

# Response to Dr. Jeffrey Mirus' "Galileo and the Magisterium: a Second Look"

By Robert Sungenis

**R. Sungenis:** Dr. Mirus, as is the case with most Catholic apologists who have tackled the Galileo issue, has accepted, without proof, the premise of popular science that heliocentrism is a fact of science. On this basis, Dr. Mirus then proceeds to form his apologetic for the ecclesiastical side of the issue. As I have demonstrated in my book, *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right*, science has not proven heliocentrism. In fact, the scientific data supports geocentrism much more than it does heliocentrism.

Second, Dr. Mirus' research into the ecclesiastical side of the issue is rather poor. This poor research leads him to make erroneous conclusions about what actually occurred in the Galileo affair. His main error is that the Church did not intend to teach geocentrism and therefore he feels there are no repercussions on either the infallibility of the papal office or the requirement of Catholics, ala *Lumen Gentium* 25, to follow the non-infallible teachings of the magisterium. As we will see, these conclusions are merely opinions of Dr. Mirus, for they are not taught by an official declaration of the Catholic Church. In short, Dr. Mirus believes he has found the silver bullet to explain the Galileo affair, and he feels confident that Catholics need not be concerned about this era of history any longer. In reality, he has misconstrued the ecclesiastical history and sullied the Catholic Church in the process.

**Dr. Mirus:** The short note that follows does not purport to be an exhaustive reassessment of the Galileo case. Rather, in view of the importance of the topic for contemporary discussions involving the Magisterium, this note is presented as an editorial service.

One of the great clubs used to punish the Church in this age of physical science has been the infamous and admittedly unfortunate 17th century Galileo case, the subject of song, story and dance since his time. It is said that the Church condemned as heretical Galileo's belief that the earth moves around the sun. We are further told that Galileo was persecuted for pursuing that truth. Catholics have generally admitted the truth of these charges, but have resisted the next charge: that if the Church erred in declaring Galileo's propositions heretical, it ought not to claim to be infallible. To this the traditional response has been two-fold, by those who believe the Magisterium of the Church pronounced against Galileo. On the one hand, it is argued that the Church has never claimed it made an infallible pronouncement in the Galileo case (the pope was not speaking infallibly). On the other, it is suggested that the Church has never claimed to be infallible in matters of science, but only in faith and morals.

Both of these Catholic counter-arguments seem to me to be unsatisfactory. The latter argument fails because, in fact, if Galileo's propositions were condemned, they were condemned precisely because they were heretical or erroneous in faith. Surely it extends to the Church's infallibility to know what is and what is not a matter of faith; otherwise, the doctrine is an absurdity. The former argument, on the other hand, is acceptable only to

those with a minimalist view of infallibility, for it generally assumes that Galileo's condemnation was an act of the ordinary, but not the extraordinary, Magisterium of the Church.

But Vatican II said Catholics must give the ordinary Magisterium "a religious submission of mind and will" (*Lumen Gentium*, 25), and this teaching presents a problem. After all, the chief traditional argument for papal infallibility has been that since all Catholics are obliged to believe the pope when he teaches formally on faith or morals, the pope must be infallible, else the whole Church would fall into error, which is impossible. However, if "a religious submission of mind and will" is also due the ordinary magisterium, then we must conclude that, in matters of faith and morals at least, there is a strong case for development in the doctrine of infallibility by its application to the ordinary Magisterium of the Church. Thus if it is true that in the Galileo case the ordinary Magisterium condemned the scientist's propositions as errors in faith, the credibility of the Magisterium would appear to be affected.

All of this provides good reason for reviewing the Galileo case. In addition, since this episode is virtually the only one which is still held by outsiders as a disproof of the inerrancy of the Church's formal teaching authority, an exposition of what actually happened in the Galileo case might well lay the issue to rest (were it not for human perversity) once and for all. Actually, the evidence has been known to a few scholars right along, and it is my task here merely to popularize the matter, hopefully for the good of the Church.

