

## Debunking David Palm

### Phase 5: The Statements on Geocentrism from the Church Fathers

**Mr. Palm:** Therefore, if the geocentrists are to prevail in their oft-repeated claim that the Fathers are in unanimous consent about geocentrism, then they will need to show where the Fathers unanimously and specifically teach an immobile earth that occupies the center of the universe.

Since they can have absolutely no appeal to any ecclesiastical authority whatsoever in support of such a claim, they would have to establish the claim on its merits, by virtue of the evidence. The burden of proof is completely on them. Now, let's have a look at that evidence.

**Athanasius:** For the Sun is carried round along with, and is contained in, the whole heaven, and can never go beyond his own orbit, while the moon and other stars testify to the assistance given them by the Sun...But the earth is not supported upon itself, but is set upon the realm of the waters, while this again is kept in its place, being bound fast at the center of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

For by a nod and by the power of the Divine Word of the Father that governs and presides over all, the heaven revolves, the stars move, the sun shines, the moon goes her circuit, and the air receives the sun's light and the aether his heat, and the winds blow: the mountains are reared on high, the sea is rough with waves, and the living things in it grow, the earth abides fixed..."<sup>2</sup>

**Athenagoras:** To Him is for us to know who stretched out and vaulted the heavens, and fixed the earth in its place like a center.<sup>3</sup>

**Augustine:** Let not the philosophers, then, think to upset our faith with arguments from the weight of bodies; for I don't care to inquire why they cannot believe an earthly body can be in heaven, while the whole earth is suspended on nothing. For perhaps the world keeps its central place by the same law that attracts to its center all heavy bodies.<sup>4</sup>

**Basil:** There are inquirers into nature who with a great display of words give reasons for the immobility of the earth...It is not, they go on, without reason or by chance that the earth occupies the center of the universe...Do not then be surprised that the world never falls: it occupies the center of the universe, its natural place. By necessity it is obliged to remain in its place, unless a movement contrary to nature should displace it. If there is anything in this system which might appear probable to you, keep your admiration for the source of such perfect order, for the wisdom of God. Grand phenomena do not strike us the less when

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<sup>1</sup> *Against the Heathen*, Part 1, No. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Against the Heathen*, Bk 1, Part III, 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Why the Christians do not Offer Sacrifices*, Ch XIII.

<sup>4</sup> *City of God*, Bk XIII, Ch 18.

we have discovered something of their wonderful mechanism. Is it otherwise here? At all events let us prefer the simplicity of faith to the demonstrations of reason.<sup>5</sup>

**Basil:** In the midst of the covering and veil, where the priests were allowed to enter, was situated the altar of incense, the symbol of the earth placed in the middle of this universe; and from it came the fumes of incense.<sup>6</sup>

**Chrysostom:** “For they who are mad imagine that nothing stands still, yet this arises not from the objects that are seen, but from the eyes that see. Because they are unsteady and giddy, they think that the Earth turns round with them, which yet turns not, but stands firm. The derangement is of their own state, not from any affection of the element.”<sup>7</sup>

**Chrysostom:** For He not only made it, but provided also that when it was made, it should carry on its operations; not permitting it to be all immoveable, nor commanding it to be all in a state of motion. The heaven, for instance, hath remained immoveable, according as the prophet says, “He placed the heaven as a vault, and stretched it out as a tent over the earth.” But, on the other hand, the sun with the rest of the stars, runs on his course through every day. And again, the earth is fixed, but the waters are continually in motion; and not the waters only, but the clouds, and the frequent and successive showers, which return at their proper season.<sup>8</sup>

**Clement of Rome:** the Creator, long-suffering, merciful, the sustainer, the benefactor, ordaining love of men, counselling purity, immortal and making immortal, incomparable, dwelling in the souls of the good, that cannot be contained and yet is contained, who has fixed the great world as a centre in space, who has spread out the heavens and solidified the earth.<sup>9</sup>

**Cyril of Jerusalem:** The earth, which bears the same proportion to the heaven as the center to the whole circumference of a wheel, for the earth is no more than this in comparison with the heaven: consider then that this first heaven which is seen is less than the second, and the second than the third, for so far Scripture has named them...”<sup>10</sup>

**Gregory Nanzianzus:** There have been in the whole period of the duration of the world two conspicuous changes of men's lives, which are also called two Testaments,(a) or, on account of the wide fame of the matter, two Earthquakes; the one from idols to the Law, the other from the Law to the Gospel. And we are taught in the Gospel of a third earthquake, namely, from this Earth to that which cannot be shaken or moved.<sup>11</sup>

**Gregory of Nyssa:** “This is the book of the generation of heaven and earth,” saith the Scripture, when all that is seen was finished, and each of the things that are betook itself to its own separate place, when the body of heaven compassed all things round, and those bodies which are heavy and of downward tendency, the earth and the water, holding each

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<sup>5</sup> *Nine Homilies on the Hexameron*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mystic Meaning of the Tabernacle*, Bk V, Ch VI; Clement of Rome, *Stromata*, Bk V.

<sup>7</sup> *Homily on Titus*, III.

<sup>8</sup> *Homilies to Antioch*, Homily XII.

<sup>9</sup> *Homily II*, Ch XLV.

<sup>10</sup> *Catechetical Lectures*, VI, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Orations*, 5, xxv.

other in, took the middle place of the universe; while, as a sort of bond and stability for the things that were made, the Divine power and skill was implanted in the growth of things, guiding all things with the reins of a double operation (for it was by rest and motion that it devised the genesis of the things that were not, and the continuance of the things that are), driving around, about the heavy and changeless element contributed by the creation that does not move, as about some fixed path, the exceedingly rapid motion of the sphere, like a wheel, and preserving the indissolubility of both by their mutual action, as the circling substance by its rapid motion compresses the compact body of the earth round about, while that which is firm and unyielding, by reason of its unchanging fixedness, continually augments the whirling motion of those things which revolve round it, and intensity is produced in equal measure in each of the natures which thus differ in their operation, in the stationary nature, I mean, and in the mobile revolution; for neither is the earth shifted from its own base, nor does the heaven ever relax in its vehemence, or slacken its motion.<sup>12</sup>

**Gregory of Nyssa:** And how does earth below form the foundation of the whole, and what is it that keeps it firmly in its place? What is it that controls its downward tendency? If any one should interrogate us on these and such-like points, will any of us be found so presumptuous as to promise an explanation of them? No! the only reply that can be given by men of sense is this: that He Who made all things in wisdom can alone furnish an account of His creation. For ourselves, “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” as saith the Apostle.<sup>13</sup>

**Gregory of Nyssa:** “...the vault of heaven prolongs itself so uninterruptedly that it encircles all things with itself, and that the earth and its surroundings are poised in the middle, and that the motion of all the revolving bodies is round this fixed and solid center...”<sup>14</sup>

**Gregory Thaumaturgos:** And the life of men weareth away, as day by day, and in the periods of hours and years, and the determinate courses of the sun, some are ever coming, and others passing away. And the matter is like the transit of torrents as they fall into the measureless deep of the sea with a mighty noise. And all things that have been constituted by God for the sake of men abide the same: as, for instance, in that man is born of earth, and departs to earth again; that the earth itself continues stable; that the sun accomplishes its circuit about it perfectly, and rolls round to the same mark again; and that the winds in like manner, and the mighty rivers which flow into the sea, and the breezes that beat upon it, all act without forcing it to pass beyond its limits, and without themselves also violating their appointed laws.<sup>15</sup>

**Hippolytus:** [Refuting the view of the Greek Ecphantus]: “And that the earth in the middle of the cosmical system is moved round its own center towards the east.”<sup>16</sup>

This is not even counting the numerous amount of Fathers who state that the sun is in motion on a 24 hour basis around the Earth.

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<sup>12</sup> *On the Making of Man*, 30, 1, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*.

<sup>14</sup> *On the Soul and Resurrection*.

<sup>15</sup> *On Ecclesiastes*, Ch 1, 2.

<sup>16</sup> *The Prooemium*, Ch XIII.

## Are the Fathers In Unanimous Consent About an Immobile Earth at the Center of the Universe?

**Mr. Palm:** J. M. Lewis noticed something that I also observed in reading the various patristic quotes alleged to establish a patristic consensus on geocentrism. With regard to the original 1616 consultation by the theologians of the Holy Office he states:

Despite the fact that none of the eleven [theological experts] had had any training in astronomy, the panel condemned Copernicanism within one week of its first sitting. The eleven would no doubt have consulted the Fathers of the Church and modern commentators and would have found nothing in them about the motion of the Earth – but they would have found nothing which denied it either (*Galileo in France: French Reactions to the Theories and Trial of Galileo*, p. 45).

**R. Sungenis:** This, of course, is an argument from silence, or one of those “have you stopped beating your wife?” questions that is designed to confuse, not get to the truth.

**Mr. Palm:** This can be confirmed by reading the various witnesses brought forth even in the geocentrist book *Galileo Was Wrong* (GWW). The claim there is that this book represents a comprehensive presentation of the patristic evidence for geocentrism and that “those quotes from the Fathers which have the most logical and comparative relevance have been listed” (GWW2, p. 88). Since it was compiled by an interested party, I will take this body of evidence as normative. If any other pertinent witnesses that are not presented in GWW2 are brought forward in the future, I’ll be happy to evaluate them.

What has struck me in looking into this particular topic is just how consistently, among the Church Fathers and the medieval theologians, these matters of cosmology were treated as matters of natural philosophy and not as matters of faith.

**R. Sungenis:** Notice how Mr. Palm cleverly seeks to set the boundaries of the debate. He introduces a dichotomy between what the Fathers believed from science and what they gleaned from Scripture, as if there exists some discrepancy between the two. But when the Council of Trent stated that we are to follow the consensus of the Fathers, it didn’t say we had to do so only if the Fathers based their arguments on Scripture. If the Fathers had a consensus, it became a matter of faith, regardless what mixture there was between natural philosophy and Scripture in the consensus.

**Mr. Palm:** For example, surveying the patristic quotations presented in GWW2, how many give any support to a central, immovable earth (geostationism) based on a scriptural citation, an actual appeal to the Bible? Unless I am missing some—which is possible, I’m open to correction—I see two: one from Athenagoras and one allegedly from Clement of Rome. I say allegedly because, although Sungenis presents it as from St. Clement, it is actually from one of the Clementine Homilies which are universally acknowledged not to emanate from St. Clement of Rome (Sungenis does not alert the reader to this fact). So from Sungenis’ evidence *only one Father* actually cites sacred Scripture on the matter of a centralized earth.

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, he is missing many of them. Below I will now quote from those who appealed to the account of Joshua in Joshua 10. The Fathers are in unanimous agreement that, by a miracle of God, the sun stopped its normal movement in the sky. I can use these passages even though they don't speak of a non-moving Earth because both the 1616 and 1633 Church stated that "it was equally absurd in philosophy" to claim that the Earth moved as it was to claim that the sun did not. The simple reason for their logic is that if the sun is revolving around the Earth then the Earth cannot be revolving around the sun.

**Aphrahat:** Furthermore when the people crossed over in the days of Joshua the son of Nun (it was there), for thus it is written: The people passed over, over against Jericho. Also Joshua the son of Nun by faith cast down the walls of Jericho, and they fell without difficulty. Again by faith he destroyed thirty-one kings and made the children of Israel to inherit the land. Furthermore by his faith he spread out his hands towards heaven and stayed the sun in Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. And they were stayed and stood still from their courses. But enough! All the righteous, our fathers, in all that they did were victorious through faith, as also the blessed Apostle testified with regard to all of them: By faith they prevailed.<sup>17</sup>

**Augustine:** Who else save Joshua the son of Nun divided the stream of the Jordan for the people to pass over, and by the utterance of a prayer to God bridled and stopped the revolving sun? Who save Samson ever quenched his thirst with water flowing forth from the jawbone of a dead ass? Who save Elias was carried aloft in a chariot of fire?<sup>18</sup>

**Chrysostom:** Consider of how great value is the righteous man. Joshua the son of Nun said, "Let the sun stand still at Gibeon, the moon at the valley of Elom," and it was so. Let then the whole world come, or rather two or three, or four, or ten, or twenty worlds, and let them say and do this; yet shall they not be able. But the friend of God commanded the creatures of his Friend, or rather he besought his Friend, and the servants yielded, and he below gave command to those above. Seest thou that these things are for service fulfilling their appointed course? This was greater than the [miracles] of Moses. Why (I ask)? Because it is not a like thing to command the sea and the heavenly [bodies]. For that indeed was also a great thing, yea very great, nevertheless it was not at all equal [to the other]. Why was this? The name of Joshua [JESUS], was a type. For this reason then, and because of the very name, the creation revered him. What then! Was no other person called Jesus? [Yes]; but this man was on this account so called in type; for he used to be called Hoshea. Therefore the name was changed: for it was a prediction and a prophecy. He brought in the people into the promised land, as JESUS [does] into heaven; not the Law; since neither did Moses [bring them in], but remained without.<sup>19</sup>

**Gregory Nanzianus:** Amalek shall be conquered, not with arms alone, but with the hostile hand of the righteous forming both prayers and the invincible trophy of the Cross; the River shall be cut off; the sun shall stand still; and the moon be restrained; walls shall be overthrown even without engines; swarms of hornets shall go before thee to make a way

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<sup>17</sup> *Demonstrations*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Tractates*, XCI, Ch XV, 24-25, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Homily on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Homily VIII.

for Israel, and to hold the Gentiles in check; and all the other events which are told in the history after these and with these (not to make a long story) shall be given thee of God. Such is the feast thou art keeping to-day; and in this manner I would have thee celebrate both the Birthday and the Burial of Him Who was born for thee and suffered for thee.<sup>20</sup>

**Hippolytus:** When Hezekiah, king of Judah, was still sick and weeping, there came an angel, and said to him: "I have seen thy tears, and I have heard thy voice. Behold, I add unto thy time fifteen years. And this shall be a sign to thee from the Lord: Behold, I turn back the shadow of the degrees of the house of thy father, by which the sun has gone down, the ten degrees by which the shadow has gone down," so that day be a day of thirty-two hours. For when the sun had run its course to the tenth hour, it returned again. And again, when Joshua the son of Nun was fighting against the Amorites, when the sun was now inclining to its setting, and the battle was being pressed closely, Joshua, being anxious lest the heathen host should escape on the descent of night, cried out, saying, "Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon; and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon," until I vanquish this people. And the sun stood still, and the moon, in their places, so that day was one of twenty-four hours. And in the time of Hezekiah the moon also turned back along with the sun, that there might be no collision between the two elemental bodies, by their bearing against each other in defiance of law. And Merodach the Chaldean, king of Babylon, being struck with amazement at that time, for he studied the science of astrology, and measured the courses of these bodies carefully – on learning the cause, sent a letter and gifts to Hezekiah, just as also the wise men from the east did to Christ.<sup>21</sup>

**Jerome:** In Exodus we read that the battle was fought against Amalek while Moses prayed, and the whole people fasted until the evening. Joshua, the son of Nun, bade sun and moon stand still, and the victorious army prolonged its fast for more than a day.<sup>22</sup>

**Justin Martyr:** The former, after he had been named Jesus (Joshua), and after he had received strength from His Spirit, caused the sun to stand still.<sup>23</sup>

**Tertullian:** In Exodus, was not that position of Moses, battling against Amalek by prayers, maintained as it was perseveringly even till "sunset," a "late Station?" Think we that Joshua the son of Nun, when warring down the Amorites, had breakfasted on that day on which he ordered the very elements to keep a Station? The sun "stood" in Gibeon, and the moon in Ajalon; the sun and the moon "stood in station until the People was avenged of his enemies, and the sun stood in the mid heaven." When, moreover, (the sun) did draw toward his setting and the end of the one day, there was no such day beforetime and in the latest time (of course, (no day) so long), "that God," says (the writer), "should hear a man" – (a man,) to be sure, the sun's peer, so long persistent in his duty – a Station longer even than late.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, Mr. Palm missed all these.

