

Response to David Palm on the Tridentine Catechism's Treatment of Cosmology,

Debate 1

Palm: But the careful reader will notice that Bob has added the words "around the earth" to the Catechism because that's what he needs it to say in order to support geocentrism. The fact is, the Catechism never uses such words. Instead, it uses generic phrases like "certain and uniform course", "continual revolution", "fixed and regular motion", "motion and revolutions" with respect to the heavenly bodies. And these would apply just as well to the pre-Tridentine theories of **Bishop Nicolas Oresme** and **Cardinal Nicolas Cusa** as they would to Copernican heliocentrism and more modern acentric cosmologies. In other words, the Catechism does not teach anything with respect to any one scientific theory—that was not the intent of those passages.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm's argument boils down to this: somehow the writers of the Tridentine catechism, without knowing anything about future cosmology (acentrism, Kepler, Newton, Big Bang, Relativity, etc), wrote the 1566 catechism to accommodate views of cosmology other than geocentrism. Perhaps Mr. Palm believes the writers of the catechism were guided by the Holy Spirit to make such a futuristic accommodation. I don't know. The fact is, he believes it made an accommodation. That being the case, his hypothesis has several problems:

First, let's assume the Tridentine catechism was written without direct guidance from the Holy Spirit. As such, if the 1566 catechism is accommodating other views, why didn't any other arm of the Catholic magisterium accommodate other views? For example, Copernicus' 1543 book, *De Revolutionibus*, which espoused heliocentrism, was put on the Index in 1548. Rheticus' book on heliocentrism was put on the Index in 1541. These books were rejected for teaching "other views" only 20 years or so before the Tridentine catechism was published. Is Mr. Palm suggesting that the authors of the Tridentine catechism are rejecting official Church decisions on this issue? If so, he has severely injured the Catholic Church. The contradiction becomes even more profound in that the magisteriums of 1616 and 1633 formally and officially rejected any other view, and specifically, any view that said the earth moved, and this decision has never been rescinded by the Church.

If Mr. Palm decides to argue that the Tridentine catechism was guided by the Holy Spirit to give futuristic accommodation toward other views, why didn't the same Holy Spirit move the 1541 & 1548 Index, and the 1616 and 1633 decree and trial to make the same "accommodation"? Was the Holy Spirit selective in which branch of the Church He was going to guide? Isn't the better solution that the Holy Spirit was guiding the 1541, 1548, 1566, 1616 and 1633 arms of the magisterium to give the same answer to cosmology that began with an absolute consensus of the Fathers and was carried by the medieval theologians, namely, the unwavering teaching of geocentrism? Why would Mr. Palm want to say that only one time out of this 1600 year tradition did the Church suddenly change her mind and make an "accommodation" for the very views that it previously and subsequently rejected as false and heretical?

In a nutshell, the contradiction Mr. Palm creates within the Catholic magisterium is the whole problem with his approach. This takes us back to the very analogy of the monkey and the cookie in the vase that Mr. Palm tried to use against his opponents. Mr. Palm is so intent on suppressing any openness to geocentrism (the cookie) that he has no reticence in making the Catholic magisterium contradict itself (the breaking of the vase).

What are the real facts in the Tridentine catechism? It says the following:

- (a) that sun and stars move. It never says the earth moves and, in fact, says the earth “stands still”;
- (b) it says the sun and stars move in continual revolution. The only “revolution” that the 1500s knew about was the stars and sun revolving around the earth;
- (c) Oresme suggested the earth might be rotating, but such diurnal motion was rejected by the Index in 1541, 1548 and condemned both in 1616 and 1633.
- (d) Cusa said the earth could be moving but not necessarily by rotating or revolution, but this was also condemned in both 1616 and 1633 when the Church said that earth doesn’t move at all because Scripture said it didn’t move;
- (e) the Tridentine catechism knew of no alternate scientific theory other than heliocentrism when it supported geocentrism. It made no statement accepting heliocentrism. It made no mention of acentrism, or any other view. It gave no credence to Oresme, Cusa, Aristarchus, Pythagorus or any view that said the earth moved;
- (f) the Tridentine catechism knew that the Catholic tradition believed the earth did not move and it makes no statement that indicates a break with the Church’s tradition, including no break against the consensus of the Fathers on geocentrism.

Palm: This answers Bob's other off-point comment, "As such, Mr. Palm will also have to accept the fact that he cannot interpret land and earth literally in the catechism and then interpret the sun, moon and stars moving around the earth non-literally." Wrong. There are really two ways to answer this. First, the Magisterium teaches that the Holy Spirit did not put specifics about "the essential nature of the things of the visible universe" into sacred Scripture. Rather, they are depicted according to "what comes under the senses" (**Providentissimus Deus 18**). We cannot really expect more from the Roman Catechism than what we get from sacred Scripture itself concerning the precise details of celestial motions.

R. Sungenis: Prov. Deus makes no reference to cosmology. Mr. Palm continues to read into that encyclical what he wants to see. I could just as easily say that the Holy Spirit did not allow Pope Leo XIII to mention cosmology in Prov. Deus since He didn’t want Leo to say the sun going around the earth was just a figure of speech. Prov. Deus merely proves, once again, that Mr. Palm can find no explicit statement in the Catholic magisterium that overturns the 1616 and 1633 decisions condemning heliocentrism.

Palm: But second, the motions are literal, it's just that the Catechism does not give specifics about those motions. Can Bob prove that the theories of Bishop Oresme and Cardinal Cusa are excluded

by the Roman Catechism? No, he can't. It is he who reads subsequent controversies and his own cosmological biases back into the Roman Catechism and adds words that are not there, to make the Catechism say what he wants it to say.

R. Sungenis: As we already noted earlier, stating that Paul V and Urban VIII condemned ANY motion of the earth is not "reading back into the Roman Catechism." Those popes are showing Mr. Palm the tradition and the consensus that existed at the time the Tridentine catechism was written. They are showing Mr. Palm that any attempt to make an ambiguity in the Tridentine catechism into a Copernican or acentric view of cosmology is HIS reading into the Tridentine catechism what he wants to see. The burden of proof is on Mr. Palm to show that the Tridentine catechism is making an explicit rejection of the Tradition which held only to geocentrism.

Palm: But more importantly, notice how Bob plays both ends against the middle. He had already implicitly acknowledged that the other passages are not clear, that there was "doubt" that needed to be expelled. So he deployed the "foundations of the earth" passage which, he claimed, will "expel any doubt about what objects are revolving". But I proved that that passage has nothing to do with the motions of celestial bodies. Bob did not even engage my exegetical argument. (Neither did "johnmartin".) Instead, he circles back around to claim that the passages that he acknowledged are doubtful are now clear enough to support the meaning of this passage: "the burden of proof is on [Palm] to show that it means earth since the catechism has already stated it believes the sun, moon and stars revolve around the earth." The problem for Bob is that I did prove just that.

R. Sungenis: The only thing Mr. Palm "proved" is that "mundus" could be taken in two ways. I granted him that. But what Mr. Palm didn't prove is that the catechism is using "mundus" in the way he prefers. Again, the whole basis for Mr. Palm's contention is that the Tridentine catechism is breaking with the Tradition and accommodating other views when, in fact, the history both immediately before and after the Tridentine catechism (1541 to 1633) shows no such break.

Palm: The bottom line is that the Catechism's language accommodates more than one cosmological view, because the Catholic Church does not teach any one cosmology as a matter of faith. Bob huffs that "Even die-hard modernists admit that the Tridentine catechism teaches geocentrism. They just don't want to accept it, but at least they are not foolish enough to force the catechism into a mold that it cannot hold."

R. Sungenis: But there is no explicit statement in the Tridentine catechism saying that it "accommodates more than one cosmological view." Mr. Palm is suffering from an anachronistic reading of the catechism. If Mr. Palm thinks otherwise, he'll need to show us one place where the Church of that day or earlier used "uniform movement" and "revolution" in a sense other than the stars and sun revolving around the Earth.

Palm: But I categorically deny that the Roman Catechism teaches geocentrism or any cosmology at all and the arguments that I have deployed to demonstrate that apply every bit as much to the modernists as to the neo-geocentrists. But the fact that Bob will side with the Church's enemies in order to save his "pebble" of geocentrism pretty much proves my point: **"The neo-geocentrist fixation on their pet cause is like a monkey who reaches into a precious Ming vase to**

grasp a pebble. Intent only on holding onto that bit of rock and unable to extract his clenched fist, the monkey will happily smash the vase to get his "prize", heedless of the priceless nature of the treasure he has wrecked."

