

# Examining the Theological Status of Geocentrism and Heliocentrism and the Devastating Problems this creates for Baptism of Desire Arguments

By Bro. Peter Dimond, O.S.B.

- *Note: this article features an important new quote from a pope on the topic of geocentrism - a quote which, to our knowledge, has not been cited in any other work on this subject. The pages of introduction which precede this important quote are crucial for understanding its significance to the topic.-*

## IN THIS ARTICLE:

- INTRODUCTORY FACTS AND HISTORY, INTRODUCING FIVE ACTS/ARGUMENTS PERTAINING TO THE DENIAL OF GEOCENTRISM
- EVERYONE MUST ADMIT THAT THERE IS A MUCH STRONGER CASE THAT THE CHURCH OFFICIALLY CONDEMNED HELIOCENTRISM AND THE DENIAL OF GEOCENTRISM THAN THAT IT OFFICIALLY CONDEMNED THE DENIAL OF "BAPTISM OF DESIRE"
- ST. ROBERT BELLARMINI HELD THAT GEOCENTRISM IS *DE FIDE*, BUT HE WAS CONTRADICTED BY LATER POPES; THIS CREATES DEVASTATING PROBLEMS FOR POPULAR ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF BAPTISM OF DESIRE
- IN AN ENCYCLICAL, POPE BENEDICT XV DECLARES THAT THE EARTH MAY NOT BE THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, CONTRADICTING THE ELEVEN THEOLOGIANS OF THE HOLY OFFICE IN 1616, THE 1633 SENTENCE OF THE HOLY OFFICE, AND WHAT ST. ROBERT BELLARMINI TAUGHT IS *DE FIDE*
- THE CONSEQUENCES IF #1 IS TRUE, NAMELY, IF GEOCENTRISM IS TO BE CONSIDERED *DE FIDE* AND HELIOCENTRISM HERETICAL
- THE CONSEQUENCES IF #2 IS TRUE, NAMELY, THAT POPE BENEDICT XV WAS CORRECT THAT THE ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN SETTLED (AND THE EARTH MIGHT NOT BE THE CENTER)
- NOW, WHAT IS THE PROPER CONCLUSION ABOUT THE TRUE THEOLOGICAL STATUS OF GEOCENTRISM?
- EXAMINING THE INFALLIBLE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH
- SPECIFICALLY EXAMINING ALL FIVE ACTS/ARGUMENTS TO SEE IF ANY OR ALL CONSTITUTE INFALLIBLE TEACHING
  - 1) In 1616 eleven theologian qualifiers of the Holy Office condemned heliocentrism as heretical
  - 2) The Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine, agreed with the declaration of heliocentrism as heretical, and he even informed Galileo of the decision
  - 3) The Congregation of the Index forbade the publication of heliocentric works
  - 4) In 1633, after the Holy Office of the Inquisition investigated Galileo as suspect of heresy, it had him make an abjuration which denounced heliocentrism and considered the denial of geocentrism to be heretical
- THE TRIAL OF ST. JOAN OF ARC SHEDS LIGHT ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY OFFICE AND OTHER ROMAN CONGREGATIONS AND THEREFORE ON THE INFALLIBILITY OR LACK THEREOF OF THE DECISIONS AGAINST GALILEO
- MORE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ACTS OF ROMAN CONGREGATIONS APPROVED IN COMMON FORM AND THOSE APPROVED IN SPECIFIC FORM
- THE LANGUAGE OF POPE ST. PIUS X SHOWS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN COMMON FORM AND SPECIFIC FORM APPROVAL TO ACTS OF ROMAN CONGREGATIONS
- CONTINUING WITH THE CASE OF ST. JOAN TO SEE WHAT CONSTITUTES "FIDELITY TO THE CHURCH"
  - 5) In 1664-1665, Pope Alexander VII promulgated on his own authority an Index forbidding all works favoring heliocentrism and denying geocentrism; it was prefaced by his papal bull which declares the Index to be part of the bull and bearing its papal authority
- DOES THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE ITSELF REQUIRE ONE TO ACCEPT A GEOCENTRIC VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE?
- IMPORTANT CONCLUDING POINTS, INCLUDING A TABLE AND COMMENTS ON WHAT THIS ISSUE TEACHES US ABOUT THE ARGUMENTS RELEVANT TO OTHER CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS, SUCH AS BAPTISM OF DESIRE, NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING, WHETHER MARY IS "CO-REDEMPTRIX," ETC.

## INTRODUCTORY FACTS AND HISTORY, INTRODUCING FIVE ACTS/ARGUMENTS PERTAINING TO THE DENIAL OF GEOCENTRISM

We're often asked what we think about geocentrism, the view that the Earth is the fixed center of the universe around which the Sun revolves. Is geocentrism the infallible teaching of the Church and of Sacred Scripture? Was the view that the Sun is stationary and that the Earth revolves around it (heliocentrism) infallibly condemned

when Galileo Galilei was condemned in the 17<sup>th</sup> century? In this article I want to look at this hotly debated subject in conjunction with another: "baptism of desire." I want to examine the question of the theological status of geocentrism; and I also want to show that the question of the theological status of geocentrism - no matter which side one takes in attempting to answer it - creates insoluble difficulties for those who maintain that baptism of desire is the binding teaching of the Catholic Church. After examining these facts, I will give my opinion on this issue.