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<sup>20</sup> *Second Oration on Easter*

<sup>21</sup> Fragments, I, *Discourse on Hezekiah*. Hippolytus' reference to "twenty-four hours" refers to the second leg of the forty-eight hour period of that unique long day.

<sup>22</sup> *Against Jovinianus*, Bk 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch CXIII.

<sup>24</sup> *On Fasting*, Ch X.

**Mr. Palm:** The quote from Athenagoras is as follows: "To Him is for us to know who stretched out and vaulted the heavens, and fixed the earth in its place like a centre" ([link](#)). Notice that this is simply a bare citation from the poetic Psalms. It's not a patristic exposition supporting geostationism per se and from the context it's clear that St. Athenagoras is simply making an appeal to the creative power of God generally, not making a statement about specific cosmological details.

**R. Sungenis:** Once again, Mr. Palm tries to set the rules of the discussion so that he can have a basis to dismiss evidence he doesn't like. There is no stipulation in the Council of Trent's teaching on patristic consensus that there must be "a patristic exposition supporting geostationism" or that the Fathers are required to give "a statement about specific cosmological details." The Fathers simply state what they believe as the Christian view, and often use a quote from Scripture to back up their belief.

**Mr. Palm:** Eight other patristic witnesses do speak, in various astrological/quasi-philosophical/quasi-scientific terms, of earth at the center of things. These are Sts. Anatolius of Alexandria, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Thaumaturgos, Hippolytus, and Methodius. But in *none of these instances* do the witnesses cite Scripture,

**R. Sungenis:** We already saw above that they do cite Scripture, and one of their favorite passages was Joshua 10:10-14 in which Joshua stops both the sun and the moon for a whole day. Joshua 10:10-14 was the same passage that Bellarmine used against Foscarini and Galileo, which logic was approved by Paul V. Hence, the basis for "contrary to Scripture" that appears in the original analysis of the Galileo case has already been established by Bellarmine. Not only the Fathers, but the "learned theologians" of the middle ages were also cited and they have plenty to say about Scripture's teaching on geocentrism.

If, on occasion a Father does not cite Scripture, there is no requirement from the Council of Trent that a Scripture must be referenced in order to make the Father's testimony legitimate or as part of the consensus. As in many other doctrines, the Fathers had a general knowledge of what the Scripture taught on a specific subject. Sometimes they cited Scripture, sometimes they didn't.

The fact remains, however, that they had a consensus that the Earth was in the center of the universe and that the sun revolved around it, not vice-versa, and that is all that matters.

**Mr. Palm:** say or even imply that they are passing on a sacred Tradition,

**R. Sungenis:** There is no requirement for them to say they are "passing on sacred Tradition." In fact, in many cases, the Fathers are the Tradition, since no documentation, other than Scripture, is extant from the Apostles. It is the very reason we go back to the patristic consensus to find the Tradition, since the Fathers are assumed to contain in their writings the very Tradition that has been carried on from the Apostles.

**Mr. Palm:** or indicate that their view is divinely revealed by God. They express these views of the centrality of the earth as matters of natural philosophy, not divine revelation.

**R. Sungenis:** If Mr. Palm can find an instance where the Fathers say they believe in geocentrism only because it is a scientific view and that their belief in geocentrism has nothing to do with either Scripture or Tradition, then he has a case. Until then, he is whistling in the dark. The fact is, the Fathers consistently show that they obtained their belief in geocentrism from Scripture. That Mr. Palm would try to deny this just shows his desperation.

**Mr. Palm:** Now these relatively few witnesses (ten, by my count, although “pseudo-Clement” does not count as a Father of the Church) certainly do not represent any “unanimous consent of the Fathers”.

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm once again seeks to establish the rules as he defines for us what a “unanimous consensus” is. The fact is, there are more than ten patristic witnesses. There are at least 29, and that number is not from an exhaustive study of the Fathers. That Mr. Palm leaves out over half of these (based on his self-made criteria) shows that he is, at the least, selective in his data gathering.

Here are the Fathers and sources: Ambrose, Anatolius, Aphrahat, Archeleus, Aristedes, Arnobius, Athanasius, Athenagoras, Augustine, Basil, John Cassian, Chrysostom, Clement of Rome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephraim the Syrian, Eusebius, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Thaumaturgos, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Jerome, John Damascene, Justin Martyr, Mathetes, Methodius, Minucius Felix, Tertullian, Memoirs of Edessa.

Of the 29 Fathers, here are the facts gleaned from each of their writings:

1. The Fathers never say the Earth moves.
2. The Fathers always say the Earth is at rest at the center of the universe.
3. The Fathers never say the sun is the center of the universe.
4. The Fathers never say the sun does not move around the Earth, even in their scientific analysis of the cosmos.
5. The Fathers always say the Earth is the center of the universe.
6. The Fathers always say the sun moves in the same way as the moon moves.
7. The Fathers recognize that some of the Greeks held that the Earth revolves and rotates, but they do not accept either of those teachings.
8. The Fathers accept the Chaldean, Egyptian and Greek teaching that the Earth is at the center of the universe and does not move.
9. The Fathers hold that the Earth was created first, by itself, and only afterward the sun, moon and stars. The only deviation from this is St. Augustine who, in one of his views, held that all the heavenly bodies were created at the same time.



10. The Fathers hold that light was created after the Earth, but this light preceded the light of the sun and stars, with the exception of Augustine notwithstanding.

**Mr. Palm:** And notice that the vast majority even of these don't cite Scripture or Tradition in support of geostationism. What or whom do they cite? St. Basil speaks generally of "inquirers into nature who with a great display of words give reasons for the immobility of the earth"; notice that he makes this a matter of natural science, not a theological point. And Methodius speaks of the "Chaldeans and Egyptians" and also of the mathematicians of the Greeks.

**R. Sungenis:** They do this to show that even the pagans agree that the universe is geocentric.

**Mr. Palm:** Hippolytus cites Ecphantus and Sungenis seems to me to have misread the saint, for he asserts that St. Hippolytus is refuting Ecphantus, but it appears to me from the text that St. Hippolytus is merely stating what Ecphantus believed without making any judgment on it. Earlier in the work, Hippolytus juxtaposes the heresies that he's refuting with the philosophies of the Greeks, saying of the latter that, "it seems, then, advisable, in the first instance, by explaining the opinions advanced by the philosophers of the Greeks, to satisfy our readers that such are of greater antiquity than these (heresies), and more deserving of reverence in reference to their views respecting the divinity" (link). So when St. Hippolytus states that Ecphantus believed "that the earth in the middle of the cosmical system is moved round its own center towards the east" he is at most taking a neutral stance toward this view. I find no evidence that he was actively opposing it.

**R. Sungenis:** Once again Mr. Palm is selective with his proofs. Below I cite two quotes from Hippolytus that were right above the one he quoted above, but which he deliberately ignored. We will see that Hippolytus uses the same argument the rest of the Fathers use – the account of Joshua in Joshua 10:10-14 – the same account that Cardinal Bellarmine used against Foscarini and Galileo:

**Hippolytus:** When Hezekiah, king of Judah, was still sick and weeping, there came an angel, and said to him: "I have seen thy tears, and I have heard thy voice. Behold, I add unto thy time fifteen years. And this shall be a sign to thee from the Lord: Behold, I turn back the shadow of the degrees of the house of thy father, by which the sun has gone down, the ten degrees by which the shadow has gone down," so that day be a day of thirty-two hours. For when the sun had run its course to the tenth hour, it returned again. And again, when Joshua the son of Nun was fighting against the Amorites, when the sun was now inclining to its setting, and the battle was being pressed closely, Joshua, being anxious lest the heathen host should escape on the descent of night, cried out, saying, "Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon; and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon," until I vanquish this people. And the sun stood still, and the moon, in their places, so that day was one of twenty-four hours. And in the time of Hezekiah the moon also turned back along with the sun, that there might be no collision between the two elemental bodies, by their bearing against each other in defiance of law. And Merodach the Chaldean, king of Babylon, being struck with amazement at that

time, for he studied the science of astrology, and measured the courses of these bodies carefully – on learning the cause, sent a letter and gifts to Hezekiah, just as also the wise men from the east did to Christ.<sup>25</sup>

**Hippolytus:** We find in the commentaries, written by our predecessors, that day had thirty-two hours. For when the sun had run its course, and reached the tenth hour, and the shadow had gone down by the ten degrees in the house of the temple, the sun turned back again by the ten degrees, according to the word of the Lord, and there were thus twenty hours. And again, the sun accomplished its own proper course, according to the common law, and reached its setting. And thus there were thirty-two hours.<sup>26</sup>

**Mr. Palm:** Similarly, Sungenis cites Anatolius of Alexandria, who himself cites the Greek philosophers Eudemus, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes with regard to various cosmological views:

Eudemus relates in his *Astrologies* that Enopides found out the circle of the zodiac and the cycle of the great year. And Thales discovered the eclipse of the sun and its period in the tropics in its constant inequality. And **Anaximander discovered that the earth is poised in space, and moves round the axis of the universe.** And Anaximenes discovered that the moon has her light from the sun, and found out also the way in which she suffers eclipse. And the rest of the mathematicians have also made additions to these discoveries. We may instance the facts – that the fixed stars move round the axis passing through the poles, while the planets remove from each other round the perpendicular axis of the zodiac (*Fragments of the Books on Arithmetic*; emphasis mine.)

**R. Sungenis:** The fact remains that Anatolius is using these Greek scientists to show that even they agree with the Scripture. If Anatolius had concluded that these Greek geocentrists were wrong, only then would Mr. Palm have a point.

**Mr. Palm:** Sungenis has miscited this work; it does not come from *The Pascal Canon*, as he says, but from *Fragments of the Books on Arithmetic*,

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, my mistake. Schaff has a small title following Ch 17 that I missed. Thank you, Mr. Palm.

**Mr. Palm:** ...which is a strong indication that St. Anatolius views these as matters of natural philosophy and not doctrine.

**R. Sungenis:** But Mr. Palm doesn't know what Anatolius' personal view is.

**Mr. Palm:** And again, there's no indication in this text that St. Anatolius is opposing the views he cites. Quite the contrary, if you read the whole section it's all very laudatory of the Greek mathematicians. St. Anatolius asserts that the mathematician Anaximander actually

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<sup>25</sup> Fragments, I, *Discourse on Hezekiah*. Hippolytus' reference to "twenty-four hours" refers to the second leg of the forty-eight hour period of that unique long day.

<sup>26</sup> Fragments, III, *Discourse on Hezekiah*.

“discovered” that the earth “moves round the axis of the universe”. Sungenis cannot simply assume that St. Anatolius opposes this view—he would have to prove it and from what I can see that’s not possible. At the very least, it strongly suggests that for St. Anatolius and St. Hippolytus, the earth’s motion is a matter of natural philosophy and not a matter of faith.

**R. Sungenis:** Correct. This reference will be removed from my book.

**Mr. Palm:** It will not do for geocentrists to take various passages in which the Fathers speak of a mobile sun and assume from those that it demonstrates an immobile earth. As I’ve already demonstrated above, there is no necessary, logical connection between a mobile sun and an immobile earth. Even if a given Father believes (as many of them did) that the sun moves around the earth, this does not in any way demonstrate that the earth itself is immobile. Both bodies could be moving (as they in fact are.)

**R. Sungenis:** We see once again that Mr. Palm bases his whole analysis of these historical events on his presumption that it is a “fact” (note the word “fact”) that the sun and earth are both moving. Where does he get this information? From his belief that modern science is correct when it claims from Einstein that everything is relative and in motion. Does Palm have any proof for this? No, not a scintilla. Mr. Palm has no way of showing whether the Earth is moving against a stationary universe or the universe is moving against a stationary Earth, therefore his argument is destroyed.

We’ve also seen that Mr. Palm’s so-called “strict” interpretation is also presumption, and it destroys his case even if it were to be used since the Church confined the issue to “local motion,” not motion of the celestial bodies through the universe. In reference to local motion, the sun and the earth remain the same distance apart as the radius drawn from the center of a circle to the circumference. Since that is the case, only the object on the circumference can move, while the center does not. If Mr. Palm claims that the center moves with relation to the universe: (1) he simply has no way to prove such; and (2) the “local motion” specification of the 1616 decree eliminates such an expanded frame of reference. Thus there is a logical connection between mobile sun and an immobile Earth.

Since Mr. Palm is looking for his loophole to support his belief that heliocentrism is a “fact,” he has consistently tried to confine the issue to merely one of movement and has avoided the obvious intent of the 1616 and 1633 Church, in line with the Fathers and the Tridentine catechism, that the sun revolves around the Earth, not the Earth around the sun.

**Mr. Palm:** To summarize, in the quotes provided by Sungenis himself, only one Father explicitly cites Scripture on geostationism—if that is actually what he’s doing, which isn’t even clear from that single passage—and this is the only patristic passage Sungenis has brought forth that makes any theological connection at all.

**R. Sungenis:** As we have seen above, Mr. Palm’s statement is categorically false.

**Mr. Palm:** As for the other Fathers he references who seem explicitly to support geostationism, they cite the Greeks and other pagans as their authorities. The evidence certainly strongly supports that the Fathers did not see the immobility of the earth as a matter of faith but as a matter of natural philosophy.

**R. Sungenis:** This is also false, as noted above.

**Mr. Palm:** It's no wonder, then, that even the consultants to the Holy Office in 1616 didn't say *anything* about the Fathers with regard to the immobility of the earth. And yet the immobility of the earth is the very point that Sungenis insists is the most important aspect of this entire controversy. The geocentrist claim that their system is supported by a "unanimous consent" of the Fathers is completely undermined when one actually examines the Fathers.

**R. Sungenis:** It was stated very clearly for Mr. Palm, but since he twists the language to make a simple issue very complicated, he misses the message.

### **Mr. Palm: The Fathers Never Indicate They Are Passing on a Revealed Truth**

As we've already stated, the modern geocentrist faces a fundamental obstacle in trying to make the case that a unanimous consent of the Fathers binds Catholics to a belief in geocentrism. The fact is that none of the various patristic witnesses explicitly present this as a matter that has been directly revealed by God.

**R. Sungenis:** Quite the contrary. They implicitly show it is from revealed truth because they cite the account of Joshua to prove their point, as well as various passages in the Psalms. Bellarmine used the same passages for the Church in 1616 against Galileo. Mr. Palm is trying to convince us that Bellarmine's work against Galileo was worthless and that the Church of 1616 made a mistake in endorsing his work.

**Mr. Palm:** No one questions that the Fathers were in fact geocentrists. This shouldn't surprise anyone because geocentrism was the best science of their day and accorded best with the observations that men were able to make at that time. But it's unjustifiable to insist that because the Fathers held to a geocentric cosmology—again, the best science of their day within the limits of their observational abilities—that they therefore held it as a matter of divine faith. That would have to be proven, not merely asserted.

