

Anthony Tardoff: Confused for Lack of Knowledge

Anthony Tardoff didn't take kindly to the rebuttal I gave him (<http://galileowaswrong.com/catholic-traditionalist-struggles-with-geocentrism/>), even though I tried to be as polite as I could with someone who has already shown hostility to me several times.

He responded by engaging in a personal attack against me, mixed with a few more objections. I've seen this scenario dozens of times. When my opponent doesn't have good answers for the distortions and contradictions I point out in their essays, they will resort to making caricatures of me (e.g., Mr. Tardoff's childish cartoon characters) and accusing me of being a "conspiracy theorist," or anti-Semite, or they will attack my academic degrees, or accuse me of writing too much, or anything that will take the focus off of their errors so that they can create a red herring to slip under. Since I refuse to stoop to Mr. Tardoff's level of argumentation, I'm going to eliminate all his *ad hominem* arguments and only answer his scientific and ecclesiastical objections.

The first topic is Mr. Tardoff's attempt to answer the issue about rocket launches toward the east:

Tardoff: Less force/fuel? Hmm. That should be observable, right? We should know whether it takes more fuel to launch westward than eastward. And in fact, we do! NASA's Dr. David P. Stern writes: "[T]he velocity needed for a stable orbit around the center of the Earth above the atmosphere is about 8000 meter/second. An object on the surface of the Earth already has an eastward velocity, because of the Earth's rotation, but it is much too small: 409 meter/sec on the equator, and 409 times $\cos L$ at latitude L . That is much too small to fling you or me into orbit (for which we ought to be grateful), but it's still something, and satellite launchers, eager to make use of the smallest advantage, fire their rockets eastward. At Cape Canaveral you get a bonus of about 360 m/s." Israel has launched two satellites so far (maybe more). Lacking the choice, it must launch westward over the Mediterranean, and those 360 (or so) meters/sec hinder rather than help its rockets, reducing the available payload. Yes, it can be done, but when a choice exists, eastward is preferable. (Note that this applies to any orbit, not merely geostationary ones.)

R. Sungenis: Perhaps Mr. Tardoff didn't understand the question and the challenge. The challenge wasn't for Mr. Tardoff to get another quote from someone at NASA claiming that they get a boost launching rockets east from a rotating Earth. The first challenge for Mr. Tardoff was to get equations from NASA that show they get a boost from a rotating Earth. The second challenge was for him to show that less fuel is used launching eastward to cover the same distance as when launching westward. Mr. Tardoff did neither. He merely quoted from someone at NASA who said that NASA takes advantage of a rotation of the Earth. So Mr. Tardoff has failed the challenge.

Tardoff: Mr. Sungenis still thinks that the only thing at stake with a change to a geostationary reference is just that: a change of reference. I'll let Dr. Phil Plait tackle this one: "And Geocentrists have to assume that all local phenomena are caused by cosmic motion. For example, the Coriolis effect, which makes hurricanes spin different ways in the northern and southern hemispheres, is relatively easy to explain if you assume a spheroidal rotating Earth. For a Geocentrist, you have to assume that the Universe itself is

revolving around us, and affecting the weather here. Again, the math works out, but it's standing a pyramid on its tip: you have it precisely backwards. And with one poke the whole thing falls over."

R. Sungenis: The only thing falling over is Mr. Plait's and Mr. Tardoff's argument. Mr. Plait himself admits that "the math works out" for a geocentric system. If the math works out, then where does the math show that the system will fall over with one poke? If the system fell over, then the math would not work out. Simple logic. Mr. Plait has never shown math equations that demonstrate that the geocentric system will "fall over with one poke." That's because there are none. The simple fact is, modern science (including Newtonian, Machian and Einsteinian physics) has no argument against a rotating universe around a fixed Earth, and none of these systems of physics says that such a model will "fall over." Unless Mr. Plait (and Mr. Tardoff) want to create their own physics systems, they haven't a leg to stand on.

Tardoff: We also know earthquakes can affect the rotation of the Earth. That makes sense since they shift the mass around on the surface, and that changes how the Earth spins. To a Geocentrist, though, that earthquake affects the entire Universe. That's simpler? This also serves to answer, again, Mr. Sungenis' assertion that invoking Occam's Razor when comparing heliocentrism and geocentrism is "pretentious."

R. Sungenis: Earthquakes in a geocentric system do not "affect the entire Universe." They do not affect any part of the universe. But the earthquakes for a rotating Earth do, indeed, affect the entire Earth. In fact, if we consider the number of earthquakes that occur per year (in the millions) and multiply that number over how many years evolutionists like Palm and Tardoff think the Earth has been in existence (billions of years), then the Earth should have slowed down to a virtual standstill due to the inertial forces against it. Somehow the sidereal rate of 23 hours, 56 minutes and 4.1 seconds never changes, but the earthquake-ridden rotating Earth model of Mr. Tardoff simply has no answer for how this could be. The rotating universe model has no problem, since earthquakes on Earth have no effect on a universe rotating around the Earth.

So much for the science. Mr. Tardoff now takes his chances with Catholic doctrine:

Tardoff: Doctrine: It should be obvious to anyone who reads his "rebuttal" that Mr. Sungenis' adherence to geocentrism rests on a prior assumption that geocentrism is Catholic doctrine. Can anyone doubt that he wouldn't make an issue of geocentrism if he didn't believe this? So it's worth revisiting this question again to show how much he disagrees with the popes about what is or is not doctrine. Here, again, Mr. Palm has done an admirable job of laying out the doctrinal status of geocentrism. (And I highly recommend this post if you want a clear, readable breakdown of the issue.) In this post I'll confine myself to showing that Sungenis is inconsistent in his appeal to Catholic authority, ignoring or dismissing those Catholic popes, Fathers, and Doctors who disagree with him. Sungenis repeatedly brings up the Inquisition's decrees of 1616 and 1633, holding them as having the mark of infallibility since, he believes, they are consonant with the consistent teaching of the Church Fathers. When I instead put forward the view stated in the Catholic Encyclopedia of 1914 that these decrees were not infallible, Sungenis accuses me of overstepping my authority: "Essentially, Anthony has become a Pope in his own right (or rite) and he will settle the issue for us."

R. Sungenis: Unfortunately, it seems Mr. Tardoff can't be trusted with what his opponent actually said. Notice that Mr. Tardoff does not provide a quote from me in which I stated that the 1616 and 1633 decrees were infallible. That's because I never said so. Additionally, I never said that the 1616 and 1633

decrees against heliocentrism and Galileo had the “mark of infallibility” (whatever Mr. Tardoff means by “mark” as opposed to “infallibility”).

Tardoff: But I already pointed out in my original post that popes don’t hold this to be true. John Paul II wrote specifically that the Inquisition erred in thinking the earth was at the center: “The error of the theologians of [Galileo’s] time, when they maintained the centrality of the earth, was to think that our understanding of the physical world’s structure was, in some way, imposed by the literal sense of Sacred Scripture. . . . In fact, the Bible does not concern itself with the details of the physical world, the understanding of which is the competence of human experience and reasoning.”

R. Sungenis: First, John Paul II didn’t write the speech to the PAS in 1992. It was written by the very liberal Cardinal Paul Poupard. Second, John Paul II’s speech to the PAS in 1992 has no official doctrinal authority for Catholics. Third, John Paul II’s speech did not say the “Inquisition erred.” The speech said that nameless “theologians” erred, but “theologians” didn’t promulgate the decree against Galileo, only the pope and his Holy Office did. Fourth, John Paul II did not reverse the 1633 magisterium’s decision against Galileo and heliocentrism. If he really believed the magisterium erred, why didn’t he correct the error and rescind their decree? As for John Paul II’s other miscues, I suggest Mr. Tardoff read the paper written against John Paul II by his new mentor, David Palm, titled “Confusion at the Very Top,” published in the *Seattle Catholic* of 2004. (http://www.seattlecatholic.com/article_20040406.html). In the end, Mr. Tardoff’s style of arguing is typical of the modern Catholic. When he thinks John Paul II can be used to his advantage (e.g., against geocentrism) he uses him. But when John Paul II is against his pet doctrines, he rejects him, just as David Palm does.

