of Aristarchus.... Kepler achieved improvements, but not complete success, and always at the expense of increasing complexity. Kepler and his successors might well have gone on in this style for generations without arriving at a satisfactory final solution, for a reason we now understand clearly. There is no simple mathematical expression for the way in which the direction of a planet – its heliocentric longitude – changes with time. Even today we must express the

longitude as an infinite series of terms when we use time as the free variable. What Ptolemy, Copernicus, and Kepler, in his early long calculations, were trying to do was to discover by trial and error the terms of this series. Since the terms become more complicated as one goes to higher orders in the eccentricity, the task became successively harder and harder...¹⁶

Professor of celestial mechanics at Columbia University, Charles Lane Poor, says much the same:

From the time of Newton, it has been known that Kepler's laws are mere approximations, computer's fictions, handy mathematical devices for finding the approximate place of a planet in the heavens. They apply with greater accuracy to some planets than to others. Jupiter and Saturn show the greatest deviations from strictly elliptical motion. The latter body is often nearly a degree away from the place it would have been had its motion about the sun been strictly in accord with Kepler's laws. This is such a large discrepancy that it can be detected by the unaided eye. The moon is approximately half a degree in diameter, so that the discrepancy in the motion of Saturn is about twice the apparent diameter of the moon. In a single year, during the course of one revolution about the sun, the Earth may depart from the theoretical ellipse by an amount sufficient to appreciably change the apparent place of the sun in the heavens.¹⁷

Astrophysicist Owen Gingerich adds:

"Naturally astronomy textbooks don't show it this way, because they can't make the point about ellipses unless they enormously exaggerate the eccentricity of the ellipse. So for centuries, beginning with Kepler himself, a false impression has been created about the elliptical shape of planetary orbits. The eccentricity of planetary orbits (that is, their off-centeredness) is quite noticeable – even Ptolemy had to cope with that – but the ellipticity (the degree the figure bows in at the sides) is very subtle indeed. Observations of Mars must be accurate to a few minutes of arc for this tiny ellipticity to reveal itself."¹⁸

David Palm: Hippolytus: "But that the circle of the sun is twenty-seven times larger than the moon, and that the sun is situated in the highest (quarter of the firmament); whereas the orbs of the fixed stars in the lowest." (Refutation of All Heresies, Bk V, Ch 22) Wrong twice.

R. Sungenis: "Wrong twice"? Well, so far, out of five entries on the Fathers, Mr. Palm has been wrong five times on what they really meant and the implications of those meanings. Be that as it may, it apparently doesn't bother Mr. Palm that Einstein changed his size of the universe at least three times in his career (e.g., by his infamous lamda fudge factor); and

¹⁶ Fred Hoyle, *Nicolaus Copernicus: An Essay on his Life and Work*, pp. 73, 8, 9, 53, 11-12, 13-14, in the order of ellipses.

¹⁷ Charles Lane Poor, *Gravitation versus Relativity*, p. 129.

¹⁸ *The Book that Nobody Read*, p. 166.

modern science can't tell us if gamma ray bursts and quasars are close or far away; and can't tell if we have an infinite Steady State universe or a Big Bang universe or something in between or totally different; and can't tell us if it moves in spurts or continuously; and can't explain where the Dark Matter and Energy is in order to propel the so-called "expansion"; and have no explanation for the almost total isotropy of space, which cuts against all reigning theories of the universe, including Einstein's, but let one of the Fathers make an apparent mistake on where the orbs of the celestial bodies are, and David Palm is there to point it out to us, all the while the pink elephant (that the Fathers all believed in geocentrism because Scripture clearly taught it) is continually staring right at him.

David Palm: Archelaus: "Then, again, the living Spirit created the luminaries, which are fragments of the soul" (Disputation with Manes, 22) The stars are "fragments of the soul"? Well, no, sorry.....St. Jerome thought the idea was idiotic.