R. Sungenis: I don't "side with the Church's enemies." How can defending the Church against those who said she made a big mistake in the 1600s against Galileo and heliocentrism be "siding with the Church's enemies"? The "enemies" of the Church are those who deny its right to interpret the Bible literally and who make the theories of popular science their authority and Gospel. The same reason the Church interprets "This is my body" literally is the same reason she interpreted "and the earth does not move out of her place" literally. Why should there be any difference? Because some atheistic scientists have claimed otherwise? Along those lines, I've asked Mr. Palm many times for scientific proof that geocentrism is wrong and heliocentrism is right, but he refuses to even acknowledge the challenge, much less answer it.

Palm: 2) There is no instance in which the Magisterium of the Church has for centuries ceased to teach a doctrine of the Catholic faith.

In **Neo-geocentrism: Excessive Interest in Usury Comes to Naught** I pointed to instances in which neo-geocentrists attack the very Magisterium of the Church in order to explain their anomalous position. "johnmartin" deployed a whole list of doctrines which he claims the Catholic Church has "de facto denied" and speaks of "church [sic] silence" prompted by "inept leadership or fear of the science establishment". Rick Delano speaks of "surrender" and "abandoning" of "binding doctrines" and "dogmas" put forth by the "ordinary magisterium". And yet I have shown how, in each and every case, the Magisterium of the Church has explicitly reaffirmed the examples they propose, right up to the present day. This leaves geocentrism standing in utter isolation as the lone alleged exception to the rule. But the neo-geocentrists are simply wrong: it is not an exception at all because geocentrism is not now and never has been taught as a matter of faith by the Catholic Church, in either her ordinary or extraordinary Magisterium. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church teaches 100% of the doctrines of the Faith. That she does not teach geocentrism demonstrates that never has been part of the Faith. Neo-geocentrism is exactly as I have described it many times in discussions on the Catholic Answers Forum—an elaborate exercise in special pleading, both scientifically and ecclesiastically.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm dismisses the consensus of the Fathers that St. Robert Bellarmine used against Galileo, and which was approved by Paul V. Mr. Palm also dismisses the decrees approved by three popes (Paul V, Urban VIII and Alexander VII); he ignores the fact that Galileo was denied being removed by the Index (Benedict XIV); and that the only reason Settele got his imprimatur was because a lie was being circulated by the Commissioner, Olivieri, that the Church of the 1600s denied heliocentrism because it didn't have elliptical orbits. Mr. Palm also fails to show us even one place where the Church has officially overturned what was decreed against heliocentrism in 1616 and 1633.

Palm: Now "johnmartin" and Sungenis consistently miss this point. The former seeks to blunt my criticism of his extreme statements by appealing to what happens on the "local level". For the record, that is not what he said before. What he said was, "I've presented a list of doctrines that

have been de facto denied by the modern church” and “I believe the church silence on the matter of geo[centrism] in the last 300 years is easily accounted for through either inept leadership or fear of the science establishment”. I don't see any disclaimers in there about this only happening on the "local level". As such, his new argument seems to be a tacit recognition that his original argument was false. And it's interesting that this alleged ineptitude and cowardice didn't prevent the Magisterium from explicitly teaching on a wide range of volatile and controversial topics, from contraception to homosexuality to divorce and remarriage. Are we to believe that this alleged failure of competence and nerve is reserved only for geocentrism? Again, this is just one more instance of neo-geocentric special pleading.

Regardless, now "johnmartin" complains that he's been misunderstood. For example:

It is in this context that geocentrist claim that the doctrine of the stationary earth has been dropped in practice (in so far as it is not taught at the local level),...

and

Geocentrism is then only one part of a larger problem within the church. The doctrine of geocentrism has not been taught at the local level for some time, but then again, many other doctrines have also not been taught for a long time either.

It is true that on "the local level" many things have broken down in many parts of the world in the Catholic Church. But let's be clear. We aren't talking about "the local level" with respect to geocentrism. We're talking about what the universal Magisterium of the Catholic Church presents to the faithful as matters of faith. And I demonstrated that, while the Church certainly does not teach geocentrism as a matter of faith, she has reiterated her teaching formally in each and every example that "johnmartin" presented as supposed parallels.

Similarly, Sungenis deflects from the core issue by speaking of "what is actually being taught in many Catholic institutions". But that is not what we're talking about. We are talking about what is taught by the Catholic Magisterium, to the universal Church. The Catholic Church teaches 100% of the doctrines of the faith to the universal Church. She does not teach geocentrism. Ergo, geocentrism is not part of the Catholic faith. Period.

R. Sungenis: In 1833, only 178 years ago, the Church required a disclaimer to be put on Newton's Principia stating that the "Supreme Pontiffs have decreed, against Newton, that the Earth does not move." In 1850, only 161 years ago, the Church commissioned Mario Marini to write a book defending the Church's stand against heliocentrism. In 1942, only 69 years ago, the president of the Pontifical Academy of Science said that neither Foucault, Newton or Bradley proved heliocentrism. In 1965, only 46 years ago, Vatican II refrained from condoning heliocentrism or saying that the Church made a mistake in teaching geocentrism. So, within the last century or two, we have the Church still making comments supporting the prior tradition on geocentrism, and no official statement has ever been issued rejecting what the Church previously decreed against heliocentrism. So it is still there. One just has to dig a little deeper to find it.

Palm: If the neo-geocentrists actually could come up with a doctrine of the faith that the Magisterium had not publicly affirmed for many centuries, then they would at least have a parallel. They can't. Most Catholics would rejoice in the fact that, even in these dark and difficult times the Catholic Church continues to teach, publicly and solemnly, all the doctrines of our faith.

R. Sungenis: When was the last time the Church has officially, clearly and unequivocally endorsed full biblical inerrancy? The last time she did so was in 1943. Ever since then, we've had anemic statements about inerrancy, most of whose ambiguity has been twisted out of shape by various liberals to mean that the Church no longer believes in full biblical inerrancy (e.g., Dei Verbum 11). If Mr. Palm thinks otherwise, he needs to find us a statement after 1943 on full biblical inerrancy, or find a Catholic institution today that teaches it. He won't be able to. Why? Has the Church's teaching changed? No, but the old doctrine is too embarrassing for the sensibilities of most Catholics, so it is ignored. The same with geocentrism. It's too embarrassing, so it is ignored.

Palm: But not the neo-geocentrists (or at least not these neo-geocentrists). This fact is a cause of great vexation to them and so they instead scramble to manufacture whatever difficulties they can imagine. To them, geocentrism must be defended at all costs. Why is that so? What has led them to such fanaticism?

At least two reasons suggest themselves. First, some of these individuals have staked their very reputations on geocentrism. Perhaps they feel they've reached the point of no return and have no choice but to defend it to the bitter end.

R. Sungenis: Let me repeat it again for Mr. Palm. We believe in geocentrism because:

- (a) the Church Fathers were in consensus on geocentrism and refuted the Greek heliocentrists;
- (b) Scripture, interpreted literally as our tradition has always done, teaches geocentrism, not heliocentrism;
- (c) two popes, one in 1616 and the other in 1633, approved official and binding condemnations of heliocentrism;
- (d) the Council of Trent said that we are bound to doctrine taught by the Fathers in consensus;
- (e) the Tridentine catechism teaches geocentrism, not heliocentrism;
- (f) the only time the Church moved slightly on the issue was in 1835 to take Galileo off the Index, but she did so under false information;
- (g) the Church has issued no official rescission of the results of Galileo's 1633 trial;
- (h) science has found evidence that Foucault's, Newton's, Bradley's arguments for heliocentrism are now inconsequential and thus false;
- (i) the Church put disclaimers on Newton's Principia in 1833 and issued a defense of geocentrism in 1850;

(j) science has found new evidence (e.g., the CMB dipole from the 2001 WMAP; the 2005 SDSS survey) that puts Earth in the center of the universe, which is admitted by its own scientists (e.g., Lawrence Krauss);

(k) science has admitted by the General Theory of Relativity that whatever is claimed by the heliocentric universe is viable in a geocentric universe;

(l) science has admitted that one explanation for the 1887 Michelson-Morley experiment; the 1925 Michelson-Gale experiment, and many other experiments, is that the Earth is not moving.

In the face of all this evidence, Mr. Palm prefers that we ignore it all and would rather accuse us of holding to geocentrism because we overvalue our ego and don't want to be proved wrong. I would suggest that Mr. Palm look in the mirror.

Palm: Second, they've also presented geocentrism in such a way that their personal faith in the Catholic Church is dependent upon it. In their view, if geocentrism is not true then the Catholic Church isn't indefectible.