Tardoff: In response, Sungenis says, "John Paul II is entitled to have his own personal opinion about cosmology or any other subject, but the glory of the Catholic Church is that there is a big difference between a pope’s personal beliefs and what he declares officially as Catholic doctrine." But John Paul II just said that the details of the physical worlds are not a matter of faith, meaning they couldn't in principle be a matter of doctrine.

R. Sungenis: Unless John Paul II makes that belief into a Catholic doctrine, both by making an official statement putting it in force and/or rescinding the 1616 and 1633 decrees against heliocentrism and Galileo, then the idea that “our understanding of the physical world’s structure was, in some way, imposed by the literal sense of Sacred Scripture....In fact, the Bible does not concern itself with the details of the physical world,” is only John Paul II’s personal opinion and is not Catholic doctrine. If Mr. Tardoff believes otherwise, then I suggest he read the above article by David Palm (“Confusion at the Very Top”), which criticizes John Paul II for the exact same thing.

Tardoff: So when a pope agrees with Sungenis it’s doctrine, but when he disagrees it’s personal opinion.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff has a penchant for twisting the issue. I merely said that unless John Paul II makes his speech into Catholic doctrine, then it is merely his personal opinion. Conversely, when Paul V and Urban VIII approved of the Holy Office’s condemnation of heliocentrism and Galileo, it was made into Catholic doctrine, and it was spread as doctrine to all the papal nuncios and universities of Europe. All books teaching geocentrism were banned, the same as any other heretical teachings. Hence, I have no choice but to accept Paul V and Urban VIII’s condemnation of heliocentrism, since they made their decision into a formal and official teaching of the Catholic Church, complete with sanctions against those

who would transgress it. But I don't have to accept John Paul II's 1992 PAS speech, since he never made it an official teaching of the Catholic Church, nor did he require anyone to obey it. Mr. Tardoff is simply comparing apples to oranges.

Tardoff: Sungenis criticizes me for using the “canard” that something does not meet the criteria for infallibility, but then plays the same card when he says that John Paul II's statements about what is or is not infallible are not themselves infallible. (Just one of many times Sungenis does what he accuses others of doing.) Essentially, Sungenis has become a pope in his own right and he will settle the issue for us.

R. Sungenis: Once again, Mr. Tardoff is twisting the issue. John Paul II did not refer to “infallibility” in his 1992 PAS, so why is Mr. Tardoff making infallibility an issue? It is nothing but a red herring.

Tardoff: Of course, John Paul II is not the only Catholic authority to hold that matters of natural science are not matters of faith. Leo XIII's encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* is very clear on the issue: [W]e must remember, first, that the sacred writers, or to speak more accurately, the Holy Ghost "Who spoke by them, did not intend to teach men these things (that is to say, the essential nature of the things of the visible universe), things in no way profitable unto salvation." Hence they did not seek to penetrate the secrets of nature, but rather described and dealt with things in more or less figurative language, or in terms which were commonly used at the time, and which in many instances are in daily use at this day, even by the most eminent men of science. . . .

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff misunderstands what he reads. Leo XIII only says that the Holy Spirit did not intend to teach “*the essential nature of things*” or “*to penetrate the secrets of nature.*” He did not say that the Holy Spirit did not intend to teach that the sun goes around the Earth. The “essential nature of things” or the “secrets of nature” are far more complex than what goes around what. Mr. Tardoff makes the mistake that many other modern Catholics make, that is, they assume that since the Bible does not speak to the intricacies of nature, then the Bible can't speak factually about anything in nature. Dead wrong.

Tardoff: 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,"(55) according to the saying of St. Thomas. And in another place he says most admirably: "When philosophers are agreed upon a point, and it is not contrary to our faith, it is safer, in my opinion, neither to lay down such a point as a dogma of faith, even though it is perhaps so presented by the philosophers, nor to reject it as against faith, lest we thus give to the wise of this world an occasion of despising our faith." The Catholic interpreter, although he should show that those facts of natural science which investigators affirm to be now quite certain are not contrary to the Scripture rightly explained, must nevertheless always bear in mind, that much which has been held and proved as certain has afterwards been called in question and rejected. And if writers on physics travel outside the boundaries of their own branch, and carry their erroneous teaching into the domain of philosophy, let them be handed over to philosophers for refutation.

R. Sungenis: Why doesn't Mr. Tardoff give his interpretation of what he thinks Leo XIII is saying? Anyone can produce a quote. We would like to know if Mr. Tardoff has found anything here that shows Pope Leo XIII was speaking about geocentrism. Does he find anything in which Leo XIII rejects the decisions of Paul V and Urban VIII against Galileo? No, not a word on either count. In fact, what we find is that Leo XIII is using Aquinas as his model, yet Aquinas was a geocentrist who states in his works that he is so because the Fathers and Scripture taught it. Additionally, Leo XIII warns Mr. Tardoff just as I have warned him. Leo XIII says: "The Catholic interpreter...must nevertheless always bear in mind, that much which has been held and proved as certain has afterwards been called in question and rejected." Well, it just so happens that popular science has been hiding the fact that the scientific evidence, and even their scientific theories, support geocentrism, as Mr. Plait has aptly admitted, since "the math works."

Tardoff: Pius XII reiterated these points in his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Calling Leo's encyclical "the supreme guide in biblical studies," he urged, "This teaching, which Our Predecessor Leo XIII set forth with such solemnity, We also proclaim with Our authority and We urge all to adhere to it religiously."

R. Sungenis: It's too bad Mr. Tardoff didn't understand Leo XIII's encyclical in order to understand what Pius XII was saying about it.

Tardoff: And if you want something that specifically mentions the belief that the earth is the center of the universe, Benedict XV, in his encyclical *In Praeclara Summorum*, wrote, "If the progress of science showed later that that conception of the world rested on no sure foundation, that the spheres imagined by our ancestors did not exist, that nature, the number and course of the planets and stars, are not indeed as they were then thought to be, still the fundamental principle remained that the universe, whatever be the order that sustains it in its parts, is the work of the creating and preserving sign of Omnipotent God, who moves and governs all, and whose glory risplende in una parte piu e meno altrove; and though this earth on which we live may not be the centre of the universe as at one time was thought, it was the scene of the original happiness of our first ancestors, witness of their unhappy fall, as too of the Redemption of mankind through the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ." This is a pope, in an official teaching document, allowing that "this earth on which we live may not be the centre of the universe as at one time was thought" -- a serious problem if that belief is a matter of doctrine.

R. Sungenis: This only shows that Mr. Tardoff has so little evidence on his side that he tries to make a mountain out of a mole hill. Little if anything can be extracted from Benedict XV's encyclical to prove Mr. Tardoff's contention. First, the encyclical is not purporting to be a treatise on either cosmology or cosmogony, and it is the understanding of the Church that no dogmatic teachings are to be gleaned from an ecclesiastical document unless said document specifically addresses and defines the issue at hand. In this case, the encyclical is merely an exoneration of Dante and his works, not a teaching on whether the Earth is the center of the universe. Popes may often gather popular sentiments or ideas from the surrounding culture in order to enhance the basic message they wish to teach, but they have no dogmatic standing whatsoever. Second, the pope himself is aware of the conditional and speculative nature of his reference to cosmology since he carefully couches his appeal with the subjective word "may" in the sentence: "and though this earth on which we live *may* not be the center of the universe as at one time was thought." To say that the Earth *may not* be the center is as equally indicative as saying that it *may* be the center. In actuality, the fact that the pope did not confirm the scientific consensus, which by this time

(1921) firmly believed in heliocentrism, means that he was not allowing himself to be pressured by the scientific community into adopting a non-central Earth as an indisputable fact. Although the pope may have known about the decrees of 1616 through 1664, he was probably under the impression, as many are today, that those decrees had been relaxed somewhat in 1822 and 1835 (yet it is safe to say that he was not aware of the subterfuge behind those two latter events). Since he put no particular study into the question, it is only reasonable to conclude that he might have a hesitancy regarding the Church's official position on the matter. There are many doctrines like that in the Catholic Church today. People don't know what the true teaching is because they have received two different voices from Church officials (e.g., the Tridentine mass, usury, biblical inerrancy, the social kingship of Christ, six-day ex nihilo creation, contraception, head coverings for women, no salvation outside the Church, etc.).