R. Sungenis: Yes, but St. Jerome was a geocentrist, and so was Archelaus, because that is what all the Fathers agreed to about Scripture. It was the same reason that the Fathers held in consensus that "This is my body" meant that Jesus Christ was present in the Eucharist, despite the fact that they had no scientific explanation for it. The Fathers took Scripture literally unless, as Augustine said, science could prove its theories. Unlike Mr. Palm, no Father became intimidated by the scientific whims of the day, and neither did Cardinal Bellarmine or the popes that approved his demand that science prove its case before he budged an inch from the Tradition of the Church. But Mr. Palm is ready to throw out that Tradition based only on his "limited knowledge" of science.

David Palm: Gregory of Nyssa: "when the body of heaven compassed all things round, and those bodies which are heavy and of downward tendency, the earth and the water, holding each other in, took the middle place of the universe" (On the Making of Man, 30, 1, 1) The earth is in the center of the universe because it's the heaviest? Well, no. And also, this is a purely pseudo-scientific reason for saying the earth is in the center rather than suggesting it was from Tradition. Sorry there, too.

R. Sungenis: Once again, Scripture doesn't tell us HOW the earth is in the center and doesn't move, it just tells us the fact is so. So Gregory is not expected to know the HOW, only the WHY, since Scripture gives him the WHY – God made it that way. And while we're here, let's put the shoe on the other foot. Can Mr. Palm tell us why his earth moves in an orbit around the sun without falling into it? Can Mr. Palm tell us why he thinks the earth even moves? Can Mr. Palm tell us what gravity is and where it comes from? I can ask all sorts of physics questions that Mr. Palm will not know the answer to, and perhaps I can make him look like a bigger "idiot" than he tried to make of Gregory, but that is not my purpose here.

David Palm: Basil: "the celestial bodies move in a circular course" (Nine Homilies of the Haxameron, Homily I) No, they do not "move in a circular course". Again, they are ellipses. Geocentrists agree with that, do they not?

R. Sungenis: Refer above to my argument refuting Mr. Palm.

David Palm: St. Cyril of Jerusalem states that the “firmament” is literally comprised of water. But modern geocentrists don’t believe that.

R. Sungenis: And where is the citation from Cyril that he believed such? Be that as it may, at least Cyril believed in the firmament. Most “Catholic” academics have dismissed that portion of Genesis 1:6-9 as a mere fable, probably including Mr. Palm.

David Palm: There are many more examples that could be cited, but I think this is sufficient to demonstrate the problem. According to a certain apologist's standards, if these witnesses can't get the details right then they simply cannot be said to form a unanimous witness.

R. Sungenis: Yes, Mr. Palm gave us enough examples that clearly “demonstrate the problem” -- that Mr. Palm himself doesn’t really have a good grasp on either the science or the ecclesiastical history. Let’s make it clear, once again. The Fathers had a consensus on geocentrism because Scripture taught this particular cosmology in about two dozen passages – passages that said the sun moves around the earth and the earth does not move. The Fathers interpreted Scripture literally whenever they could, unless reason and necessity barred them from doing so. It doesn’t matter if a particular Father believed that the sun was bigger or smaller than the stars, or whether the earth didn’t move because it was heavier than the sun, for Scripture did not get into those details. It only matters what their consensus was on what Scripture actually taught, and it is crystal clear that they all believed that Scripture taught geocentrism, not heliocentrism.

David Palm: I think it's worthwhile to look too at the various passages of Scripture that geocentrists advance in support. What's interesting is that although they claim to be taking them literally, it's not actually true. See a thread in which a fellow interacts with our "johnmartin"'s listing of various Scripture texts which he claims support geocentrism (the vast majority from the Psalms, poetry which "johnmartin" above said was worthless to establish anything and the backtracked, although he has not yet honestly admitted his blunder).

Sure, lots of passages of Scripture state that the sun rises/set or goes up/down. But geocentrists don't believe that it literally goes up and down, rather they say that it orbits around the earth. So they do not apply a literal hermeneutic--even they have to admit that it only appears to go up and down.