**R. Sungenis:** No Father ever said he believed in geocentrism because "it was the best science of the day." Mr. Palm is just making it up as he goes along. If he believes otherwise than he needs to cite a Father who says what he claims. The heliocentrists from the Pythagorean school thought their science was better, and no one was able to judge which was better. What the Fathers had was Scripture to make the choice between the two systems.

**Mr. Palm:** In fact, none of the Fathers, when speaking of cosmological matters, say they are passing on a matter revealed by God.

**R. Sungenis:** Obviously, one doesn't need to state they are "passing on a matter revealed by God" if they are already quoting Scripture (which is revealed by God) to prove their point. The problem started when Mr. Palm arbitrarily limited the patristic evidence to Athenagoras. Bellarmine would have laughed at him.

**Mr. Palm:** None of the Fathers indicate in any way that they are passing on a Tradition from the Apostles.

**R. Sungenis:** The Fathers were not in the habit of saying that any particular doctrine was "Tradition from the Apostles." Since most of them did not live in the time of the Apostles, it would be impossible for them to connect a particular doctrine with the Apostles. Rather, the doctrines of the Apostles were preserved in the churches, and the Fathers were born and grew up in those churches and thus received whatever oral tradition had been preserved before them. Moreover, Scripture itself was considered part of that Tradition, and it was Scripture upon which the Fathers mainly rested their arguments, which is why many of them cited Joshua as supporting a moving sun and a stationary earth.

**Mr. Palm:** As we have already seen above, the evidence indicates that this is for them a matter of natural philosophy and not a matter of faith.

**R. Sungenis:** Since the Fathers quoted from Joshua to support a moving sun and a fixed Earth, if Mr. Palm had objected to them, they would have told him he was rejecting or misinterpreting the Scripture, and that doing so was a matter of faith, which is precisely what the Church told Galileo in 1616 and 1633.

**Mr. Palm:** Numerous Catholic theologians affirm that for the combined witness of the Fathers to be normative and binding, they must be addressing a matter of revealed truth, that is, a matter of faith and morals. In doing so, they are being faithful to the teaching of the Council of Trent, Vatican I, and Pope Leo XIII on the binding nature of a consensus of the Fathers:

[N]o one, relying on his own skill, shall,—**in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine** . . . interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary . . . to the unanimous consent of the Fathers . . . (Council of Trent, Session IV; emphasis mine.)

[W]e renew that decree and declare its meaning to be as follows: that **in matters of faith and morals**, belonging as they do to the establishing of Christian doctrine, that meaning of Holy Scripture must be held to be the true one, which Holy mother Church held and holds, since it is her right to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of Holy Scripture. In consequence, it is not permissible for anyone to interpret Holy Scripture in a sense contrary to this, or indeed against the unanimous consent of the fathers (First Vatican Council, Session III; emphasis mine.)

the Holy Fathers, We say, are of supreme authority, whenever they all interpret in one and the same manner **any text of the Bible, as pertaining to the doctrine of faith or morals;** (Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* §14; emphasis mine).

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm is correct. As Bellarmine told Galileo: “Nor can one reply that this is not a matter of faith, because even if it is not a matter of faith because of the subject matter [ex parte objecti], it is still a matter of faith because of the speaker [ex parte dicentis]. Thus anyone who would say that Abraham did not have two sons and Jacob twelve would be just as much of a heretic as someone who would say that Christ was not born of a virgin, for the Holy Spirit has said both of these things through the mouths of the Prophets and the Apostles.”

**Mr. Palm:** Note that that Pope Leo XIII adds the phrase “as pertaining to the doctrine of faith and morals” to modify “any text of the Bible”, demonstrating that not every text of the Bible does in fact pertain to faith and morals. All Scripture is inspired and inerrant, certainly, and all of it exists for our edification and instruction. But not every passage of Scripture pertains to a matter of faith or morals. One thinks of stretches of history, genealogies, or the personal salutations and instructions contained in various epistles as examples where the words of Scripture, while certainly still inspired, do not pertain to a matter of faith and morals.

**R. Sungenis:** But if one denies the veracity and truth of “stretches of history, genealogies, or the personal salutations and instructions contained in various epistles as examples where the words of Scripture, while certainly still inspired, do not pertain to a matter of faith and morals,” it is just as if he denied the whole Bible, since all of it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. In that sense it becomes a matter of faith, as Bellarmine told Galileo.

**Mr. Palm:** Pope Leo XIII states further on in *Providentissimus Deus* that we need not heed every opinion of the Fathers, but only those they put forward as matters of faith:

The unshrinking defence of the Holy Scripture, however, does not require that we should equally uphold all the opinions which each of the Fathers or the more recent interpreters have put forth in explaining it; for it may be that, in commenting on passages where physical matters occur, they have sometimes expressed the ideas of their own times, and thus made statements which in these days have been abandoned as incorrect. Hence, in their interpretations, we must carefully note what they lay down as belonging to faith, or as intimately connected with faith-what they are unanimous in. For "in those things which do not come under the obligation of faith, the Saints were at liberty to hold divergent opinions, just as we ourselves are,"

**R. Sungenis:** The Fathers were unanimous that Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit, as did the Church after them, and if someone denied that this or that part of Scripture was not inspired and inerrant, he would be denying the faith. Moreover, Pope Leo XIII is only referring to issues that were not settled by the Fathers or issues that were not from

Scripture. But the Fathers were in consensus on geocentrism and the truth they held of it came from Scripture.

**Mr. Palm:** Theologian Fr. William Most draws this out this succinctly:

To prove a doctrine from the Fathers, it is necessary to find them morally unanimous, and *speaking as witnesses of revelation* ("Grace, Predestination and the Salvific Will of God: New Answers to Old Questions", P.200; emphasis mine.)

**R. Sungenis:** Which is why the Fathers quoted from Joshua to prove the doctrine of geocentrism, and it is the very reason that Bellarmine referred to the Father's consensus on Joshua to curtail the heresy of Galileo.

**Mr. Palm:** Fr. R. C. Fuller lays this out in more detail:

When the Fathers interpret a text pertaining to faith and morals in one and the same way they are of the highest authority 'because their unanimity clearly shows that such an interpretation has come down from the Apostles as a matter of Catholic Faith', PD, EB 96, Dz 1944. Moral unanimity is sufficient, i.e., if a good number of Fathers in widely different parts of the Church, or of different ages agree on a point and no Father contradicts their teaching. Again the view must be given as certain and not as merely possible or probable. Lastly *the doctrine must be put forward as revealed truth*. Evidently these conditions are not often fulfilled simultaneously. The number of texts determined by the consent of the Fathers is even smaller than that of the texts determined by the decrees of the Church. We cite a few examples: the virginal conception of Christ, Is 7:14; the Passion of Christ, Is 53; existence of Purgatory, 2 Mac 12:43 . . .

**R. Sungenis:** Correct, and Joshua 10:10-14 was revealed truth that the Fathers used to uphold the doctrine of geocentrism.

**Mr. Palm:** In matters other than those of faith and morals the Fathers have no special authority and their views are to be judged in light of their arguments. Even if they all held, for example, that the world was made in six days of twenty-four hours we would not be bound to accept that view under authority because it is not a matter of faith and morals ("*Interpretation of Holy Scripture*", in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, p. 60; emphasis mine.)

**R. Sungenis:** It becomes a matter of faith and morals if one claims that what the Bible says on any subject is either not inspired by the Holy Spirit or errant in its message. Thus, if the Bible teaches geocentrism and this is affirmed by the Church, then to deny geocentrism would become a matter of faith, even though geocentrism itself isn't a matter of faith as the deity of Christ is a matter of faith.

**Mr. Palm:** Lest anyone claim that Fr. Fuller's example of the six days of creation is merely his own opinion, consider that the Magisterium under Pope St. Pius X explicitly allowed for non-literal interpretations of the days of creation. This is highly significant since the

new geocentrists—Sungenis, DeLano, Salza, et al.—also claim that belief in creation in six literal, twenty-four hour days is itself a matter binding on all Catholics by virtue of an alleged unanimous consent of the Fathers (see e.g. GWW2, pp. 98ff. and <http://www.scripturecatholic.com/evolution.html>). I'll lay this out in more detail below.

**R. Sungenis:** We do not hold it as a matter of faith in the sense that it is required of salvation, especially since Pius X's PBC allowed for it to be either 24 hours or another length of time. We only show that it was the consensus of the Fathers, and the only possible departure from it was St. Augustine's alternative interpretation.

**Mr. Palm:** Another Catholic theologian, Fr. Jerome Langford, reinforces this distinction concerning the unanimous witness of the Fathers pertaining only to matters of faith and morals:

Thus for a scriptural interpretation of the Fathers to unquestionable validity, two requirements had to be met. First, all who wrote on a text had to explain it in the same way. This "unanimous consent" of the Fathers meant that there must be a moral unanimity. If many of the great Fathers interpreted it in one way and no other Church Father contradicted them, the exegesis could be accepted as the universal interpretation of the Fathers. Secondly, *the Fathers had to affirm, explicitly or implicitly, that the text under consideration pertained to a matter of faith or morals*. Therefore, if there was not a unanimous consent or if the interpretation was not proposed as a certain doctrine pertaining to faith or morals, but merely as an opinion or conjecture, it did not necessarily have to be followed. (Langford, *Galileo, Science, and the Church*, 3rd ed. pp. 62f.; emphasis mine.)

**R. Sungenis:** Already answered above.

**Mr. Palm:** There's one other witness worth hearing on the matter—not a Catholic theologian, to be sure, but certainly an interested party. It turns out that Sungenis himself agrees with these standards. In a different context—namely, when he's trying to *downplay* the testimony of the Fathers concerning positive divine promises to the Jewish people—he agrees that not everything held by the Fathers, even by a majority of the Fathers, is by that fact *de fide*, a matter of faith. He insists, in line with Catholic theologians, that it is necessary for the matter to be of divine origin for the unanimity of the Fathers to be binding and normative:

It is the divine origin of a particular doctrine that makes the doctrine a requirement of belief for salvation, not the majority or common opinion of the Fathers, the medievals or theologians and prelates of today" (*The Epistles of Romans and James*, p. 440).

And:

". . . no Catholic is under any compulsion whatsoever to abide by whatever was predicted about Israel among even a majority of patristic writers ... even if the Fathers are in



consensus on a given topic, we are still permitted to add information that has been gleaned from fresh studies of Scripture" ("Never Revoked", p. 12).

He says elsewhere,

[N]ot one of the witnesses ever provide exegesis of the passages, nor cited early patristic support for their interpretation, nor showed that the apostolic tradition demanded their interpretation. ("Intense Dialogue on Romans 11").

**R. Sungenis:** Unfortunately, for all Mr. Palm's scouring of my writings to prove his point, he skipped right over one of the most important points I make on this very topic, and it was a point that was the next sentence in a paragraph of mine he quoted earlier from my Romans commentary. Here it is from page 440, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. I state:

"There are instances in which the Fathers held to a consensus on various points of doctrine, but the Church, who is the final authority, has not chosen to dogmatize the consensus into a requirement for personal belief and salvation (e.g., **geocentrism**, that the sons of God in Gn 6:1-2 were fallen angels)."

So, as one can see, I stated the very argument Mr. Palm is trying to make against me (namely, he says that I am requiring geocentrism to be believed as a matter of faith necessary for salvation), but Mr. Palm deliberately avoided it. This is deceptive, for it is trying to make me appear one way when I am actually the other way.

**Mr. Palm:** And the fact is, as Fr. Langford so rightly says,

Not one Father can be found who declares that the motion of the heavens or the immobility of the earth pertains to faith or morals. St. Augustine explicitly teaches that it most certainly does not (*Galileo, Science, and the Church*, p. 63.)

**R. Sungenis:** Of course Augustine would say so, since geocentrism does not deal with issues of sin and salvation. But Augustine would be the first to say that if someone denies something that the Bible clearly says exists, then that matter becomes a matter of faith, since the person is denying the veracity of Holy Scripture.

**Mr. Palm:** As early as 2007 I stated that, "if we applied all of Sungenis's criteria that he uses to dismiss the testimony of the Fathers in support of a future conversion of the Jews, we would find that list of witnesses for geocentrism likewise decimated" ("[The Ongoing Role of the Jews in Salvation History](#)").

**R. Sungenis:** And Mr. Palm would be wrong in this comparison simply because the Fathers disagreed on the future conversion of the Jews, but they did not disagree on geocentrism.

**Mr. Palm:** Of course, Sungenis is simply wrong about some of the rules for evaluating patristics, and he seems to just make them up as he goes along — such as his recent insistence when dealing with the "Conversion of the Jews" that a Church Father can't

simply state a belief and cite a passage of Scripture as the basis for that belief in order for it to carry weight. According to Sungenis's "rule", the Father must also provide a detailed exegesis of the relevant Scriptural passage (remarkably, Sungenis blithely dismissed *forty-five* patristic citations with the flippant comment, "no exegesis, just assertions". [[LINK](#)]). But it's particularly interesting to note that Sungenis develops amnesia about these same made up rules when it comes to his favored belief, geocentrism.

**R. Sungenis:** Well, it just so happens that the Church in 1616 and 1633 backed up my understanding of the Fathers on geocentrism by making an official condemnation of the competition, but the Church has yet to make an official decision on the so-called "conversion of the Jews."

Moreover, cosmology is a simple topic. Either the Earth is revolving around the sun or the sun is revolving around the Earth. But the Jews and their salvation is a very complicated topic, and it is the very reason there are a number of views among the Fathers, medievals, theologians, saints, doctors and popes. For a case like this, one cannot just cite a Scripture and think that it answers such a complicated question, especially when the citations come from some of the most difficult passages in Scripture that theologians have been arguing about for centuries (e.g., Romans 9-11). This is especially true in the case of the Jews, since most of the early Fathers were Premillennialists, and the latter Fathers were Amillennialists – two eschatological futures for the Jews that are diametrically opposed! Yet Fathers from both these camps used the same passages of Scripture to prove their particular future for the Jews! Need I say more?

**Mr. Palm:** And, of course, Sungenis was also simply wrong about the nature of the patristic witness in support of "the Conversion of the Jews" – which is extensive, explicitly based on scripture and presented by Fathers of the East and West as a matter of revelation/faith rather than reason or science.

**R. Sungenis:** You can see it for yourself. Mr. Palm apparently believes that a mass conversion of the Jews in the future is a "matter of revelation/faith." Perhaps he thinks that it is required for salvation.

**Mr. Palm:** But it's probably safe to assume that we'll never see him even attempt to apply the hermeneutic of suspicion he uses to dismiss patristic testimony concerning positive eschatological promises to the Jews to his pet cause, geocentrism. For him, it always seems to be one standard for me and another for thee.

**R. Sungenis:** As I stated above, the Fathers (early and late), the medievals, the saints, theologians, doctors, commentaries, etc., are not in consensus when it comes to the Jews and their future, and Scripture is certainly not spilling over with clear information on the topic since the only verse in the New Testament to address the issue is Romans 11:25-29, one of the most obscure passages in the Bible. So, my so-called "hermeneutic of suspicion" will continue on the future conversion of the Jews. Mr. Palm simply doesn't like me upsetting his Dispensationalist applecart with solid exegesis of Scripture as opposed to his name-dropping analysis.