Tardoff: Not good enough? Since Sungenis places such importance on decrees from the Inquisition approved by a pope, how about the decrees of the Inquisition in 1820 and 1822 approved by Pope Pius VII? David Palm has an in-depth examination, so I'll just quote the pertinent part from the 1820 decree for the record: "His Holiness has decreed that no obstacles exist for those who sustain Copernicus' affirmation regarding the earth's movement in the manner in which it is affirmed today, even by Catholic authors. "His Holiness has decreed . . ." And yet Sungenis says, "Anthony is setting himself up as a pope in his own right."

R. Sungenis: It has become quite apparent that Tardoff and Palm are playing a game. The game is designed to keep repeating the same old arguments over and over again and deliberately refuse to engage with their opponent's rebuttal. In my previous response to Mr. Tardoff just a month ago, I painstakingly showed why Mr. Palm's arguments were false, but Mr. Tardoff doesn't even recognize them, much less engage with them. For the record, I will copy and paste here what I explained to Mr. Tardoff previously:

R. Sungenis: Since the best Anthony can do is name call, allow me to introduce you to the so-called "dubious conspiracy theory" so you can judge for yourself:

In 1820, Cardinal Olivieri and Father Anfossi were in a bitter battle about an imprimatur sought for by Canon Settele who had just written a book espousing the Copernican doctrine. Father Anfossi, as Master of the Sacred Palace, had the authority to refuse an imprimatur for any book, and he refused the imprimatur for Canon Settele's book on the basis that it went against the 1616 and 1633 decrees against Galileo and heliocentrism. Cardinal Olivieri, a liberal of that day, decided to go around Father Anfossi and went directly to Pius VII. Pius VII was very ill at that time besides having a weak personality, in addition to that fact that he had only recently been returned to the Vatican after having been incarcerated by Napoleon in Florence. In the midst of this weakness, Olivieri told Pius VII a pack of lies to persuade him to override Anfossi. Olivieri told Pius VII that the only reason the 1616 and 1633 Church condemned Galileo and heliocentrism was because: (a) Galileo didn't use Kepler's elliptical orbits for the planets, but kept them in perfect circles, and (b) that if the Earth moved, then the atmosphere would be blown away. These were bald-faced lies, since neither the 1600 nor 1633 Church ever mentioned such criteria, much less used them to condemn Galileo or heliocentrism.

The records from 1616 and 1633 (which Pius VII did not possess and thus could not consult in 1820 since Napoleon had confiscated all the Galileo records in 1809 and took them back to Paris, and were not returned to the Vatican until 1845) are very clear that Galileo was condemned for saying that the

Earth went around the Sun instead of the Sun going around the Earth. It didn't matter whether Galileo said the Earth revolved in perfect circles or perfect triangles. The fact that Galileo said that the Earth moved around the Sun was sufficient to receive his condemnation.

I'm not the only one to discover and condemn the chicanery of Cardinal Olivieri:

...Father Grandi. Working in agreement with Olivieri and basing himself on his argumentation, he had tried to realize the objective of saving the good name of the Holy See, substantially by emphasizing the fact that the Copernican system, by then recognized even by Catholic authors, had been purified from errors and inconsistencies which made it unacceptable in its original form. This was equivalent to maintaining that the Church had not erred in 1616 by putting on the Index a work at that time so defective at the level of physics and that now the Church was legitimately authorized to approve it after its errors were corrected. And it was, as a matter of fact, this which 'was suggested' to poor Settele to make skillfully known in his work... That is, the Church had been right in condemning the latter from a scientific point of view, because Galileo had also upheld heliocentrism in its unsatisfactory Copernican form...¹

So now we know why there is a division between the traditional Catholic Church and the modern Catholic Church. The traditional Church made the official statements against Galileo, but someone in 1820 lied to make it appear as if the official status of Galileo had changed so that the modern Church could rub shoulders (at least unofficially) with modern science. And that is where we are today. Your choice is between the official statements made against heliocentrism and Galileo by the traditional Catholic Church, or the ecclesiastical chicanery and unofficial opinions of the modern Catholic Church.

Tardoff: We have here the official teaching documents from three popes and a juridical decision from a fourth. But Sungenis is a greater authority than Benedict XV and Pius VII about whether we don't have to believe geocentrism. He's a greater authority than Leo where scriptural exegesis is concerned. And he's a greater authority than Pius XII, from whose exhortation to take Leo's encyclical as "the supreme guide in biblical studies" and "adhere to it religiously" Sungenis flat-out dissents.

R. Sungenis: What we have seen is Mr. Tardoff's historiography, not the real history. He claims to have provided "the official teaching documents from three popes and a juridical decision from a fourth," but he hasn't. Let's go over this again, so we can be clear about Mr. Tardoff's miscues:

1) John Paul II did not issue any "official teaching document" in his 1992 PAS speech. Neither did he make mention of any rejection of the decisions made by Paul V or Urban VIII; rather, his speech (written by Poupard) only referred to nameless "theologians." Moreover, John Paul II did not rescind the magisterium's decrees of 1616 and 1633 issued against Galileo and heliocentrism, and thus those decrees stand to this very day. Lastly, since Mr. Tardoff wants to use John Paul II as his mentor, then perhaps he can tell us why his other mentor, David Palm, has such a low opinion of John Paul II in his article "Confusion at the Very Top" found at http://www.seattlecatholic.com/article_20040406.html

¹ Finnocchiaro, *Retrying Galileo*, p. 520.

2) Leo XIII in *Providentissimus Deus*, said nothing about geocentrism. He made no mention of the decrees against heliocentrism and Galileo promulgated by Paul V and Urban VIII. He merely said that some things the Fathers believed are not necessarily believed today. We can understand this, since today we don't believe in the four humours as medical fact.

3) Pius XII said nothing about geocentrism, but merely reiterated what Leo XIII said.

4) Benedict XV did not teach that the Earth is not the center of the universe, and he made no doctrine of it. In fact, Benedict's encyclical has nothing to do with cosmology at all. And despite modern science's belief in heliocentrism, Benedict XV stated that the Earth still "may be the center of the universe," thus not allowing modern science to rule that issue.

So, in the end, Mr. Tardoff's best examples don't even come close to proving his case. The only thing that citing these four popes prove is Mr. Tardoff's desperation to prop up something to make it appear as if there is some official teaching against geocentrism. But there is none, and he knows it, but won't admit it.

Tardoff: Sungenis' idea of biblical interpretation seems not to have progressed beyond his protestant roots. Though he gives lip service to the marriage of faith and reason, in practice he seems to be a kind of a Catholic fideist — faith trumps reason — as contrasted to Augustine and Aquinas' "two books" approach — faith and reason both aim at truth and so cannot contradict.

R. Sungenis: Pardon my French, but is pure bullcrap. It is what usually happens when my opponent can't win the argument by reason and logic. If there is anyone who is acting like a "protestant," it is Mr. Tardoff, since he refuses to accept the teaching of the Fathers, the medievals, the Tridentine catechism, the Inquisition, and the Popes of the 1600s who taught geocentrism and condemned any system that says the Earth moves. Those who are truly Catholic will accept this Tradition. Those who want to protest against this Tradition (just as the Protestants protested against the Church with regard to the doctrine of Justification) are Protestant Catholics, not true Catholics. They are ashamed of their Tradition, and don't have the courage to defend it.

Tardoff: I already quoted Aquinas in my original post, and he's worth quoting again. Aquinas says: "For certain things are per se the substance of the Faith, as that God is three and one, and other things of this kind, in which no one is authorized to think otherwise. Thus the Apostle says in Galatians 1 that if an angel of God preached diversely from what he had taught, let him be anathema. But certain things (pertain to the faith) only incidentally (per accidens), inasmuch, that is, as they are handed down in Scripture, which faith supposes to have been promulgated under the dictation of the Holy Spirit. And these things can without danger remain unknown by those who are not held to be knowledgeable about the Scriptures, for example, many items of history. In these things even the Fathers have thought differently and have explained the Scriptures in different ways. So, therefore, with regard to the beginning of the world, there is something which pertains to the substance of the Faith, namely, that the world was created to begin with. And this all the Fathers agree in saying. But how and in what order it was made does not pertain to the Faith except per accidens, inasmuch as it is presented in Scripture, the truth of which the Fathers retained in their varying explanations as they arrived at different conclusions.