This latter problem particularly concerns me in that others who have the misfortune of encountering such misguided neo-geocentrist fanaticism—whether practicing Catholics or those considering the Catholic faith—may also be adversely affected. I know this from private notes I have received to date. But this "all or nothing" approach is, of course, a product of **manifest neo-geocentrist exaggeration** as to the authority and nature of the ecclesiastical documents that address geocentrism. For the Catholic who knows his faith, the truth or falsehood of geocentrism has no impact whatsoever on his trust in the Catholic Magisterium.

R. Sungenis: If the Church came out tomorrow with an official and binding statement and said that the previous Church was wrong in condemning heliocentrism and that science has confirmed that heliocentrism is true and the only cosmology we should accept, I and everyone else would forsake geocentrism in a second. Bottom line? The Church's existence does not depend on geocentrism. The support of geocentrism helps the Church maintain her credibility in the face of those who say that if she was wrong on a major doctrine in the past she can be wrong on major doctrines in the future. How many times have you heard people use the Church's supposed mistakes in the Galileo affair to posit that she can make mistakes in other important areas? Too many times. It's the very argument feminists use for a female priesthood, and homosexuals use to say that the Church is culturally biased against them, or any number of issues that involve an interpretation of both the ecclesiastical and scientific data.

Palm: Unfortunately, these neo-geocentrist fanatics are heedless of the damage they may be doing to others' trust in the Magisterium—all in order to open some glimmer of plausibility for their pet theory to be part of our faith. And this once again proves my point. To all appearances they will do anything to hang on to the "pebble" of their private fixation on geocentrism, even to the point of making a shipwreck of their faith and the faith of others.

R. Sungenis: How about the damage Mr. Palm creates when he puts the Tridentine catechism at odds with the very Tradition it came from? How about the damage Mr. Palm creates when he says

that previous pontiffs, who based their condemnations of heliocentrism on Tradition and Scripture, made mistakes on cosmology, but the current clerics, who base their decisions on the shifting winds of popular science, are correct? What about the damage Mr. Palm creates in saying that we can interpret literally such passages as “This is my body” even though it makes no sense scientifically, but such passages such as Psalm 19:1-6 we can’t interpret literally even though we can now show them to be scientifically acceptable? What about the damage Mr. Palm creates in making the consensus of the Church Fathers of no consequence when, in fact, the Council of Trent said we are bound to that consensus, and the Church has always held to that premise? What about the damage Mr. Palm causes when he reads into Leo XIII’s encyclical and says that Leo was referring to cosmology when Leo makes no such statement? What about the damage Mr. Palm creates when he ignores the real reason Settele got his imprimatur? Or when he ignores that “the Supreme Pontiffs” argued against Newton’s Principia that promoted heliocentrism? Or what about the damage Mr. Palm creates in suggesting Catholics ignore all the new scientific evidence that exonerates geocentrism simply because Mr. Palm neither knows the science nor commits to studying it to find out the new evidence? What about the damage Mr. Palm causes when he ignores the whole history of the Church’s direct teaching on geocentrism through 1850? Mr. Palm’s apologetic is the one that brings untold damage to the Church.

Second Debate on the Tridentine Catechism and Geocentrism

R. Sungenis: First, I want to thank Mr. Palm for catching an error in my chronology regarding Rheticus and Copernicus. Since the only legitimate goal of debate is truth, I am grateful for the correction. Unfortunately, there is reason to suppose that Mr. Palm's otherwise good deed may have proceeded from less than worthy motives. Moreover, in the end, the mistaken chronology only makes Mr. Palm’s position that much more untenable. Bear with me as I tell the story.

Mr. Palm: Bob Sungenis and "johnmartin" have written "rebuttals" of my latest essay, Sungenis and "johnmartin" Studiously Miss the Point (they can be found here and here.) Candidly, all they have done is to provide further proof that the neo-geocentric case is a massive exercise in ecclesiastical and scientific special pleading, gummed together with a hermeneutic of suspicion and a liberal dose of conspiracy theories to fill in the chinks.

I won’t be spending much time on "johnmartin"'s response, for the simple reason that it's silly. For example, "johnmartin" twice makes the argument that the Roman Catechism teaches geocentrism because a contested section involving the “earth” comes under the heading "The Formation of the Universe." But in a previous piece he agreed with me that this heading is a mistranslation, all without skipping a beat. Hello? ...

Now, turning to Bob Sungenis, while I’ve never been impressed by his scholarship in this area, I’m genuinely a bit shocked at the degree to which his arguments continue to degenerate. He's supposed to have studied this issue in great detail (Galileo Was Wrong was essentially his putative doctoral dissertation on geocentrism) and yet his reply was just shot through with outright errors, not to mention more of his usual debater's tricks. Here are just a few examples:

"For example, Copernicus' 1543 book, *De Revolutionibus*, which espoused heliocentrism, was put on the Index in 1548."

This is false. The Index of Forbidden Books was not even established until 1559. I think it's fair to surmise that Copernicus' work could not be put onto the Index before the Index was established. (Bob's oddly anachronistic argument here is reminiscent of his repeated insistence that the essential context for St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter 11 is the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which took place 13 years after the writing of Romans and 3 years after St. Paul was dead; see [here](#).)

In reality, Copernicus' work was not put on the Index until 1616, after the writing of the Roman Catechism.

"Rheticus' book on heliocentrism was put on the Index in 1541."

False. Obviously Rheticus' book, like that of Copernicus, couldn't have been put on the Index before it was even established. I find no evidence that Rheticus' works were ever put on the Index, but my search was certainly not comprehensive. Even if they were at some point, it certainly was not in 1541 or even in 1616, so Bob's statement is false.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm is not telling the whole story. First let me clarify. As I mentioned above, I made a mistake in saying that Rheticus' work was put on the Index in 1541. I was working from memory instead of checking my notes. What I should have said is that Rheticus' work was published in 1541 and put on the Index in 1559.

Now, what disturbs me about Mr. Palm's correction is that he knows what the truth is about this issue, that is, he knows that Rheticus' book was put on the Index in 1559 but he doesn't say so in his rebuttal. But I know Mr. Palm is aware that Rheticus was put on the Index since he has a copy of my book *Galileo Was Wrong, Volume 2* (from which he has quoted many times before, and specifically this section dealing with the 1500s). On page 164 (fifth edition) GWW states:

"Rheticus' works, including the earlier pro-Copernican work, *Narratio prima*, were all placed on the Index of Forbidden Books published between 1559-1593, with a subsequent suppression of *Narratio* ordered by the Inquisition in 1598."

Now, if Mr. Palm chose to be as accurate and forthright with his audience as possible, he would have alerted them to this fact, since it is clearly written in my book. Subsequently, he would have instead revealed that in my recent rebuttal to him I made an oversight in saying Rheticus was put on the Index in 1541 since I say in my book that it was 1559. But we don't see any such consideration and leeway given by Mr. Palm. So I need to pose this question: is Mr. Palm interested in the truth, or is he just interested in trying to make Robert Sungenis look bad?

Mr. Palm made a similar obfuscation in regards to Copernicus. Again, working from my faulty memory, I mistakenly said in my rebuttal that *De revolutionibus* was put on the Index in 1548. What I meant to say is what was already written in my book, *Galileo Was Wrong*. On page 165, I write these words:

The fact that Copernicus' book, *De revolutionibus*, was printed by a Lutheran who also had printed other non-Catholic works that the Inquisition had censured, added a flavor of animosity to the issue that only religious disputes can generate. Bartolomeo Spina, the Master of the Sacred Palace from 1542 until his death in 1547, sought to have Copernicus' book banned, which was eventually carried out by his Dominican colleague Giovanimaria Tolosani, who died two years later in 1549.

In other words, the correct history is that Copernicus' book was banned in 1549 by the Master of the Sacred Palace (which is like our prefect of the CDF today). Now, wouldn't it have been more honest and certainly more beneficial for the reading audience for Mr. Palm to give this precise history since, as is apparent, he is claiming to be such a stickler for details? Instead, Mr. Palm hides the real truth and decides to make it appear that there was no censure of either Rheticus or Copernicus! The only thing Mr. Palm seems interested in doing is pointing out my mistake.

Why would Mr. Palm do such a thing? I think that is easy to discern. I had challenged him with the fact that the 1566 Tridentine Catechism would not allow other views of cosmology because both before and after the Catechism was published the Church disallowed views other than geocentrism. Since it is the case that Rheticus' book, which advocated heliocentrism, was placed on the Index in 1559, this is only seven years prior to the Catechism! So how is Mr. Palm going to explain that a Catechism published so shortly after a major decision of the Church to ban alternative cosmologies will be blatantly disagreeing with that prior Church decision to ban heliocentrism? Likewise for the banning of Copernicus' book in 1549. Both these decisions directly refute Mr. Palm's thesis.