R. Sungenis: No big deal. I cover this issue in GWW. Here it is:

Scripture’s phenomenal language (e.g., the “sun rises” or the “sun sets”) also applies to the geocentric system. In the geocentric system the sun does not actually “rise” or “set”; rather, it revolves around the Earth. When the geocentrist sees a sunset he does not say: “Oh, what a beautiful revolution of the sun,” just as a heliocentrist does not say: “Oh, what a beautiful rotation of the Earth.” The geocentrist and the heliocentrist know that the sun “rises” or “sets” only with respect to the Earth’s horizon, and therefore, reference to a “rising sun” in Scripture is just as phenomenal in the geocentric system as it is in the heliocentric. On that basis alone neither Leo XIII’s nor Pius XII’s above directives can be

commandeered to support heliocentrism, especially in light of the fact that three previous pontiffs, based on stricter criteria, denied heliocentrism and endorsed geocentrism, as the historical records show quite clearly....

Lastly, although it is safe to say that phrases such as “the sun rises” or “the sun sets” are to be considered phenomenal from both the heliocentric and geocentric perspectives, this does not mean that Scripture always limits itself to phenomenal language when it addresses the movement of the heavenly bodies. The language of appearance only applies to expressions when appearance is the intended feature. One can easily surmise from language such as “the sun rises” or “the sun sets” that although Scripture may express the appearance of the movement from the perspective of the observer on Earth, nevertheless, Scripture confidently affirms the scientific fact that, of the two bodies, one of them moves and the other does not. In that particular scientific category, Scripture is adamant that it is the sun that moves, not the Earth. Hence, it is the sun that is the circling body that causes the appearance of the sun rising or setting over the horizon, not the Earth rotating. As we will see, there are many other passages of Scripture that are much more specific concerning the movement of the sun and the immobility of the Earth.¹⁹

David Palm: Neither is there literally an enclosure somewhere for the sun (Psa 19:4) nor does the sun have legs with which to run (Psa 19:5).

R. Sungenis: Apparently Mr. Palm fails to recognize that Scripture often mixes literal and metaphorical language together to convey a certain truth. Psalm 19 first establishes in literal language that the sun moves around the earth every day by the statement in verse 6: “Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them.” In fact, the Psalmist uses five distinct words of movement to describe the sun’s daily traverse – one describing the background against which the sun moves (“set a tent for the sun”), and four describing the sun’s movement (“comes forth,” “runs its course,” “rising” and “circuit”). The addition of “there is nothing hid from its heat” is very significant, since it is a scientific fact that the sun radiates heat. Logically, one scientific fact deserves another. Hence, it follows that the sun’s movement must also be a scientific fact, since it would be rather inconsistent to treat one aspect of the sun scientifically and the other unscientifically.

The reason the metaphorical language of verse 5 is added is to show, in a word picture, what the sun must do to accomplish this scientific fact. The sun is compared to a bridegroom that comes out of his chamber, and a strong man running a race. The purpose for these descriptions is not for cosmetic value. These metaphors portray the images of tremendous energy and movement. In fact, there are few images that better represent single-minded determination and vigor than a bridegroom who seeks his bride and an athlete running a race. Both have strong desire firmly in mind and no concern or obstacle can bar them from their appointed goal. One would have to cripple or kill them in order to stop them. So strong are these images that, if the sun did not actually move in a circuit each day, there would be little reason for the Psalmist to employ the metaphors.

¹⁹ GWW, Vol. 2, pages 56-57.

Again, all these explanations are included in *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*. I have over 50 pages of exegesis on these Scriptural passages.

David Palm: Again, Pope Pius XII addressed this sort of language of the senses and specifically stated that we do not derive any scientific information from it, since the Holy Spirit did not intend to convey such. But it's worth noting that even geocentrists do not take this language literally, as they claim.

R. Sungenis: Again, Mr. Palm misapplies Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, since Pius XII mentions nothing about either geocentrism or heliocentrism, nor does he make even the slightest reference to the Galileo issue that the Church tackled in the 17th century. If Pius XII had intended to reverse those teachings, this was the perfect opportunity for him to do so. But he doesn't even mention the issue, much less overturn it. *Providentissimus Deus* and *Divino Afflante Spiritu* are merely speaking in general terms of various instances in Scripture in which phenomenal language is used. We have already seen this in the expressions "the sun rises" and "the sun sets," since both heliocentrism and geocentrism see this as phenomenal language with the earth's horizon as the focal point. There are many other instances of phenomenal language in Scripture, such as Nm 11:7; 1Sm 28:14; Ez 1:5; 8:2; Dn 8:15; 10:6; Jl 2:4; Am 5:8; Mt 16:3; 28:3; Mk 8:24; Lk 12:56; Ap 4:1; 15:2.