R. Sungenis: This quote from Aquinas actually works against Tardoff, since the Fathers did not think "differently and explain the Scriptures in different ways" with regard to geocentrism. The all had a firm

and undivided conviction that accepted Scripture's teaching that the sun and stars go around the earth rather than the earth going around the sun and rotating on an axis. Of course, the Fathers didn't hold their belief in geocentrism on par with the Trinity, but as Bellarmine told Fr. Foscarini, they did hold geocentrism as the definitive teaching of Scripture, and thus if one denied its truth, it meant that he denied the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and in that sense it is a "matter of faith."

Tardoff: Sungenis doesn't like this passage...

R. Sungenis: Notice how Tardoff tries to put words in my mouth. I never said I "didn't like" the passage. In fact, I like it very much because it denies Tardoff's thesis.

Tardoff: ...because it contradicts his belief that the six-day literalist reading of creation is dogma (another example of Sungenis holding a belief that the popes do not, not to mention that even the Fathers were not as unanimous as he claims).

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff is once again reading into the passage what he wants to see. Thomas isn't "contradicting" a six-day creation. In fact, there is nothing in Thomas' writings where he rejects a six-day creation. He merely says that the Fathers had different opinions on the "order" of the days, and what he actually means here is that St. Augustine *alone* had a different order, not the other Fathers. All of the other Fathers were in unanimous agreement that the order of days were precisely as they are stated in Genesis 1, and they all believed those days were 24 hours long. The only holdout was Augustine, who said that the creation might have been in one-day or instantaneously. This was not a firm position for him, but only one other possibility to a six-day creation.

Tardoff: When I quoted this passage in my original post, Sungenis put words into my mouth: "Anthony is trying to tell us that Aquinas either did not believe in a literal and chronological six day creation or that the view he quotes above was the norm in Catholic teaching." Neither, actually. As Leo XIII noted above, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church believed many things according to the knowledge of their times.

R. Sungenis: But Leo XIII did not refer to the Fathers' views on creation or geocentrism, so it is a moot point.

Tardoff: What I was claiming, and still do claim, is that Aquinas had no problem with believing otherwise. Aquinas explicitly states that the order and time of creation are not a matter of faith.

R. Sungenis: I never said it was a matter of faith, so Mr. Tardoff is beating his own strawman.

Tardoff: And despite Sungenis' claim that Augustine's outside-of-time idea of creation was tolerated by Aquinas "out of respect for Augustine," Aquinas in fact states in the same passage just quoted that Augustine's interpretation "is more reasonable and defends Sacred Scripture more from the derision of non-believers, a factor which Augustine, in his Letter of Genesis (bk. I, ch. 19) teaches us is to be kept well in mind, so that the Scriptures may be expounded in such a way that they not be mocked by nonbelievers. This opinion pleases me more."

R. Sungenis: The problem with Mr. Tardoff's thesis is that Aquinas did not adopt Augustine's "instantaneous creation" beliefs. He sided with the other Fathers in a literal reading of Genesis. For example, along with the other Fathers (and against Augustine's belief that the Light of Genesis 1:3

represented the angels), Thomas said the light of Genesis 1:3 was literal light and had nothing to do with the angels. Those who elaborate on this point are Basil in *The Hexameron*, Homily II, 7; Victorinus in *On the Creation of the World*. Leo the Great, Sermon XXVII. Gregory of Nyssa (*Hexameron*, PG 44, 66-118); Ephrem the Syrian (*Genesim et in Exodum commentarii*, in CSCO, v. 152, p. 9); Chrysostom (*Homilies on Genesis* (PG 53, 57-58); Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, 1, Qs. 67, Art. 4, Re. 2; Bk 1, Ques. 67, Art. 1). Honorius of Autun (*Hexameron* PL 172, 257); Peter Lombard (*Lombardi opera omnia*, PL 192, 651); Colonna, aka Aegidius Romanus (*Opus Hexaameron*); Nicholas of Lyra (*Postillae perpetuae*); Cajetan (*Commentarii de Genesis 1*); as well as Mendelssohn (*Commentary on Genesis*) Petavius (*Dogmata theologica*) et al.

Tardoff: I'm going to quote Aquinas one more time just to pound home the point that Sungenis' idea of what belongs to faith is not shared by the foremost theologian in Church history. This comes from *Summa Contra Gentiles*, book 2, chapter 4. Aquinas writes: "For this reason, also, the philosopher and the believer consider different matters about creatures. The philosopher [i.e. scientist] considers such things as belong to them by nature—the upward tendency of fire, for example; the believer, only such things as belong to them according as they are related to God—the fact, for instance, that they are created by God, are subject to Him, and so on. Hence, imperfection is not to be imputed to the teaching of the faith if it omits many properties of things, such as the figure of the heaven and the quality of its motion. For neither does the natural philosopher consider the same characters of a line as the geometrician, but only those that accrue to it as terminus of a natural body." So to Aquinas, what belongs to faith regarding created things is their relationship to God (just as Benedict XV said above), whereas their natural properties, including movement, belong to the natural sciences. To say that faith doesn't include matters of science is not a mark against faith: it's simply a delineation of scope, just as other subjects, like natural science and geometry, are delineated.

R. Sungenis: This is a perfect example of how Tardoff continually reads into a passage what he wants to see. Notice that Thomas says: "Hence, imperfection is not to be imputed to the teaching of the faith if it omits many *properties of things*, such as the figure of the heaven and the *quality of its motion*." In other words, a critic of Christianity cannot claim that the Christian message is faulty if the message doesn't include teachings about the "properties of things," which would include the "figure of heaven" (that is, it is a sphere, an oblong, etc.) and the "quality of its motion" (that is, how it rotates, how it keeps time, etc.).

Yet notice how Tardoff twists it. He says: "So to Aquinas, what belongs to faith regarding created things is their relationship to God...whereas their natural properties, including movement, belong to the natural sciences."

Did Aquinas say that "movement" belongs only to natural sciences? No. He said the QUALITY of movement does. In fact, by saying the "quality of ITS motion," Thomas has already admitted that the "heavens" (which word he used in the previous phrase, and which the "its" of the second phrase refers to) are in "motion." That is, the universe is in motion around the Earth, which Thomas has also confirmed in other places, and he never says the Earth is in motion. As we have seen over and over again, Tardoff simply cannot be trusted with the text.

Tardoff: Sungenis' basis for thinking that geocentrism is a matter of faith ends up resting entirely on the Inquisition's say-so in the 17th century.

R. Sungenis: Tardoff has become so comfortable siding with popular science that he doesn't hesitate throwing the Inquisition under the bus, and the Holy Spirit with it. Hence, Tardoff has proven our point that his authority is popular science, not the Catholic magisterium.

Also notice how Tardoff seeks to minimize the players in the condemnation of Galileo and heliocentrism. He refers to them as the "Inquisition." This is similar to what Cardinal Poupard did in John Paul II's 1992 speech to the PAS, by saying that those who committed the "errors" in the 1600s against Galileo were merely "theologians." Both are an attempt to take the spotlight off the popes and cardinals of the 1600s who condemned Galileo and heliocentrism. These historiographers think that if they use expendable entities such as "Inquisition" and "theologians" it somehow mitigates the fact that two popes and their Holy Offices were in this battle from start to finish, and promulgated their decisions far and wide to the rest of the Church. You can always tell what someone is hiding by the labels they use to describe what they don't want to admit.