So in the end, Mr. Palm only dug his hole deeper. By not being forthcoming with his audience and instead trying to strain at the gnat of a simple and easily corrected mistake while swallowing the camel of a tendentious misreading of the historical data, he has given us a chance to set the historical record straight and show that his thesis is even more dubious than before, since the placing of Rheticus' book on the Index was only seven years prior to the publishing of the Tridentine Catechism instead of twenty five years prior!

And here we need to ask the fair question. Since Mr. Palm knew the correct dates were in my book but he failed to mention that fact in his present rebuttal, is Mr. Palm in this debate just to score points against Bob Sungenis? Is he in this debate just so he can play the "gotcha" game? I'm in it for the truth. How about Mr. Palm?

Palm: (quoting R. Sungenis): "It [the Roman Catechism] never says the earth moves and, in fact, says the earth "stands still""

False. The Roman Catechism never uses that phrase. Once again, Bob is adding words to the Catechism that are not there. And it's time for him to stop dodging the exegetical argument I deployed that proves that the "foundation of the earth" passage has nothing to do with the position of the globe in relation to the universe, but instead speaks of the relationship of dry land to water on the surface of the earth. Here is the passage again:

The earth [terram] also God commanded to stand in the midst of the world [mundi], rooted in its own foundation, and made the mountains ascend, and the plains descend into the place which he

had founded for them. That the waters should not inundate the earth, He set a bound which they shall not pass over; neither shall they return to cover the earth. He next not only clothed and adorned it with trees and every variety of plant and flower, but filled it, as He had already filled the air and water, with innumerable kinds of living creatures.

Notice again that the Catechism states that God clothed the terram with "trees and every variety of plant and flower". He also filled it with living creatures, "as He had already filled the air and water". In other words, this terram is something distinct from the air and the water. The passage makes perfect sense if terram means "dry land", as it does in Gen 1:10. It makes no sense whatsoever if it means the entire earth, as in "the globe"—which is what the neo-geo needs it to say.

As such, I challenge Bob to provide a coherent counter-exegesis to support his interpretation or admit that this passage says nothing about geocentrism. That goes for "johnmartin" too, who, as I accurately stated, did not even engage this exegetical argument. It is Bob's claim that the Roman Catechism contains "One of the clearest official and authoritative statements from the Catholic Church defending the doctrine of geocentrism..." and he speaks of the "Roman Catechism's dogmatic assertion of geocentrism". This is the passage that he claimed would, "expel any doubt about what objects are revolving". Thus, he is the one who needs to prove that his is the only possible reading of this and the other passages. Remember that he is the one making this claim that not even the prelates during Galileo's day made, that the Roman Catechism teaches geocentrism dogmatically and clearly. He's already given the game away by saying my interpretation could be correct. To support his exaggerated claims he would need to demonstrate that my view is not reasonable and that his is the only interpretation that is reasonable. But while he's already given the game away by saying my interpretation could be correct, he has yet to show how his own interpretation is even reasonable at all, let alone the only correct one. It is past time to stop dodging his burden of proof and provide some, or else finally admit that he has misread this passage.

R. Sungenis: It looks like I have to repeat and elaborate on my previous argument, since Mr. Palm doesn't understand it. First, let's reiterate my main argument, which is: if the Tridentine catechism is allowing other cosmologies and not teaching geocentrism, then it is directly contradicting the magisterial decisions both before and after it, not to mention the consensus of Church Fathers and medievals that specifically and officially **DISALLOWED** alternative cosmologies to geocentrism.

Second, Mr. Palm wants us to believe that the only way to read the Catechism's statement is for us to see "terrum" as referring only to the "dry land" of the earth and not the earth at large. He makes this conclusion in the face of three statements in the Catechism that say the sun and stars move in their circuits uniformly, and he knows that the Catechism never says the earth revolves around the sun. So, with the odds stacked against him, he must try to denude the Catechism of teaching geocentrism, ergo, "terram" becomes "dry land" not "earth"; and "mundus" becomes "earth" not "world or universe." But this is futile. Let's look at the Catechism's statement very closely:

"The earth [terram] also God commanded to stand in the midst of the world [mundi], rooted in its own foundation."

Can Mr. Palm tell us of any place in Scripture, the Fathers, the medievals, Tridentine Catechism or any Catholic scholarly work where the “dry land” is commanded to stand in the “midst” of the earth? I don’t know of any. In fact, I don’t know of any place in all of Catholic literature where it is said that dry land was placed in the “midst” or middle of the earth. But I do know of a lot of places where the Fathers, the Popes, the Congregations, and even the banning of Rheticus’ and Copernicus’ books where it is stated that the earth was commanded to stand in the “midst” of the “world” or universe. I do know a lot of places where Scripture says the earth doesn’t move, which would necessarily make it the center.

The only possible place where Mr. Palm might get some relief is Genesis 1:9: “And God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.’ And it was so.” But there is nothing here about the dry land being made to stand in the middle or midst of the earth. The dry land covered various parts of the surface of the earth, not the midst or middle of the earth. The “midst of the earth” would have been the center of the earth, since there is no “midst” or “middle” to a sphere other than the center of the sphere. The surface of the land would not contain a “midst” or middle position. Hence, the only way “midst” could make sense is if the earth was placed in the middle of the universe. Not surprisingly, this solution would fit like a glove with the Catechism’s statements about the sun and stars which, “by their motions and revolutions,” must revolve around a central point, the “midst” or middle of the universe.

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "Oresme suggested the earth might be rotating, but such diurnal motion was rejected by the Index in 1541, 1548 and condemned both in 1616 and 1633."

False. No such ideas were addressed on the Index in 1541 or 1548, because it had not even been established yet.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm’s rebuttal is just another quibble. The issues of rotation and revolution *were addressed*, since both Rheticus and Copernicus claimed the earth moved but the Master of the Sacred Palace said it didn’t move, and he based his argument on Scripture and the Fathers.

Palm: And the neo-geos have greatly exaggerated the nature of the condemnations of 1616 and 1633. See my Neo-Geo Double Standards and Exaggerations on Magisterial Documents and also more detail in a forthcoming essay.

R. Sungenis: In 1616 the Sacred Congregation of the Index condemned Copernicanism and it was approved by the reigning pope, Paul V. In 1633, a canonical trial determined that heliocentrism was “formally heretical,” which was approved by the reigning pope, Urban VIII. What is there to exaggerate? It is a fact that unless a canonical trial is formally and officially overturned, then its results remain, no matter how long the passage of time. This was confirmed by the Sacred Office when Lalande tried to get Galileo off the Index in 1775. It is one thing for Mr. Palm to claim these teachings had been reversed, or abandoned. It is quite another for him to spin a self-serving yarn to the effect that they were never taught at all!

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "the Tridentine catechism knew of no alternate scientific theory other than heliocentrism when it supported geocentrism. It made no statement accepting heliocentrism."

It made no mention of acentrism, or any other view. It gave no credence to Oresme, Cusa, Aristarchus, Pythagorus or any view that said the earth moved;"

Gratuitous assertion and straw man. Cardinal Cusa's theories were never condemned and Bob has no proof that the authors of the Catechism could not have been aware of them. And once again, Bob is tilting at windmills. I specifically said that the Catechism does not teach any cosmological system. It teaches nothing and rejects nothing about specific cosmological systems.

R. Sungenis: As we have seen, the Catechism says that the earth was placed in the "midst" or middle of the world (or universe). Land is never said to be placed in the midst of the earth. As such, Mr. Palm's interpretation of the Catechism is askew. As for Cusa, his theory was not formally condemned but it was implicitly condemned since in 1548, 1559, 1616 and 1633 the Church condemned any theory that said the earth moved, whether in rotation or revolution. These are the facts. Unfortunately, Mr. Palm is trying to make the Tridentine Catechism open to any theory, in direct refutation of all the magisterial statements both before and after the Catechism that denied any other theory.

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "the Tridentine catechism knew that the Catholic tradition believed the earth did not move and it makes no statement that indicates a break with the Church's tradition, including no break against the consensus of the Fathers on geocentrism."

and

"How about the damage Mr. Palm creates when he puts the Tridentine catechism at odds with the very Tradition it came from? How about the damage Mr. Palm creates when he says that previous pontiffs, who based their condemnations of heliocentrism on Tradition and Scripture, made mistakes on cosmology, but the current clerics, who base their decisions on the shifting winds of popular science, are correct?"

Again, straw man. One more time—The Catholic Church does not teach any system of cosmology as a matter of faith. A Catholic is free to hold to geocentrism. A Catholic is free to hold to acentrism. No theory of celestial motion is a matter of faith in the Catholic Church. Thus, obviously, I never said that the Catechism breaks with any tradition. Rather, it uses generic language that does not assert any specific cosmological system. So, enough of Bob's debater's tricks and straw men.