**Mr. Palm:** But even without applying an undue hermeneutic of suspicion it can be demonstrated that the patristic quotes that Sungenis deploys to try to establish a “unanimous consent” of the Fathers fall far short of what he needs to demonstrate, namely, that a consensus of the Fathers presented geocentric cosmology as a matter of divine and revealed faith. Space doesn’t permit me to interact with every patristic quote that Sungenis brings to the table. But we can certainly see a number of different patterns that serve to highlight just how far short this evidence falls of meeting that bar.

First, there are those citations that simply demonstrate that a given Father held to geocentrism. And it may be readily acknowledged that the Fathers actually held to geocentrism, especially if we leave the focus on their understanding that the sun moves (as we’ve seen,

**R. Sungenis:** And the fact that the Fathers held to geocentrism means it was the consensus of belief among them, and surely Mr. Palm is not going to tell us that none of these Fathers just happened to notice that Scripture also teaches geocentrism if interpreted literally.

**Mr. Palm:** it is much more difficult to *prove* that the Fathers believed that the earth does not move.)

**R. Sungenis:** No it isn’t. Many Fathers say the Earth is fixed in the center of the universe, and not one Father says the Earth moves. But apparently that’s not enough for Mr. Palm.

**Mr. Palm:** As I’ve previously noted, this is hardly surprising because geocentrism was the best science of their day and we would expect men of their learning and intellect to hold this view. But this may be admitted without any prejudice to the case I’m making because demonstrating that a given Father holds to geocentrism as a matter of natural philosophy is very different from demonstrating that he held geocentrism as a *matter of faith*. And in the case of Sungenis’ patristic citations, there are quite a number that indicate that a given Father was a geocentrist (again, no surprise since it was the best science of the day), but fall completely short of making any connection whatsoever to establishing geocentrism as a matter of faith. So, for example, Sungenis cites St. Clement of Rome: “The sun and moon, with the companies of the stars, roll on in harmony according to His command, within their prescribed limits, and without any deviation” ([link](#); see larger context.) These words are certainly true. But they’re just as true in a non-geocentric cosmology and do nothing to establish that St. Clement believed geocentrism to be a matter of divine revelation.

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, perhaps that criticism might be true, unless, of course, Mr. Palm had bothered to quote the next two passages I cite from Clement of Rome, which are these:

**Clement of Rome:** the Creator, long-suffering, merciful, the sustainer, the benefactor, ordaining love of men, counseling purity, immortal and making immortal, incomparable, dwelling in the souls of the good, that cannot be contained and yet is

contained, who has fixed the great world as a centre in space, who has spread out the heavens and solidified the earth.<sup>27</sup>

Notice here that Clement says it was the “Creator...who has fixed the world as a center in space.” Well, where did Clement get that divine information? How does he know it is the “Creator” and not the Greek Demiurge? Because that is what Scripture and Church tell him. Very simple.

**Clement of Rome:** For it is manifest even to the unbelieving and unskilful, that the course of the sun, which is useful and necessary to the world, and which is assigned by providence, is always kept orderly; but the courses of the moon, in comparison of the course of the sun, seem to the unskilful to be inordinate and unsettled in her waxings and wanings. For the sun moves in fixed and orderly periods: for from him are hours, from him the day when he rises, from him also the night when he sets; from him months and years are reckoned, from him the variations of seasons are produced; while, rising to the higher regions, he tempers the spring; but when he reaches the top of the heaven, he kindles the summer’s heats: again, sinking, he produces the temper of autumn; and when he returns to his lowest circle, he bequeaths to us the rigour of winter’s cold from the icy binding of heaven.<sup>28</sup>

Notice here that Clement says that the cosmos was “assigned by providence.” How does he know that? Why doesn’t he believe it was just a matter of time and chance as the Greeks did? Because Scripture told him otherwise. Or is Mr. Palm going to tell us that every time Clement came across a passage in Scripture that spoke about the cosmos, Clement just closed his eyes and ignored it because he wanted to get all his information from “the best science of the day” – geocentrism. How absurd.

**Mr. Palm:** Second, there are any number of patristic quotes brought forth by Sungenis in which the Father in question does nothing more than simply quote or allude to a given Bible passage. But this does nothing to advance the question, for if the author of the Scripture passage is merely using phenomenological language (i.e., language that describes matters as they appear to our senses without necessarily intending to convey objective, scientific fact) then there is no reason to suppose that a given Father means any more than that when quoting it.

**R. Sungenis:** Granted, if that were the only source we have. We also grant that there is “phenomenological language” in Scripture about the sun’s movement, since the sun does not “rise” literally; rather, it orbits the Earth. It only seems to rise since its orbit traverses the Earth’s horizon.

**Mr. Palm:** For example, Sungenis quotes St. Ephraim the Syrian thus: “The sun in his course teaches thee that thou rest from labour.” But how does this help the geocentrist? For even in a geocentrist cosmology the sun does not “rest” anywhere, but moves constantly.

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<sup>27</sup> *Homily II, Ch XLV.*

<sup>28</sup> *Pseudo-Clementine, Bk VIII, Ch XLV*

Clearly, St. Ephraim was not being scientific, but poetic and was speaking according to the appearance that the sun “rests” when it is nighttime.

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, he may have been speaking more poetically than scientifically. Then again, he may have been confident to speak poetically about the sun’s movement because he believed scientifically that the sun does, indeed, move around the Earth. After all, wasn’t it Mr. Palm who told us that “geocentrism was the best science of the day”?

**Mr. Palm:** Or let’s take the example cited from St. Gregory Nazianzus, who says, “The sun is extolled by David for its beauty, its greatness, its swift course, and its power, splendid as a bridegroom, majestic as a giant; while, from the extent of its circuit, it has such power that it equally sheds its light from one end of heaven to the other, and the heat thereof is in no wise lessened by distance.” Here, aside from being factually incorrect about the heat of the sun not diminishing with distance,

**R. Sungenis:** Gregory is speaking about the relative heat of the sun not diminishing, which is very true. That Mr. Palm wants to use a microferometer to make his case only shows how desperate he is.

**Mr. Palm:** the saint alludes to the poetic language of the psalms in order to make a further connection to the qualities of his dear friend St. Basil the Great.

**R. Sungenis:** That the Psalms use Hebrew poetic forms, few disagree. That these same poetic Psalms reveal historical and prophetic truth, few disagree. If not, then Psalm 22’s poetic language about the crucifixion of Christ should go on Mr. Palm’s list of mere figurative language without historical validity.

**Mr. Palm:** This does nothing to demonstrate that he held geocentrism as a matter of divine faith (and see further on this “[The Pitfalls of Over-Literal Interpretation](#)”).

**R. Sungenis:** Unless Mr. Palm can show us a statement from Gregory that he does not hold to a geocentric view, and that his reading of moving suns and immobile Earths in the Psalms is something that he never interprets literally as a historical truth, only then does he have a case. But the fact is, Gregory, by Mr. Palm’s own admission, was a geocentrist. If anything, that means, even though he recognized the poetic style of the Psalm, he would be inclined to understand the Psalms as confirming a geocentric universe, as did all the Fathers.

Mr. Palm is simply barking up the wrong tree, but that’s what usually happens when one is desperate. We can also see this desperation when he picks one of Gregory’s weaker statements and ignores stronger ones, such as the one right above the one he cited, in which Gregory says:

“But who gave him motion at first? And what is it whichever moves him in his circuit, though in his nature stable and immovable, truly unwearied, and the giver and sustainer of life, and all the rest of the titles which the poets justly sing of him, and

never resting in his course or his benefits? How comes he to be the creator of day when above the earth, and of night when below it? Or whatever may be the right expression when one contemplates the sun?"

**Mr. Palm:** Third, Sungenis brings forth witnesses who don't say anything to support his point at all. For example, Sungenis cites the ancient apologist Arnobius thus: "The moon, the sun, the earth, the ether, the stars, are members and parts of the world; but if they are parts and members, they are certainly not themselves living creatures" ([link](#)). Let's all grant this ancient Catholic's point, that the sun, earth, and stars are not living creatures. But what does this have to do with establishing geocentrism? This citation contributes nothing to an alleged patristic consensus on the matter. And so it is with any number of passages put forth by Sungenis allegedly in support of geocentrism. They have nothing to do with the topic.

**R. Sungenis:** Of course, it would seem they have nothing to do with the topic, unless one quotes the entire passage I put in my book. Here is the part Mr. Palm left out, apparently deliberately:

Has the revolution of the globe, to which we are accustomed, departing from the rate of its primal motion, begun either to move too slowly, or to be hurried onward in headlong rotation? Have the stars begun to rise in the west, and the setting of the constellations to take place in the east?

**Mr. Palm:** But then another more troubling pattern we find is that Sungenis cites selectively and often even misleadingly.

**R. Sungenis:** Notice how, after he ignores most of Arnobius' quote above, Mr. Palm has the audacity to accuse me of "citing selectively and often even misleadingly."

**Mr. Palm:** Here's an example from a very great Father, St. Athanasius. Sungenis cites the saint thus:

"For the Sun is carried round along with, and is contained in, the whole heaven, and can never go beyond his own orbit, while the moon and other stars testify to the assistance given them by the Sun...But the earth is not supported upon itself, but is set upon the realm of the waters, while this again is kept in its place, being bound fast at the center of the universe."

Four points present themselves when looking at this passage in its full context (see [here](#)). First, the entire point of this section of St. Athanasius' work was to stop people from worshipping the creation – whether the sun or the earth. The saint was demonstrating the dependence of created objects like the sun, moon – and yes, *the earth* – upon other things. These things are all unlike God because God is not dependent upon anything. As such, St. Athanasius was certainly not at all trying to exalt or elevate the physical place of the earth in the heavens. In fact, he was trying to do precisely the opposite!

**R. Sungenis:** The fact that Mr. Palm cannot admit that Athanasius is using historically known facts about the cosmos (*e.g.*, the sun orbits the Earth and the Earth is in the center of the universe) in order to make them an object lesson for his greater truth about God, shows that the only one who is being “misleading” here is Mr. Palm.

**Mr. Palm:** Second, St. Athanasius is not making some sort of precise scientific claim, much less claiming that the details of what he’s saying are a matter of revealed truth. Rather, he is making a general observation about the orderliness of creation and therefore of the existence of a Creator. It’s a perfectly good argument, but it does not establish the physical details of what he’s describing as a matter of revealed truth.

**R. Sungenis:** So in other words, Mr. Palm is suggesting to us that Athanasius does not have a core scientific conviction that the sun orbits the Earth or that the Earth is in the center of the universe (even though, as Mr. Palm told us, “geocentrism was the best science of the day”); rather, for Mr. Palm, Athanasius has a bad habit of using flimsy and unsupported historical facts for his analogies about God. How absurd. Doesn’t Mr. Palm realize that the strength of Athanasius’ analogy comes from the fact that his historical and scientific facts are solidly based? The Psalmist does the same as Athanasius. When in Psalm 93 the Psalmist says that the God is immutable, the Psalmist then compares this immutability to the fact that the Earth doesn’t move. Hence, the historical fact (that the Earth doesn’t move) is used to teach the immutability of God (*i.e.*, that God doesn’t move). In other words, God would not be very immutable if the Earth moved, since it would imply that God moves.

**Mr. Palm:** Third, notice that Sungenis has done with St. Athanasius just what he did with the Roman Catechism (see [here](#) and [here](#)). He takes a passage that addresses the dry land on the earth and presents it as if it was about the globe’s place in the cosmos.

**R. Sungenis:** As we have already seen much earlier in this debate, it is Mr. Palm who makes the grossest error he has ever made when he analyzes the Roman Catechism. Here is what the Catechism said:

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>29</sup>

The word “world” is the Latin “*mun*do,” and it refers to the universe. It is the same use of “*mun*do” in the first decree against Galileo (“The proposition that the sun is the center of the world...”). Of course, true to form, Mr. Palm once tried to argue that “Earth” meant “land” and “world” meant “Earth,” in an obvious attempt to remove the geocentric doctrine from the 1566 catechism. But Mr. Palm’s illogic would then make it say, “The land also God

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<sup>29</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.”

commanded to stand in the middle of the earth,” which doesn’t make any sense, since the land does not occupy the middle (center) of the Earth but rests on its surface, and there is no middle to the surface.

**Mr. Palm:** Notice what Sungenis cut out with the ellipses:

while the earth again evidently does not yield her crops without rains, which in their turn would not descend to earth without the assistance of the clouds; but not even would the clouds ever appear of themselves and subsist, without the air. And the air is warmed by the upper air, but illuminated and made bright by the sun, not by itself. 6. And wells, again, and rivers will never exist without the earth ([link](#))

St. Athanasius is clearly speaking of the dry land on the surface of the earth and its relationship to the water, not to the position of the entire planet in relation to the universe. This passage does nothing to establish geocentrism even as a matter of natural philosophy, let alone as a matter of divine revelation.

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm’s analysis is ridiculous. Apparently he hasn’t learned from his same mistake in the Roman Catechism. Let’s look at the passage again, and this time we will add the part that Mr. Palm accuses me of deliberately cutting out “because I want to hide something”:

For the Sun is carried round along with, and is contained in, the whole heaven, and can never go beyond his own orbit, while the moon and other stars testify to the assistance given them by the Sun

Does this not tell us that the sun is carried in its orbit by the whole heaven, which is rotating around the Earth? Why is Athanasius making this point? Because in the previous sentence he is trying to teach them about how the creation is made in parts that are dependent on one another! Notice what he says:

“For if man take the parts of the Creation separately and consider each by itself – as for example, the sun by itself alone, and the moon apart, and again the earth and air, and heat and cold, and the essence of wet and dry, separating them from their mutual conjunction – he will certainly not find that one is sufficient for itself, but all are in need of one another assistance, and subsist by their mutual help. For the sun is carried round along with, and is contained in, the whole heaven...”

Obviously, Athanasius is saying that the sun cannot orbit the Earth all by itself; rather, the sun is carried by the whole heaven, and thus Athanasius proves his own point that “he will certainly not find that one is sufficient for itself, but all are in need of one another assistance.”

Now let’s look at the continuation of Athanasius’ paragraph that Mr. Palm cites:



while the earth again evidently does not yield her crops without rains, which in their turn would not descend to earth without the assistance of the clouds; but not even would the clouds ever appear of themselves and subsist, without the air. And the air is warmed by the upper air, but illuminated and made bright by the sun, not by itself. And wells, again, and rivers will never exist without the earth.

Obviously, we have another example of how parts of God's creation are dependent on other parts, in this case it is the clouds, rain, rivers and crops that are mutually dependent on one another. This part of Athanasius' paragraph does not contradict the fact concerning the sun orbiting the Earth by means of the whole heaven. In fact, this is precisely what geocentric cosmology holds, namely, that the whole universe rotates around a fixed Earth in the center of the universe, and carries the sun with it. In fact, the geocentric model says that because the universe oscillates with the margin of 23.5 degrees as measured from the sun, it thus causes the sun to move up and down over the course of a year to create our seasons.

Athanasius then gives us yet another example of how nature depends on all its parts working together:

...But the earth is not supported upon itself, but is set upon the realm of the waters, while this again is kept in its place, being bound fast at the center of the universe.