The facts that will be brought forward in this article - including a new quotation from a pope on this issue of geocentrism which I came across in my study - demolish most of the arguments which are near and dear to the hearts of baptism of desire advocates. These facts demonstrate, *once again*, that those who adhere to the *ex cathedra* teaching on the necessity of water baptism have been right all along about what constitutes the infallible and binding teaching of the Catholic Church.

A small but significant portion of professing traditional Catholics holds that the Catholic Church did infallibly teach geocentrism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when certain Church officials condemned Galileo Galilei for contradicting it with the heliocentric model. Based on the Galileo affair, some argue that obstinate believers in heliocentrism are heretics, or at least in mortal sin for contradicting the official teaching of the Church. We have been contacted by a number of individuals who adhere to this position.

In an effort to examine their arguments objectively, I've read through numerous articles written **by those who have made the study of this particular subject (the theological status of heliocentrism) a significant part of their work.** To introduce some of the key facts of the Galileo case, I want to cite some passages from John Daly's article, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*. He points out that on:

"24th February 1616: The eleven theologian-qualifiers of the Holy Office meet to consider the theological qualifications proper to be attached to the following propositions:

( i ) The sun is the centre of the universe ("mundi") and absolutely immobile in local motion.

( ii ) The earth is not the centre of the universe ("mundi"); it is not immobile but turns on itself with a diurnal movement.

All unanimously censure the first proposition as "foolish, absurd in philosophy [i.e. scientifically untenable] and formally heretical on the grounds of expressly contradicting the statements of Holy Scripture in many places according to the proper meaning of the words, the common exposition and the understanding of the Holy Fathers and learned theologians"; the second proposition they unanimously censured as likewise "absurd in philosophy" and theologically "at least erroneous in faith".

25th February 1616: Pope Paul V is officially apprised of this theological qualification and confirms it, ordering Cardinal Bellarmine to summon Galileo and ( i ) warn him to abandon the said opinions; should he refuse to obey, ( ii ) order him to abstain from teaching, defending or treating of this doctrine and opinion in any way; and, should he not acquiesce even in this, ( iii ) to imprison him.

26th February 1616: Cardinal Bellarmine summons Galileo to his home and before witnesses

transmits the Pope's orders, commanding him in the name of the Pope and of the whole Congregation of the Holy Office to abandon the position in question and no more to hold, teach or defend it on pain of being proceeded against by the Holy Office. Galileo promises to obey.

3rd March 1616: Bellarmine reports Galileo's submission to the Pope.

4th March 1616: Pietro Guicciardini, Tuscan Ambassador to the Holy See, reports to the Grand Duke that Pope Paul V and Bellarmine consider Galileo's opinion to be erroneous and heretical and intend to hold a Congregation to declare it so.

5th March 1616: The Congregation of the Index publishes a decree on the order of Pope Paul V condemning absolutely the study of Father Foscarini referred to above and prohibiting circulation of the writings of Copernicus and Zunica until they had been corrected; it also forbids in general all books teaching the doctrine of the immobility of the sun. It makes no specific mention of Galileo or his writings. The decree explains that the reason for the condemnation is that the doctrine of the immobility of the sun is "false and in absolute contradiction with the Holy Scripture", but it does not use the word "heretical". These edicts were published by the Master of the Apostolic Palace on the orders of the Pope."

Before we proceed, we see that **in 1616 eleven theologian-qualifiers of the Holy Office condemned heliocentrism as heretical**. This was not an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, for Pope Paul V did not solemnly promulgate this decision on his own authority. He didn't even sign it, but it was done with his knowledge and approval. St. Robert Bellarmine, a Doctor of the Church, was also aware of and in agreement with the declaration of the eleven members of the Holy Office. **St. Robert Bellarmine even informed Galileo of the Holy Office's condemnation.**

The Congregation of the Index (the Roman Congregation in charge of watching out for dangerous books) then published a decree on the order of Pope Paul V which forbade the circulation of heliocentric works for the reason that they are contrary to Holy Scripture. After the 1616 condemnation of heliocentrism and the decree which forbade works in favor of it, Galileo submitted to the decision. Galileo was also personally told not to write anything on it in the future.

About a decade later, however, Galileo began work on a paper called: *Dialogue of Galileo Galilei Concerning the Two Great Systems of the Universe, the Ptolemaic and the Copernican*. This paper not only dealt with heliocentrism, but was favorable to it. The Inquisition found out about this and summoned Galileo to Rome for a trial. The trial began in the Spring of 1633:

"12th and 30th April and 10th May 1633: Galileo is examined and claims to have meant to discuss the subject hypothetically, putting the arguments for and against each system. He claims to have forgotten that in 1616 he had been forbidden to write on the subject of heliocentrism at all, alleging [correctly] that this had not been stated in Bellarmine's testimonial of 26th May 1616. **Galileo admits that some parts of the Dialogue appear excessively favourable to heliocentrism but claims that this was no more than an act of foolish vanity by which he enjoyed trying to find credible arguments in**

favour of a system which was so difficult to defend. He declares that he himself did not believe in heliocentrism and had not believed it to be true since 1616 when he was apprised that it was condemned by the Church." (John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*)

On June 22, 1633, Galileo was sentenced by the Holy Office of the Inquisition (the Roman Congregation which deals with offenses against the faith) as vehemently suspect of heresy for having seemingly taught in favor of heliocentrism.