R. Sungenis: Debate tricks? Hardly. It seems when I disagree with Mr. Palm's position it is a "debater's trick" or, as he claimed earlier, "a massive exercise in ecclesiastical and scientific special pleading, gummed together with a hermeneutic of suspicion and a liberal dose of conspiracy theories to fill in the chinks." I simply refuse to get into any of that school yard nattering.

Palm: It belongs to a future essay to demonstrate that there is no such doctrinally binding consensus of the Fathers on geocentrism.

R. Sungenis: So now Mr. Palm is going to disagree with the Sacred Congregation, St. Robert Bellarmine, and the approval of Paul V all of which said that the consensus of the Church Fathers taught geocentrism not heliocentrism? I don't know one person or scholar who hasn't admitted that

the Church Fathers held a consensus on geocentrism. The usual way this is answered is to claim that Pope Leo did not hold us to a patristic consensus. So Mr. Palm will be the first person in Catholic history to argue with a new thesis – that the Fathers weren't in consensus on geocentrism. Good luck.

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "the only reason Settele got his imprimatur was because a lie was being circulated by the Commissioner, Olivieri that the Church of the 1600s denied heliocentrism because it didn't have elliptical orbits."

False. In the process of accusing a priest of purposeful subterfuge Bob has seriously garbled the facts. Let me just cite two points here, with more to come in the future. First, several times in GWW2 (e.g. pp. 233, 244-5, 261, 262) he speaks of Fr. Olivieri as the Commissary General of the Congregation of the Index. But Fr. Olivieri actually held that position in the Congregation of the Holy Office (the same office that issued the Galileo decree.) A relatively small point, perhaps, but if you're going to accuse a priest of ecclesiastical treason then it behooves you to get your facts straight.

R. Sungenis: So it's against some code of ethics to accuse a priest of subterfuge, even when we have the evidence from historical scholars that Olivieri did precisely what I accuse him of? And if Mr. Palm thinks that I misconstrued the true office of Olivieri, let him show us the evidence instead of his mere assertions.

Palm: What's made very clear throughout GWW2 is that Bob doesn't like Fr. Olivieri very much. Here are just some of the charges he levels. He accuses Fr. Olivieri of being "devious", of "tortured logic", of putting forth "one of the most ludicrous and egregious forms of rationalization ever propounded by an ecclesiastical ward", of "calculating and deceptive motives", of "duplicity", of "twisting the truth", of "outright falsehood", of "attempt[ing] to twist and distort the truth", of a "concocted analysis", of "specious argumentation", of "malicious distortion of the historical record", of a "deliberate attempt to confuse the issue by inserting the red herring of elliptical orbits", and of "one of the most deceptive pieces of propaganda ever foisted on the Catholic Church". (Does this level of insult and invective sound like the kind of material you would expect to find in a "doctoral dissertation"? Not to me.)

R. Sungenis: Instead of faulting Olivieri for making up a lie about why the 1616 and 1633 magisterium condemned Copernicanism, Mr. Palm decides to turn his guns on me for pointing out Olivieri's lie. I'll let the reader judge the rationality of that kind of approach. See my explanation below.

Palm: But the fact is that Bob has seriously misrepresented Fr. Olivieri's arguments. In the quote above and in GWW2 Bob boils the whole thing down to a matter of "elliptical orbits". He asserts, without evidence, that, "'devastating mobility' refers to non-elliptical planetary revolutions" (GWW2, p. 250). He calls this claim "preposterous" and so it would be, if that was actually what the Commissary General was saying. But Bob has misconstrued what Fr. Olivieri meant by "devastating motion".

When the Commissary General speaks of, "the devastating motion from which Copernicus and Galileo had been unable to free the motions of axial rotation and orbital revolution which they ascribed to the earth" (Finocchiaro, *Retrying Galileo*, p. 208), he meant that the natural philosophers of Galileo's day (and even Galileo himself) could not figure out how it could be that the earth was revolving around the sun and rotating on its axis and we don't experience that as a devastating motion that lays waste the surface of the earth. He cites Msgr. Fabroni explaining just this:

The Roman theologians were stressing the great disturbances of which we spoke, that is, the confusion of things produced by the earth's motion. . . . the waters of the sea, the flow of rivers, the waters of wells, the flight of birds, and all atmospheric phenomena would be completely disturbed and intermingled (Finocchiaro, *Retrying Galileo*, p. 207).

Fr. Olivieri says, rightly, that this "devastating motion" was one of the reasons that the theological commission in 1616 said that Copernicanism was "absurd in philosophy", by which they meant natural philosophy, i.e. science. But even neo-geocentrists have to admit that this ruling has been proved to be erroneous, that there is now no natural philosophical absurdity in saying that the earth rotates around the sun and revolves on its axis. How in the world Bob equates "devastating motion" with "non-elliptical planetary revolutions" is a great mystery. What is clear is that Bob has totally misunderstood and misrepresented Fr. Olivieri on this point.

Fr. Olivieri also pointed to many other instances in which the views of modern astronomers differed from a strict Copernicanism. Elliptical orbits was one. He also noted that astronomers no longer believe that the sun is the center of the universe. They no longer believe that the sun is motionless. They have solved the difficulties of the "devastating motion" problem, thereby clearing modern views of the natural philosophical absurdity that formed a key part of the evaluation of the theologians of the Holy Office in 1616. And Fr. Olivieri pointed to additional scientific discoveries and observations—most notably aberration and nutation—that gave additional support to non-geocentric cosmology (these can only be explained in the neo-geocentric system through more special pleading.)

R. Sungenis: So Mr. Palm is now engaging in science (for the first time, I might add) and telling us that the geocentric explanation of aberration is not possible? I'd love to see it. Please follow up on this, Mr. Palm. For the moment, I think it is probably simplest to allow Mr. Palm's assertion regarding "special pleading" above to be refuted by Albert Einstein himself:

"The struggle, so violent in the early days of science, between the views of Ptolemy and Copernicus would then be quite meaningless. Either coordinate system could be used with equal justification. The two sentences, 'the sun is at rest and the earth moves', or 'the sun moves and the earth is at rest', would simply mean two different conventions concerning two different coordinate systems." (*The Evolution of Physics: From Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta*, Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, New York, Simon and Schuster 1938, 1966 p. 212)

Palm: I will have more to say about the actions of the Congregation of the Holy Office in 1820-22 later. But I believe what I have outlined above shows that Bob has vastly oversimplified and therefore garbled the matter by speaking only of elliptical orbits. He then repeatedly slanders a Catholic priest based on his own confused analysis.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm is wrong. First “devastating mobility” can refer to a number of things, not just the idea that the surface of the earth would be disrupted by movement through space. Second, and most important, Olivieri admits himself that elliptical orbits of the planets are the crux of the issue, and I quote his admission on page 251 of *Galileo Was Wrong* in plain sight of Mr. Palm’s perusal, since he has my book. Olivieri stated:

Along with modern astronomers, Settele does not teach that the sun is at the center of the world: for it is not the center of the fixed stars; it is not the center of heavy bodies, which fall toward the center of our world, namely of the earth; nor is it the center of the planetary system because it does not lie in the middle, or center, **but to one side at one of the foci of the elliptical orbits that all planets trace**. Still less does he teach that the sun is motionless; on the contrary, it has a rotational motion around itself and also a translational motion which it performs while carrying along the outfit of all its planets. (From Olivieri’s November 1820 Summation, titled, “Ristretto di Ragione, e di Fatto,” ¶30, as cited by Finocchiaro in *Retrying Galileo*, p. 205.)

Added to this are the words of Finocchiaro (which Mr. Palm apparently missed) as he comments on the Settele affair and the real reason Settele was given an imprimatur:

...Father Grandi. Working in agreement with Olivieri and basing himself on his argumentation, he had tried to realize the objective of saving the good name of the Holy See, substantially **by emphasizing the fact that the Copernican system**, by then recognized even by Catholic authors, **had been purified from errors and inconsistencies which made it unacceptable in its original form**. This was equivalent to maintaining that the Church had not erred in 1616 by putting on the Index a work at that time so defective at the level of physics and that now the Church was legitimately authorized to approve it after its errors were corrected. And it was, as a matter of fact, this which ‘was suggested’ to poor Settele to make skillfully known in his work...**That is, the Church had been right in condemning the latter from a scientific point of view, because Galileo had also upheld heliocentrism in its unsatisfactory Copernican form...**” (*Retrying Galileo*, p. 520).