David Palm: It is my understanding that there is only one truly papal text in this whole discussion, Alexander VII's bull republishing the Index. But again, according to his own word he only included earlier documents in order to establish the history of the various matters. This is the only actual papal document of which I am aware. The 1616 and 1633 documents were from Roman congregations and neither was approved by the Pope in forma specifica. I have said only that the decrees of Roman congregations approved in forma communi do not and cannot bind the universal Church to an irreformable, infallible doctrine. This is obvious even to honest inquirers outside the Church (as cited by the CE).

R. Sungenis: Suffice it to say that Mr. Palm's efforts to hang this whole thing on a pope is futile. The popes, regardless of what form they used, or whether they signed a document or not, were only following the Tradition laid before them. That Tradition said Scripture taught geocentrism and there was no way those popes were going to go against it without irrefutable scientific proof. None was available then, and none is available now. In fact, what is available now shows that geocentrism is the correct cosmology, not heliocentrism.

We also need to remember that, the concept of putting a Church doctrine into an "infallible and irreformable ex cathedra" statement that distinguished it from all other papal decrees (e.g., apostolic constitution) was not known by either Paul V, Urban VIII or Alexander VII, since the doctrine of papal infallibility was not declared and defined until more than 200 years later. But I can assure you, as even Ernan McMullin agrees, neither Paul V nor Urban VIII expected their decisions to be "reformable" in the future.

Moreover, the Church has not given us a list of what papal decrees before 1870 were infallible. So, at best, Mr. Palm's argument is anachronistic, not to mention presumptuous due to his lack of scientific proof for heliocentrism.

David Palm: The Church does not teach geocentrism as a matter of faith. She never has.

R. Sungenis: This is just more unbridled historiography from Mr. Palm. Just listen to the words of Pope Urban VIII to the Grand Duke of Tuscany concerning Galileo and heliocentrism, taken from *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, pages 203-206:

As was the case with Paul V, the present pope, Urban VIII, took the Galileo affair very seriously. There can be little doubt that Urban understood, as did his chief inquisitor, Robert Bellarmine, that nothing less than the veracity of Scripture was at stake. He was not about to let a relative upstart reverse fifteen centuries of Church teaching on little more than a scientific hunch. That the pope was interpreting Galileo's heliocentrism as a direct attack upon Scripture is noted in the text of the sentence against him that was approved by the pope:

...the said certificate [from Bellarmine] you produced in your defense aggravates your case further since, while it says that the said opinion is contrary to Holy Scripture, yet you dared to treat of it, defend it, and show it as probable; nor are you helped by the license you artfully and cunningly extorted since you did not mention the injunction you were under.²⁰

The pope's involvement and seriousness of mind is noted in how he communicated directly and privately with the Grand Duke of Tuscany's ambassador, Francesco Niccolini, who then reported his communications back to the Grand Duke's secretary of state, Andrea Cioli. Over the period of September 1632 to June 1633 the resolve of Pope Urban VIII against both heliocentrism and Galileo was made crystal clear for both the hierarchy of the Church and the Tuscany government. Beginning on September 5, 1632, Niccolini writes to Cioli:

Yesterday I did not have the time to report to Your Most Illustrious Lordship what had transpired (in a very emotional atmosphere) between myself and the Pope in regard to Mr. Galilei's work...I too am beginning to believe...that the sky is about to fall. While we were discussing those delicate subjects of the Holy Office, His Holiness exploded in great anger, and suddenly he told me that even our Galilei had dared enter where he should not have, in the most serious and dangerous subjects which could be stirred up at this time. I replied that Mr. Galilei had not published without the approval of his ministers....He answered, with the same outburst of rage, that he had been deceived by Galileo and Ciampoli...²¹

²⁰ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 19, pp. 403-404, as cited in Fantoli, p. 138.