This shows: (1) the land of the Earth is set upon the oceans, and (2) the Earth itself is set in the center of the universe.

**Mr. Palm:** Then finally notice that just a little further on, St. Athanasius puts forward the view that all things in the universe are made up of four elements:

For as to the four elements of which the nature of bodies is composed, heat, that is, and cold, wet and dry, who is so perverted in his understanding as not to know that these things exist indeed in combination, but if separated and taken alone they tend to destroy even one another according to the prevailing power of the more abundant element? For heat is destroyed by cold if it be present in greater quantity, and cold again is put away by the power of heat, and what is dry, again, is moistened by wet, and the latter dried by the former ([link](#)).

Here again we have an example of a Father simply accepting the natural philosophy of his day, but which we now know to be incorrect. Sungenis passed over this scientific inaccuracy in silence.

**R. Sungenis:** Notice how Mr. Palm is so keen on accusing me of "passing over" something, or, as he accused me above, of not quoting all of Athanasius paragraph because I intend to be "misleading." As we have seen above, it wasn't necessary to quote all of Athanasius' paragraph, since my object was not to show the nature of clouds, water and crops, but to show where Athanasius uses the scientific fact of an orbiting sun and centrally located Earth to prove his point about God's creation. Hence, if there is anyone who is "passing over" things and "misleading" people, it is David Palm.

As for the assertion of Mr. Palm that Athanasius' division of the creation into four basic substances is "incorrect," such is not the case. Athanasius is simply using different words to describe the same thing we hold today. I worked on this issue from the writings of St. Hildegard, who is a doctor of the Church. Here is the section from Volume 2 of *Galileo Was Wrong*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition:

Hildegard's visions show that she understood matter to be composed of four basic elements, the same ones that Aristotle recognized: fire, air, water and earth, which Aristotle obtained from Empedocles. Tempted as we might be to dismiss these as primitive concepts or think of them as referring merely to specific physical substances (*e.g.*, dirt, flames, oceans/ivers, wind/breath), in reality the four terms represent the general makeup of all matter. On one level of understanding, "earth" refers to solids; "water" refers to liquids; and "air" refers to gases – the three states of matter that any modern scientist would recognize. The "fire" represents energy, or what some identify as the fourth state of matter – plasma. In fact, plasma physicists consider fire to be plasma, as they do the sun, the stars, intergalactic nebulae, quasars, radiogalaxies, galaxies, auroras, lightning, the flow of electrical current in conductors and semiconductors, fluorescent lights and neon signs. Thus we have matter and energy, the two entities constituting anything physical that the universe has to offer. Even modern scientists recognize the fire-air-water-earth terminology. For example, biogeochemist Egon Degens writes:

The element air is described by molecular kinetics and statistical physics. The "simple" substance fire is thermodynamically defined as heat or energy. Quantum mechanics, solid-state physics and chemistry refer to matter rather than to Earth. The problem child, however, is water, because so far no equation can thermodynamically describe its reaction and properties at the molecular level.<sup>30</sup>

As we relate Hildegard's description of these four elements to even deeper facts from modern science, we find that the four also correspond to the fundamental building blocks of nature that we moderns have assigned such names as protons, neutrons and electrons. The "fire" is the energy of the atom, otherwise known as the electron, whereas the protons and neutrons, known as a nucleon, are the "earth" (proton) and "water" (neutron). As we will see later, the atom is also comprised of "air," which occupies the space between the "fire" of the electron and the "earth" and "water" of the nucleon. In a very similar way, Hildegard's visions show the universe is constructed with the energy zones in the outer layers; the air/water layers in the middle zones; and the earth material in the center.

Accordingly, Hildegard adds: "More or less than these four elements there is nothing."<sup>31</sup> Scientifically speaking, we understand this to mean that the 103+ elements of the Periodic Chart do not represent substances that have differing fundamental components. Lead, for example, is not made of lead protons and lead electrons; rather, lead has 82 protons and 82 electrons. If we take away two protons and two electrons to leave an 80-80 balance, we will have the element mercury. Take away one more proton and electron

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<sup>30</sup> *Universal Water: The Ancient Wisdom and Scientific Theory of Water*, Hawaii, Interocean Pub., 2002, p. 93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ursachen u. Behandlung der Krankheiten*, 71, *Das wahre Weltbild*, p. 85.

and we now have gold. The fundamental building blocks are the same; only their number and ratio change from element to element.

The cosmic spheres of fire, air, water and earth are in constant communication and exchange in order to produce the proper balance required for the universe's stability. This, we might say, is the *Ultimate Unified Field Theory*. As Hildegard puts it:

God has built the world by means of the four elements, so that no one of them may be separated from the others, for then the world would go back to nothingness if an element could exist separately from the others.<sup>32</sup>

For example, to varying degrees, fire (energy) permeates the other three elements: water, air and earth. The very formula we moderns use,  $E = mc^2$ , is, in Hildegardian terms, little more than the permeation of the element fire (energy) into earth (matter). As we noted above, on a macro scale astronomers have seen evidence of "fire" in the form of plasma all throughout the universe, the study of which is commonly known as plasma cosmology.<sup>33</sup> In addition, it is fire (energy) that turns solids into liquids, and liquids into gases. Each state must maintain a certain energy envelope in order to remain a solid, liquid or gas. As Hildegard puts it in her scientific terms: "The water contains in itself fire...the water could not flow if it didn't contain some fire."<sup>34</sup>

In Hildegard's terminology, "fire" represents many things, and we moderns have to accommodate her language to what we know scientifically. Although we speak of energy coming in the form of the entire electromagnetic spectrum – from gamma rays, to visible light, to microwaves – in Hildegard's vision "fire" represents all of these various energy forms. As Dr. Posch has suggested, we would venture to say that Hildegard's "fire" comes in three states, just as matter comes in solid, liquid and gaseous form. The fire we see as flames is analogous to the solid state; electrical current or light waves are analogous to the liquid state, while radiation and high-energy plasma are the gaseous state. Similar to solids, flames are confined to a certain locale. But as liquids flow, so light energy flows from one place to another. For example, a lightning bolt that descends and hits the ground will suddenly burst into flames, and in such cases one could say that the liquid form of energy was turned into a solid form. We also know that light can penetrate its medium only so far, for opaque substances will deter it, whereas radiation, like a fine gas, can penetrate through various surroundings. Radiation also produces heat, and thus makes it similar to a

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<sup>32</sup> *Ursachen u. Behandlung der Krankheiten*, 68, *Das wahre Weltbild*, p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Nobel laureate, Hannes O. G. Alfvén, "Cosmology in the Plasma Universe: An Introductory Exposition," *IEEE Trans. Plasma Science*, Feb, 1990; "Plasma Physics from Laboratory to Cosmos – The Life and Achievements of Hannes Alfvén," by Carl-Gunne Fälthammar, *IEEE Trans. Plasma Science*, June 1997; *World-Antiworlds: Antimatter in Cosmology*, 1966; Eric Lerner, *The Big Bang Never Happened*, 1992; US Dept. of Energy advisor and Associate Director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, Anthony Peratt (A. Peratt and D. Nielsen, "Evolution of Colliding Plasmas," *Physical Review Letters*, 44, pp. 1767-1770, 1980); Oscar Buneman in "A Tribute to Oscar Buneman – Pioneer of Plasma Simulation," *IEEE Trans. Plasma Science*, Feb, 1994; Nobel nominee, Kristian Birkeland, in "The Worlds in the Universe," wrote: "This theory differs from all earlier theories in that it assumes the existence of a universal directing force of electro-magnetic origin in addition to the force of gravitation, in order to explain the formation around the sun of planets (which have almost circular orbits and are almost in the same plane) of moons and rings about the planets and of spiral and annular nebulae" (*Sky and Telescope*, "Birkeland and the Electromagnetic Cosmology," May 1985). The first to recognize the plasma state was Sir William Crookes, who discovered it in 1879, and which was later given the name "plasma" by Nobel laureate Irving Langmuir in 1929. Interestingly enough, Hildegard's visions portray something very close to plasma cosmology for the origin of the sun's energy and its relationship to the planets.

<sup>34</sup> *Ursachen u. Behandlung der Krankheiten*, 68, *Das wahre Weltbild*, p. 89.

flame. In fact, there is so much “fire” in the element radium that it literally overflows with radiation. In the words of Marie Curie, the discoverer of radium:

A glass vessel containing radium spontaneously charges itself with electricity...Radium possesses the remarkable property of liberating heat spontaneously and continuously. A solid salt of radium develops a quantity of heat such that for each gram of radium contained in the salt there is an emission of one hundred calories per hour. Expressed differently, radium can melt in an hour its weight in ice. When we reflect that radium acts in this manner continuously, we are amazed at the amount of heat produced, for it can be explained by no known chemical reaction. The radium remains apparently unchanged....As a result of its emission of heat, radium always possesses a higher temperature than its surroundings...When a solution of a radium salt is placed in a closed vessel, the radioactivity in part leaves the solution and distributes itself through the vessel, the walls of which become radioactive and luminous... We may assume, with Mr. Rutherford, that radium emits a radioactive gas and that this spreads through the surrounding air and over the surface of neighboring objects. This gas has received the name emanation. It differs from ordinary gas in the fact that it gradually disappears.<sup>35</sup>

Another important relationship among the four elements is the affinity, on the one hand, of fire and earth, and, on the other hand, air and water. As we noted earlier, one example of the former relationship is that as “fire” represents the electron, the “earth” represents the proton. These two substances each carry a charge and thus relate to each other electrically or electromagnetically. All communication flows from positive to negative and back again. In another way, light is invisible unless it reacts with matter. We cannot see a light beam until some solid object impedes it, and this is one reason why the night sky is so dark. It is different for air and water. The communication between their domains consists largely of mechanical waves, incorporating pressure and temperature and other motions.

Upon these four elements and their communicative principles is based the workings of the whole universe. It is really quite simple. Modern science assigns various values and proportions to these entities and their relationships, such as Planck’s constant, Boltzmann’s constant, Avogadro’s constant, the Gravitational constant, the electron charge value, etc., but they are all essentially describing the four basic elements of Aristotelian science and how they interact with one another.

**Mr. Palm:** Let’s have one more example to illustrate this pattern. Sungenis quotes St. Gregory of Nyssa as follows:

...the vault of heaven prolongs itself so uninterruptedly that it encircles all things with itself, and that the earth and its surroundings are poised in the middle, and

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<sup>35</sup> “Radium and Radioactivity,” Mme. Sklodowska Curie, *Century Magazine*, January 1904, pp. 461-466. The “gas” is now known as radon.

that the motion of all the revolving bodies is round this fixed and solid centre...  
(GWW2, p. 96; ellipses are his.)

Now here's the full quote in context:

And how, then, I asked, is it that some think that by the underworld is meant an actual place, and that it harbours within itself the souls that have at last flitted away from human life, drawing them towards itself as the right receptacle for such natures?

Well, replied the Teacher, our doctrine will be in no ways injured by such a supposition. For **if it is true**, what you say, and also that the vault of heaven prolongs itself so uninterruptedly that it encircles all things with itself, and that the earth and its surroundings are poised in the middle, and that the motion of all the revolving bodies is round this fixed and solid centre, then, I say, **there is an absolute necessity that, whatever may happen to each one of the atoms on the upper side of the earth, the same will happen on the opposite side**, seeing that one single substance encompasses its entire bulk. As, when the sun shines above the earth, the shadow is spread over its lower part, because its spherical shape makes it impossible for it to be clasped all round at one and the same time by the rays, and necessarily, on whatever side the sun's rays may fall on some particular point of the globe, if we follow a straight diameter, we shall find shadow upon the opposite point, and so, continuously, at the opposite end of the direct line of the rays shadow moves round that globe, keeping pace with the sun, so that equally in their turn both the upper half and the under half of the earth are in light and darkness; so, by this analogy, we have reason to be certain that, whatever in our hemisphere is observed to befall the atoms, the same will befall them in that other. The environment of the atoms being one and the same on every side of the earth, I deem it right neither to contradict nor yet to favour those who raise the objection that we must regard either this or the lower region as assigned to the souls released ([link](#); emphasis mine).

Notice first of all that St. Gregory presents this as hypothetical. If the tables were turned, the geocentrists would be all over the phrase "if it is true".

**R. Sungenis:** I find it interesting how Mr. Palm, on the one hand, admits "the Fathers were geocentrists," yet, on the other hand, if he finds even a smidgen of doubt about such a consensus on geocentrism, he jumps on it with all fours. Here he jumps on the fact that Gregory is presenting a hypothetical argument. Mr. Palm then makes a leap predicting that geocentrists would do the same if the hypothetical argument were in our favor. So, in other words, Mr. Palm is presenting his own hypothetical argument against geocentrists and making it sound as if it is fact. Isn't it interesting how Mr. Palm does our thinking for us, and then accuses us for thinking such things? ☺

And, of course, Mr. Palm skips right over the fact that Gregory's opponent was also a geocentrist and thus it allows Gregory to use a geocentric foundation to refute what his opponent was alleging about the migration of souls.

**Mr. Palm:** But more importantly, notice what Sungenis snipped out immediately after his quote in GWW. St. Gregory insists that if the geocentric view is true then, "there is an absolute necessity" that whatever happens to the atoms on one side happens also on the opposite. He develops this in great detail. And it's totally and completely wrong, as even the geocentrists would have to admit. How in the world is this anything but 1) proof that the Fathers aren't the place to go for scientific information...

**R. Sungenis:** I find it interesting how Mr. Palm just skips over the explanation I give of the very thing he objects to above. All he had to do was copy and paste it into his above diatribe, and the matter would be fairly treated. Here is what I say:

Commentary: Some object that Gregory is wrong in saying that the Earth is in the center of the universe because it is heavy and has a downward tendency. But we must recognize that the Fathers did not know all the scientific reasons for why things worked they way they do. This should be no surprise to moderns, since, to this very day, for example, modern science does not have an explanation for why an apple falls to the ground. All science has done for the last three hundred years since Newton is give us an equation for how fast the apple moves downward. Again, the only thing of interest with regard to the Fathers and cosmology is their consensus that the Earth is motionless, since that fact is expressed as an inerrant piece of divine revelation in Scripture.

As a matter of fact, with Gregory of Nyssa, it was necessary for me to make several comments like this. Here are two others:

Commentary: Some object that Gregory is incorrect because the Earth does not have a downward tendency. But Gregory does not mean that "downward tendency" is an actual motion downward but a force going against any attempt to move the earth in the opposite direction, thus allowing it to remain motionless. In either case, neither the Fathers nor the Church ever claimed a consensus or teaching on what keeps the Earth motionless; only that it is motionless.

Commentary: Some object that Gregory is incorrect because we now know that the planets move in an ellipse, not a circle. First, the planetary orbits are closer to circles than they are noticeable ellipses, so there is little wrong with estimating their orbits by characterizing them as circles. Second, modern science cannot prove the planets have elliptical orbits as opposed to circular orbits with various speeds in the orbit. What is known about planetary orbits is that the planet's speed changes. One way to explain the speed change is to attribute it to an elliptical orbit in which the planet would move faster at its perihelion than its aphelion. In either case, neither the Fathers nor the Church ever claimed a consensus or teaching on circular versus elliptical orbits.