"22nd June 1633: Galileo is sentenced as vehemently suspect of heresy and required to abjure heliocentrism and be absolved of the censures and penalties he was deemed to have incurred. Galileo made the abjuration in question and was accordingly absolved. He was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment of the Inquisition, a sentence commuted on the same day so that he was allowed to reside as a private gentleman for the rest of his life though limited in his movements and communications. The text of Galileo's condemnation and abjuration is lengthy but its careful perusal is necessary to understand the issues involved in establishing the mind of the Holy See in 1633 concerning the theological status of heliocentrism and the reader is requested at this point to refer to the full text included in Appendix I." (John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*)

So, to summarize this point: in 1633 Galileo was considered suspect of heresy for having written something favorable to heliocentrism after it had previously been condemned by the eleven theologians of the Holy Office. Obviously, therefore, the Holy Office of the Inquisition considered adherence to heliocentrism to be heretical on the grounds that it contradicted the decree of the eleven theologian-qualifiers of the Holy Office in 1616, among other things. (Note: I am not yet examining whether such a decision by the Inquisition proves that heliocentrism is heretical; I am simply laying out the facts of what occurred before I do that.)

Galileo made the abjuration required by the Inquisition and was absolved. Here is the text of the condemnation of Galileo by the Inquisition, and the abjuration which he made. In this text below, we can see that this abjuration, composed by the cardinals of the Holy Office, identifies heliocentrism as heretical, false and contrary to the Sacred Scriptures. It also identifies as heretical the idea that the Earth moves and is not the center of the universe.

#### THE TEXT OF THE CONDEMNATION AND ABJURATION OF GALILEO BY THE HOLY OFFICE, 1633

The 1633 condemnation and abjuration of Galileo: "We say, pronounce, sentence and declare that you, the said Galileo, by reason of the matters adduced in trial, and by you confessed as above, have rendered yourself in the judgment of the Holy Office vehemently suspect of heresy, namely, of having believed and held the doctrine - which is false and contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures - that the Sun is the centre of the world and does not move from east to west and that the Earth moves and is not the centre of the world; and that an opinion may be held and defended as probable after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to the Holy

Scripture; and that consequently you have incurred all the censures and penalties imposed and promulgated in the sacred canons and other constitutions, general and particular, against such delinquents. From which we are content that you be absolved, provided that, first, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, you **abjure, curse, and detest before us the aforesaid errors and heresies and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church** in the form to be prescribed by us for you." (quoted by John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*)

The next year of significance to this subject is 1664, and Alexander VII was the reigning pope.

"March 1664: Pope Alexander VII promulgates his *Index Librorum Prohibitorum Alexandri VII Pontificis Maximi jussu editus* prefaced by a papal bull in which he directs the entire Index to be deemed part of the bull itself and sharing its directly papal authority. This Index includes all previous condemnations of geocentric [*sic; he means heliocentric*] books in general and in particular and is confirmed and approved with apostolic authority.

"1665: Pope Alexander VII publishes a new Index in which are forbidden 'all books and any booklets, periodicals, compositions, consultations, letters, glosses, opuscula, speeches, replies, treatises, whether printed or in manuscript, containing and treating the following subjects or about the following subjects...the mobility of the earth and the immobility of the sun.'" (John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*)

So, allow me to summarize the crucial facts we have discussed so far:

- 1) in 1616 eleven theologians of the Holy Office condemned heliocentrism as heretical with the pope's knowledge and approval, but *without a specific declaration emanating from his supreme teaching authority*;
- 2) the Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine, agreed with the declaration of heliocentrism as heretical, and he even informed Galileo of the decision;
- 3) the Congregation of the Index forbade the publication of heliocentric works;
- 4) in 1633, after the Inquisition investigated Galileo as suspect of heresy, it had him make an abjuration which denounced heliocentrism and considered the denial of geocentrism to be heretical;
- 5) in 1664-1665, Pope Alexander VII promulgated on his own authority an Index forbidding all works favoring heliocentrism and denying geocentrism; it was prefaced by a bull which declares the Index to be part of the bull and bearing its papal authority.

Before giving a conclusion about *whether any of these acts are infallible* or whether any of these constitute a binding obligation for a Catholic to reject heliocentrism (I will examine each one individually near the end of this article), allow me to switch gears and examine this subject in conjunction with the issue of baptism of desire, prior to giving more history relevant to geocentrism's theological status.

Let's ask ourselves: has the equivalent to what we read above ever been done with regard to those who deny the position of "baptism of desire" - the idea that one can

be saved without the Sacrament of Baptism by his desire for it? The answer is *absolutely not, not even close.*

**EVERYONE MUST ADMIT THAT THERE IS A MUCH STRONGER CASE THAT THE CHURCH OFFICIALLY CONDEMNED HELIOCENTRISM AND THE DENIAL OF GEOCENTRISM THAN THAT IT OFFICIALLY CONDEMNED THE DENIAL OF "BAPTISM OF DESIRE"**

It's appropriate here to recall two of the most popular arguments that people advance in favor of baptism of desire. One is the idea that the Catholic Church condemned those who would deny baptism of desire by "condemning" Fr. Feeney in *Suprema haec sacra*, the 1949 letter to "Archbishop" Richard Cushing of Boston from the Holy Office. This position is widely held today among those who profess to be "traditional Catholics."