Tardoff: But given that the Inquisition disagreed with Aquinas, Augustine, Benedict XV, Leo XIII, Pius XII, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and others about whether a matter of natural science can be a matter of faith,

R. Sungenis: How could the Inquisition "disagree" with Aquinas and Augustine when all three believed in geocentrism?! How could the Inquisition disagree with Benedict XV through Benedict XVI when those popes came after the Inquisition?! For that matter, where do any of the popes Tardoff mentions either rescind the condemnations against Galileo and heliocentrism or make a doctrine that says Scripture and the Fathers have nothing binding to say about what celestial body goes around what? For that matter, where does the Inquisition, or either Paul V, Urban VIII or Alexander VII ever say or teach that natural science is a matter of faith? They don't, ever. What they say is that Scripture's testimony is a matter of faith, and if you deny Scripture you deny the faith, and it doesn't make any difference if you deny the Virgin birth, that Jacob had 12 sons, or that the sun goes around the earth, since Scripture affirms them all.

Tardoff: John Paul II's statement that the Inquisition erred should not surprise us or be hard to accept.

R. Sungenis: Tardoff is reading into John Paul II what he wants to see. John Paul II's speech (written by the liberal Cardinal Poupard) said that nameless "theologians" erred, not that the Inquisition erred. It doesn't seem to bother Mr. Tardoff that the speech to the PAS played fast and loose with the actual events, since it was the very popes of the Catholic Church (not nameless "theologians") who put the full weight of their magisterium against Galileo and heliocentrism. The fact is neither Tardoff nor Poupard can live with that simple fact, since they know it will irreparably damage the Catholic Church to admit the popes were in error, so they try to lessen it by saying it was "theologians" or "the Inquisition." Any fall guy will do, as long as they don't have to mention Paul V and Urban VIII.

Tardoff: The Inquisitions's decree could never be binding...

R. Sungenis: Really? Is that why the Inquisition incarcerated people who taught heresy? Is that why Galileo was forced to recant and was then imprisoned? Is that why Copernicus', Galileo, Foscarini's, Zuniga and Kepler's books were forbidden to be read by the Index? Is that why in 1739 the Catholic editors Jaquier and Le Suer said they were bound by the decrees of the pontiffs against the heliocentrism

of Newton? Is that why Bellarmine appealed to the consensus of the Fathers and the Council of Trent so as to demand that Galileo stop teaching heliocentrism? And all these things were not only approved by the reigning popes but facilitated by them as well. Mr. Tardoff lives in a dream land of his own making.

Tardoff: ...even if it otherwise had the character of an infallible decree, precisely because infallibility only extends to matters of faith.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff has a bad habit of begging the question. He hasn't proven that Scripture's testimony on geocentrism is not a matter of faith. In fact, he hasn't shown any official Catholic statement that says Scripture's testimony on geocentrism is not a matter of faith. The only thing he has that even addresses the issue is a statement written by Cardinal Poupard and passed on as a private speech of John Paul II to the PAS in 1992, but even that statement makes no doctrine saying that Scripture's testimony is wrong on geocentrism nor does it rescind the decrees of the popes made in 1616 and 1633. In the end, Mr. Tardoff has nothing, except a wild imagination. As for "infallibility," Mr. Tardoff's argument is anachronistic, since papal infallibility was not a teaching of the Catholic Church in 1616 or 1633. And even when the Church indoctrinated papal infallibility in 1870, it gave us no list of statements of previous popes that qualify as either fallible or infallible statements.

Tardoff: (Of course, it did not have the character of an infallible decree:

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff is giving us more historiography, not history. The teaching of geocentrism is from the Ordinary magisterium. If geocentrism qualifies for infallibility, it is because it is from the Ordinary magisterium, not the Extraordinary. I gave Mr. Tardoff a whole list of reasons, mainly from Lumen Gentium 12 and 25, why geocentrism could be considered an infallible teaching of the Ordinary magisterium, but he interacts with none of it, which is par for the course. So let me give it again, not for his sake, but for yours:

Additionally, if, as the Catholic Encyclopedea authors desire, we make papal infallibility retroactive to 1633, let's also make Vatican II's teaching in Lumen Gentium 25 about the pope's authority retroactive to 1633 also. It states:

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

So, in respect of the Church's geocentric teachings and its corollary condemnations of heliocentrism over the past two thousand years, *Lumen Gentium 25* brings us back to square one by authenticating the authority of the 1616-1664 decrees and the level of commitment and obedience Catholics must give to them. In effect, Cardinal Poupard's and John Paul II's appeal to the decrees against heliocentrism as not being "irreformable" becomes moot or superfluous since, as is true with many teachings of the Catholic Church, the mere "ordinary" or "traditional" authority of the decrees plays

a larger part, according to *Lumen Gentium* 25, in commanding submission from the Catholic parishioner. In fact, the Church's historic teaching on geocentrism and her condemnation of heliocentrism fulfills all the criteria of *Lumen Gentium* 25:

- “that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect”:

It was certainly the case that popes Paul V, Urban VIII and Alexander VII understood themselves and their decrees against heliocentrism as coming from their “supreme teaching authority” and commanded that it be “acknowledged with respect.” Urban VIII, for example, approved his Holy Office's conclusion that heliocentrism was “formally heretical” and “erroneous in faith,” and demanded that Galileo sign an abjuration to that effect. Obviously, Pope Urban VIII also considered his predecessor's decree, Paul V's, as authoritative, binding, and demanding respect, since the 1633 decree was based on the condemnations of the 1616 decree.

- “and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him”:

It was certainly the case that the decrees against Copernicanism required the “assent” of Galileo, Foscarini, and all the other theologians who were venturing into the area of biblical cosmology. Urban VIII sent letters of the decree against Copernicanism and Galileo's abjuration to all the papal nuncios and universities of Europe showing the seriousness of the issue and his desire to have it widely disseminated so that the Christian faithful would be obedient to it. Alexander VII devoted a signed papal bull to the subject of banning books that threaten the faith and welfare of the Christian faithful, stating: “We command each and every one of our venerable brethren, the patriarchs, archbishops, bishops and other Ordinaries of places, as well as those beloved sons who are their vicars and officials, the inquisitors of heretical depravity, the superiors of every kind of religious Order, congregation, society, or institute, and all others...” to obey his words.

- “conformably with his manifest mind and intention”:

Few can read the documents surrounding the Galileo affair and come away without the conviction that the popes, cardinals and the Holy Offices were as resolute in their condemnation of Copernicanism as they have been about most major doctrines of the Church. The popes used and approved very solemn and foreboding language and made sure that the decrees were enforced throughout Europe.

- “which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question”

The decrees against heliocentrism were put in place for the express purpose of protecting Scripture from false interpretations and protecting the Christian faithful from harmful teachings. Although the decrees may not reach the level of being declared formally infallible, they are, nevertheless, on the

same level of “ordinary” or “traditional” authority as most other doctrines that the Church has taught.

- “or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed”

The formal and official condemnations of Copernicanism spanned a period of fifty years (1615-1665) and were delineated by three different popes. The number of ecclesiastical documents and other personal correspondences written about the Galileo affair over the course of three decades (1615-1633) exceed 7,000. Obviously the Church considered this a grave matter. She incessantly appealed to the 1500 years of tradition on the teaching of geocentrism as her greatest bulwark against the new ideas of Copernicus and Galileo.

- “or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated”:

During the condemnations against heliocentrism the Church issued some of the most detailed and comprehensive decrees ever written. Every wrinkle of the issue was investigated, arguments were presented and rebutted, witnesses were put under oath, experts were called in for testimony, the most severe and condemnatory language was formulated in the final decree, that is, that heliocentrism was “formally heretical” and “erroneous in faith.” If geocentric doctrine does not qualify under the rubrics of *Lumen Gentium* 25, what does?