To clear the air, the peripheral issues of whether Galileo was really persecuted, and even of what was at stake in his ideas, will be dealt with briefly before going on to state precisely how the case does or does not bear on the ordinary Magisterium of the Church. First, on the matter of Galileo's trial it must be said that individuals who disliked the scientist denounced him before the Inquisition in 1632 not only for the clear violation of earlier ecclesiastical warnings against his work (1616), but also for flaws in his personal character and faith. The Inquisition, after months of patient investigation, cleared Galileo's name, finding him guilty only on the point of advancing his theory of heliocentricity, which he had earlier agreed to abandon (for a thorough treatment of the case, with documents throughout, see Giorgio de Santillana, *The Crime of Galileo*, U. of Chicago Pr., 1955). In the context of the times, then, Galileo was hardly persecuted by the Church, but rather given every consideration by the inquisitorial court, which had little choice in taking up the case. We are not concerned, of course, with the attitudes of Galileo's accusers, the opinions of the masses, or even the actions of those who apparently falsified Church records in an effort to get a conviction. This point rests on how the judges handled the case.

Second, it is important to understand what the highest Church officials really wanted of Galileo (for a concise treatment with ample documents, see James Brophy & Henry Paolucci, eds., *The Achievement of Galileo*, Twayne Pubs., N.Y., 1962, esp. pp. 41ff). In a long conversation with Cardinal Barberini (later Pope Urban VIII), Galileo was asked whether or not he could resolve the apparent contradictions between Scripture and the Pythagorean-Copernican system, which did seem to accord with the observable facts. Men were intensely interested in truth in this age; such apparent conflicts had to be considered. Barberini also pointed out that Galileo could not assert his system as true just because it accounted for all

the phenomena. Rather, he would have to show that the phenomena could not be accounted for by any other system. That, of course, could not be demonstrated, and modern physicists readily admit that variations of the Ptolemaic (earth-centered) system would account for all the known phenomena at that time, but that the newer Copernican model did so more simply. Thus the possibility that the Copernican-Galilean system did not represent reality could have been admitted by competent astronomers. Unfortunately, Galileo made no qualifications of this type when he violated his 1616 agreement by publishing his *Dialogue on the Great World Systems* (1632). Moreover, apparently not caring for the faith of ordinary men and women, he made no effort to resolve the apparent contradictions with Scripture (e.g., Joshua made the sun stand still), nor to reconcile his Pythagorean notions with the prevailing Aristotelian views, things which certain other scientists and theologians were both willing and able to do.

A consideration of these factors suggests that, whatever Galileo's enemies may have been like, the judges and high officials of the Church acted respectably in the handling of his case. In fact, as regards Barberini, the representative of the Church showed considerably more respect for the nature of truth than did Galileo himself. Having cleared the air, therefore, we can turn to the decisive question. Is the authority of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church impugned by the condemnation of Galileo's theories as heretical? Other questions are merely peripheral; this alone is the crucial point; and a brief survey of the actual facts of the case solves the problem immediately.

On February 19, 1616, the following two propositions advanced by Galileo were submitted by the Inquisition to the Holy Office for advice regarding their orthodoxy (Santillana, 120):

1. "The sun is the center of the world and hence immovable of local motion."
2. "The Earth is not the center of the world, nor immovable, but moves according to the whole of itself."

On February 24th, the experts (qualifiers) of the Holy Office found the first proposition "foolish and absurd, philosophically and formally heretical, inasmuch as it expressly contradicts the doctrine of the Holy Scripture in many passages, both in their literal meaning and according to the general interpretation of the Fathers and Doctors." They declared the second "to receive the same censure in philosophy and, as regards theological truth, to be at least erroneous in faith" (121). That there were competent theologians even then who argued against the views expressed here suggests that the qualifiers could have reached a wiser conclusion. Theirs is the chief fault in the entire affair.

