

Aristotle, Pius VII, Benedict XV, and the Art of David Palmistry

R. Sungenis: Yet another dialogue between myself and David Palm on the subject of geocentrism. Unfortunately for Mr. Palm, his wounds become very deep on this round, though he probably thinks he put up a valiant fight.

Palm: Sungenis vs. Pope Benedict XV: Was Dante a Marginal Catholic? Anyone who has followed Robert Sungenis's many controversies through the years knows that when he is emotionally invested in a subject, he often fails to maintain a reasonable level of objectivity and scholarly standards. For instance, in the service of geocentrism, Sungenis has more than once turned documentary evidence completely on its head, (see, for example, "Sungenis and Pius VII: Turning the Evidence on its Head" and "It's All In the Translation".) The latest example of this can be found in his response to my article "Geocentrists Peddle Alien Theology of Centrality". There I demonstrated that the geocentric claim that the Earth's supposed physical centrality in the universe confirms our significance to God is completely alien to classical Western thought and Catholic tradition. It's a theological novelty. What the new geocentrists have actually done is adopt the false premise of modern critics of the Church and concocted a fundamentally erroneous theology in response. As I explained in my article, for ancient and medieval Christians the center (and hence for them the Earth) was actually seen as the most base and unexalted location in the universe. I wrote: "For sixteen centuries, Aristotelian/Ptolomaic cosmology held sway among Christian thinkers. That cosmology considered the Earth to be in the lowest, most degraded and least privileged place in the entire universe." And this was seen as perfectly compatible with Christian theology.

R. Sungenis: There is a phenomenon in the human psyche that has rightly been characterized in psychology as "projection." Here is the Wikipedia definition:

Psychological projection, also known as blame shifting, is a theory in psychology in which humans defend themselves against their own unpleasant impulses by denying their existence while attributing them to others. For example, a person who is rude may constantly accuse other people of being rude.¹

David Palm's above two accusations are prime examples of projection, since Mr. Palm has done exactly what he accuses me of doing. In fact Mr. Palm is so deep into his projection that it may have turned into a psychotic break with reality.

The above two issues regarding Pius VII and Earth's centrality in western thought have been thoroughly rebutted in several articles (which you can find on www.debunkingdavidpalm.com) but of which Mr. Palm pretends they don't even exist. This is why I have said in the past that Mr. Palm lives in his own little world and doesn't want anyone to disturb it with truths that counter what he wants to believe. This is probably the reason Mr. Palm has also refused to accept my offer to have a formal debate. He simply doesn't want to face the possibility of being refuted in public.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_projection

Briefly, as regards to Pius VII, it is a fact of history in 1820 that Pius VII was lied to by Cardinal Olivieri so that Olivieri could get an imprimatur for Canon Settele's book on heliocentrism. Olivieri lies were: (1) he told Pius VII that the only reason Galileo was condemned by the 1616 and 1633 magisteriums was because his model of the solar system did not contain the elliptical orbits of Kepler's model, and (2) that if the Earth moved, then the atmosphere would be sucked away. Pius VII couldn't check up on these lies because all the Galileo records had been confiscated by Napoleon in 1809 and weren't returned to the Vatican until 1845. But the truth is, the 1616 and 1633 magisteriums said nothing of the kind. The only reasons the 1616 and 1633 magisteriums specified was that it was wrong for Galileo to say that the sun did not move around the Earth, and wrong to say that the Earth moved around the sun. Period. The only basis given for their reasoning was because both of Galileo's propositions were against the testimony of Scripture and the Fathers, and that Galileo had no scientific proof for his assertions.

But David Palm doesn't want to accept this recording of events. He wants to pretend that Cardinal Olivieri was doing a good service to the Church by fabricating two rationales for the 1616 and 1633 magisteriums' decision against Galileo and lying to Pius VII, a pope who was weak enough as it was from sickness as well as his five-year incarceration by Napoleon. In the face of this glaring evidence, Mr. Palm even castigates me for "tarnishing the reputation of Olivieri"!