In addition, Vatican I also had some important things to say regarding the authority of the ordinary magisterium and the claims of modern science. They are as follows:

Further, by divine and Catholic faith, all those things must be believed which are contained in the written word of God and in tradition, and those which are proposed by the Church, either in a solemn pronouncement or in her ordinary and universal teaching power, to be believed as divinely revealed.²

In regard to “those things proposed by the Church,” Vatican I makes no distinction between a “solemn pronouncement” (an infallible, *ex cathedra*, definition) and the ordinary magisterium, insofar as it concerns the truth of a doctrine. Both sources are to be considered as “divinely revealed.” Hence, if the condemnations of heliocentrism, which were “declared and defined” as being “formally heretical” and “erroneous in faith” were not “solemn pronouncements,” it follows that they were then authoritative decisions from the “ordinary magisterium,” and are likewise to be understood as “divinely revealed.” Vatican I adds:

By enduring agreement the Catholic Church has held and holds that there is a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only in principle but also in object: (1) in principle, indeed, because we know in one way by natural reason, in another by divine faith; (2) in object, however, because, in addition to things to which natural reason can attain, mysteries

² Denzinger ¶1792.

hidden in God are proposed to us for belief which, had they not been divinely revealed, could not become known.³

In this case, the matter of geocentrism, which, on one level, the Church proposed as a “matter of faith,” it is a fact that modern science, especially the relativistic forms, admits that it cannot determine whether the Earth moves or is stationary. In effect, the immobility of the Earth is something that can only be revealed by “divine faith.”

But, although faith is above reason, nevertheless, between faith and reason no true dissension can ever exist, since the same God, who reveals mysteries and infuses faith, has bestowed on the human soul the light of reason; moreover, God cannot deny Himself, nor ever contradict truth with truth. But, a vain appearance of such a contradiction arises chiefly from this, that either the dogmas of faith have not been understood and interpreted according to the mind of the Church, or deceitful opinions are considered as the determinations of reason. Therefore, “every assertion contrary to the truth illuminated by faith, we define to be altogether false.”⁴

In regards to the issue of geocentrism, both of the above warnings come into play: (a) Cardinal Bellarmine informed Galileo that geocentrism was a “matter of faith” and that the Church, based on the consensus of the Fathers, could not interpret Scripture in opposition to the same literal interpretation that had been passed down to it through the preceding centuries. In essence, Galileo was accused of not interpreting Scripture “according to the mind of the Church”; (b) since false claims of scientific proof for heliocentrism were consistently being advanced (e.g., Foscarini, Galileo, Kepler, Bradley, Settele, Boscovich, Newton, Bessel), and from which many people became convinced that heliocentrism was correct, these would have to be classed as “deceitful opinions [that] are considered as the determinations of reason.”

Further, the Church which, together with the apostolic duty of teaching, has received the command to guard the deposit of faith, has also, from divine Providence, the right and duty of proscribing “knowledge falsely so called” [1Tm 6:20], “lest anyone be cheated by philosophy and vain deceit” [Cl 2:8]. Wherefore, all faithful Christians not only are forbidden to defend opinions of this sort, which are known to be contrary to the teaching of faith, especially if they have been condemned by the Church, as the legitimate conclusions of science, but they shall be altogether bound to hold them rather as errors, which present a false appearance of truth.⁵

Obviously, Galileo was “forbidden to defend opinions” of “knowledge falsely so called,” concerning the claims of science that asserted the Earth revolved around the sun.⁶ Galileo was reminded in 1633

³ Denzinger ¶1795.

⁴ Denzinger ¶1797.

⁵ Denzinger ¶1798.

⁶ Some Bibles during this precise time in history (1611-1633) translate 1 Timothy 6:20 as “science falsely so called” (KJV), which shows a common understanding in the early 1600s that “science” was often equated with “knowledge.”

that heliocentrism, as early as 1616, had already been “declared and defined as opposed to Scripture,” and was now declared to be “formally heretical” and “erroneous in faith” in 1633. Hence, the Church made it known that heliocentrism was, in the language of Vatican I, “known to be contrary to the teaching of faith,” since it had clearly “been condemned by the Church,” even though it was commonly believed to be a “legitimate conclusion of science.” These “legitimate conclusions,” the Church warned, could “present a false appearance of truth,” which is certainly the case for heliocentrism since geocentrism can be demonstrated to work just as well on a geometric basis. It is quite clear that the ordinary magisterium can, without invoking infallibility, declare these theoretical beliefs of science as propping up a “false appearance,” and are thus “formally heretical” and “erroneous.” It is clear that this was done in 1616, 1633 and 1664, and these teachings against heliocentrism were never officially and formally rescinded or reformed.

And, not only can faith and reason never be at variance with one another, but they also bring mutual help to each other, since right reasoning demonstrates the basis of faith and, illumined by its light, perfects the knowledge of divine things, while faith frees and protects reason from errors and provides it with manifold knowledge. Wherefore, the Church is so far from objecting to the culture of the human arts and sciences, that it aids and promotes this cultivation in many ways. For, it is not ignorant of, nor does it despise the advantages flowing therefrom into human life; nay, it confesses that, just as they have come forth from "God, the Lord of knowledge" [1 Samuel 2:3], so, if rightly handled, they lead to God by the aid of His grace. And it (the Church) does not forbid disciplines of this kind, each in its own sphere, to use its own principles and its own method; but, although recognizing this freedom, it continually warns them not to fall into errors by opposition to divine doctrine, nor, having transgressed their own proper limits, to be busy with and to disturb those matters which belong to faith.⁷

If, for example, “right reasoning” was employed in 1887 when the Michelson-Morley experiment was performed, it would have shown that a slight impedance of light’s velocity would be due to the rotation of space around a stationary Earth and not because matter shrunk when it moved or that time slowed down. In that case “reason” would have worked very well with “faith.” But Einstein, being an atheist, had no faith. He ridiculed Christianity and hated the Catholic Church. Therefore, he would consider the rotation of space around a stationary Earth as “unthinkable,” and his colleague Edwin Hubble, a like-minded atheist, even though he saw through his telescope evidence that the Earth was in the center of the universe, rejected it as a “horrible” conclusion and something that must be “avoided at all costs.” Faith in Scripture could have provided the necessary boundaries for the crucial interpretations of the scientific experiments of the late 1800s and 1900s. Science would have been spared the wild goose chase it was forced to run as it began inventing a world in which twins age at different rates, clocks slow down at will, matter shrinks upon movement, where one is forced to say that up may be down and left may be right in order to have at least some answer to the crucial experiments. As Thomas Aquinas put it:

⁷ Denzinger ¶1799.

The knowledge proper to this science of theology comes through divine revelation and not through natural reason. Therefore, it has no concern to prove the principles of other sciences, but only to judge them. Whatever is found in other sciences contrary to any truth of this science of theology, must be condemned as false.⁸

Vatican I concludes:

For, the doctrine of faith which God revealed has not been handed down as a philosophic invention to the human mind to be perfected, but has been entrusted as a divine deposit to the Spouse of Christ, to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted. Hence, also, that understanding of its sacred dogmas must be perpetually retained, which Holy Mother Church has once declared; and there must never be recession from that meaning under the specious name of a deeper understanding. “Therefore...let the understanding, the knowledge, and wisdom of individuals as of all, of one man as of the whole Church, grow and progress strongly with the passage of the ages and the centuries; but let it be solely in its own genus, namely in the same dogma, with the same sense and the same understanding.”⁹

We aren’t done yet. Perhaps the most significant reason why the doctrine of geocentrism should be considered infallible comes, quite surprisingly, from one of the more modern declarations concerning the teachings of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* states in Paragraph 12:

The holy People of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office: it spreads abroad a living witness to him, especially by a life of faith and love and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips praising his name (cf. Heb. 13:15).¹⁰ The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20 and 27)¹¹ cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*)¹² of the whole people, when, “from the bishops to the last of the faithful”¹³

⁸ *Summa Theologica*, I, Ques. 1, Art. 6, ad. 2.

⁹ Denzinger ¶1800.

¹⁰ “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”

¹¹ “But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know....but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him.”

¹² *Lumen Gentium* 12 adds this footnote: “(The *sensus fidei* refers to the instinctive sensitivity and discrimination which the members of the Church possess in matters of faith. – Translator.)”