**R. Sungenis:** As we see, Dr. Mirus attempts to lay the chief fault with the commission of eleven cardinals assigned by Paul V to investigate Galileo's claims. But what "wiser" conclusion does Dr. Mirus expect them to reach? Pius V had stated in four separate places of his 1566 Tridentine catechism that geocentrism was true. The Church Fathers were in absolute consensus on the truth of geocentrism. Thomas Aquinas and all the medieval theologians taught geocentrism. Scripture was replete with references to a moving sun and a stationary earth. What was there in the Tradition of the Church that would induce these 11 qualifiers to make a "wiser" conclusion than what they already gleaned from the 1600 years before them? The problem here is that not only is Dr. Mirus judging the cardinals from

hindsight, it is a fallacious hindsight. Dr. Mirus is assuming that science has proven heliocentrism and he is then reading this position back into the 1616 Galileo affair and expecting the qualifiers to be "wiser" by agreeing with his position that heliocentrism is at least plausible and thus wants them to refrain from being so damning against heliocentrism. This is pure anachronism. The reality is, the qualifiers did precisely what we would expect faithful leaders of the Church to do. They listened to the Fathers, Thomas, and the Tridentine catechism and concluded that heliocentrism was not part of the Tradition and had no place in Catholic teaching. And since there were no scientific facts refuting the Tradition, they held on to their conclusion all the more.

**Dr. Mirus:** In any case, the next day the Pope (Paul V) was notified of their judgment. His response was simply to direct Cardinal Bellarmine to warn Galileo to abandon his opinion: failing that, to abstain from teaching or defending or even discussing it; failing that, to be imprisoned. Galileo, according to a report of Bellarmine on March 3rd, submitted. Two days later, several works by other authors which expressed Pythagorean-Copernican ideas were placed on the Index by the appropriate officials. Thus the matter rested for sixteen years.

In 1632, Galileo was denounced to the Inquisition for publishing his Dialogue. On June 16, 1633, Pope Urban VIII ordered that he be interrogated in full assembly of the Congregation of the Holy Office, and, again, be ordered not to treat further in any way "of the mobility of the earth and the stability of the sun" (293). His Dialogue was prohibited from sale and reading. Then, on June 22, 1633, the sentence of the inquisitorial court was passed (306-310). In it the history of the case, including Galileo's own lies about the circumstances under which the Dialogue was published, was recounted. The judgment of the Holy Office was that Galileo had rendered himself "vehemently suspected of heresy." The punishment was that Galileo renounce his errors before the Inquisition in a form to be prescribed, which he immediately did.

This sentence is interesting for two reasons. First, it marks the first time that the declaration of heresy by the qualifiers of the Holy Office (of February 24, 1616) was published, it being adduced as expert testimony in the history of Galileo's case. That it had never been promulgated on its own is of some importance. Second, the sentence itself bears the signatures of seven of the ten judges; the Pope, in other words, did not officially endorse the decision (there was, of course, no reason why he should, since the Court was simply exercising its normal powers).

**R. Sungenis:** Here we come to a presumption common among Catholics that is often used to support their belief in heliocentrism. It is presumed that the pope is required to sign a specific document in order for his decision to be official. Says who? Where does the Church teach that a pope has to sign a piece of paper in order to make his teaching official or binding? Granted, a signed statement from the pope would make it easier to verify his position on a certain issue, but a signed statement is not a requirement. The pope could verbally declare his teaching, and as long as it is affirmed by witnesses, it is official and binding.

Be that as it may, how involved was Paul V in the 1616 decision? Was he just an observer that nodded his head intermittently, or did he take an active role in the proceedings against Galileo. The historical record demonstrates the latter:

- 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 assessment, “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.”<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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.<sup>2</sup>

**Dr. Mirus:** The conclusions to be drawn are perhaps obvious. First, the declaration that Galileo's propositions were heretical was never published as a teaching of the Church, and it was never intended to be such. It was intended and taken as the advice of certain theological experts who worked in the Holy Office, of value in a legal case, but hardly a norm of faith for the Church as a whole.

**R. Sungenis:** So is Dr. Mirus trying to tell us that the condemnation of heliocentrism as "formally heretical," and which was approved by Pope Paul V as such, was never intended to apply to anyone else in the Church except Galileo? Is Dr. Mirus trying to tell us that the pope and his commission of cardinals would have allowed any parishioner to believe and teach heliocentrism except for Galileo, Foscarini and Zuniga? That hardly can make sense. Dr. Mirus is trying to make an argument on a technicality. He is trying to say that because Paul V did not universally disseminate the finding that heliocentrism was formally heretical, then Catholics were not bound to abide by it. Perhaps technically speaking he has room for this kind of hair-splitting legalese, at least in the case of Paul V, but it won't be the case when we come to Pope Urban VIII in 1633 who had the results of the trial of Galileo bound and published and sent to all the papal nuncios and universities of Europe demanding allegiance to the condemnation of heliocentrism as "formally heretical." Here are the historians who write about this issue. 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..."<sup>3</sup>

Another says:

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<sup>2</sup> *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.