It wouldn't be so bad except that in my rebuttal to Mr. Palm I gave him the testimony of the scholarly consensus on the Pius VII affair and all of the scholars were against Mr. Palm's conclusion. The scholars are the top in their field, namely, Fr. George Coyne, Anabale Fantoli and Maurice Finocchiaro. All three conclude that Olivieri fabricated his evidence and that Pius VII made the decision for the imprimatur based on the fabrication. It's as clear as day. Hence, it doesn't surprise me that Mr. Palm has resorted to "projection" as his defense mechanism, for it is all he has in the face of the evidence.

As regards Mr. Palm's contention that "the geocentric claim that the Earth's supposed physical centrality in the universe confirms our significance to God is completely alien to classical Western thought and Catholic tradition. It's a theological novelty," is a most amazing piece of selective scholarship.

Here's the truth on the subject: Although it is true that some of western thought stemming from Aristotle's philosophy believed the Earth was corrupted, and for lack of a better term, the "anus" of the universe, what I enlightened Mr. Palm to was the fact that the Fathers and medievals of the Church rejected Aristotle's concept. They took Scripture's view, that is, that the Earth was made perfect at the Creation. It became cursed due to sin. (For that matter, heaven was made perfect but experienced some corruption when the angels rebelled). In other words, the Earth was not originally made corrupt, whereas Aristotle believed it was made corrupt.

Hence, it is easy to see why Aristotle equated the Earth's central position with being corrupt – he didn't have Christian revelation to set him straight. Christian revelation understands the Earth quite differently. When the Earth was put in the center of the universe at Creation it was said to be "good" and "very good" in Genesis 1, not in any form of corruption.

Even in its cursed condition, the Earth is still extolled by the scriptural writers as the place over which God reigns and has His footstool. But Mr. Palm doesn't tell you this side of the story. He doesn't quote from one Father or medieval in his paper. His paper is based on pagans and Protestants, and he makes it sound as if Aristotle's pagan view is the only view, even though western civilization was Christianized

after Constantine in 312 AD and led away from Aristotle's pagan notions. Although the Earth being originally an "anus" may have survived in some secular thought, it certainly was not the dominant thought-form in the patristic period through the late medieval period.

The other issue that Mr. Palm doesn't understand is that things have changed since Aristotle, even if some of Aristotle's thought survives in secular society. In fact, it is quite irrelevant what Aristotle thought in his pagan machinations 2300 years ago. Due to our telescopic discoveries, we now know the universe is a vast, vast, place filled with 10^{22} stars. It is neither the dome-covered world of the ancients nor Aristotle's bull's eye view of six crystalline spheres encased by a thin circle of stars. The dominant view in modern society is that neither the heavens nor the earth are "pure" or "impure" but that the Earth, as Carl Sagan reminded us, is "...an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost between two spiral arms in the outskirts of a galaxy which is a member of a sparse cluster of galaxies, tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people."

Today, modern man is seeking to keep Earth out of the center and to put it at the remote recesses of space in order to make it appear as an insignificant speck of dust among all the other specks of dust, many of which probably have biological life like Earth since they came from the same evolutionary process as we did. The last thing they want to see is evidence that the Earth is in the center, since that defies the Copernican Principle that the Earth isn't in a special place and therefore we are not special but are just the results of time and chance.