If we add these two things together we see that Olivieri made up a lie that the 1616 and 1633 Church rejected Copernicus and Galileo because they didn’t put their planets in elliptical orbits around the sun. Instead of admitting that the 1616 and 1633 Church condemned ANY system that made the earth move, Olivieri and Grandi proposed that the Church only condemned the defective parts of the Copernican and Galilean systems!

What must have been on Olivieri’s mind as to the defects of the Copernican and Galilean systems? Olivieri reveals it to us right in the quote above, that is, “Settele does not teach that the sun is at the

center of the world...**but to one side at one of the foci of the elliptical orbits that all planets trace.**" In other words, Olivieri is saying that since Copernicus and Galileo didn't include Kepler's elliptical orbits of the planets, their systems didn't work. It was ingenious effort to get the Church off the hook and get Settele an imprimatur but it was a complete lie, since the 1616 and 1633 Church never even addressed the defects of the Copernican and Galilean systems, but condemned them outright because they made the earth move. In other words, the 1616 and 1633 Church didn't care whether Kepler proposed that the earth and the planets moved in elliptical orbits. ANY system other than a motionless earth was condemned. This is precisely why Kepler's book on elliptical orbits of the planets was put on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1664 by Alexander VII, and it was never taken off. So much for Mr. Palm's revisionist history.

Now, if Mr. Palm retorts that Olivieri also said that the Copernican and Galilean systems were thought to be defective because Olivieri proposed that in his day (1822) "astronomers no longer believe that the sun is the center of the universe. They no longer believe that the sun is motionless," the same accusation of perpetrating a lie applies since Olivieri is trying to take our focus off of the real reason the 1616 and 1633 Church rejected Copernicanism and refocus it on the idea that Copernicus' model was inherently defective because it made the sun the center of the universe instead of being in motion. Quite frankly, the 1616 and 1633 Church didn't care one whit about the merits or demerits of the Copernican system. It only allowed his book to be published in 1620 if, and only if, all the assertions about the earth going around the sun were made hypothetical. It emphatically stated that the Copernican theory was heretical because it made the earth move and forbade the sun to revolve around the earth, period. I suggest Mr. Palm go back and read the decrees of 1633. He will find nothing there about elliptical orbits; the sun being the center of the universe or moving amongst the stars.

Palm: What's more, I would note something else that I will be expanding upon, namely, that this is all perfectly in line with the Church's actual canonical protocol. The Catholic Church has taught from time immemorial that canonical censures are to be interpreted strictly.

Laws that establish penalties, restrict the free exercise of rights, or contain an exception to the law must be interpreted strictly (c. 18) It is long-standing canonical tradition that restrictive laws must be narrowly applied. . . . Strict interpretation means that the sense of the words of the canon and the scope of its application are limited as much as reasonably possible. (J. A. Coriden, An Introduction to Canon Law, 202-3)

Note well that it is the neo-geos who turn this principle on its head by striving to apply the 1633 decree against Galileo as broadly as possible, to as many people as possible. Conversely, the Catholic Church applies her canonical principles to modern cosmological views and rules that these don't fall under the disciplinary decrees of the seventeenth century.

R. Sungenis: So let's interpret the canonical trial of 1633 "strictly." It stated that any system that makes the earth move and the sun not revolve around the earth is "formally heretical." So that means that any system, be it Copernican, Galilean, Keplerian, Newtonian, Einsteinian or whatever, is "strictly" prohibited because all those theories make the earth move and the sun not revolve around the earth. Very simple. Not much wiggle room there. Of course, if one is going to accept

Olivieri's fabricated reasons for why the 1616 and 1633 Church rejected Copernicanism (as Mr. Palm does), then one would naturally see the 1633 canonical trial as accommodating modern views of cosmology. But since those magisteriums DID NOT see it the way Olivieri did, Mr. Palm is just digging his hole deeper and deeper.

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "In 1833, only 178 years ago, the Church required a disclaimer to be put on Newton's *Principia* stating that the "Supreme Pontiffs have decreed, against Newton, that the Earth does not move.""

This is yet another example of blatant neo-geo exaggeration and what might be termed "fabricative evolution". Here's what Bob says about this matter in GWW:

"...when the three-volume edition of the *Principia* was published in Geneva, the Catholic Church apparently had enough power to assign two Minim friars from the Franciscan order, Thomas Le Seur and François Jacquier as editors . . . although Newton assumed the heliocentric system to be true, this was not the belief of the editors, Le Seur and Jacquier, who represented the Catholic Church (GWW2, p. 241)."

Here, Bob starts with an assertion, made up out of whole cloth, that "the Catholic Church apparently had enough power to assign two Minim friars from the Franciscan order . . . as editors" He claims that they were, "commissioned by the Church". But he cites no evidence that the Church had anything officially to do with these friars being the editors of the *Principia*. None.

R. Sungenis: Instead of being amazed by the fact that for almost two hundred years the same disclaimer against heliocentrism was put on Newton's *Principia* and which disclaimer was permitted by the Catholic Church without censure, Mr. Palm is seeking to refocus the debate on whether these Franciscan friars were "commissioned" by the Church. You see, Mr. Palm doesn't like the fact that the *Principia* contains a disclaimer rejecting Newton's heliocentrism, so he has to find some way to neutralize the disclaimer. The best way, he thinks, is to make the disclaimer the personal opinion of the Franciscan friars instead of being representative of the consensus of the Church of that day. Mr. Palm is trying to convince us that these friars were just mavericks going against the tide. This is the same thing he tried to do with the Tridentine Catechism – make it appear as if the Catechism was accommodating other cosmological views when, in fact, all the magisterial statements both before and after the Catechism rejected Copernicanism and held only to geocentrism.

Although I admit that "commissioned" may perhaps be too strong a word, I did not mean it in the sense that the Church formally employed Jaquier and Le Suer to write the commentary but that Jaquier and Le Suer had the Church's undivided sanction and endorsement. You can depend upon it that if the Church had disagreed with the disclaimer and had decided by 1739 to accommodate cosmologies other than geocentrism, the disclaimer would have been removed since the disclaimer is making the bold and well publicized proclamation that all the "Supreme Pontiffs" have rejected Newton's heliocentrism. In 1739, when Jaquier and Le Suer first published their commentary, the Index against heliocentrism was alive and well, as noted by the fact that Benedict XIV kept

Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler on the Index in 1741 and 1758. If Jaquier and Le Suer had promoted Newton's heliocentrism, they would have been put on the Index as well.

Palm: But in his latest reply to me this gratuitous assertion takes on a life of its own and evolves even further. Now, suddenly, according to Bob, "the Church required a disclaimer to be put on Newton's Principia" (my emphasis). This is, of course, a gross exaggeration. Two priest-editors with no official mandate suddenly evolve into "the Church". If there were anyone who would have made hay of these priests' alleged official status, it would have been William Roberts. Roberts wrote a book attacking papal infallibility based on the Church's handling of the Galileo affair. Yet, even Roberts called this merely "the opinion of its Roman editors" (The Pontifical Decrees Against the Doctrine of the Earth's Movement, p. 53; my emphasis).

R. Sungenis: What Mr. Palm misses is that Roberts called them "ROMAN editors," not just editors. In other words, even Roberts knows that these Franciscan friars are working with and have the endorsement of Rome. Everyone knows this, except, apparently, Mr. Palm.

Palm: Considering the fact that Galileo Was Wrong was essentially Bob's putative "doctoral dissertation" on geocentrism and that Bob received particular praise from Calamus International for the alleged depth and caliber of his research, one wonders how he failed to even find, let alone interact with, the copious material I've presented here that contradicts his thesis. It's not as if this material was hiding somewhere or as if I've spent the hours necessary to earn a doctorate.

R. Sungenis: As we can see, all Mr. Palm's efforts of success are in his own mind. Each one of his rebuttals have been shown to be either erroneous or incomplete. Of course, Mr. Palm, holding the vendetta against me that he has for the last seven years, has now attacked my doctoral dissertation twice in this rebuttal, and obviously, it is for the specific reason to try to discredit me and the dissertation. But I'm not interested in getting into a tit-for-tat on the personal side of things. I'm only interested in Mr. Palm's objections, and they are easy to refute. All Mr. Palm's efforts only make the next edition of Galileo Was Wrong that much stronger, and for that I say Thank you, Mr. Palm.

Palm (quoting Sungenis): "If the Church came out tomorrow with an official and binding statement and said that the previous Church was wrong in condemning heliocentrism and that science has confirmed that heliocentrism is true and the only cosmology we should accept, I and everyone else would forsake geocentrism in a second."