<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Stimson *The Gradual Acceptance of the Copernican Theory of the Universe*, 1917, pp. 67-68.

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 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.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to Paul V we have the Tridentine catechism of Pius V about 65 years earlier. It's teaching on geocentrism for the Catholic populous at large is clear and distinct:

He also gave to the sun its brilliancy, and to the moon and stars their beauty; and that they might be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years. He so ordered the celestial bodies in a certain and uniform course, that nothing varies more

than their continual revolution, while nothing is more fixed than their variety.<sup>5</sup>

Although this wording is somewhat brief, it correctly describes the Church's historical position. It states very clearly that the "sun...the moon and stars" are "celestial bodies" which move with a "certain and uniform course" and does not say that the Earth moves among them. Rather, to expel any doubt about what objects are revolving the catechism adds that the sun, moon and stars have a "continual revolution." Although the unspecified reference to "revolution" might cause a heliocentrist to infer that the sun's revolution does not necessarily mean it is revolving around the Earth, a few pages later the catechism disallows that inference by stating the following:

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<sup>4</sup> *Retrying Galileo*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>5</sup> *The Roman Catechism, The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, translated by John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P., Tan Publishing, 1982, p. 27. This particular translation has a *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur*, issued January 1923. The 1829 version says the same: "[God] so ordered the celestial orbs in a certain and constant course, that nothing can be seen more variable than their continual revolution, nothing more certain than that variety" (*Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Article 16, Chapter 2, translated by Fr. O'Donovan, Dublin, James Duffy and Sons, n. d., p. 38).

The earth also God commanded to stand in the midst of the world, rooted in its own foundation and made the mountains ascend, and the plains descend into the place which he had founded for them....<sup>6</sup>

The Roman Catechism then says the following toward the end of the book:

But though God is present in all places and in all things, without being bound by any limits, as has been already said, yet in Sacred Scripture it is frequently said that He has His dwelling in heaven. And the reason is because the heavens which we see above our heads are the noblest part of the world, remain ever Incorruptible, surpass all other bodies in power, grandeur and beauty, and are endowed with fixed and regular motion.<sup>7</sup>

A few pages later the Catechism confirms its cosmology and the God who designed it:

...all goods both natural and supernatural, must be recognised as gifts given by Him from whom, as the Church proclaims, proceed all blessings. If the sun by its light, if the stars by their motion and revolutions, are of any advantage to man; if the air with which we are surrounded serves to sustain us...nay, those very causes which philosophers call secondary, we should regard as so many hands of God, wonderfully fashioned and fitted for our use, by means of which He distributes His blessings and diffuses them everywhere in profusion.<sup>8</sup>

One of the more significant facts regarding the Roman Catechism's dogmatic assertion of geocentrism is that it remained unchanged in all subsequent editions, including the last Roman Latin version in 1907 and the 1914 edition published in Turin, which, incidentally, was just three years before the Fatima visions of 1917 showing the sun moving in the sky. Obviously, no editor saw fit to remove the geocentric teaching from the catechetical regimen of Catholic doctrine. The introduction states:

The original manuscript of the Catechism is not extant. But of the innumerable Latin editions that have appeared, the earliest are: The Manutian (Rome, 1566), so called because it was printed by Paulus Manutius by command of Pope Pius V....Among later Latin editions may be mentioned the following issued at Rome: The edition of 1761, which contains the Encyclical of Clement XIII on the excellence and use of the Roman Catechism; the Propaganda editions of 1858, 1871 and 1907.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28. The 1829 version reads: "God also, by his word, commanded the earth to stand in the midst of the world, 'founded upon its own basis'" (Article 18, Chapter 1). NB: the word "world" is from the Latin *mundus*, which means "universe." The clause "founded upon its own basis" may refer to the fact that, if the Earth were the universe's center of mass, it would be independent of all inertial forces, remaining in the center while neither resting upon or suspended by any force or object. As Job 26: 7 says: "He...hangs the earth upon nothing."