²¹ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, p. 383, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 229. Original Italian: "Non hebbi tempo hieri di rappresentar a V. S. III. Quell che haveva passato meco a caso il Papa con gran sentimento a proposito dell'opera del S. Galilei, et io n'hebbi cara l'opportunità, perchè potetti dir qualche cosa a S. B. medesima, ben che senza alcun profitto; e quant'a me comincio a creder anch'io, come ben dice V. S. III, ch'il mondo habbia a cadere. Mentre si regionava di quelle fastidiose materie del S. Offizio, proroppe S. S. in molta collera, et all'improvviso mi disse ch'anche il nostro Galilei haveva ardito d'entrar dove non doveva, et in materie le più gravi e le più pericolose che a questi tempi si potesser suscitare. Io replicai ch'il S. Galilei non haveva stampato senza

Niccolini, clearly trying to make headway for Galileo, explained to Urban that Galileo's book, the *Dialogo*, was "dedicated to our Most Serene Patron," namely, the Grand Duke who, as was common in those days, had been secretly financing Galileo's work. But the pope's reply showed he was not going to budge an inch, and the reasons were theological in nature. Urban called Galileo's book nothing less than "the worst harm to religion...ever conceived." Niccolini describes the pope's reaction as follows:

He said that he had prohibited works which had his pontifical name in front and were dedicated to himself, and that in such matters, involving great harm to religion (indeed the worst ever conceived), His Highness [the Grand Duke] too should contribute to preventing it, being a Christian prince....I retorted that...I did not believe His Holiness would bring about the prohibition of the already approved book without at least hearing Mr. Galilei first. His Holiness answered that this was the least ill which could be done to him and that he should take care not to be summoned by the Holy Office; that he has appointed a Commission of theologians and other persons versed in various sciences, serious and of holy mind, who are weighing every minutia, word for word, since one is dealing with the most perverse subject one could ever come across....Finally, he told me to write to our Most Serene Patron that the doctrine is extremely perverse, that they would review everything with seriousness, and that His Highness should not get involved but should go slow; furthermore, not only did he impose on me the secret about what he had just told me, but he charged me to report that he also was imposing it on His Highness [the Grand Duke].²²

On September 11, Niccolini writes:

In fact, the Pope believes that the Faith is facing many dangers and that we are not dealing with mathematical subjects here but with Holy Scripture, religion, and Faith....However, above all he says, with the usual confidentiality and secrecy, that in the files of the Holy Office they have found something which alone is sufficient to ruin Mr. Galilei completely; that is, about twelve years ago, when it became known that he held this opinion and was sowing it in Florence, and when on account of this he was called to Rome, he was prohibited from holding this opinion by the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, in the name of the Pope and the Holy Office. So he says he is not really surprised that His Highness is acting with so much concern, for he has not been told all the circumstances of this business.²³

l'approvazione di questi suoi ministri, et ch'io medesimo havevo ottenuto e mandato in costà l'proemii a questo fine. Mi rispose con la medesima escandescenza, che egli et il Ciampoli l'havevano aggirata."

²² *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, p. 384, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 230.

²³ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, p. 388, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 232-233.

On September 18, Niccolini reports that the pope has no qualms about his strong reaction against Galileo:

He [the pope] retorted that in cases where religion might suffer damage, it was less harmful to overreact occasionally than to be remiss as a result of the reasons I mentioned, and thus to endanger Christianity with some sinister opinion; furthermore, he had been told by His Holiness that, since we are dealing with dangerous dogmas, His Highness [the Grand Duke, Cosimo Medici] should put aside all respect and affection toward his Mathematician and be glad to contribute himself to shielding Catholicism from any danger.

I replied by again humbly begging him to consider that Mr. Galilei is Mathematician to His Highness, currently employed and salaried by him, and also universally known as such. His Holiness answered that this was another reason why he had gone out of the ordinary in this case and that Mr. Galileo was still his friend, but these opinions were condemned about sixteen years ago and Galileo had gotten himself into a fix which he could have avoided; for these subjects are troublesome and dangerous, this work of his is indeed pernicious, and the matter is more serious than His Highness thinks... Then he added, telling me to report it fully to His Most Serene Highness, that one must be careful not to let Mr. Galilei spread troublesome and dangerous opinions under the pretext of running a certain school for young people...²⁴