¹³ *Lumen Gentium* 12 adds this footnote: “See St. Augustine, *De Praed. Sanct.* 14, 27: *PL* 44, 980.” This refers to Augustine’s work *Predestination of the Saints*, Book II, Chapter 14: This grace He placed “in Him in whom we have obtained a lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things.” And thus as He worketh that we come to Him, so He worketh that we do not depart. Wherefore it was said to Him by the mouth of the prophet, “Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, and upon the Son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself, and we will not depart from Thee.” This certainly is not the first Adam, in whom we departed from Him, but the second Adam, upon whom His hand is placed, so that we do not depart from Him. For Christ altogether with His members is--for the Church’s sake, which is His body – the fulness of Him. When, therefore, God’s hand is upon Him, that we depart not from God, assuredly God’s work reaches to us (for this is God’s hand); by which work of God we are caused to be abiding in Christ with God – not, as in Adam, departing from God. For “in Christ we

they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*magisterium*), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God (*cf.* 1 Th 2:13),¹⁴ the faith once for all delivered to the saints (*cf.* Jude 3).¹⁵ The people unflinchingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life.¹⁶

Since it is a fact that the “People of God,” which includes “the bishops to the last of the faithful,” have believed unanimously, firmly and without equivocation in the doctrine of geocentrism from the beginning of the Catholic Church and throughout two millennia, and who were “guided by the sacred teaching authority” to do so, this belief necessarily fulfills the criteria of *Lumen Gentium* 12 that these same People of God “cannot err.” It is an undeniable fact that all the Fathers, all the medievals, all the bishops, priests, saints, doctors, theologians and the remaining Christian faithful of every nation believed in the doctrine of geocentrism. Additionally, three popes and their Holy Offices officially confirmed this absolute consensus in the 17th century against a few men who, because of their own misguided convictions, sought to depart from that consensus, making the attempt in the wake of unproven scientific claims with the express purpose of reinstating a novel and subjective interpretation of Holy Writ.

As we have seen, even many years after modern science began to treat heliocentrism as a scientific fact, the Catholic faithful still maintained their vigilance for geocentric doctrine. It has only been in the last one hundred years or so that this consensus has waned.

Because of the waning consensus, some objectors might themselves appeal to the principle of *Lumen Gentium* 12 and posit that the Holy Spirit is now teaching the “People of God” that heliocentrism has been correct all along. But that notion, of course, is impossible, since the “People of God” could not have been “aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth” into believing that geocentrism was correct for 1900 years and then have the Spirit suddenly change His mind to teach them the opposite. It would make the Holy Spirit a liar, which is certainly impossible. The reality is, if the “People of God” were led to believe that geocentrism was the truth, and which was, according to the stipulations of *Lumen Gentium* 12, “guided by the magisterium” to confirm their consensus, then there is simply no possibility that a change in their belief could be understood as a movement of the Holy Spirit.

Tardoff: ...the Inquisition’s power was limited to disciplinary and juridical authority only.

have obtained a lot, being predestinated according to His purpose who worketh all things.” This, therefore, is God’s hand, not ours, that we depart not from God. That, I say, is His hand who said, “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they depart not from me.”

¹⁴ “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

¹⁵ “Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

¹⁶ *The Documents of Vatican II*, Austin Flannery, O.P., NY: Costello Publishing, 1975, p. 363.

R. Sungenis: But the Inquisition got its marching orders from the pope and his cardinals! The pope and the cardinals made the doctrine, and the Inquisition carried it out. Any fool can see that, except, of course, those who try to limit the scope to nameless “theologians” (as the papal speech of 1992 did) or “the Inquisition” (as Mr. Tardoff did). In fact, with the full approval of Popes Paul V and Urban VIII concerning the conclusion of their Holy Offices (the CDF of that day), heliocentrism was first declared a “formal heresy” and then Galileo was convicted of being “vehemently suspect” of that heresy. How could he be convicted of being suspect of heresy if heliocentrism had not already been condemned as a heresy? Mr. Tardoff’s arguments make no sense.

Tardoff: The Church has never taught that tribunals can define doctrine.

R. Sungenis: Correct. The Church has taught that tribunals have the power to convict one of heresy that has already been determined as heresy prior to the tribunal. As such, Galileo was already told that heliocentrism was a heresy in 1616, and he was commanded not to teach it ever again. It was this very decree that was then used by the 1633 tribunal to convict Galileo of heresy, and to also convict him of disobeying the 1616 injunction not to teach heliocentrism.

Tardoff: The approval of a disciplinary action by a pope does not constitute an infallible teaching.

R. Sungenis: Nobody said it did. Papal infallibility is not an issue here. The infallibility of the issue stems from the fact that geocentrism was a consensus of the Fathers and continually upheld by the magisterium of the Church, which is called the Ordinary Magisterium. I suggest Mr. Tardoff read the sections on Lumen Gentium 12 and 25 for more enlightenment.

Tardoff: So what are the criteria for determining whether something is a matter of faith? Here I will quote the 1914 Catholic Encyclopedia’s entry on infallibility (though unfortunately we’ve already seen that Mr. Sungenis considers himself a more knowledgeable source than the Catholic Encyclopedia):

R. Sungenis: Not quite, but I am forced to conclude that Mr. Tardoff is incapable of reading an ecclesiastical document and understanding what it actually says.

Tardoff: “As regards matter, only doctrines of faith and morals, and facts so intimately connected with these as to require infallible determination, fall under the scope of infallible ecclesiastical teaching. These doctrines or facts need not necessarily be revealed; it is enough if the revealed deposit cannot be adequately and effectively guarded and explained, unless they are infallibly determined.”

R. Sungenis: Since Mr. Tardoff has already shown us that he doesn’t know the difference between *ex parte objecti* (a matter of faith because of the subject matter) and *ex parte dicentis* (a matter of faith because of its testimony in Scripture), his quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia is of little value.

Tardoff: So let’s use our God-given capacity for reason and apply these criteria to the belief that the earth is the unmoving center of the universe. Can the revealed deposit of faith be “adequately and effectively guarded and explained” if we believe that the earth revolves around the sun?

R. Sungenis: Since Mr. Tardoff is working from a wrong premise (i.e., that geocentrism is a matter of faith because it, itself, is an issue of faith and morals) then discussing it with him is futile. He doesn’t know the rubrics.

Tardoff: It seems that it has been, since at least 1820 when heliocentrism was allowed to be presented as established fact.

R. Sungenis: Not quite. It was never allowed to be presented as “established fact.” It was allowed as “the common opinion of astronomers.” That’s all. The Church has never made a statement, not even close, that an Earth revolving around the sun is an established fact. Here is the statement from 1820:

Their Eminences have decreed that, for the time being, now and in future, a license is not to be refused to the Masters of the Sacred Apostolic Palace for the printing and publication of works dealing with the mobility of the earth and the immobility of the sun according to the common opinion of modern astronomers, as long as there are no other contrary indications, on the basis of the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of the Index of 1757 and of this Supreme Holy Office of 1820.¹⁷

Just as important, notice also that the 1820 statement says that Catholic authors would be allowed to present the common opinion of astronomers “**as long as there are no other contrary indications.**” Well, my friends, we now have plenty of “contrary indications.” It is called modern science, which has revealed that the three branches of physics (Newtonian, Machian and Einstein) have no objections to geocentrism, as even Phil Plait recognizes, since he admits “the math works” for geocentrism. Modern science has also revealed in the 1887 Michelson-Morley and the 1925 Michelson-Gale experiments that the Earth isn’t moving but that the universe is revolving around the Earth. Einstein tried to answer the 1887 experiment with Special Relativity, but Special Relativity was falsified by the 1925 experiment, as was General Relativity. Additionally, the 1990 – 2013 Cosmic Microwave Radiation probes and the 2005 Sloan Digital Sky Survey show that the Earth is at or near the center of the universe. But, of course, these are “contrary indications” that Mr. Tardoff refuses to investigate or accept, because he has already made up his mind that geocentrism can’t be true.

Tardoff: Of course, Sungenis believes that this was the result of a “campaign of lies” — but even if that were the case,

R. Sungenis: Notice how Mr. Tardoff refuses to deal with the details of this issue. The fact that Pius VII was lied to by Cardinal Olivieri just goes right over his head. Mr. Tardoff makes sure that none of the facts get in his way when he wants to make his case.