This is not hard to demonstrate. I'll give you just a few examples. When Edwin Hubble noticed that all the galaxies emitted redshift in whichever direction he looked, he admitted that this evidence would put the Earth in the center of the universe. But he didn't like it. In fact, he despised it. If you were an atheist like him, you would despise it, too. Here is his reaction:

Such a condition would imply that we occupy a unique position in the universe, analogous, in a sense, to the ancient conception of a central earth. The hypothesis cannot be disproved but it is unwelcome and would be accepted only as a last resort in order to save the phenomena....The unwelcome supposition of a favored location must be avoided at all costs....Such a favored position, of course, is intolerable; moreover, it represents a discrepancy with the theory, because the theory postulates homogeneity. Therefore, in order to restore homogeneity, and to escape the horror of a unique position, the departures from uniformity, which are introduced by the recession factors, must be compensated by the second term representing effects of spatial curvature. There seems to be no other escape."²

Likewise, when Michelson-Morley discovered in 1887 that the Earth wasn't moving in space, note this reaction from a physicist who didn't like what they found:

....The easiest explanation was that the earth was fixed in the ether and that everything else in the universe moved with respect to the earth and the ether....Such an idea was not considered seriously, since it would mean in effect that our earth occupied the omnipotent position in the universe, with all the other heavenly bodies paying homage by moving around it.³

² *The Observational Approach to Cosmology*, 1937 pp. 50-59.

³ James A. Coleman, *Relativity for the Layman*, p. 37. Of Coleman's book Einstein wrote: "Gives a really clear idea of relativity" (front cover of the 1954 edition).

Why such a negative reaction to a central Earth? It's not hard to guess. These men know instinctively that if the Earth is in the center of the vast, vast universe they have seen with their telescopes, then it couldn't have happened by chance. Someone much bigger and better than they had to put it there, namely God. And if God exists, then they know instinctively that they must answer to Him, and that gets them very worried since they lead such sinful lives.

So, in the end, all Mr. Palm's ranting about "western thought" is just a desperate attempt to misdirect you from the real truth. And in the end, our movie, *The Principle*, is exposing modern man's attempt to take God out of the picture by making it appear as if Earth resides in no special place, and especially not a place as unique and special as the center.

Palm: Pagans Only? The pith of Bob Sungenis's response to my article was to claim that only pagan and not Christian writers held such a lowly view of the Earth. This is false, as I plan to demonstrate in more detail in an upcoming follow-up article.

R. Sungenis: So, the obvious question is, why didn't Mr. Palm give this apparent evidence in his first article? There can only be a few reasons, and none of them are good for Mr. Palm: (1) he didn't realize that there was a huge difference between pagan thought and Christian thought on the subject of the Earth's centrality; (2) he didn't realize that there was a huge difference between pagan thought and modern thought on the subject of Earth's centrality; (3) he knew the differences but didn't choose to tell you about them.

Palm: But to focus on one example, Sungenis, who has no particular expertise in medieval theology and literature,

R. Sungenis: Here is another case of Mr. Palm's usage of the psychological defense mechanism of "projection." Per the definition above, projection is when someone defends themselves against their own unpleasant impulses by denying their existence while attributing them to others. Since Mr. Palm also has "no particular expertise in medieval theology and literature," then he is merely projecting his own inability onto me. This projection is compounded by the fact that Mr. Palm has no proof of his claims against me.

Palm: summarily dismissed the testimony of widely acclaimed medievalist C. S. Lewis,

R. Sungenis: So the ploy here is to make C. S. Lewis not only the expert, but virtually infallible in his interpretation of medieval views, and thus I stand no chance in rebutting him. With all due respect to C. S. Lewis, I dare say that many of his views of medieval Catholicism were quite off the mark, since C. S. Lewis was a Protestant who wrote from a Protestant perspective, not a Catholic one (much like Mr. Palm's rabid Christian Zionism is a holdover from the Protestant seminary he attended, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School). Unfortunately, there are Catholic apologists today who are enamored with C. S. Lewis (e.g., Karl Keating) and who believe he is virtually flawless in his analysis of the world. But the test is easy. Did C. S. Lewis believe the medieval Catholic concept of the Eucharist was correct, or did he regard it as just another vile superstition from a tradition-laden Church? The latter is the case. So how can a man rightly access the medieval period when he doesn't even know the truth of the Church's theology? Likewise, how is a man going to access correctly the medieval period when he doesn't regard

the Church Fathers who gave the medieval period its theology as authorities for the Church but just another opinion no more superior than his?