On November 13, 1632, Niccolini again shows the pope's resolve in silencing the Copernican doctrine and bringing Galileo to trial in Rome:

...this morning I discussed it with His Holiness himself. After mentioning that Mr. Galilei is ready to obey and to comply with what he will be ordered to do, I undertook to explain to His Holiness the same things at great length, to move him to pity poor Mr. Galileo, who is now so old and whom I love and adore....However, His Holiness told me that...there was no way of avoiding Mr. Galilei's coming to Rome...for indeed it was necessary to examine him personally, and that God would hopefully forgive his error of having gotten involved in an intrigue like this after His Holiness himself (when he was cardinal) had delivered him from it....Finally, he reiterated that one is dealing with a very bad doctrine.²⁵

On February 27, 1633, just a few months now before Galileo's trial, Niccolini reiterates the pope's resolve:

²⁴ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, pp. 388-389, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 235-236.

²⁵ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, pp. 428-429, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 238-239.

Then he [the pope] went on to say that, in short, Mr. Galilei had been ill-advised to publish these opinions of his, and it was the sort of thing for which Ciampoli was responsible....His Holiness gives the impression that Mr. Galileo's doctrine is bad and that he even believes it, the task is not easy....His Eminence [Cardinal Antonio Barberini, brother of the pope] replied that he felt warmly toward Mr. Galilei and regarded him as an exceptional man, but this subject is very delicate for it involves the possibility of introducing some imaginary dogma into the world...²⁶

As the time gets nearer to the trial, Pope Urban's resolve seems to strengthen even more. On March 13, 1633, Niccolini writes:

I replied that I hoped His Holiness would double the obligation imposed on His Highness by exempting him from this [the trial]....but he again said he does not think there is any way out, and may God forgive Mr. Galilei for having meddled with these subjects. He added that one is dealing with new doctrines and Holy Scripture, that the best course is to follow the common opinion since he too is attracted to them and is a friend of the new philosophy; further, Mr. Galileo had been his friend, they have conversed and dined several times together familiarly, and he was sorry to have to displease him, but one was dealing with the interests of the faith and religion. I think I went on to add that if he is heard, he will easily give every satisfaction, though with the proper reverence which is due the Holy Office. He replied that Mr. Galilei will be examined in due course, but there is an argument which no one has ever been able to answer: that is, God is omnipotent and can do anything; but if He is omnipotent, why do we want to bind him? I said that I was not competent to discuss these subjects, but I had heard Mr. Galilei himself say that first he did not hold the opinion of the earth's motion as true and then that since God could make the world in innumerable ways, one could not deny that He might have made it this way. However, he got upset and told me that one must not impose necessity on the blessed God; seeing that he was losing his temper, I did not want to continue discussing what I did not understand, and thus displease him, to the detriment of Mr. Galilei.²⁷

On April 9, 1633, Niccolini adds the same. By this time Galileo is suffering from arthritis:

However, I could hide neither the ill health of this good old man, who for two whole nights had constantly moaned and screamed on account of his arthritic pains....This morning I spoke to His Holiness about it, and, after I expressed appropriate thanks for the advance notice he was so kind to give me, His Holiness said he was sorry that Mr. Galilei had gotten involved in this subject, which he considers to be very serious and of great consequence for religion.

²⁶ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 55-56, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 245-246.

²⁷ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 67-68, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 247.

Nevertheless, Mr. Galilei tries to defend his opinions very strongly; but I exhorted him...not to bother maintaining them and to submit to what he sees they want him to hold or believe about that detail of the earth's motion. He was extremely distressed by this, and, as far as I am concerned, since yesterday he looks so depressed that I fear greatly for his life.²⁸

On June 19, 1633, Niccolini reveals that it is the pope himself that formulated the conclusion that Galileo's cosmology was "erroneous and contrary to Holy Scripture":

This morning His Holiness displayed very friendly feelings in innumerable ways....Again I pleaded that Mr. Galilei's trial be brought to an end....However, he said that in regard to the issue, there is no way of avoiding prohibiting that opinion, since it is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scripture dictated by the mouth of God; and in regard to the person, as ordinarily and usually done, he would have to remain imprisoned here for some time because he disobeyed the orders he received in the year 1616.²⁹