If Bob wants to assert once again that cosmology was somehow specifically excluded from these teachings of Leo XIII and Pius XII—despite the fact cosmology is considered the most obvious application for their words—then the burden is on him to prove that, not just assert it. The point that seems to elude him is that these popes laid out a general principle that plainly applies to cosmology. If he wants to carve out an exception to this principle for geocentrism, then he needs to provide justification from these encyclicals or some other authoritative source—something he has failed to do. As such, his argument here is nothing more than bare, unsupported assertion—in a nutshell, more special pleading.

R. Sungenis: This is indicative of Mr. Palm's previous attempts to turn the tables, but they are futile. The fact remains that the burden of proof is on the one who claims that a document addresses a

certain topic when, in fact, the document makes no mention of the topic. That Mr. Palm refuses to recognize this shows his desperation. As I said in my previous rebuttal, one could just as easily claim that Leo XIII and Pius XII did not mention cosmology because they were directed by the Holy Spirit not to do so, in addition to the fact that neither Leo XIII or Pius XII wanted to call into question the decisions of the 1616 and 1633 Church without doing a formal and official study of the matter. What pope would want to indict his papal predecessors without doing a formal and official investigation into both the history and the science of cosmology before he accused them of error? As it stands, Mr. Palm is the one accusing Paul V and Urban VIII of error, not Leo XIII and Pius XII.

Palm: After that, he needs to explain why the entire Magisterium of the Church—popes and bishops—behaves and teaches as if these documents were addressing cosmology, even going so far as to publicly acknowledge the probability of non-geocentric cosmology. Based on history, we can anticipate the likely answer: it's all the result of ineptitude and cowardice.

R. Sungenis: Perhaps Mr. Palm can tell us why “the entire Magisterium of the Church—popes and bishops—behaves and teaches as if” Dei Verbum 11 means that Scripture is only inerrant when it speaks about salvation when, in fact, the Church prior never taught such a thing. Perhaps Mr. Palm can tell us why “the entire Magisterium of the Church—popes and bishops—behaves and teaches as if” Humane Vitae says that Catholic parents can space out their children whenever they wish to, yet Humanae Vitae says they can only do so if one of the spouses has a “physical or psychological condition” or there are “external circumstances” that prohibit bearing a child. Perhaps Mr. Palm can tell us why “the entire Magisterium of the Church—popes and bishops—behaves and teaches as if” usury is perfectly acceptable when, in fact, the Church prior condemned it. There are many, many, such practices that liberal clerics condone today without the slightest shame regarding their departure from what the Church taught previously. Except for its abandoning of geocentrism, Mr. Palm apparently thinks these modern clerics are just perfect in all they say and do.

Palm: Still, if the statement above is Bob's real position then well and good. But it is very, very different from what he has said elsewhere. For example:

If we say the 17th century magisterium erred, then it is a fact that the Holy Spirit allowed the Church to err, and if the Church can err in what it then declared as a matter of faith and morals (i.e., it was a matter of faith because Scripture taught the earth didn't move, and Scripture cannot lie), then it can also err in matters of faith and morals today, and if that is the case then we simply don't have the Catholic Church we have claimed to have. This is an all or nothing game, gentlemen. We can no longer sit on the proverbial fence and shun one period of our official magisterium as seriously misguided and accept the unofficial musings of another period as correcting the former, especially since modern science gives us no help in substantiating the latter (link).

R. Sungenis: There is no contradiction, as anyone knows who is familiar with the specifics about the Church's protocol in regards to infallible statements. For example, many Catholics argued about the contents of the canon of the Bible right up until the Council of Trent gave the final infallible and irreformable teaching. Even Cardinal Cajetan rejected the traditional canon, at least until Trent said he could no longer do so. So, without an infallible and irreformable statement on geocentrism from the magisterium, that is, one that binds every Catholic to geocentrism on pain of sin and

excommunication, no one can hold it as an infallible teaching, at least not from the pope. The same was true for the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. Although the medieval tradition has much evidence supporting the doctrine and various popes made declarations making it an official teaching (e.g., Alexander VII, the same one who put Kepler on the Index), one could disagree with the doctrine right up until it was made an infallible dogma in 1950. So it is the case with geocentrism. One can disagree with it even though it has a strong pedigree. In order to be binding in the sense that one cannot question it, it would have to be declared infallibly. Until that time, any pope could infallibly declare geocentrism null and void.

The reality is, no pope has done so and no pope probably ever will, since any pope who would even attempt to do so would be going against one of the strongest traditional, ecclesiastical, scriptural and scientific positions ever held by the Church. Instead of recognizing my hypothetical argument (i.e., "If we say the 17th century magisterium erred") and appreciating it to show that I am a loyal son of the Church who will obey any infallible command it gives me, Mr. Palm, as he usually does, tries to make it into a contradiction to discredit me.

Palm: Or how about a talk he gave in Canada during which this was reported:

Later on in the lecture, he actually said verbatim that if you did not believe in a geocentric universe you were atheist [if Bob denies that he said that, fine, but apparently there is an audio recording of it.]

R. Sungenis: I find it interesting that Mr. Palm earlier accused me of not providing a citation about Oliveiri's official position, but he fails to provide even a link to what I purportedly said at the Canada debate! Rather than asking me if I ever said such a thing, Mr. Palm has no shame in accusing me. This is nothing but calumny. Nevertheless, allow me to satisfy Mr. Palm's lack of research – the claim is absolutely bogus. I never said any such thing, and never would, and never have. Mr. Palm is familiar with all my geocentrism writings, so why didn't he appeal to them to compare against what some hostile critic is saying about me? There is not one statement I have ever written that even comes close to what Mr. Palm is alleging.

Palm: So which view does Bob hold now? The Church could teach against geocentrism and that would be just fine, or that if the Church taught against geocentrism we simply wouldn't have the same Catholic Church?

R. Sungenis: As I have pointed out, Mr. Palm is simply twisting my words.

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "How many times have you heard people use the Church's supposed mistakes in the Galileo affair to posit that she can make mistakes in other important areas? Too many times. It's the very argument feminists use for a female priesthood, and homosexuals use to say that the Church is culturally biased against them, or any number of issues that involve an interpretation of both the ecclesiastical and scientific data."

Yes, some people argue this way. That doesn't make it a good argument. And how does this make the neo-geocentrist response tenable? How does this make the scenario they paint any better than the scenario they're reacting against? In order to make their case, the neo-geos argue that the

Church has been run by such incredibly inept and cowardly leaders from top to bottom that the fullness of the faith has been effectively abandoned and hidden from Catholics for last 300 years!

R. Sungenis: Mr. Palm continues to use the “300 year” figure even though I have corrected him on this several times. It’s not 300 years. How could it be when, in fact, Jaquier and Le Suer’s disclaimer was still put on Newton’s Principia only 178 years ago? How could it be when Mario Marini wrote a defense of the Church’s decision on Galileo in 1850, just 161 years ago? How could it be when the president of the Pontifical Academy of Science said in 1943, just 68 years ago, that neither Newton, Foucault or Bradley proved heliocentrism? Mr. Palm just likes to ignore these events because a 300 year figure will make his argument sound better.

Palm: Fortunately, there’s a way to defend the Church aside from these two extremes that has the added benefit of aligning with the facts. All the neo-geocentrists need to understand is that any alleged consensus of the Fathers only binds on matters of faith and morals (as Leo XIII teaches) and that the matter of geocentrism was, as Fr. Brian Harrison rightly said, “promulgated only in disciplinary documents, not in formally doctrinal ones . . . [and] was never promulgated directly and personally by any Pope, only indirectly, through the instrumentality of the Vatican Congregations of the Index and the Holy Office”. That is, the Church has never taught geocentrism as a matter of faith, in either her ordinary or extraordinary Magisterium. As the Protestant scholar Karl von Gebler has said:

The conditions which would have made the decree of the Congregation, or the sentence against Galileo, of dogmatic importance, were, as we have seen, wholly wanting. Both Popes had been too cautious to endanger this highest privilege of the papacy by involving their infallible authority in the decision of a scientific controversy; they therefore refrained from conferring their sanction, as heads of the Roman Catholic Church, on the measures taken, at their instigation, by the Congregation “to suppress the doctrine of the revolution of the earth.” Thanks to this sagacious foresight, Roman Catholic posterity can say to this day, that Paul V. and Urban VIII. were in error “as men” about the Copernican system, but not “as Popes.” (Karl von Gebler, Galileo Galilei and the Roman Curia, trans. J. Sturge, London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1879, p. 239)

R. Sungenis: This, of course, is all bogus, since there was no strictly defined set of criteria governing papal infallibility in 1616 and 1633. We only read back into history what we believe to be infallible statements, and even then this is a mine-field of speculation and uncertainty since no such list has been given to us by the Church. Further, no pope has ever declared, in an infallible statement, that the 1616 and 1633 popes were “in error,” so how does Mr. Gebler know, for certain, that they were “in error”? Perhaps, like Mr. Palm, Mr. Gebler is “in error” for not considering the scientific evidence for geocentrism, and if all indications are correct, Mr. Gebler, like Mr. Palm, has never even studied the issue scientifically. Paul V and Urban VIII certainly didn’t consider their decisions against Galileo reformable, and neither did Alexander VII.