Palm: ...who pointed to Dante as a medieval writer whose work very much reflected the lowliness and insignificance of the Earth:

Because, as Dante was to say more clearly than anyone else, the spatial order is the opposite of the spiritual, and the material cosmos mirrors, hence reverses, the reality, so that what is truly the rim seems to us the hub ... We watch 'the spectacle of the celestial dance' from its outskirts. Our highest privilege is to imitate it in such measure as we can. The medieval Model is, if we may use the word, anthropoperipheral. We are creatures of the Margin (*The Discarded Image*, 58).

To this Sungenis replied:

R. Sungenis: Of course, the problem with Dante was always whether he was accurately depicting the Christian faith, and his devotion to it was always questioned. Benedict XV had mentioned Dante's peculiar ideas in his April 30, 1921, encyclical titled, *In Praeclara Summorum*, although he exonerated Dante from being a pseudo-believer ("David Palm Peddles Alien Arguments Against Geocentrism", p. 9).

You might want to read that remarkable claim again. According to Sungenis, it's obvious to all, that it has "always" been a "problem" to know "whether [Dante] was accurately depicting the Christian faith." Sungenis claims that Dante's "devotion to [the Faith] was always questioned" (my emphasis). Seeking to damn Dante with faint praise, Sungenis claims that in his encyclical *In Praeclara Summorum* on Dante, Pope Benedict XV merely, "mentioned Dante's peculiar ideas" and only just, "exonerated Dante from being a pseudo-believer." What the Pope Really Wrote: Is that really what Pope Benedict XV wrote? Look for yourself. The very opening lines of the encyclical *In Praeclara Summorum* state: "Among the many celebrated geniuses of whom the Catholic faith can boast who have left undying fruits in literature and art especially, besides other fields of learning, and to whom civilization and religion are ever in debt, highest stands the name of Dante Alighieri, the sixth centenary of whose death will soon be recorded. Never perhaps has his supreme position been recognized as it is today. Not only Italy, justly proud of having given him birth, but all the civil nations are preparing with special committees of learned men to celebrate his memory that the whole world may pay honour to that noble figure, pride and glory of humanity (emphasis mine here and throughout.)" The second paragraph says: "And surely we cannot be absent from this universal consensus of good men; rather should We take the lead in it as the Church has special right to call Alighieri hers." In the fourth paragraph the Pope describes this virtual "pseudo-believer" thus, "the divine poet throughout his whole life professed in exemplary manner the Catholic religion, . . ." And then further down, apparently struggling to recognize "whether [Dante] was accurately depicting the Christian faith," Benedict XV highlights Dante's especial devotion to St. Thomas, Scripture, and the Fathers of the Church: "Dante lived in an age which inherited the most glorious fruits of philosophical and theological teaching and thought, and handed them on to the succeeding ages with the imprint of the strict scholastic method. Amid the various currents of thought diffused then too among learned men Dante ranged himself as disciple of that Prince of the school so distinguished for angelic temper of intellect, Saint Thomas Aquinas. From him he gained nearly all his philosophical and theological knowledge, and while he did not neglect any branch of human learning, at the same time he

drank deeply at the founts of Sacred Scripture and the Fathers. Thus he learned almost all that could be known in his time, and nourished specially by Christian knowledge, it was on that field of religion he drew when he set himself to treat in verse of things so vast and deep.”

R. Sungenis: I did not deny that Benedict XV extolled Dante. In fact, I stated that Benedict XV, in opposition to others, defended Dante. Here is what I said, “Of course, the problem with Dante was always whether he was accurately depicting the Christian faith, and his devotion to it was always questioned.” That means exactly what it says. For example, Dante was questioned because in his fervor to denounce various popes, he stated that Celestine V, the last sainted pope before Pius V, went to hell. Moreover, his books, the *Divine Comedy* and *The Monarchy* were suspected of containing heresy and were burned at Bologna by order of the papal legate. Some questioned Dante’s elaborate descriptions of purgatory and hell, since neither the Fathers, Scripture, nor the Church teach any of the so-called nine “levels” of hell. Some questioned Dante’s insistence that the pope have no temporal powers and that all such powers should be given to the emperor. These were legitimate questions about Dante’s beliefs and motives. But leave it to Mr. Palm to twist it all out of distortion and make it appear as if I am denouncing Dante and have no regard for Benedict XV’s words about him.