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 511-512.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxvi. Even later, namely 1969, is the French version of Roman Catechism, *Catechisme du Concile de Trente* (Paris: Itinéraires, 1969, p. 30), stating: *Dieu affermit aussi la terre sur sa base, et par sa parole Il lui fixa sa place au milieu du monde* ("The earth also God commanded to stand in the midst of the world, rooted in its own foundation" ).



Also highly significant is the fact that the Roman Catechism makes a point of not only reiterating the dogmatic decrees from the Council of Trent, but its purpose was also to “examine every statement in the Catechism from the viewpoint of doctrine,”<sup>10</sup> which requires us to conclude that among the statements subjected to the prescribed analysis were the four geocentric catechetical teachings noted above. This is a clear indication that Pius V understood geocentrism as Catholic doctrine.

Then, of course, we have the rejection of Copernicanism by the Church just a few years after Copernicus published his book in 1543. One of Copernicus’ close friends, Georg Joachim Rheticus was pushing heliocentrism with even more vigor than Copernicus. Where Copernicus showed at least some reluctance to publish his final work, Rheticus greased the wheels by alerting Osiander who quickly fashioned the famous “hypothetical” disclaimer for Copernicus. Rheticus’ verve came from his own heliocentric convictions, which he had published two years earlier, in 1541. In it Rheticus attacks what he senses is the prime battle ground of the controversy, assuring his readers that we should see “very clearly...that the motion of the earth does not contradict the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

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. Similar to Copernicus’ effort to persuade Paul III, Tolosani wrote a detailed geocentric treatise in 1546, which he dedicated to Paul III and which included an endorsement from Spina. In it Tolosani vehemently rejected Copernicus’ universe and declared it an extreme danger to the faith precisely because of its attempt to deliteralize Sacred Scripture.<sup>13</sup>

As the 16<sup>th</sup> century reached the midway point, the staunchest anti-Copernican of the day was the Jesuit Christoph Clavius (d. 1612). He writes in his highly esteemed work:

We conclude, then, in accordance with the common doctrine of the astronomers and the philosophers, that the earth lacks any local motion, either rectilinear or circular, and that the heavens themselves revolve continually round it.... Holy Scripture is also in favor of this doctrine, stating in a great number of places that

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

<sup>11</sup> The words of Tiedeman Giese in his letter to Rheticus of July 26, 1543 that are included in Copernicus’ *Briefe Texte*, letter no. 194, 359, the original Latin being: “opusculum tuum, quo a sacrarum scripturarum dissidentia aptissime vindicasti telluris motum.” Cited in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Lerner notes that the suppression of *Narratio prima* was “recently discovered” in a “document from the Arch episcopal Curia of Naples.”

<sup>13</sup> The work’s title is: *On the Highest Immobile Heaven and the Lowest Stable Earth, and All Other Movable Heavens and Intermediate Elements*. Tolsani insisted Copernicus’ teaching “could easily provoke discord between Catholic commentators on Holy Scripture and those who have resolutely decided to follow this false opinion. It is in order to avoid such scandal that we have written this short work” (English translation of the French translation *Aux origins*, p. 708, cited in *The Church and Galileo*, pp. 15-16).

the earth is stationary. It also bears witness to the fact that the sun and the other heavenly bodies are in motion.<sup>14</sup>

With all this evidence that the Church was formally teaching and defending the geocentric position, how is it that Dr. Mirus hopes to cling to a technicality to save face for the Catholic Church in its condemnation of heliocentrism? The reason is that Dr. Mirus didn't really investigate the full history before he decided to find some loophole in Catholic protocol to get the Church off the horns of a dilemma that he created in his own head by accepting heliocentrism as scientifically proven.

**Dr. Mirus:** Second, as noted earlier, Pope Paul V did not endorse this theological opinion, but rather ordered in an in-house directive only that Galileo be commanded to stop holding and advancing his own opinion.

This action, then, stemmed from a judgment of prudence about the promotion of ideas which could not be easily reconciled with Scripture.

Even as a private document, therefore, the declaration of heresy received no formal papal approval.

Third, there is no evidence that Pope Urban VIII ever endorsed any public document which included the declaration of heresy, especially the sentence at Galileo's trial. That no pope ever promulgated any condemnation of Galileo's ideas removes the Galileo case entirely from discussions on the historical character of the Church's teaching authority.