*Suprema haec sacra* was a letter to "Archbishop" Cushing in response to his query about Fr. Feeney's preaching on the dogma Outside the Church There is No Salvation. Dated Aug. 8, 1949, *Suprema haec sacra* responded negatively about Feeney's preaching and taught positively about baptism of desire, including "implicit" baptism of desire, including for those in "invincible ignorance," and for those who are not "members" of the Church, and for those "who do not belong to the body of the Catholic Church." It was signed by two members of the Holy Office (Cardinals Marchetti-Selvaggiani and Ottaviani).

Based on this letter allegedly from the Holy Office, scores of "traditionalists" and tons of members of the Vatican II sect think that the Catholic Church officially condemned Fr. Feeney for denying baptism of desire.

The condemnation of heliocentrism, keep in mind, was approved by eleven theologian-qualifiers of the Holy Office in its first evaluation in 1616. Heliocentrism was then condemned again by numerous acts of the Sacred Congregation of the Index and another act of the Holy Office in 1633, which involved many more theologians and a formal abjuration and text of condemnation which identified any denial of the Earth as the center of the universe as heresy. **Obviously, therefore, if someone is going to hold that the condemnation of Fr. Feeney (in Cardinal Marcetti-Selvaggiani's Aug. 8, 1949 letter *Suprema haec sacra*) represents the binding teaching of the Church, as so many today do, that person would necessarily have to hold that the numerous declarations that heliocentrism/the denial of geocentrism is heretical/false by the Holy Office, etc. are also binding.** Hypocritically, however, very few of the baptism of desire advocates who spread far and wide the false idea that the Catholic Church officially condemned Fr. Leonard Feeney would also say that the Catholic Church officially condemned heliocentrism or the denial of geocentrism during the Galileo ordeal. In fact, many of these very same "anti-Feeney" baptism of desire advocates believe in heliocentrism and/or reject geocentrism. This represents just the first of the major contradictions in their position, and we're just getting started. This is profound hypocrisy and theological inconsistency which cannot be underestimated!

Thus, we can and must say: any person who thinks that *Suprema haec sacra* (the 1949 letter against Fr. Feeney) proves that Feeney's teaching was not Catholic - in other words, that "the Pope Has Spoken" on it - who doesn't also hold that all non-

geocentrists are in heresy, is a complete fraud who deserves no respect from a Catholic. This includes many members of the Vatican II sect, but also many alleged "traditionalists" and "traditional" priests (e.g., priests of the SSPV, the CMRI, some of the SSPX, etc.), who love to condemn Fr. Feeney but are largely silent about this issue, or openly say that one can hold heliocentrism or deny geocentrism. Keep this in mind as we proceed.

Second, let's look at another of the favorite arguments made on behalf of the theory of "baptism of desire." Many of them argue that since St. Alphonsus, a Doctor of the Church, held that baptism of desire is "de fide" (see my book *Outside the Catholic Church There is Absolutely No Salvation* on this topic for the full citation and discussion), that means that the Church teaches it officially. It's unthinkable, they say, that a Doctor of the Church could err in such a significant way: he couldn't possibly consider something to be "de fide" which is not. Here's how two baptism of desire advocates expressed their argument on a discussion forum:

Dom Pook, Feb. 11, 2007: "The fact that a Doctor of the Church has been wrong on certain points of theology does not mean St. Alphonsus may be wrong on baptism of desire. If St. Alphonsus says that baptism of desire is a teaching that is *de fide*, then it is. **I do not believe, nor is it possible, that a Doctor of the Church could have taught what is in fact an error to be *de fide* teaching (Does anyone disagree?). One need only know the requirements of the Church for making a Doctor of the Church to be able to reach that conclusion."**

His position was publicly supported by baptism of desire and Society of St. Pius X advocate, John Lane - yes, he's an advocate and benefactor of the SSPX even though he claims to be a sedevacantist:

John Lane, March 19, 2007: "Dear Dom, I agree entirely. It is one thing to say that a Doctor might have erred (and who would wish to make such a claim???) - it is another thing entirely to say that all theologians for hundreds of years erred without correction, and that a Doctor of the Church labelled that error as *de fide*!!! The former is merely absurd - or at least, usually so; the latter is an assault on the Church herself..."

Notice that the baptism of desire advocates declare that **it's unthinkable that a Doctor of the Church could make such a mistake - i.e., consider something as "de fide" (of the Faith) which is not.** (We have always maintained the opposite. We have pointed out - as can be seen in my book on the topic - that St. Alphonsus's position was based on a misunderstanding of Sess. 6, Chap. 4 of the Council of Trent, in addition to his failure to recognize, at that point of time, the true status of certain documents he believed favored baptism of desire. We have further noted that the arguments he advances on this topic are clearly flawed, such as his citing the wrong part of the Council of Trent in one of his passages.) Even though St. Alphonsus's mistakes are documented, Mr. Pook arbitrarily declares that it's impossible for St. Alphonsus to have made a mistake on *this* matter. Lane echoes this sentiment by questioning whether anyone could accuse a Doctor of the Church of error at all. He states that one could perhaps say that a Doctor *might* have erred, but "who would wish to make such a claim?" Guided by the diabolical spirit which causes one to be

infected by the worship of man, Lane remains oblivious to the fact that many errors by the Doctors of the Church have been documented, while Pook arbitrarily decides which matters about which they can err.