Tardoff: ...it’s hard to deny that we seem to have done fine without the “doctrine” of the immobility of the earth.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff lives in a dream world of his own making. Has he looked at the world since 1835 when Galileo was surreptitiously taken off the Index due to the underhanded work of Olivieri and Capallari? The liberal and modernistic onslaught hit just a few years afterward. Pius IX was one of these modernists, until he got so sick of it that he did a 180 degree turn and wrote the Syllabus of Errors in 1864 against the modernists. But modernism and liberalism continued to infect the Church. Teilhard de

¹⁷ “E.mi DD. Decreverunt, non esse a praesenti et futuris pro tempore Magistris Sacri Palatii Apostolici recusandam licentiam pro impressione et publicatione operum tractantium de mobilitate terrae et immobilitate solis iuxta communem modernorum astronomorum opinionem, dummodo nihil aliud obstet, ad formam Decretorum Sacrae Congregationis Indicis anni 1757, et huius Supremae anni 1820” (Antonio Favaro, *Galileo e l’Inquisizione*, pp. 30-31).

Chardin, the very essence of Catholic liberalism, was proud to say that the fall of geocentrism was the beginning of his new movement in theology. Here's what he had to say:

As a result of the collapse of geocentrism, which she has come to accept, the Church is now caught between her historico-dogmatic representation of the world's origin, on the one hand, and the requirements of one of her most fundamental dogmas on the other – so that she cannot retain the former without to some degree sacrificing the latter.

In earlier times, until Galileo, there was perfect compatibility between historical representations of the Fall and dogma of universal redemption – and all the more easily, too, in that each was modeled on the other. So long as people believed as St. Paul himself did, in one week of creation and a past of 4000 years – so long as people thought the stars were satellites of the earth, and that animals were there to serve man – there was no difficulty in believing that a single man could have ruined everything, and that another man had saved everything. Today we know, with absolute physical certainty, that the stellar universe is not centered on the earth, and that terrestrial life is not centered on mankind.... With the end of geocentrism, what was emerging was the evolutionist point of view. All that Galileo's judges could distinctly see as menaced was the miracle of Joshua. The fact was that in consequence the seeds of decomposition had been introduced into the whole of the Genesis theory of the fall: and we are only today beginning to appreciate the depth of the changes which at that time were already potentially completed [in Galileo's day].¹⁸

The “collapse of geocentrism” was leading many Catholics, who were already predisposed to liberal theology and liberal hermeneutics, down the primrose path of accepting evolution as a fact. Another example is George Mivart, a convert to Catholicism in the late 1800s. As Finocchiaro describes it:

Mivart...argued for the compatibility of Christianity and evolution....that Galileo's trial showed that the Church was fallible in scientific matters, and so modern Catholics had complete freedom in scientific inquiry; but he argued that the Church's error on Copernicanism was a providential one...”¹⁹

Just last year, Pope Benedict XVI said that one of the very reasons Vatican II was called was due to the Galileo issue. He writes:

So we went to the Council not only with joy, but with enthusiasm. There was an incredible anticipation. We hoped that everything would be renewed, that a new Pentecost would truly come, a new era of the Church – because at that time, the Church was still strong enough: Sunday practice still good, the vocations to the priesthood and to religious life were already a bit reduced but still sufficient. Nonetheless, we felt that the Church was not advancing, it was diminishing, and it seemed rather a reality of the past and not the bringer of the future. And in that moment, we hoped that this relationship would be renewed, that it would change; that the Church would once again be a force of tomorrow and a force of today. And we knew that the relationship between the Church and the modern period was a bit in conflict, beginning with the error of the Church in the case of Galileo Galilei; we thought we could correct this wrong beginning and find the union between the Church and the best forces in the world in order to

¹⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, “Fall, Redemption and Geocentrism,” *Christianity and Evolution*, 1969, 1971, William Collins Co., Harcourt, pp. 37-38.

¹⁹ *Retrying Galileo*, pp. 260-261.

open up the future of humanity, to open true progress. So we were full of hope, of enthusiasm, and of the will to do our part for this thing.²⁰

And what has happened since Vatican II? Let's ask David Palm. He gives the answer in his article titled "Confusion at the Very Top" when he points out that the very errors of liberalism and modernism infected the very papacy itself. Read his article at http://www.seattlecatholic.com/article_20040406.html.

In the last 50 years the Catholic Church itself has engaged in heinous sins, as its own priests, bishops and cardinals were caught in a sex scandal of unprecedented proportions, all under the vigilance of John Paul II who let it fester during his whole pontificate, even though he was warned it was occurring. Today we have homosexuals running rampant in our dioceses, and no one is lifting a finger to stop it, because those very homosexuals are in places of power in the Church.

In one of the documents of Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, the wording on Scripture was made ambiguous so that liberals like Rahner, De Lubac, von Balthasar, Brown, and many others could then claim that Scripture was only inerrant when it spoke on matters of salvation, which meant that only about 10% of the Bible was inerrant. This liberal doctrine about Scripture was the result of the Galileo issue, as Pope Benedict admitted. In fact, it is precisely for the belief that Scripture is not error-free when it speaks about non-salvific issues that many prelates believe that Scripture's condemnation of homosexuality is in error, since it is not a matter of salvation! It is the very reason homosexuality has run rampant in the Catholic Church.

On a trip to Scotland a few years ago, Pope Benedict XVI was confronted by a mural on a city wall depicting a woman dressed as a priest and flanked on either side by Galileo and Copernicus with the word "oops!" at the bottom of each picture. The message was clear: as the Church is presumed to have made a mistake in condemning heliocentrism, she is also presumed to have made a mistake in barring women from the priesthood. In fact, everything from homosexuality, divorce, remarriage, contraception, abortion, genetic engineering to cloning, the Catholic Church has been relentlessly stigmatized as a primitive and out-of-touch institution in the modern age, beginning with her mistake concerning Galileo, which stigma she now carries over into every other area of life. The complaint is often heard: 'How can the Catholic Church claim to be infallible when, in fact, she put the weight of the magisterium behind her traditional interpretation of Scripture in order to condemn Galileo and his heliocentric system, yet we now know she was totally wrong?' This seems to be a



legitimate question. If the Catholic Church was wrong about what she not only claimed to be right, but of which she also claimed that she had sole authority to judge, how could we ever trust her to handle even more complex issues?

Tardoff: I don't think it has affected my understanding of the deposit of the faith — has it affected yours?

²⁰ Pope Benedict's farewell address to priests at the Vatican, as reported by *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 14, 2013, page 4, paragraph #5 in the article "Al concilio pieno di entusiasmo e speranza."

R. Sungenis: That's because Mr. Tardoff doesn't understand the issue or its implications. He thinks this is just about disagreeing with Carl Sagan and Albert Einstein. He can't see the forest for the trees. How many times have we heard the secular world complain to us that they no longer listen to the Catholic Church precisely because she erred in the Galileo case? We hear it almost every day.

Tardoff: I certainly don't think anyone who believes in heliocentrism risks his soul. Nor do I think that Mr. Sungenis is in danger of losing his soul for his beliefs in geocentrism, because the physical relationship of the earth to the cosmos is just not a matter of faith.

R. Sungenis: In Mr. Tardoff's case, I would say he is in more danger of losing his soul because of the calumny he has waged against me, especially that he is now following David Palm, the master of calumny.

Tardoff: But Sungenis is his own authority in interpreting not only the Scriptures, but also these popes, Doctors, and Fathers.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Tardoff hasn't shown one instance in which I touted myself as my own authority. I have consistently quoted from the Fathers, the Tridentine catechism, and the documents of 1616 and 1633. I have, conversely, shown where Mr. Tardoff has engaged in private interpretation, as is the case with his analysis of the 1820 statement from Pius VII, the 1992 speech to the PAS, the statements from Leo XIII and Pius XII, and the involvement of the Inquisition in 1616 and 1633. Almost everything that Mr. Tardoff stated about those events is categorically wrong.

This is done. Since the rest of Mr. Tardoff's piece is nothing but an ad hominem attack against me so that he can make me into his boogeyman of choice, I will ignore it. Mr. Tardoff has sealed his own fate by his inept treatment of the science and the history. I don't need to say anything more. If in the future Mr. Tardoff wants to deal with more science and history, minus the ad hominem, I will be more than happy to answer him, not so much for his sake, but for yours.

Robert Sungenis

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