**Mr. Palm:** and 2) that St. Gregory, like all of the Fathers, presents this as a matter of natural

philosophy and not divine revelation. Yes, he's a geocentrist. Fine. But he never presents it as a matter of faith.

**R. Sungenis:** That Mr. Palm can skip right over the passage from Gregory of Nyssa that I had used to show Gregory believes that the geocentric construction of the universe is divine and divinely revealed is amazing. It just shows how blind Mr. Palm is to the real truth. Here is what Gregory says:

And how does earth below form the foundation of the whole, and what is it that keeps it firmly in its place? What is it that controls its downward tendency? If any one should interrogate us on these and such-like points, will any of us be found so presumptuous as to promise an explanation of them? No! the only reply that can be given by men of sense is this: that He Who made all things in wisdom can alone furnish an account of His creation. For ourselves, "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," as saith the Apostle.<sup>36</sup>

**Mr. Palm:** This is why it is so precarious to try and extract precise scientific guidance and details from the Fathers.

**R. Sungenis:** Only Mr. Palm is in this makeshift ballpark. Who is trying to use the Fathers for "precise scientific guidance"? Certainly not me. As I've stated above, many times, the Fathers get their macro view of the universe from Scripture, since it says the sun orbits the Earth and the Earth doesn't move. That's it. No more, no less.

**Mr. Palm:** The fact is that the Fathers make many (now) obvious scientific mistakes. This is no slight of the Fathers, it's just an acknowledgement of the limitations of the science of their day. I detailed a number of these mistakes elsewhere (see [here](#)) and one Internet critic dubbed me "Mr. Smartass" for what he considered my cheeky attitude toward the Fathers (see [Answering a Site that Ridicules Church Fathers On Geocentrism](#)). I obviously meant no disrespect, but rather was highlighting the double standard deployed by Sungenis, in which alleged mistakes by the Fathers in matters pertaining the Jewish people in a positive way are used by him to discredit their testimony, whereas he turns a blind eye to their obvious errors in matters of science.

**R. Sungenis:** I dare say that Mr. Palm's drive to denounce geocentrism comes from his being incensed that I won't support his views of "the Jewish people."

As I've stated above, geocentrism is a rather simple topic, since either the Earth revolves around the sun or vice-versa. The past, present and future of the Jews is a very complicated topic, and thus there is room for much disagreement and discussion.

**Mr. Palm:** The same dynamic may be seen in Sungenis's truncation of a citation by St. Basil the Great—but to keep this present study within reasonable bounds, the reader is urged to

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<sup>36</sup> *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book.*

see my treatment of that example elsewhere (see [here](#).) But mistakes by the Fathers in purely natural matters present no problem for a Catholic, because the Church has never taught that in such matters they have any special insight above anybody else.

**R. Sungenis:** Granted, but, as Bellarmine told Galileo, and which was agreed upon by Paul V and Urban VIII, the Fathers do have the privilege of high esteem when they are in consensus about a matter of faith and morals, and since believing that the Bible is inerrant and inspired by God is a matter of faith, then anyone who denies something that is explicitly taught in the Bible and verified as such by a consensus of the Fathers, sins against the faith.

**Mr. Palm:** Obviously, space doesn't permit a detailed analysis of each patristic passage proffered by Sungenis to supposedly prove there's a patristic consensus establishing geocentrism as a matter of revealed truth. But the reader is invited to look at them and notice how many of the citations present the matter purely as a matter of natural philosophy (i.e. science), with no reference to faith at all. In other cases, one can find a bare citation of Scripture, with no indication as to whether the Father intends to take its words as literally describing a physical reality, versus simply presenting phenomenological language such as the sun "rises" and "sets". Other examples have no connection to the question at all. And still others are woven through with what even the geocentrists would have to admit are scientific errors of that day, further undermining the notion that the Father was passing on a matter of divine faith rather than simply expressing himself in the context of the best science of his day.

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm is just repeating himself (which he does a lot in this diatribe). Let me add that his entire critique focuses on what he believes are the weak links in the chain of the Fathers' consensus.

**Mr. Palm:** When we combine this with the fact that the Magisterium has never said that the Fathers are in consensus on geocentrism—indeed, that twice during the Galileo controversy this very claim was purposely excised before a magisterial decree was promulgated—we find that support for the geocentrist "ace in the hole" regarding a consensus of the Fathers is little more than a mirage.

**R. Sungenis:** As we stated, there is no evidence whatsoever that the decree took out the clause about the Fathers because it changed its mind on the validity and value of the Father's testimony. Mr. Palm is simply inserting his own conclusion into the matter. There is absolutely no evidence in any document, official or unofficial, that the Church suddenly wanted to drop the Fathers because someone figured out that their consensus was not really a consensus.. The Church simply condensed its condemnation to a brief statement for its own purposes. Mr. Palm, however, is on a witch hunt, and that mentality causes him to find things that do not exist and make grandiose conclusions based on his phantom findings.



## Mr. Palm: Did the Fathers Really Specifically Oppose Greek Heliocentrism?

The fact that the Fathers never put forward their views of cosmology as matters of faith touches on another geocentrist argument that has been repeated numerous times. The claim is that the Fathers not only held to geocentrism—which all can affirm that in the main they did, that being the best science of their day—but that they did so *in direct opposition to Greek heliocentrism*. Here’s how Sungenis repeats this argument throughout GWW:

Copernicus rests his lot with the Greek philosophers and astronomers, the very individuals upon whom the Church Fathers focused their critiques in the areas of cosmology and cosmogony (GWW2, 29).

St. Augustine and St. Thomas were both geocentrists, in opposition to the Greeks and Indians who were promoting heliocentrism (GWW2, 53).

The “Fathers,” as we have seen in Chapter 13 were all avowed geocentrists in the face of many of the Greek philosophers and astronomers who were espousing heliocentrism (GWW2, p. 132).

As we discovered in Chapter 13, all the Fathers of the Church were geocentrists. There was not one who advocated a heliocentric view, even though these same Fathers were aware that the Greeks from the Pythagorean school were advocating heliocentrism (GWW2, 171).

Since Galileo hardly read the Fathers, he would have missed the frequent debates and admonitions they raised in their writing against the speculative science of the Greeks, including the push for evolution and heliocentrism in the Pythagorean school (GWW2, 208).

We notice in the Inquisition’s approval that the heliocentric system is tied directly to Pythagoras, thus showing the 1742 Church’s recognition that the battle over cosmology was a long-running one, which began when the Church Fathers held fast to the fixed Earth of Scripture against the moving Earth of the Greek philosophers (GWW, p. 231).

Concerning that last quote, I should say that it does not follow at all that because the decree of the Index in 1616 mentioned a “Pythagorean doctrine” that this serves as evidence of an alleged “long-running” battle beginning with the Church Fathers. It need indicate no more than that Copernicus himself drew upon preceding Greek thought when he formulated his theory.

**R. Sungenis:** Perhaps Mr. Palm would do better to read the early Fathers references to both Greek cosmology and cosmogony before he ventures into any conclusions. I can tell he hasn’t.

**Mr. Palm:** Not surprisingly, this very argument has been made by other modern geocentrists such as John Salza and Rick DeLano. But what is the evidence for this? As I read the patristic quotations proffered by Sungenis in GWW, which he claims have “the most logical and comparative relevance” to this topic, I don’t find a single one in which any Father actively opposes Greek heliocentrism. One would expect to find at least one, given the number of times that this argument has been repeated by the geocentrists. But there don't appear to be any.

**R. Sungenis:** That’s because Mr. Palm hasn’t done his own study of the issue, but has confined himself to quotes that I supply in my book in which the Fathers promote their consensus on the cosmos. Nevertheless, even with this focus, I mention some in which the Father is directly refuting a Greek philosopher. Unfortunately, either Mr. Palm missed them or deliberately ignored them:

**Hippolytus:** [Refuting the view of the Greek Ecphantus]: “And that the earth in the middle of the cosmical system is moved round its own center towards the east.”<sup>37</sup>

There are other occasions in which the Fathers confront the Greeks on either cosmogony or cosmogony. Hippolytus, for example, also critiques the Greek philosophers for allegorizing the days of Genesis. He writes:

**Hippolytus:** “When, therefore, Moses has spoken of ‘the six days in which God made heaven and earth’...Simon, in a manner already specified, giving these and other passages of Scripture a different application from the one intended by the holy writers, deifies himself. When, therefore, the followers of Simon affirm that there are three days begotten before sun and moon, they speak enigmatically.”<sup>38</sup>

Since Mr. Palm’s interest is piqued, here are a couple more that might make him pause, This next one is the very one he already cited:

**Anatolious of Alexandria:** “And Thales discovered the eclipse of the sun and its period in the tropics in its constant inequality. And Anaximander discovered that the earth is poised in space, and moves round the axis of the universe. And Anaximenes discovered that the moon has her light from the sun, and found out also the way in which she suffers eclipse. And the rest of the mathematicians have also made additions to these discoveries. We may instance the facts – that the fixed stars move round the axis passing through the poles, while the planets remove from each other round the perpendicular axis of the zodiac; and that the axis of the fixed stars and the planets is the side of a penta-decagon with four-and-twenty parts.”<sup>39</sup>

**Methodius:** “Resuming then, let us first lay bare, in speaking of those things according to our power, the imposture of those who boast as though they alone had comprehended from what forms the heaven is arranged, in accordance with the hypothesis of the Chaldeans and Egyptians. For they say that the circumference of the

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<sup>37</sup> *The Prooemium*, Ch XIII.

<sup>38</sup> *Refutation of All Heresies*, Book VI, Ch IX

<sup>39</sup> *The Paschal Canon*, Chapter XVII.

world is likened to the turnings of a well-rounded globe, the earth having a central point. For its outline being spherical, it is necessary, they say, since there are the same distances of the parts, that the earth should be the center of the universe, around which as being older, the heaven is whirling. For if a circumference is described from the central point, which seems to be a circle – for it is impossible for a circle to be described without a point, and it is impossible for a circle to be without a point, – surely the earth consisted before all, they say, in a state of chaos and disorganization. Now certainly the wretched ones were overwhelmed in the chaos of error, “because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”<sup>40</sup>

**Clement of Rome:** For the Greek philosophers, inquiring into the beginning of the world, have gone, some in one way and some in another. In short, Pythagoras says that numbers are the elements of its beginnings; Callistratus, that qualities; Alcmaeon, that contrarieties; Anaximander, that immensity; Anaxagoras, that equalities of parts; Epicurus, that atoms; Diodorus, things in which there are no parts...Democritus, that ideas; Thales, that water; Heraclitus, that fire; Diogenes, that air; Parmenides, that earth; Zeno, Empedocles, Plato, that fire, water, air and earth. Aristotle also introduced a fifth element...by joining the four elements into one...<sup>41</sup>

**Basil:** The philosophers of Greece have made much ado to explain nature, and not one of their systems has remained firm and unshaken, each being overturned by its successor. It is vain to refute them; they are sufficient in themselves to destroy one another.<sup>42</sup>

**Hippolytus:** But Leucippus, an associate of Zeno...affirms things to be infinite, and always in motion, and that generation and change exist continuously....And he asserts that worlds are produced when many bodies are congregated and flow together from the surrounding space to a common point, so that by mutual contact they made substances of the same figure and similar in form come into connection; and when thus intertwined, there are transmutations into other bodies, and that created things wax and wane through necessity...<sup>43</sup>

**Mr. Palm:** I don't conclude from this that any given Father actually held to Greek heliocentrism because that would go beyond the evidence. But at the very least it highlights two things. First, the geocentrists frequently advance arguments that sound very convincing and which they assert with absolute certainty. But all too often, when one looks into the matter carefully, one finds that they have built a great edifice on nothing—there just isn't sufficient evidence to back up their claims (as is so often true of such conspiracy theorists).

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<sup>40</sup> *Discourse On the Virgins*, Dis. VIII, Thekla, Ch XIV.

<sup>41</sup> Clement of Rome, Pseudo-Clementine, Ch. XV, *Theories of Creation*.

<sup>42</sup> *The Hexameron*, Homily 3, 2.

<sup>43</sup> *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Ch. X: Leucippus and His Atomic Theory. Hippolytus also critiques Thales, Founder of Greek Astronomy; Pythagoras on his Cosmogony and the Transmigration of Souls; Empedocles on Causality; Heraclitus on his Theory of Flux; Anaximenes on the idea of “Infinite Air”; Anaxagoras on his Theory of Mind and Efficient Cause; Parmenides on his Theory of Unity, and other Greek philosophic and scientific ideas.

**R. Sungenis:** No, what we find is that, since Mr. Palm is dogmatic that heliocentrism or acentrism is a scientific fact (and thus in opposition to the Fathers), he will scour the evidence and nit-pick his way to try to find some loophole, and then declare that the loophole he found shows that we didn't deal with all the evidence.

**Mr. Palm:** And second, it indicates yet again that for the Fathers this really was not a matter of divine revelation but of natural philosophy. At least two Fathers (Sts. Hippolytus and Anatolius) cite Greek philosophers concerning a mobile earth with no indication that they opposed this view. They, at least, did not see this view as so pernicious, so corrosive to the Christian faith that it demanded some immediate rebuttal or opposition.

**R. Sungenis:** As you can see, one of the other "loopholes" Mr. Palm uses is making arguments from silence, such as saying that Anatolius didn't give specific refutations to the half-dozen Greeks he mentioned in his paragraph, from which Mr. Palm tries to capitalize and suggest that Anatolius didn't have any objections to Greek heliocentrism. He says this in face of the fact that there is no statement from any Father (and there were over two dozen of them that addressed the issue of cosmology) that even remotely suggests that they had rejected geocentrism for heliocentrism. But when you are desperate, you do strange things.

**Mr. Palm:** The fact remains that with respect to this tenet that Bob Sungenis and other geocentrists consider to be the very heart of the matter—the mobility of the earth itself—the patristic evidence is paltry, insignificant, relies much more heavily on natural philosophical views than Scripture (if they rely on Scripture for this point at all), and falls far short of establishing any sort of "consensus".

**R. Sungenis:** As we have seen, this is categorically false. It is uncanny, but many of Mr. Palm's arguments were already voiced by both Galileo and Foscarini, but they were both condemned by the Church. Here is an excerpt from my book, *Galileo Was Wrong*, concerning Fr. Foscarini:

Basically, Foscarini sought to employ the same argument we hear so often today against putting trust in Scripture to teach us true facts about the cosmos. Foscarini merely shifts this argument and places it against the Holy Fathers, arguing that they can only be trusted when they speak as one on matters of the Christian faith, not on cosmological information they glean from Scripture. He writes:

Thus Vincent of Lérins, a most learned and zealous defender of the dogmas of the Church, in his golden booklet against the profane novelties of heretics, says that we should investigate and follow with great care the consensus of the Holy Fathers, not in every little question of the divine law, but only or especially in the rules of faith. In *Contra Faustum*, Book 2, Chapter 13, St. Augustine says that the Holy Fathers and all the authors who fall outside of the canonical Scriptures sometimes perhaps say things which do not agree with truths that are rather hidden and difficult to know....while the connection to the faith is preserved, the best and most learned defenders of the Catholic rules sometimes disagree, as Augustine says in *Contra Julianum*, Book 1. Likewise some of the Fathers can occasionally teach

something contrary to truth...Hence it is not rash to depart from the common interpretation of the Fathers in matters not pertaining to the faith, especially if this occurs because of a pressing and persuasive reason.<sup>44</sup>

We can safely assume that the “pressing and persuasive reason” that would convince Foscarini to “depart from the common interpretation of the Fathers” was what he stated in the opening lines of his letter: “the earth moves...an opinion which has been confirmed by weighty arguments by many of the most learned astronomers of our day.” This assumed scientific fact forces Foscarini to find some rationale for discounting what he knows is a solid patristic consensus of both the literal interpretation of biblical cosmology and the immobility of the Earth. The only way to do so is for Foscarini to make a dichotomy between the spiritual and the corporeal, and declare that the Fathers were always right on the former but sometimes wrong on the latter.