Now, to zoom in on Lane's claim that it's "an assault on the Church" to suggest that a Doctor of the Church could label as *de fide* that which is not, let's take a look at what St. Robert Bellarmine - a Doctor of the Church - said about the notion that the sun is the fixed center of the universe and that the Earth is not. As covered already, St. Robert Bellarmine was intimately involved with passing along the 1616 decision of eleven theologian-qualifiers of the Holy Office that heliocentrism is against the faith. Below are his words:

**ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE HELD THAT GEOCENTRISM IS *DE FIDE*, BUT HE WAS CONTRADICTED BY LATER POPES; THIS CREATES DEVASTATING PROBLEMS FOR POPULAR ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF BAPTISM OF DESIRE**

St. Robert Bellarmine, *Letter to Paolo Antonio Foscarini*: "But to want to affirm that the sun really is fixed in the center of the heavens and only revolves around itself [turns upon its axis] without traveling from east to west, and that the earth is situated in the third sphere and revolves with great speed around the sun, is a very dangerous thing, not only by irritating all the philosophers and scholastic theologians, but also by injuring our holy faith and rendering the Holy Scriptures false...

"Second. I say that, as you know, the Council (of Trent) prohibits expounding the Scriptures contrary to the common agreement of the holy Fathers. And if Your Reverence would read not only the Fathers but also the commentaries of modern writers on Genesis, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Josue, you would find that all agree in explaining literally (ad litteram) that the sun is in the heavens and moves swiftly around the earth, and that the earth is far from the heavens and stands immobile in the center of the universe. Now consider whether the Church could encourage giving to Scripture a sense contrary to the holy Fathers and all the Latin and Greek commentators."

"Nor may it be answered that this is not a matter of faith, for if it is not a matter of faith from the point of view of the subject matter, it is on the part of the ones who have spoken. It would be just as heretical to deny that Abraham had two sons and Jacob twelve, as it would be to deny the virgin birth of Christ, for both are declared by the Holy Ghost through the mouths of the prophets and apostles."

We see very clearly that St. Robert Bellarmine held that geocentrism is *de fide*. He further stated that it was the position of all the theologians and all the fathers. This point regarding the teaching of the theologians is relevant because the same crowd of baptism of desire advocates maintains that the common teaching of theologians also represents the binding teaching of the Catholic Church. (This position is refuted in section 19 of my book, *Outside the Catholic Church There is Absolutely No Salvation*, but the point here is that St. Robert Bellarmine held geocentrism to be *de fide* and to be not just the "common" teaching of theologians, but the unanimous teaching of theologians.) As another writer on this issue stated:

Paula Haigh, Galileo's Heresy: "Cardinal Bellarmine assures us that the consent of the Fathers and their commentators is unanimous in holding a geocentric and geostatic view of the universe based on Holy Scripture (#6)."

Some attempt to argue that St. Robert Bellarmine didn't necessarily hold that geocentrism is *de fide* by quoting the latter portion of St. Robert Bellarmine's letter to Fr. Foscarini. In the latter portion of that letter, St. Robert supposedly indicates that one could hold to heliocentrism as a hypothesis, but just not as a *proven position*. But even baptism of desire advocate John Daly dismisses this argument with the following points:

"Ward quoted St. Robert Bellarmine's letter to Father Foscarini in defence of this opinion, as the saint therein says that it is unobjectionable to write of heliocentrism as an hypothesis. But **this fact is of no help to the argument because ( i ) it is quite plain from the context and the rest of what we know of Bellarmine's thinking on the subject that he was referring only to a *per impossibile* hypothesis, useful, perhaps, as a basis for making practical calculations, but in no way recognising heliocentrism as being even *possibly true*, and ( ii ) this letter was not written in 1624 as Ward alleged in his first article in the *Dublin Review* on this subject (the saintly author having been already three years dead by that time), nor in 1620 as he alleged in his second article, but in 1615, before the Holy See had pronounced definitively on the topic; and no statement of Bellarmine's can be traced subsequent to the 1616 decrees which could appear by any stretch of the imagination to attribute even hypothetical possibility to the heliocentric system.**" (John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*)

So, to summarize: Bellarmine's final point to Foscarini, which some claim gives endorsement to heliocentrism as a hypothesis, was written in the context of using the heliocentric position *merely to make calculations*, not as if heliocentrism might be true. Further, even if one wants to argue that there is a touch of ambiguity in his letter - a letter which, as quoted above, considers the denial of geocentrism "heretical" - Bellarmine's statement at issue was made in 1615, before the eleven theologians of the Holy Office had condemned heliocentrism. After that time, there is nothing from Bellarmine which suggests that, in his view, one is free to hold heliocentrism as possibly true. He obviously concurred with the decision of the eleven members of the Holy Office, which declared heliocentrism false and heretical. That is why St. Robert Bellarmine was the one who summoned "Galileo to his home and before witnesses [transmitted] the Pope's orders, commanding him in the name of the Pope and of the whole Congregation of the Holy Office to abandon the position in question [heliocentrism] and no more to hold, teach or defend it on pain of being proceeded against by the Holy Office. Galileo promise[d] to obey."

Thus, it's clear that St. Robert Bellarmine held that geocentrism is *de fide*, and the denial of it to be heretical. With these facts being established, it's now time to bring forward the piece of evidence which, when considered with all of the foregoing facts, ties together one of the main points I'm attempting to establish in this article. Considering all of the above, the following piece of evidence becomes utterly

devastating (a true knockout blow) to current leading baptism of desire advocates and their arguments.