But allow me to fight this battle like Mr. Palm wishes to fight it – with leading innuendos. His contention is that I am out of line for even raising the point that some of Dante’s actions were questioned. Well let’s put the shoe on the other foot. In April 2004 David Palm had a beef about the theological beliefs and practices of Pope John Paul II. He wrote an article titled: “Confusion at the Very Top,” which was published by the *Seattle Catholic*. You can still get a copy of the article today at http://www.seattlecatholic.com/article_20040406.html, so apparently Mr. Palm still believes what he wrote and hasn’t insisted that the *Seattle Catholic* take it down, nor has he asked *The New Oxford Review* – the first to publish his article – to retract it. If you haven’t guessed, “the Very Top” refers to John Paul II. Mr. Palm judged him as “confused” theologically, and went on to give a laundry list of complaints about his teachings: (a) the death penalty, (b) no souls in hell, (c) collegiality & lack of ecclesiastical discipline, (d) no return of the dissidents to the one true Church? (e) honoring heretics, praying with pagans (f) liturgical abuse.

Huum. John Paul II didn’t believe there were souls in hell? He honored heretics? He prayed with pagans? He abused the liturgy? He didn’t discipline dissidents? Sounds a lot worse than Dante, doesn’t it? But wait. Wasn’t John Paul II just canonized as a saint by Pope Francis? So if what Mr. Palm says about John Paul II in the *Seattle Catholic* is true, how in the world could such a person with such heretical beliefs and practices become a saint? Curious minds want to know.

Even more curious is what Mr. Palm says at the end of his article:

“I expect there will be those who proclaim that this is all just ‘Pope bashing.’ It is not. Any annoyance with what I’ve written should at least be tempered by a realistic evaluation of the concrete examples that have been presented (and, unfortunately, a great many more could be). We must remain cognizant of the fact that not every word spoken or action taken by the Pope is done in his capacity as the Universal Pastor. In fact, the vast majority of them are not. Having said this, one must immediately acknowledge that certainly there is clearly a grave danger in falsely concluding, as the liberals do, that we can simply ignore the Pope when his opinions clash with our own, so long as he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. We must continue to reject and

expose such pernicious error. Yet, we cannot continue to ignore the danger of the opposite extreme, an extreme which faithful Catholics are most prone to embrace in reaction to the disobedience of liberals — that is, hyper-obedience. Such hyper-obedience is, in reality, a well-intentioned but humanistic attempt to counterbalance error and is thus itself an error. We all agree, in principle, that it is wrong to imbue the Pope's every example and utterance with infallibility. Yet, in practice, it seems that too many of us are driven to precisely this mistake.

The point is, Mr. Palm allows himself to disagree vehemently with a canonized saint of the Church (since he hasn't taken down his article from the Seattle Catholic), but he doesn't allow me to dig a little deeper into the life and beliefs of Dante since to do so would put me in opposition to Benedict XV's extolling of Dante. This is the double-standard that is so common in Mr. Palm's rhetoric.

Palm: Geocentrism: Not a Matter of Faith. Then we come to a passage of the encyclical that has already been highlighted on this site (here, here, and here). Perhaps this passage is the key to understanding why Sungenis has gone to such lengths to distort and downplay the Pope's encyclical. Pay close attention to what the Pope wrote here: "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." It's plain from this passage that Benedict XV did not consider geocentrism to be part of the Catholic Faith.