Foscarini uses the same kind of argument to make a similar dichotomy in Scripture, which, incidentally, is the same argument used in modern times. He writes:

Many authorities have shown that the Sacred Scriptures most wisely speak to the hearing of the common man, and in matters pertaining to the human sciences, it does not much care what opinion anyone holds; it accommodates itself to any opinion and to the common manner of speaking. Thus in his commentary on Jeremiah 28 St Jerome says that many things are said in the Scriptures according to the opinion of the time in which the events occurred, and not according to the truth of the matter. Thus when Scripture speaks of God’s arm, the literal sense is not that he actually has such a bodily part, but rather what the bodily part signifies; namely, his operative power....

Perhaps sensing that he must give at least some room to the literal reading of Scripture, Foscarini then closes his argument by attempting to convince the censor that the Earth remains at rest not in the sense of motion but in its own peculiar way, a way which he never actually explains.

When the Scriptures say that the earth is at rest and the sun moves, using the opinion of the common man and the common opinion of some of the ancient wise men, who did not perceive this as clearly as their successors...it does not say anything false because it describes them in this way. For the earth truly has a certain state of rest of its own, but in a different sense than is commonly thought. And the sun truly has motion of its own, for it rotates on itself around its own center in thirty days (as is seen from sunspots.) Therefore the earth is at rest and the sun moves, but not in the ways that the common man thinks nor as the common opinion of philosophers has held up to now, but is a more subtle way.

He then completes the case by drawing, once again, on what he believes is the scientific consensus of the Earth’s movement.

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<sup>44</sup> *Galileo, Bellarmine and the Bible*, pp. 256-258.

But the ancient sages up to the present have not known this because they did not observe or grasp (they were unable, not possessing the instruments recently invented by human ingenuity) those things which were reserved for the observation and apprehension of the present age by the singular and marvelous providence of God.<sup>45</sup>

When Solomon said “there is nothing new under the sun,” we now know why. Five hundred years after Foscarini the same arguments are still being voiced for heliocentrism, only in more detailed and sophisticated ways. Today it is claimed that: (a) the Bible speaks with neither literalness nor authority on such mundane issues; (b) the Fathers made erroneous conclusions in their consensus on biblical cosmology; and (c) various scientific “proofs” show the Earth is moving. Where today a sophisticated telescope might detect a distant star with planets circling around it, in Foscarini’s day the telescope was pointed toward Jupiter wherein one could watch its moons circling the Jovian giant. Both then and now the revolutions of the smaller around the larger would be used as “proof” that the Earth, because it is smaller than the sun, is required to revolve around it, and never vice-versa. Likewise, it was argued that if the sun itself rotates (since we can see black spots circling its circumference), analogously the Earth should also rotate. Galileo had also argued that, because the sunspots changed the angle of their path according to an annual cycle and not a daily one, the system had to be heliocentric. As we have discovered, however, there is science, and then there is *science*. As noted in Volume I, modern science has shown that the above arguments provide no proof for a moving Earth. In fact, it can be safely said that one of the only true facts of science is that science has not proven that the Earth moves. Unfortunately, however, if in spite of the factual evidence a person is convinced that science has proven the Earth moves, there is little that can persuade him otherwise. Neither Scripture, nor the patristic consensus nor the magisterium will trump what one believes is a fact of science, and the modern science community has made certain that the public believes that heliocentrism is a fact.

As was the case with Campanella, none of Foscarini’s arguments impressed either the censors or Cardinal Bellarmine. They could easily see that these men were driven to disregard the patristic consensus and confine Scripture to spiritual matters because they were all under the mistaken notion that science had proven the Earth moved.

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<sup>45</sup> Galileo, *Bellarmino and the Bible*, pp. 259-263.

### **Mr. Palm: Is the Physical Centrality of the Earth of Theological Import?**

In the same vein, the geocentrists repeatedly put forward another argument for the importance of geocentric cosmology, namely, that if earth is not at the physical center of things this displaces man as the center of God's creation:

...humility guides the human soul to recognize that there is Someone much higher than we Who has esteemed Earth so much that He put it in a most unique place in the universe to be the apple of His eye. Arrogance is on the side of those who would seek to remove that Someone from our immediate purview by throwing the Earth into the remote recesses of space (GWW1, 29).

An Earth set adrift will invariably make everything else relative and thus, as Hawking admits, will turn the notions of "certainty" and "absolutes" into mere figments of our imagination (GWW1, p. 30).

Although this argument has a certain psychological appeal, the insurmountable problem for the geocentrists is that they never actually cite any magisterial sources, no Fathers or Doctors of the Church, nor even any of the personalities involved in the actual Galileo affair in its support. And there's a good reason for this. This was not an argument used by any of the Fathers, any of the medievals, or even the prelates involved in the Galileo affair:

One construal of the motivation behind the decree of 1616 that finds favor in some quarters today comes from long after the facts. It is that the proposed shift of the cosmic center from earth to sun effectively displaced humans from their exalted place at the center of the universe and thus had to be resisted by a Church that saw human beings as the center of God's creation, as the privileged beings around whom the rest of the world circled.

But this will not do. It may well be what the enlightened modern would say should have been the Church's reaction to this displacement of human beings from the center of the Creation they had occupied, unchallenged, until then. But in fact there is hardly any reference at all to this consideration in the abundant criticisms of Copernicanism from the theologians of the immediate post-1633 period. It seems very unlikely that it played a major role in the qualifiers' discussions; they had plenty of other reservations of more immediate consequence in mind. And, of course, of itself it would not have warranted the censure found in the decree.

**R. Sungenis:** We never said that a specially located Earth was one of the philosophical arguments used by the Church in the 1600s against Galileo. Mr. Palm is creating his own straw man to beat up.

We have stated, rather, that the Fathers make the central location of the Earth as part of their consensus, as did the Church of 1600. The Church realized that if the Earth doesn't move and we see the stars and sun go around us every day, then we must be at the center

of the universe. That is why Galileo's view was called "absurd in philosophy" since it was illogical.

We have also stated, in reference to the Copernican mentality so often trumpeted today by such icons as Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking that an Earth in the remote recesses of space better suits their wish for a universe that arrived there by time and chance and not by God, that it is time we emphasized the metaphysical ramifications of a centrally located Earth.

**Mr. Palm:** What is more, the center was not, in fact, regarded by the theologians of that day as a particularly favorable location. The abode of the blessed was at the circumference, and Bellarmine was not alone in situating hell at the center of the universe--that is, at the center of the earth. In the Aristotelian view of the matter, the earth was the locus of change, of corruption, by contrast with the serenity of the celestial regions. It was true, of course, that in the Christian vision human beings, made in the image of God, were central to the work of Creation, for on them alone was bestowed the ability, at once fatal and ennobling, to choose freely. But to go from this sort of "centrality" to the literal sort of centrality that these modern interpreters of 1616 have in mind is an inference that the theologians of 1616 would have been far less inclined to make than would the speculative interpreters of today (E. McMullin, "The Church's Ban On Copernicanism", in *The Church and Galileo*, pp. 165-6).

Indeed, this whole argument can be flipped around. Not only is the center theologically an unfavorable location, as Fr. McMullin points out, but throughout divine revelation we see that God regularly chooses the lowly to shame the great, the insignificant to rise above the mighty, the weak to triumph over the strong. Thus, there is no theological validity to the argument that our planet should be located at the physical center of the universe in order to demonstrate its importance in God's plan. This is simply a matter of the geocentrists projecting onto God their private notions of what ought to be.

**R. Sungenis:** The Aristotelian concept of corruption/incorruption that pervaded the thinking of many just proves that the Church did not base its argument for geocentrism on what was metaphysically convenient at the time; rather, it based its argument on what Scripture said. Scripture said the sun orbited the Earth, which thus placed Earth in the center. In fact, the Fathers and the Church already knew the Earth was corrupt, so it was fitting that it was in the center. It was perhaps this very reason that Genesis 1 incorporates "darkness" as half of the realm of creation, since it anticipated how corrupt the Earth would become once man sinned. In fact, Jeremiah uses Genesis 1:1-2 as a description of the apostasy of Israel in Jer 4:23; and St. Paul uses Genesis 1:3 as a description of the redemption offered by God in Christ in 2 Cor 4:4-6. Obviously, Genesis 1 was written from a theological perspective as well as a historical.

It just so happens, however, that the Aristotelian concept of the cosmos is not the dominant view any longer. The predominant view is Carl Sagan's, which views an Earth that is not in the center but is lost among the stars as the purer and more humanistic view of the universe that suits atheism much better than a centrally located Earth that implies that God had to put it there.



**Mr. Palm:** In an exchange on various scientific topics (in which Rick DeLano had to admit that he was well and truly bested), his interlocutor also pointed out

**R. Sungenis:** The “interlocutor” was a person going by the moniker “CB” (obviously not willing to divulge his/her name). Contrary to Mr. Palm’s assertion, Mr. Delano wasn’t “bested.” Please go to the link and check it out for yourself.

<http://scienceblogs.com/startswithabang/2012/09/23/weekend-diversion-you-are-responsible-for-what-you-say/#comment-26712>

What Mr. Palm is trying to refer to (and not so honestly, since it has little to do with Earth in the center) is that Mr. Delano made the mistake of saying that the universe oscillated on a 23.5 degree angle, and “CB” told him this was wrong, and CB was correct. In fact, Mr. Delano thanked CB for the correction.

What Mr. Delano should have said is that the universe oscillates within a 75 million mile margin, not on a 23.5 degree angle. The 75 million mile margin, as the base of an isosceles triangle, is created by the 47 degree angle from the center of the Earth to the center of the sun at its maxima and minima seasonal distance. If that distance of 75 million miles is carried out to the edge of the universe, we have the margin of distance that the whole universe oscillates on an annual basis and which then carries the sun up and down within its 47 degree range.

**Mr. Palm:** just how skewed this theological emphasis on the earth's physical location really is:

That’s weird, because you’ve been saying the opposite. It’s almost like you actually don’t understand, and only care about grasping at whatever proves your pre-conceived model of the universe correct and ignoring anything contrary.

But this disregard for science isn’t that troubling to me; it’s all too typical. Here’s what really bothers me at the end of the day: The notion that God needs to put humanity in the center of the universe in order to give us our due attention. That God in all His infinity couldn’t have sent His son to die for us without us also being at the physical center of the cosmos.

What is the most important thing in the universe? Is it God? Or is it Man? Who are you really worshiping with this model of the universe? ([link](#)).

Indeed, I propose that this argument highlights much more the geocentrists' own psychological neediness and insecurity than it does anything about the authentic teaching of Scripture or the Fathers and Doctors of Church (a theme we’ve seen repeated in other contexts).

**R. Sungenis:** As I stated above, the view of the cosmos has shifted from Aristotle to Sagan, and therefore it requires a different perspective on just how significant a centrally located Earth is in light of the wish of Sagan and company to throw Earth out of the center and into the realms of time and chance.

**Mr. Palm:** It also shows yet again that their arguments aren't necessarily those of the Catholic Church. We have seen repeatedly throughout this series of essays that although they claim to be advancing true Catholic doctrine, the modern geocentrists simply don't share the mind of the Church on these matters. They're marketing their own beliefs and products.

**R. Sungenis:** We have seen that Mr. Palm is blind to the truth. We have many sources for a geocentric universe:

1) the consensus of the Fathers, as stated by Bellarmine to Galileo and approved by Paul V, which consensus Mr. Palm seeks to escape at all costs.

2) the Scripture, stating that the sun revolves around the Earth and the Earth is motionless, especially Joshua 10:10-14, a passage that Mr. Palm totally misunderstands and distorts.

3) the Tridentine catechism which supports geocentrism and was created specifically to promote Catholic doctrine, which Mr. Palm also distorts.

4) the Church of 1616 and 1633, which condemned Galileo and his heliocentric view, and has never rescinded that decision, despite the falsehoods perpetuated by Olivieri and Cappallari in 1820, which falsehoods Mr. Palm finds himself supporting.

5) no official statement from the Catholic Church to this very day that rescinds the Church's previous condemnation of heliocentrism, and no official statement endorsing heliocentrism or acentrism, or any cosmology of modern times.

6) the discoveries of modern science that shows a geocentric universe is the best answer to all the scientific data that has been collected over the last 200 years.

What we have seen is Mr. Palm distorting each of the first five categories, and knows nothing about the sixth.

## **Mr. Palm: Catholic Principles of Faith and Science: Sts. Augustine, St. Thomas and the Magisterium or Reading the Fathers With the Mind of the Church**

The real key to this whole matter is to read both Scripture and the Fathers with the mind of the Church. We've already seen that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church doesn't support the geocentrist claim that the Fathers are in unanimous consensus in upholding geocentrism as a matter of divine faith.

**R. Sungenis:** And we've seen that this is categorically false, since the Church at no time has made such a statement. Mr. Palm continues to argue from silence.

**Mr. Palm:** But the geocentrist position becomes even more untenable when we find that the Magisterium has officially adopted principles laid out by her two greatest Doctors, St. Augustine and St. Thomas, which completely undermine the modern geocentrist approach to both Scripture and the Fathers.

Probably the key issue that the Church was grappling with during the Galileo affair is the extent to which sacred Scripture presents details of the physical universe. Certain theologians and prelates such as Cardinal Bellarmine insisted that sacred Scripture does contain details of the physical universe and that inspiration guarantees that these details are all presented with a kind of scientific precision.

**R. Sungenis:** There are no reputable geocentrists claiming the Bible has "scientific precision." The Bible only claims to answer the basic question of whether the sun goes around the Earth or the Earth goes around the sun. A child could understand it. Mr. Palm, on the other hand, wants to make a caricature of the issue and use extremes so as to make his case more palatable.

**Mr. Palm:** Other theologians and prelates, such as Cardinal Baronius, argued to the contrary that descriptions of physical phenomena are in Scripture "according to the appearances" and that therefore we do not expect to find scientifically precise details in Holy Writ—the aphorism commonly attributed to him captures this thus: "The Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

**R. Sungenis:** The statement is often translated as: "The Holy Spirit tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." In some colloquial versions "Holy Scripture" replaces "Holy Spirit." The speech says that it has been "attributed" (original: "attribuita") to Cardinal Baronius because no exact quote exists from Baronius' writings.<sup>46</sup> It is not indicative of any magisterial decree or even an authoritative statement, but a mere cliché that may have been circulating in the pro-Galilean *Accademia die Lincei* circles during the seventeenth century controversy. It has no more weight than any other opinion being

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<sup>46</sup> Galileo wrote it quite poetically in his native Italian to Madama Cristina di Lorena: "...ciò è l'intenzione dello Spirito Santo essere d'insegnarci come si vadia al cielo, e non come vadia il cielo" ("that is the intention of the Holy Spirit which is to teach us how to go to heaven, and not how the heavens go") and attributes it as coming from "Io qui direi quello che intesi da persona ecclesiastica costituita in eminentissimo grado" ("Here I refer to the understandings of an ecclesiastical person in a very eminent position"), who most suppose is Cardinal Cesare Baronio (*Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, 1968, vol 5, p. 319, lines 25-28). Stillman Drake claims that "a marginal note by Galileo assigns this epigram to Cardinal Baronius" who "visited Padua with Cardinal Bellarmine in 1598, and Galileo probably met him at that time" (*Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, p. 186).

propagated at that time, and thus it is quite inappropriate in a 1992 papal address. Cardinal Poupard's resorting to such specious statements perhaps shows the pressure he was under to provide some plausibility for his assault on the literal interpretation of Scripture.