IN AN ENCYCLICAL, POPE BENEDICT XV DECLARES THAT THE EARTH MAY NOT BE THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, CONTRADICTING THE ELEVEN THEOLOGIANS OF THE HOLY OFFICE IN 1616, THE 1633 SENTENCE OF THE HOLY OFFICE, AND WHAT ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE TAUGHT IS *DE FIDE*

Pope Benedict XV, *In Praeclara Summorum* (#4), April 20, 1921: "If the progress of science showed later that the 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 ini una parte piu e meno altrove*; and though this Earth on which we live may not be the center 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."

Here we see Pope Benedict XV, in a 1921 encyclical, declare that "this Earth on which we live may not be the center of the universe as at one time was thought." In all the discussions of the issue with which I'm familiar, I've never seen the above quotation from Pope Benedict XV brought forward. People such as John Daly, Solange Hertz, Paula Haigh, etc., who have spent much time on this issue, were obviously unaware of this quotation.

It's a quotation that I came across some time back in my detailed study of every papal encyclical since 1740. Now that it has been divulged in this article, you can expect to see it quoted by others in the future, probably without mentioning where they first saw it. I mention that these authors were unaware of this quote from Pope Benedict XV because it quite frequently happens that we will come across a quotation from the popes - or a particular heresy from the Vatican II antipopes - that is striking or relevant to a certain topic, and after it gets circulated by others they never mention the original research source.

Solange Hertz, *The Scientific Illusion*: "As we know, Galileo abjured in order to avoid excommunication, and to this day the Church has not lifted its condemnation of his heretical theory, which remains as unproven as ever."

Paula Haigh, *Was It/Is It Infallible*, p. 20: "The modern theologians have never addressed the problem posed by this Bull of Alexander VII. If they had, they would need to admit its direct papal authority and search for some subsequent document by a subsequent pope that formally and specifically abrogated [i.e. nullified] the 1664 Bull. But no such document has ever been found or produced."

We see that they remain unaware of any direct papal statements which call into question the geocentric view of the universe. While the above quote from Pope Benedict XV certainly doesn't abrogate the Bull of Alexander VII (a bull which I will discuss), it quite obviously advances a position which allows for belief in something different from geocentrism. (I will eventually get to my opinion concerning what the Church actually teaches - or doesn't teach - on this matter in light of the facts we have seen thus far, but I first want to continue with the examination of this subject in conjunction with the issue of "baptism of desire.")

So, after carefully examining Pope Benedict XV's quote on the Earth possibly not being the center of the universe "as was at one time thought," the huge problem for leading baptism of desire advocates should be very obvious.

**EITHER A POPE IN AN ENCYCLICAL CONTRADICTED THAT WHICH IS *DE FIDE* AND BINDING, OR ST. ROBERT BELLARMINI, MANY THEOLOGIANs OF THE HOLY OFFICE AND THE HOLY OFFICE'S 1633 SENTENCE AGAINST GALILEO WERE COMPLETELY WRONG THAT GEOCENTRISM IS *DE FIDE* AND BINDING**

There are only two possibilities: 1) St. Robert Bellarmine and the members of the Holy Office were correct that geocentrism is *de fide*; in that case, Pope Benedict XV was wrong (and was teaching heresy) when stating that the Earth may not be the center of the universe; or 2) Pope Benedict XV was correct that the issue has not yet been settled (and the Earth might not be the center) and St. Robert Bellarmine, many theologians of the Holy Office and the Holy Office's 1633 sentence against Galileo, etc. were therefore wrong for declaring heliocentrism to be heretical and considering geocentrism to be *de fide*. Please bear with me as I examine the ramifications of each possibility, for a careful consideration of this issue sheds much light on the parameters of Church infallibility, precisely what constitutes fidelity to the Magisterium, and what alone definitively determines "the mind of the Church."

**THE CONSEQUENCES IF #1 IS TRUE, NAMELY, IF GEOCENTRISM IS TO BE CONSIDERED *DE FIDE* AND HELIOCENTRISM HERETICAL**

Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that #1 is true: St. Robert Bellarmine and the members of the Holy Office were correct that geocentrism is *de fide*. As we saw already, this would have to be the position of leading baptism of desire advocates; for they claim that "it's an assault on the Church" to think that a Doctor of the Church could label as *de fide* that which is not. If they do not hold position #1 they are monstrous hypocrites.

If #1 is true, that means that Pope Benedict XV was teaching heresy in his encyclical. It also means that he and other numerous other popes (as will be

explained below) were ignorant of the true theological status of geocentrism. In his article on *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*, John Daly points out that on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1757 - 164 years before Pope Benedict XV - Pope Benedict XIV suspended the decrees of the Congregation of the Index of the Forbidden Books which had forbidden works which contradicted geocentrism. Other popes followed Pope Benedict XIV by allowing the publication of heliocentric works:

**“16th April 1757: The scholar-pope Benedict XIV in recognition of the new status held by heliocentrism in the scholarly world since the writings of Isaac Newton suspends the decrees of the Congregation of the Index against heliocentric works.**

1820: A Canon Settele applies for the Roman *Imprimatur* from Mgr. Anfossi to authorise publication of his openly heliocentric *Elements d’Astronomie*. Anfossi refuses this, but Settele appeals to Pope Pius VII who upholds the appeal and allows publication.