R. Sungenis: Perhaps it's plain to Mr. Palm from this passage that Benedict XV did not consider geocentrism to be part of the Catholic Faith, but that would only be because, listen: Benedict XV WASN'T TALKING ABOUT GEOCENTRISM BEING A PART OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH! Any first year seminary student can figure out that if the pope just mentions a private thought in passing (i.e., "though this earth on which we live may not be the center of the universe as at one time was thought") that he is hardly dealing with the issue, much less declaring a doctrine. Who in their right mind is going to hold Benedict XV's hands to the doctrinal fire based on an equivocal statement in which he uses the word "may" in an offhand comment in a context that has nothing to do with either biblical cosmology or the Church's teaching on it? Who is going to conclude that Benedict XV wouldn't change his "may not" to "is" if he had been thoroughly educated to the Church's decisions in 1616 and 1633 as opposed to being bombarded by the liberal teachings of Teilhard de Chardin and Ernest Messenger, the same way John Paul II was bombarded by the liberal teachings of Raymond Brown, Karl Rahner, Urs von Balthasar and the rest? In fact, the words "may not" shows that, contrary to Mr. Palm's statement (i.e., "Benedict XV did not consider geocentrism to be part of the Catholic faith"), Benedict XV DOES NOT have a settled belief for or against geocentrism. In essence, he admits he is uneducated to the issue. Most of all, since he used the words "may not" and not "is not," Benedict XV, unlike David Palm, is at least open to the idea of geocentrism. But leave it to Mr. Palm to make it appear as if Benedict XV is on his side.

Palm: As such, perhaps Sungenis was confused. Perhaps it was not Dante, but rather Benedict XV who needed to be “exonerated...for being a pseudo-believer” because he dared to doubt the geocentric “dogma” that the Earth is the immobile center of the universe?

R. Sungenis: Benedict XV doesn’t need to be exonerated since he wasn’t teaching anything official regarding the Earth’s position. But according to Mr. Palm’s 2004 article about John Paul II, that sainted pope certainly needs to be exonerated from the accusations of “confusion” that Mr. Palm levied against him.

Palm: The geocentrists have attempted to escape the force of the pope’s statement here, but it is presented in a simple, “If A is not true, nevertheless B is still true” form. If the geocentrists want to argue that this statement leaves open the possibility that geocentrism is a core doctrine of our faith, let’s turn it around and consider the results. What if the pope had said instead, “If this earth on which we live was not the scene of the original happiness of our first ancestors . . . as too of the Redemption of mankind through the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, nevertheless it is the center of the universe.” Would they still consider his statement to be doctrinally acceptable? Not a chance. It’s plain that Pope Benedict XV was saying that the Earth’s physical location in the cosmos is a matter of doctrinal indifference, while the latter portion of our Fall and Redemption remains a core part of our Catholic faith.

R. Sungenis: No, Benedict XV didn’t say that geocentrism was “a matter of doctrinal indifference.” Mr. Palm is putting words into the pope’s mouth. How could Benedict XV possibly be saying anything of a factual nature since he uses the word “may”? If the pope had been educated to what the Church’s teaching is on the subject of geocentrism, he probably would have been more careful with his comments. And it is easy to tell that Benedict XV had not studied the issue before he made his statement and was merely reiterating a common belief at that time.

There are a lot of doctrines like that today in Catholicism. That is, the popular consensus is that the doctrines are either no longer existent, equivocal, or no longer in force. For example, up until Pope Benedict XVI declared that the Tridentine Mass had never been taken away, most of the Church thought it no longer existed and could no longer be said. Likewise, most of the Church today thinks that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy has been modified since Vatican II. They now think that Scripture errs when it talks about things other than salvation. Even popes and cardinals have been heard saying so. But, of course, it hasn’t changed. Scripture is still inerrant in all that it says, as confirmed by many popes prior to those of the last half of the 20th century. I could list many more examples. The point is, it is certainly no surprise to see Benedict XV have some equivocation on the doctrine of geocentrism.