Niccolini's revelation about the pope's decision coincides with the minutes of the Inquisition's June 16, 1633 meeting which "reported a papal decision outlining the conclusion of the trial, including an injunction to never again discuss the topic on pain of being treated as a relapsed heretic."³⁰

David Palm: On the contrary, she has given us the direct principle—taught by the great Doctors Augustine and Thomas—that on matters of scientific inquiry, on "how the heavens go", we are free to pursue these matters and come to varying conclusions. THAT is the teaching of the Church, as has been demonstrated here.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm has demonstrated no such thing. He ignores the Tradition and the consensus of the Fathers; he doesn't understand how Scripture teaches the subject of geocentrism; he nit-picks the Fathers to give the reader a bad impression of them; he gets caught up in "venues" and "infallibility" that are basically presumptuous and irrelevant; he puts too much weight on non-definitive statements (e.g., Benedict XV); he admits he has "limited knowledge" of science, yet sides with popular science; and he came to this issue five years ago with his arms folded and said he was going to make a public campaign against me. Now he is resorting to quoting from clichés to convince us that he has the freedom to dismiss the Tradition (e.g., "The Holy Spirit tells us how to get to heaven, not how the heavens go").³¹ And this is exactly what Mr. Palm wants us to accept, *i.e.*, that

²⁸ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 84-85, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 249.

²⁹ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 160, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 255.

³⁰ As noted by Finocchiaro in *Retrying Galileo*, p. 272.

³¹ Galileo wrote it quite poetically in his native Italian to Madama Cristina di Lorena: "...ciò è l'intenzione dello Spirito Santo essere d'insegnarci come si vadia al cielo, e non come vadia il cielo" ("that is the intention of the Holy Spirit which is to teach us how to go to heaven, and not how the heavens go") and attributes it as coming from "lo qui direi quello che intesi da persona ecclesiastica costituita in eminentissimo grado" ("Here I refer to the understandings of an ecclesiastical person in

somehow the Holy Spirit decided to leave the Church to her own devices for about a 100 or so years when she condemned Galileo and heliocentrism, yet we are supposed to believe that the same Holy Spirit stayed with the Church when she was fighting the Protestant Reformation during the same time!

David Palm: You admit that the Church has stopped teaching geocentrism as a part of the Faith. Good, I'm glad you admit that openly. Now, let's look at the specific instances you cited. Let's ask ourselves, has the Church stopped teaching THOSE things as part of the Faith?

R. Sungenis: So, using the same logic, Mr. Palm must admit that for all the centuries prior the Church continued to teach geocentrism (*i.e.*, for all those 1700 years prior to his arbitrary "300 year" period when he says the Church finally stopped teaching it). So what was it that Mr. Palm thinks led the Church to put geocentric teaching into disuse during that "300 year" period? Why science, of course! Certainly not because the Church SAID or WROTE that she was going to stop teaching geocentrism. The point is, the Church has NEVER officially stated that she has stopped teaching geocentrism. We only need the words of Agostino Gemelli in 1941 of the Pontifical Academy of Science when he said that neither Galileo, Newton, or Foucault proved heliocentrism; and we only need the silence of *Gaudium et spes* which excluded any reference to the Galileo issue so as not to say the Church of the past was in error; and we even have John Paul II's claim that it was all a big "misunderstanding." The only thing that has happened is the same that happened in Israel when everyman sat under his own fig tree – confusion.

David Palm: The evil of contraception. Still explicitly taught.

R. Sungenis: Not relevant, since it was only formally addressed in the 20th century. Even if it were relevant, most Catholics ignore it as much as they ignore geocentrism.

David Palm: * The indissolubility of marriage. Still explicitly taught.

R. Sungenis: How easy it is to get an annulment is also still explicitly taught. Why worry about the indissolubility of marriage when annulments are so easy to get?

David Palm: * The nature of and need for the Sacrament of Confession. Still explicitly taught.

R. Sungenis: How many people do you see lined up for Confession these days?

David Palm: * The grave sin of homosexual behavior. Still explicitly taught.