11th September 1822: The Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition decides that the printing of books teaching the movement of the earth would thenceforth be permitted at Rome.” (John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism*)

Thus, if #1 is true, it not only means that Pope Benedict XV was teaching heresy in his encyclical *In Praeclara Summorum*, but that numerous popes allowed heresy to be taught by lifting decrees which forbade the publication of it. For instance, Pope Pius VII approved the decree mentioned above (of 11 September 1822) which allowed the printing of books teaching the movement of the Earth. It therefore means that those popes who lifted these decrees were ignorant of the true theological status of geocentrism.

Now, to accept that these popes were wrong - which we must do if we believe that St. Robert Bellarmine and the theologians of the Holy Office were correct about geocentrism, in other words, if we accept the arguments of baptism of desire advocates about the “authority” of Doctors of the Church, etc. - is actually to prove that St. Robert Bellarmine could have been wrong. For if numerous popes could have been wrong about the theological status of a teaching that is actually *de fide*, then certainly a mere Doctor of the Church could have been wrong in his evaluation that such a teaching is de fide.

This is because “by the very apostolic primacy which the Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter, the chief of the Apostles, holds over the universal Church, the *supreme power of the Magisterium is also comprehended...*” (Vatican Council I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chap. 4, Denz. 1832) That is to say, a pope doesn’t exercise the supreme power of the Magisterium in all of his acts, but he is the one who possesses it. The supreme power of the Magisterium is not held by theologians or Doctors of the Church. If a pope could have been wrong and could have failed to recognize that something is *de fide* - something which, incidentally, we know occurred because popes gave their approval (though not solemnly) to the decisions of the Holy Office in 1616 and 1633! - then necessarily a mere saint or theologian or Doctor of the Church could have been wrong in considering something to be *de fide*. Therefore, **no matter which way you look at it, the argument that “since St. Alphonsus taught that baptism of desire is *de fide* it must be true,” is out the window**. For even if we accept possibility #1, that St. Robert Bellarmine was correct

that geocentrism is *de fide*, that means that **popes who followed him didn't recognize it or share that assessment**. If they could have been wrong, then it's possible, not impossible, for a Doctor of the Church to have been as well.

**THE CONSEQUENCES IF #2 IS TRUE, NAMELY, THAT POPE BENEDICT XV WAS CORRECT THAT THE ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN SETTLED (AND THE EARTH MIGHT NOT BE THE CENTER)**

Now, let's switch gears and suppose that #2 is true: namely, that Pope Benedict XV was correct - along with the other popes, such as Pope Benedict XIV, who allowed the publication of heliocentric works - that the issue has not yet been settled (and the Earth might not be the center), based on the grounds that the past decisions were not infallible, irreformable teachings on Faith; and therefore that St. Robert Bellarmine, the members of the Holy Office, and the Holy Office's 1633 sentence against Galileo were simply wrong for declaring heliocentrism to be heretical and for considering geocentrism to be *de fide*, and for having Galileo abjure the heresy of the movement of the Earth.

In this case, we immediately see that the infallibility of the Church is much more limited than many so-called experts have held. We immediately see that a Doctor of the Church, many members of the Holy Office, countless other theologians, official decrees emanating from various Congregations in the Vatican working under the pope, including the Office of the Inquisition (the Office in charge of ferreting out heresy), were all wrong in declaring heliocentrism to be heretical and geocentrism to be *de fide*. We see that the status of this truth has been a mystery for centuries, even though many popes and a Doctor of the Church were involved with the issue.

In this case, we see that the arguments advanced by baptism of desire advocates - that the Church necessarily teaches "baptism of desire" because St. Alphonsus, a Doctor of the Church, said it was *de fide* and because a letter from two members of the Holy Office condemned Fr. Feeney - are directly (not indirectly, as in the case that #1 is true) demolished. For in this case we have a direct parallel: a Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine, was wrong in labeling geocentrism *de fide* and considering the denial of it to be heretical; and we have numerous acts of the Holy Office approved by more than ten theologians of it (not just two, in the case of Fr. Feeney) which were wrong in condemning heliocentrism as heresy and teaching geocentrism to be *de fide*.

Hence, those who have remained with this article thus far should easily see that the facts covered herein prove that the arguments which have been repeatedly pounded home by baptism of desire advocates from less than dogmatic sources (e.g., from theologians, from St. Alphonsus, from the letter against Fr. Feeney) - arguments which they claim definitely represent the official mind of the Church in favor of baptism of desire - are nothing more than illusory falsehoods which don't prove that the Church teaches such at all. They have been made by men who lack a true understanding of that which - when push comes to shove on a theological question - must give us our understanding of the "mind of the Church." Now that these men - who have bashed, harassed, and attempted to intimidate certain Catholics who reject baptism of desire - have been totally refuted on some of their favorite points, they should be ashamed of having attacked the truth and of having been so misled by their bad will.

The truth is that no matter which side you take on them, the facts in this article serve as a striking vindication of Catholics who have maintained, and not without often harsh resistance or criticism, that true fidelity to the Magisterium, true fidelity to the mind of the Church, and true fidelity to the Catholic teaching, exist in adherence to the teaching of dogmatic definitions (e.g., those on the absolute necessity of water baptism) and clear statements from popes themselves that such and such has always been held by the Catholic Church. These points demonstrate that even if something is taught by a saint, a Doctor of the Church who says it's "de fide," the common or even dominant teaching of theologians for even hundreds of years, and even Holy Office decisions not specifically approved by a pope with authoritative language, it is not necessarily infallible, binding or true - or, at the very least, numerous valid popes failed to recognize that it was.