Palm: In the fifth paragraph Benedict XV highlights Dante’s reverence for and fidelity to sacred Scripture, the ecumenical Councils, and the Doctors of the Church. In the sixth paragraph he highlights Dante’s reverence for the Popes. Then in the seventh paragraph the Pope describes the Divine Comedy thus: “Thus, as he based the whole structure of his poem on these sound religious principles, no wonder that we find in it a treasure of Catholic teaching; not only, that is, essence of Christian philosophy and theology, but the compendium of the divine laws which should govern the constitution and administration of States” So powerful is Dante’s representation of the Faith, says Pope Benedict XV, that it has resulted in more than one conversion. The Pope states that Dante’s writings are firmly grounded in the true Faith, as expressed by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. And finally, the Pope closes by exhorting teachers, especially, to study Dante more and more deeply precisely in order to enhance their “devotion to

the Catholic Faith”: “And you, beloved children, whose lot it is to promote learning under the magisterium of the Church, continue as you are doing to love and tend the noble poet whom We do not hesitate to call the most eloquent singer of the Christian idea. The more profit you draw from study of him the higher will be your culture, irradiated by the splendours of truth, and the stronger and more spontaneous your devotion to the Catholic Faith.” So Much For the Pope: Now What About Bob? Those are the Roman Pontiff’s views, in his own words, expressed in a papal encyclical. Now, let’s look at Sungenis’s tendentious characterization again: R. Sungenis: Of course, the problem with Dante was always whether he was accurately depicting the Christian faith, and his devotion to it was always questioned. Benedict XV had mentioned Dante’s peculiar ideas in his April 30, 1921, encyclical titled, *In Praeclara Summorum*, although he exonerated Dante from being a pseudo-believer. It seems fair to ask, if the pope’s encyclical *In Praeclara Summorum* only just rescues Dante from the fate of being a “pseudo-believer” who held “peculiar ideas”, what would the Pope have to say to describe Dante as a true believer?

R. Sungenis: This is all water under a broken bridge since, as I elaborated above, Mr. Palm made his own straw man out of my comment instead of dealing with what I actually said and meant. Moreover, Mr. Palm failed to mention any of the controversial issues regarding Dante or his outright denial of Celestine V’s sainthood.

Palm: It’s important to ask ourselves too, why did Sungenis go to such lengths to dismiss Dante and to mischaracterize Pope Benedict XV’s statements about him in the first place? Because he felt it was necessary in order to defend geocentrism. Sungenis has publicly stated that he believes God has given him the mission of convincing the world that geocentrism is true and he has also said that he intends to spend the rest of his life pursuing it.¹

R. Sungenis: I neither “dismissed Dante” nor “mischaracterized Pope Benedict XV’s statements about him.” Mr. Palm merely created his own straw man so that he could then invent some ulterior motives on my part (e.g., “because he felt it was necessary in order to defend geocentrism”).

Palm: So, once again, we see that when Robert Sungenis is heavily, emotionally (and in this case financially) invested in a topic – as he is with geocentrism – he can’t be relied upon to provide a fair and accurate account of the evidence. And that’s true whether we’re talking about magisterial documents, Scripture, or science.

R. Sungenis: The real truth is the David Palm is heavily invested in trying to discredit Robert Sungenis because Robert dares to criticize Mr. Palm’s emotionally invested belief in Christian Zionism. It is the same with one of his cohorts who once admitted this very motive to me several years ago. Geocentrism is just a screen for Mr. Palm’s real agenda. Admittedly, it makes a good screen since until one is educated to why geocentrism is viable, it appears to be a fringe nut belief like the flat earth society, and Mr. Palm has been trying to capitalize on that stigma for many years.

The problem he has found, however, is that the deeper he goes, the more geocentrism, both scientifically and ecclesiastically, vindicates itself. So, as Joseph said to his brothers, I say to Mr. Palm:

“And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result.” (Genesis 50:20).