**R. Sungenis:** Dr. Mirus simply doesn't know his history. If there is anything that is clear from the historical record it is Pope Urban VIII's "endorsement" of the declaration of heliocentrism as a formal heresy. Not only do we have, as I noted above, evidence of the letters that Urban VIII sent out to all of Europe, we have his protracted conversations with the Grand Duke of Tuscany in which he tells the Duke that heliocentrism is a heresy that will destroy the Church unless it is sequestered. One can consult pages 203 to 206 of Volume 2 of *Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right* to get the verbatim dialogue that occurred between Cosimo Medici and Pope Urban VIII.

Not only do we have the public and pervasive dissemination by Pope Urban VIII of the decrees against Galileo and heliocentrism, apparently those in the know understood these movements as the universal teaching of the Church, and specifically of the Church's pontiffs. For example, between 1739 to 1742, when the three-volume edition of Isaac Newton's *Principia* was published in Geneva, the Catholic Church assigned two Minim friars from the Franciscan order, Thomas Le Seur and François Jacquier as editors. Their editing of the *Principia* was for the purpose of introducing Newton's work to the educated class of the Roman papal court. As one author judged their edition:

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<sup>14</sup> *In Sphaeram Ioannis de Sacro Bosco Commentarius*, Rome 1570, pp. 247-248, cited in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 18, 31. Clavius uses Psalms 19:5-6; 104:5 and Ecclesiastes 1:4-6 for his main support. See also: James Lattis' *Between Copernicus and Galileo: Christoph Clavius and the Collapse of Ptolemaic Cosmology*, University of Chicago Press, 1994.

With its rich editorial content, extensive summaries and detailed index, the Jesuit edition remains the most ambitious and perhaps the most useful edition ever published. It was reissued in Geneva in 1760, Prague in 1780-85, and finally in Glasgow in 1822 and 1833, with further changes by J. M. F. Wright.<sup>15</sup>

The most significant feature of the above editions of the *Principia* in light of the heliocentric/geocentric debate was that the Preface contained a disclaimer, or what was then known as a "Declaratio," stating that 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. Hence, each reader of the *Principia* would understand that although the editors wrote as if they accepted Newton's heliocentrism, they did not, in fact, agree with it at all. All the editions carried this wording:

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.<sup>16</sup>

**Dr. Mirus:** It is clear, then, that not even the ordinary Magisterium has ever taught or promulgated the idea that the propositions of Copernican-Galilean astronomy are heretical or errors in faith.

Thus it can in no way be claimed that "the Church" has taught that such views are heretical. To make such a claim would require that we locate the teaching authority of the Church in those theologians who claim expertise, a mistake which many make today, but one which the Galileo case should, at long last, serve to correct.

**R. Sungenis:** The mistake, as we have seen from the documented evidence, is Dr. Mirus, for it is clear from the historical record that the popes took an active role not only in teaching geocentrism and facilitating the condemnation of Galileo and heliocentrism, they publicized their conclusions far and wide. If Dr. Mirus wants to hang his whole argument on the signature of the pope, then he will first have to show us the official papal document that requires the pope's signature in order to put his teaching into effect, and he will also have to show us the proofs of heliocentrism that would make the pope signing such a document a matter of whether he did so infallibly.

All in all, I am amazed at the contortions of documents, hair-splitting legalese and avoidance of the actual history that Catholic apologists have used to answer the Galileo

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<sup>15</sup> *Isaac Newton and the Scientific Revolution*, an exhibition of books from Dr. and Mrs. R. Ted Steinbock, Mountain Goat Press, Louisville KT, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> *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 quoquè 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.

issue. They are forced to these aberrations because they all start from the premise that popular science just couldn't have gotten it wrong about cosmogony and cosmology. Once one puts his faith in the scientific status quo as infallible, then one has no choice but to say the Church cannot be infallible. Two authorities cannot serve on the same platform of infallibility. As I have shown in my books, true science (not popular, atheistic-driven science) has shown that geocentrism is, indeed, correct. The evidence is staring us right in the face, if we will only look at it and accept it.

Robert Sungenis, Ph.D.

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