Palm: I personally might say “overreacted” rather than “were in error”, but the point is that even a Protestant scholar can agree with what I wrote in a previous essay, “The seventeenth-century Popes knew perfectly well how to promulgate doctrinal decrees binding on the whole Church. But they consistently refrained from doing so with regard to geocentrism.” So if someone wants to

continue to use the Galileo incident to excuse his rejection of the Catholic Church's authority, then let him. But a sober evaluation of the actual facts—setting aside the exaggerations of both neo-modernists and neo-geocentrists—provides the solid ground any Catholic needs to be confident in the integrity of the Magisterium.

R. Sungenis: Yes, of course. We know Mr. Palm's stand. Robert Bellarmine and Paul V said the Fathers held geocentrism in consensus, but Mr. Palm disagrees and says that there was no consensus and that Bellarmine and Paul V were in error. Rheticus' and Copernicus' books were banned by the Master of the Sacred Palace and later placed on the Index, but Mr. Palm says that the reason was "too strict." The Tridentine Catechism says the earth was placed in the "midst" of the world and that the sun and stars have uniform revolutions, but Palm insists that somehow the dry land is what was placed in the midst, which makes absolutely no sense. The 1616 and 1633 Sacred Congregations declare heliocentrism "formally heretical" but Mr. Palm dismisses this because they weren't open enough to alternative views. The Roman editors, Jaquier and Le Suer, state that all the Supreme Pontiffs held to geocentrism, but Mr. Palm dismisses it because they weren't actually employed by the Vatican to say so. Scripture, interpreted literally as we have always done in the Catholic Church, teaches geocentrism, but Mr. Palm, siding with popular science, says we can no longer interpret Scripture literally. The truth is, science now has a plethora of evidence that says the earth is in the center of the universe, but Mr. Palm dismisses all this, even though he knows very little, if any, science. Leo XIII never mentions cosmology, but Mr. Palm ignores this and continues to see what is not there. Vatican II refrained from accepting heliocentrism and rejecting geocentrism, but Mr. Palm acts as if it did just the opposite. On and on it goes. At every instance Mr. Palm tries to find an escape. Mr. Palm doesn't even admit that there might be some credibility to the geocentric argument but at this time he personally doesn't want to accept it. I would applaud such a stance. That would be the honest way to deal with the evidence against his position.

Palm: (quoting Sungenis): "If Mr. Palm thinks otherwise, he needs to find us a statement after 1943 on full biblical inerrancy, or find a Catholic institution today that teaches it. He won't be able to."

False. First, and most obviously, note that 1943 is only 69 years away, which is a far cry from the 300 years Bob needs in order to create a parallel with geocentrism.

R. Sungenis: Of course, it isn't "300 years," as I have noted above.

Palm: But even worse, he's just flat out wrong that 1943 was the last magisterial reiteration of full inerrancy. In 1998 Pope John Paul II issued the document *Ad Tuendam Fidem* which amended Canon Law to include measures to be taken against heretics, those who publicly profess views contrary to the dogmas of the Catholic Church. In its commentary on this document, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith laid out three tiers of doctrines and delineated the level of assent that is required for each. The first category of doctrine contains those which are infallibly proposed, which are "defined with a solemn judgment as divinely revealed truths either by the Roman Pontiff when he speaks 'ex cathedra,' or by the College of Bishops gathered in council, or infallibly proposed for belief by the ordinary and universal Magisterium." Examples include the Virgin Birth of our Lord, His bodily resurrection from the dead, the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff when speaking *ex cathedra*, the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, etc. The CDF states that,

"These doctrines require the assent of theological faith by all members of the faithful. Thus, whoever obstinately places them in doubt or denies them falls under the censure of heresy, as indicated by the respective canons of the Codes of Canon Law" (link).

One of the truths which belongs to this category is "the absence of error in the inspired sacred texts". The authority cited for this doctrine is Dei Verbum 11. This, then, represents an authoritative interpretation of this passage from the Second Vatican Council. According to the CDF, with explicit approval of the Pope, Dei Verbum 11 teaches "the absence of error in the inspired sacred texts," not (as the revisionists would have it) the absence of error insofar as the text in question is salvific in nature or some other such limiting interpretation. The absence of error in the inspired sacred texts is not limited or modified in any way.

As such, Bob is wrong about the Magisterium not reasserting full biblical inerrancy. Let's hope that he will rejoice with us at this good news rather than seeking out additional difficulties in order to hold on to his geocentric "pebble."

R. Sungenis: This just shows how naïve or oblivious to the real state of affairs Mr. Palm is. I am well aware of the CDF statement about "the absence of error in the inspired sacred texts," since I am the one who quoted it in my commentaries and even in *Galileo Was Wrong*. The problem is not in the CDF statement but how it, as well as Dei Verbum 11, has been INTERPRETED by a certain school of thought within the episcopate. Both John Paul II and Pope Benedict do, indeed, believe there are errors in the Bible. If you don't believe me, I suggest you read Pope Benedict's book, *Jesus of Nazareth* in which he states that the Gospels have many historical errors. This is a very troubling departure from what Popes such as Leo XIII in *Providentissimus Deus* have taught:

"For all the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical, are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost...it is impossible that God Himself, the supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true. This is the ancient and unchanging faith of the Church."

This is all the more ironic since in 1998 it was Joseph Ratzinger who was the head of the CDF and authorized the statement "the absence of error in the inspired sacred texts." This makes us suspicious of what the true nature of the CDF statement really is. As I said in my last rebuttal to Mr. Palm, the Church has issued various statements about inerrancy in the last 50 years (such as the 1998 CDF statement) but they are all anemic and leave the door open for someone to hold that the Bible is only inerrant when it speaks of salvation. As such, the CDF's statement "the absence of error in the inspired sacred texts" is just such an anemic statement, especially since the CDF knew at that very time and practiced it in its exegesis of Scripture that it believed the Bible to be inerrant only in matters of salvation! "The absence of error in the inspired sacred texts" is a very general and open-ended statement that allows Catholic biblical scholars to still believe that only the "salvation" parts were inspired Scripture and the rest was the result of redactors who were not eyewitnesses or even in the same generation as the actual events of Scripture! I rest my case.

Palm: Finally, as for Catholic institutions that still teach full biblical inerrancy, Bob only asked for one, but here are three off the top of my head (I'm sure more could be added): Thomas Aquinas

College, St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, and the University of Navarre. Sadly, we can't add Bob's organization to that list because he was told by his bishop to take the word "Catholic" off his apostolate.

R. Sungenis: This is typical of Mr. Palm's cheap shots, which are designed to create scurrilous innuendo that sounds good to itching ears. This is why I even hesitate to get into any discussions with Mr. Palm, but I will do so for the sake of the truth of geocentrism. That Bishop Rhoades threatened to make me take the word Catholic from my apostolate was due to a personal difference he and I had about the Catholic approach to the Jews and Jewish beliefs. It had nothing to do with whether I or Bishop Rhoades believed in biblical inerrancy, but leave it to Mr. Palm to make it part of this discussion.

As for Mr. Palm's mention of the three universities who teach full inerrancy, this is another example of his naivety. Do you know how many Catholic seminaries, colleges, universities, high schools, grade schools are in the United States today that don't teach full biblical inerrancy? All of them except three. There are 87 seminaries; 267 universities and colleges, and over a thousand high schools and grade schools. Let's just deal with the seminaries and colleges, which amounts to 354 institutions, just in the United States. So the 3 that Mr. Palm claims are holding to full inerrancy are just 0.85% of all the higher-learning Catholic institutions. Yet in all this Mr. Palm has the gall to use biblical inerrancy as an example of a continued teaching in the Catholic Church so that he can contrast it to the non-continued teaching of geocentrism. All one can do is shake one's head in disbelief.

Palm: I hope that the material above will further help those who have encountered Catholic neo-geocentrists to see that neo-geocentrism is just as I have described it—an elaborate exercise in scientific and ecclesiastical special pleading, gummed together with a hermeneutic of suspicion and a liberal dose of conspiracy theories.

R. Sungenis: All I can say is, if this is the best Mr. Palm can do, then geocentrism has a long and glorious history ahead of it. I am ashamed that a Catholic of Mr. Palm's intellectual caliber could posit such lame and specious arguments. It tells me that something else is behind this campaign, and Mr. Palm and I both know what it is, but I'll save that for another time.