More to the point, however, is that Baronius' statement is false. No one in the whole history of Catholic Scripture study up to that point had ever uttered such a denial on the domain of either the Holy Spirit's teaching or the content of Holy Writ. Baronius' quip can easily be countered with one that Robert Bellarmine was sure to have thought: "The Holy Spirit tells us how the heavens go, as well as how to get to heaven." Unfortunately, however, the papal speech has made exegetical delinquents of all those of the Church who lived prior to and in the time of Baronius' cliché. If the Bible does not concern itself with "how the heavens go" then why did the Fathers of the Church, in unanimous consent, believe it to be so, and why did Cardinal Bellarmine and his fellow cardinals, with the popes afterwards who for decades sanctioned their verdicts against Galileo, ever dare say that, because it was spoken by the Holy Spirit, a motionless Earth and a moving sun were "a matter of faith"? As we noted in Chapters 14 and 15, celestial motion rotating around an immobile Earth permeates the divine record, from the Pentateuch to the Deuterocanonicals and everything between them.

**Mr. Palm:** As I demonstrated in detail in "[Geocentrism and Strict Canonical Interpretation](#)," the 1633 decree of the Holy Office against Galileo doesn't settle this question at all. It doesn't bind the Church to any particular cosmology, least of all geocentrism. And since it addresses only a strict Copernicanism—with an immobile sun at the center of the universe—it applies to no one and never will again.

**R. Sungenis:** And we have seen that Mr. Palm distorted the historical record on every count in order to reach his self-made conclusion.

**Mr. Palm:** Thus, the hermeneutical questions remained unanswered in the aftermath of the Galileo affair. Ultimately, the Church alone had the authority to answer this question. And answer it she did. In the doctrinal development fomented by that controversy, the Magisterium drew explicitly from the principles expounded by her two greatest Doctors, Sts. Augustine and Thomas, and authoritatively settled the question of whether we're to draw conclusions about the details of the physical universe from the pages of sacred Scripture. The answer is, no.

**R. Sungenis:** It depends on what those "details" are. Mr. Palm is obscuring the issue and making blanket statements that are categorically false.

### Mr. Palm: St. Augustine:

Galileo himself had appealed to the thought of the great St. Augustine, who laid out principles of biblical interpretation with respect to physical phenomena. Augustine insists on the truthfulness of Scripture, but equally insists that Scripture's intent is to teach us truths pertaining to salvation and not the details of the physical universe:

It is frequently asked what our belief must be about the form and shape of heaven according to Sacred Scripture. Many scholars engaged in lengthy discussions on these matters, but the sacred writers with their deeper wisdom have omitted them. Such subjects are of no profit for those who seek beatitude, and, what is worse, they take up precious time that ought to be given to what is spiritually beneficial. What concern is it of mine whether heaven is a sphere and the earth is enclosed by it and suspended in the middle of the universe, or whether heaven like a disk above the earth covers it on one side?

But the credibility of Scripture is at stake, and as I have indicated more than once, there is danger that a man uninstructed in divine revelation, discovering something in Scripture or hearing from it something that seems to be at variance with the knowledge that he has acquired, may resolutely withhold his assent in other matters where Scripture presents useful admonitions, narratives, or declarations. Hence, I must say briefly that in the matter of the shape of heaven the sacred writers knew the truth, but that the Spirit of God, who spoke through them, did not wish to teach men these facts that would be of no avail to their salvation (see [here](#)).

**R. Sungenis:** Notice that St. Augustine is talking about the "shape of heaven," not whether the Earth goes around the sun. Augustine was a geocentrist just like the rest of the Fathers, and he based his belief on Scripture:

Augustine: But we read in the divine books that even the sun itself stood still when a holy man, Joshua the son of Nun, had begged this from God until victory should finish the battle he had begun; and that it even went back, that the promise of fifteen years added to the life of king Hezekiah might be sealed by this additional prodigy. But these miracles, which were vouchsafed to the merits of holy men, even when our adversaries believe them, they attribute to magical arts; so Virgil, in the lines I quoted above, ascribes to magic the power to "Turn rivers backward to their source, And make the stars forget their course."<sup>47</sup>

Augustine: Who else save Joshua the son of Nun divided the stream of the Jordan for the people to pass over, and by the utterance of a prayer to God bridled and stopped the revolving sun? Who save Samson ever quenched his thirst with water flowing forth from the jawbone of a dead ass? Who save Elias was carried aloft in a chariot of fire?<sup>48</sup>

Augustine: I desire to know the power and nature of time, by which we measure the motions of bodies, and say (for example) that this motion is twice as long as that. For, I ask, since "day" declares not the stay only of the sun upon the earth, according to which day is

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<sup>47</sup> *City of God*, Book XXI, Ch 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Tractates*, XCI, Ch XV, 24-25, 2.

one thing, night another, but also its entire circuit from east even to east, according to which we say, "So many days have passed" (the nights being included when we say "so many days," and their spaces not counted apart), since, then, the day is finished by the motion of the sun, and by his circuit from east to east, I ask, whether the motion itself is the day, or the period in which that motion is completed, or both? For if the first be the day, then would there be a day although the sun should finish that course in so small a space of time as an hour. If the second, then that would not be a day if from one sunrise to another there were but so short a period as an hour, but the sun must go round four-and-twenty times to complete a day. If both, neither could that be called a day if the sun should run his entire round in the space of an hour; nor that, if, while the sun stood still, so much time should pass as the sun is accustomed to accomplish his whole course in from morning to morning. I shall not therefore now ask, what that is which is called day, but what time is, by which we, measuring the circuit of the sun, should say that it was accomplished in half the space of time it was wont, if it had been completed in so small a space as twelve hours; and comparing both times, we should call that single, this double time, although the sun should run his course from east to east sometimes in that single, sometimes in that double time. Let no man then tell me that the motions of the heavenly bodies are times, because, when at the prayer of one the sun stood still in order that he might achieve his victorious battle, the sun stood still, but time went on. For in such space of time as was sufficient was that battle fought and ended. I see that time, then, is a certain extension. But do I see it, or do I seem to see it? Thou, O Light and Truth, wilt show me.<sup>49</sup>

**Mr. Palm:** St. Augustine is adamant that Christians should not pit the findings of the physical sciences against the words of sacred Scripture. And this is not only because the focus of sacred Scripture is "how to go to heaven and not how the heavens go", but also because many passages of Scripture admit of more than one meaning and if there seems to be a clash between an observation in the physical universe and a proposed meaning of Scripture, it may be that the interpreter has misunderstood Scripture:

It not infrequently happens that something about the earth, about the sky, about other elements of this world, about the motion and rotation or even the magnitude and distances of the stars, about definite eclipses of the sun and moon, about the passage of years and seasons, about the nature of animals, of fruits, of stones, and of other such things, may be known with the greatest certainty by reasoning or by experience, even by one who is not a Christian. It is too disgraceful and ruinous, though, and greatly to be avoided, that he [the non-Christian] should hear a Christian speaking so idiotically on these matters, and as if in accord with Christian writings, that he might say that he could scarcely keep from laughing when he saw how totally in error they are. In view of this and in keeping it in mind constantly while dealing with the book of Genesis, I have, insofar as I was able, explained in detail and set forth for consideration the meanings of obscure passages, taking care not to affirm rashly some one meaning to the prejudice of another and perhaps better explanation ('De genesi ad litteram' (The literal meaning of Genesis), book 2, chapter 9, tr. J.H.Taylor, 1982).

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<sup>49</sup> *Confessions*, Bk XI, Ch XXIII, 30.

**R. Sungenis:** Yes, there are many things in science that Scripture does not address. But notice how Mr. Palm doesn't separate the things Scripture does not address from the things Scripture DOES address. Thus, Mr. Palm, quite deceptively, wants you to conclude that Scripture has nothing to say about science. But that is false. Scripture DOES address whether it is the sun or Earth revolving around the other. Mr. Palm's casual dismissal of this fact would have upset St. Augustine very much. Augustine answered people like Mr. Palm not only with his references to Scripture above, but also with this:

But since the words of Scripture that I have treated are explained in so many senses, critics full of worldly learning should restrain themselves from attacking as ignorant and uncultured these utterances that have been made to nourish all devout souls....But more dangerous is the error of certain weak brethren who faint away when they hear these irreligious critics learnedly and eloquently discoursing on the theories of astronomy or on any of the questions relating to the elements of this universe. With a sigh, they esteem these teachers as superior to themselves, looking upon them as great men; and they return with disdain to the books which were written for the good of their souls; and, although they ought to drink from these books with relish, they can scarcely bear to take them up.<sup>50</sup>

**Mr. Palm: St. Thomas:**

The saint who is probably the Church's greatest Doctor, St. Thomas, affirms these same principles. Although of course he himself was a geocentrist—that being the best science of his day—

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm is trying to implant in your mind that St. Thomas was a geocentrist not because Scripture said so, but because it was good science. He has no evidence, much less proof, for this assertion, but he says it anyway.

**Mr. Palm:** St. Thomas is explicitly open to the possibility that in astronomical matters the theories proposed by men (i.e. geocentrism, in his day) may not be adequate to explain the true nature of things and that other theories may more adequately account for what we observe:

The suppositions that these astronomers have invented need not necessarily be true; for perhaps the phenomena of the stars are explicable on some other plan not yet discovered by men (De coelo, II, lect. 17).

**R. Sungenis:** The "phenomena of the stars" has nothing to do with whether the Earth goes around the sun or vice-versa. St. Thomas is talking about details regarding the stars that Scripture does not address. Here is a sample from De coelo, II, Lecture 17 that Mr. Palm cites:

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<sup>50</sup> *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book 1, Chapter 20, Para. 41, Ancient Christian Writers, *ibid.*, p. 44.

Moreover, to each of the planets he also assigned certain other revolving spheres, as is explained in Metaphysics XII. 454. But even this theory could not account for all the appearances about the stars, especially as to their being near and far away from us — which is grasped from the fact that under the same disposition of the air, the planets are seen at one time larger and at another time smaller.

456. Then at [322] he raises the second difficulty. And he says that with good reason one can wonder why it is that in the first sphere, which is moved by the first motion, there is such a great multitude of stars that their whole order appears to be of the "arithmetical," i.e., of things innumerable (for their number cannot be comprehended by us), whereas in the lower orbs we find one solitary star in each so that two or more of the wandering stars are not seen fixed in one mobile sphere.

**Mr. Palm** (St. Thomas): "the theory of eccentrics and epicycles is considered as established, because thereby the sensible appearances of the heavenly movements can be explained; not, however, as if this proof were sufficient, forasmuch as some other theory might explain them" (Summa theologica, I, q.32, a.1, ad. 2).

**R. Sungenis:** This works against Mr. Palm, since it proves that St. Thomas is still a geocentrist, and will remain one, especially if there is a better system than Ptolemy's that can account for all the movements of the heavenly bodies, which actually was found in Tycho Brahe's geocentric model, and now in the Neo-Tychonic model.

**Mr. Palm:** And taking up the matter of the bearing of sacred Scripture on details of the physical universe, St. Thomas evaluates and reaffirms the principles laid out by St. Augustine. He applies these specifically to the question of the six days of creation, which interestingly enough a number of modern geocentrists have insisted is also a matter fixed by a unanimous consent of the Fathers and therefore something that binds Catholics to a single interpretation. On the contrary, says St. Thomas:

I answer that, in discussing questions of this kind two rules are to be observed, as Augustine teaches. The first is, to hold the truth of Scripture without wavering. The second is that since Holy Scripture can be explained in a multiplicity of senses, one should adhere to a particular explanation only in such measure as to be ready to abandon it if it be proved with certainty to be false, lest Holy Scripture be exposed to the ridicule of unbelievers, and obstacles be placed to their believing.

**R. Sungenis:** Unfortunately for Mr. Palm, no physical experiment has ever proven that geocentrism is wrong and heliocentrism or acentrism is correct. In fact, the preponderant evidence supports geocentrism, not heliocentrism or acentrism. Here is a quote from historian Lincoln Barnett, with a Foreword by Albert Einstein:

"We can't feel our motion through space, nor has any physical experiment ever proved that the Earth actually is in motion." (Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe* and Dr. Einstein, 2nd rev. edition, 1957, p. 73).



**Mr. Palm** (St. Thomas): We say, therefore, that the words which speak of the firmament as made on the second day can be understood in two senses. . . . [he goes on to discuss various ideas of the heavens, Plato, Aristotle et al.] If, however, we take these days to denote merely sequence in the natural order, as Augustine holds, and not secession in time, there is then nothing to prevent our saying, whilst holding any one of the opinions given above, that the substantial formation of the firmament belongs to the second day. (cited in What would St. Thomas say?, from ST, First Part, Question 68)

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm is trying to capitalize on the fact that Augustine had two interpretations to Genesis. (1) he thought that Genesis could be interpreted as six 24-hour days, or (2) that the days were one instantaneous time period. He was the only Father that held to the possibility of (2). But that was because Augustine had a faulty interpretation of some other passages of Scripture based on his weak understanding of the Greek language in the Septuagint. (See pages 283ff in my book *Genesis: Chapters 1 to 11* for more detail on this issue).

In any case, St. Thomas is giving deference to Augustine's two views on Genesis 1. But notice that St. Thomas is not talking about whether the Earth goes around the sun or the sun around the Earth, since that issue was already settled in his mind from Scripture.

**Mr. Palm:** When it comes to geocentrism itself, St. Thomas, like the Fathers, gives no indication at all that this is anything for him other than a matter of natural philosophy:

Even Saint Thomas, when he argued for the geocentric cosmology in the *Summa*, argued based on the observations of Ptolemy, a natural scientist and a pagan. Not the Bible. Not the Church fathers. Ptolemy. This is a question for natural science, not an article of the faith ([link](#)).

**R. Sungenis:** Mr. Palm likes to play the either/or game and ignore the both/and. Thomas consistently used Aristotle's *Metaphysics* for his scientific and metaphysical basis, but he also used Scripture, just as did Augustine and the other Fathers and medievals. For example, in his work in the *Summa Theologica*, "Treatise on the Work of the Six Days," Question 68, Article 4, he says: "The Earth stands in relation to the heaven as the center of a circle to its circumference. But as one center may have many circumferences, so, though there is but one Earth, there may be many heavens"

Obviously, Thomas is expounding on Scripture, since his title refers to Genesis 1.

NB: By "many heavens" Thomas is referring to the three ways in which Scripture uses the word "heaven," e.g., the Earth's atmosphere; the starry cosmos; and the third heaven as God's domain above the firmament.