R. Sungenis: With a priesthood that is up to its ears with homosexuals and child molesters.

David Palm: * Scriptural inerrancy. Still explicitly taught.

a very eminent position"), who most suppose is Cardinal Cesare Baronio (*Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, 1968, vol. 5, p. 319, lines 25-28).

R. Sungenis: And still explicitly ignored by the vast majority of the prelature and Catholic academia based on the ambiguous phrase in *Dei Verbum* 11 (“for the sake of our salvation”).

David Palm: * The Virgin Birth. Still explicitly taught.

R. Sungenis: And doubted by many in Catholic academia. Just read Fr. Raymond Brown’s book on the Virgin Mary.

David Palm: * The establishment of the Sacrament of Holy Orders by Christ Himself. Still explicitly taught.

R. Sungenis: And practically ignored today, which has now resulted in the lowest number of priests per capita of any time in history.

My point in all this? To show that just as the Church maintains certain doctrines officially but which proves nothing about how and when the people in the Church will obey those doctrines, so the doctrine of geocentrism has never officially been rescinded yet people in the Church have decided not to believe it on their own.

David Palm: *** Geocentrism. Not taught. Not even implicitly. Not only not taught, but every indication given that this is no part of the deposit of Faith, that Catholics are perfectly free to hold divergent views.

R. Sungenis: Actually there is no statement where the Church says we are allowed to hold divergent views. Mr. Palm argues from silence.

David Palm: So, burden of proof is squarely on you to show how this could be reconciled with the dogma of the Indefectibility of the Church. I have already demonstrated how the matters surrounding the Galileo incident can be so harmonized.

R. Sungenis: No, in actuality, the burden of defending Indefectibility is squarely on Mr. Palm. First, Mr. Palm hasn’t shown that geocentrism is false, so how could the geocentric belief of Paul V and the rest of the popes to Gregory XVI be a measure of Indefectibility? The only way Indefectibility could possibly be relevant is if Paul V and the following popes were wrong about geocentrism. So where is Mr. Palm’s proof that they were wrong?

Second, Mr. Palm has the much greater burden of proof to show Indefectibility. For if the Church held a certain belief for his 1700 year period and only changed it for the last “300 years” (as he argued earlier), then the change of mind in the “300 year” period shows that the Church of the 1700 year period was defectible! Mr. Palm is trapped either way he goes.

David Palm: Your interaction with the quote from Benedict XV made me smile. Imagine that he had said, “If subsequent study has shown that Jesus Christ really is St. Michael the Archangel” or that “the Blessed Virgin Mary really didn’t maintain a virginal state throughout her life” or that “the Sacrament of Holy Orders really was not established by Christ”, then the encyclical would have immediately been tagged, especially by the enemies of the Church, as containing an obvious nod to heresy. But nobody blinked an eye. Why? Because the Church does not teach geocentrism as a matter of Faith. She never has.

R. Sungenis: She DID teach it was a matter of faith because it directly impinged on the veracity of Scripture, and this stipulation was made clear by Paul V and Urban VIII. No one “blinked an eye” for Benedict XV because in 1915 the science establishment was not challenging the Church on the identity of Jesus Christ or Mary’s virginity or the Priestly office, but was challenging the Church in two basic areas, cosmogony (evolution) and cosmology (heliocentrism). Because few in the Church really understood the science, it was winning the war. Benedict XV thus had a free pass to be equivocal. But when outside forces WERE challenging the Church on the identity of Christ and Mary, such as is the case in the Arian heresy of the 4th to 6th centuries, then there was a whole slew of prelates who were falling into heresy just like there are a slew of prelates today who have fallen for the heresy of heliocentrism. It took an Athanasius and a few fellow prelates to fight the Arian heresy and bring the rest of the Church back to its senses. The same thing will happen today when we show the bogus nature of popular science, and, just as in the Arian heresy, it may take a century or two to complete the job.

David Palm: Viva la difference.

R. Sungenis: I suggest David Palm do a lot more study, both in science and in the history of the Church’s teaching on cosmology, before he ever attempts to take up this issue again.

Barring that admonition, I wish him well.

Final Draft: December 22, 2010

Robert A. Sungenis, Ph.D.

Address all comments to cairomeo@aol.com