### NOW, WHAT IS THE PROPER CONCLUSION ABOUT THE TRUE THEOLOGICAL STATUS OF GEOCENTRISM?

Now, let's jump from examining the hypothetical implications which necessarily arise if each position is considered true, and move to examining which one is actually true.

### THE INFALLIBLE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

In order to assess whether something is an infallible teaching on faith or morals (which is the question at hand), we must be clear on when the Church teaches infallibly on faith or morals. The requirements defined by Vatican I for an *ex cathedra* pronouncement by a Roman Pontiff are quoted below:

Pope Pius IX, Vatican Council I, 1870, Session 4, Chap. 4:  
"...the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra [from the Chair of Peter], that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His Church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable." (Denz. 1839)

As we see, in order for a pronouncement to be promulgated *ex cathedra* (infallibly from the Chair of St. Peter) a pope must 1) explain a doctrine of faith or morals, 2) in virtue of his apostolic authority, 3) to be held by the universal Church. If there were other ways that a pope teaches infallibly, Vatican I would have defined them. The only other way, indicated by Vatican I, that the Magisterium teaches infallibly on faith or morals, is in what is called the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

What exactly constitutes the teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium has never been defined, and therefore is a matter of debate. One can safely say, however, that the ordinary and universal Magisterium is exercised when a pope himself **specifically states that such a teaching has always been held by the Church** in language which is not *ex cathedra*. For example, if a pope stated in a bull or an encyclical that "the Church has always held that the Earth is the center of the

universe” then that would, in my view, be an example of the teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium. But that has never occurred.

With these thoughts on the infallible teaching of the Church having been established, let’s begin by looking again at each of the five main points which are put forward to prove that geocentrism is the binding teaching of the Catholic Church:

#### SPECIFICALLY EXAMINING ALL FIVE ACTS/ARGUMENTS TO SEE IF ANY OR ALL CONSTITUTE INFALLIBLE TEACHING

1) In 1616 eleven theologian-qualifiers of the Holy Office condemned heliocentrism as heretical with the pope’s knowledge and approval, but *without a specific declaration emanating from his supreme teaching authority.*

This was a declaration by eleven theologians employed by the Holy Office. It is clearly not infallible. Even though the pope of the time (Paul V) was aware of this decision and approved of it, he didn’t approve it solemnly or even in writing. It should also be emphasized that there is an important distinction between acts of Roman Congregations (e.g. acts of the Holy Office) which are approved by a pope *in forma communi* (in common form) and those which are approved *in forma specifica* (in specific form). The Catholic Encyclopedia explains the difference:

“As regards the doctrinal value of Decrees of the Holy Office it should be observed that canonists distinguish two kinds of approbation of an act of an inferior by a superior: first, approbation in common form (*in forma communi*), as it is sometimes called, which does not take from the act its nature and quality as an act of the inferior. Thus, for example, the decrees of a provincial council, although approved by the Congregation of the Council or by the Holy See, always remain provincial conciliar decrees. Secondly, specific approbation (*in forma specifica*), which takes from the act approved its character of an act of the inferior and makes it the act of a superior who approves it. This approbation is understood when, for example, the pope approves a Decree of the Holy Office *ex certa scientia, motu proprio, or plenitudine suae potestatis.*” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13, 1908, p. 138.)

Acts of Roman Congregations or members of the Holy Office which are approved only in common form are not infallible. That is important to keep in mind for a number of points which follow. I will expand on this more as I go along. Now that it’s clear that point #1 is not infallible, let’s move on to the second argument.

2) The Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine, agreed with the declaration of heliocentrism as heretical, and he even informed Galileo of the decision.

This also clearly falls short of the requirements of Vatican I, as discussed above. The infallible teaching of the Magisterium is invested in popes, not Doctors of the Church, despite what many today would have us believe.

Pope Benedict XIV, *Apostolica* (# 6), June 26, 1749: "The Church's judgment is preferable to that of a Doctor renowned for his holiness and teaching."

Pope Pius XII, *Humani generis* (# 21), Aug. 12, 1950: "This deposit of faith our Divine Redeemer has given for authentic interpretation not to each of the faithful, not even to theologians, but only to the Teaching Authority of the Church."

### 3) The Congregation of the Index forbade the publication of heliocentric works.

This is a disciplinary decision by a Roman Congregation. And even though this Roman Congregation included reasons of faith for its decision, it is still not an infallible act of the Church or the Roman Pontiff on faith or morals, as explained in #1 about acts of Roman Congregations approved in common form. It certainly shows that Churchmen at the time considered geocentrism to be *de fide*, but we're analyzing whether the Church itself committed its infallible teaching authority to that position. This fact does not prove that it did. That's why popes were able to reverse this disciplinary decision a few hundred years later, as covered already. The answer to the next point sheds more light on this as well.

### 4) In 1633, after the Holy Office of the Inquisition investigated Galileo as suspect of heresy, it had him make an abjuration which denounced heliocentrism and considered the denial of geocentrism to be heretical.

It's true that Pope Urban VIII was in favor of the 1633 decision and ordered its wide circulation. But he did not command that it must be accepted by the universal Church, which is one of the requirements for an *ex cathedra* declaration. Again, this certainly shows that Churchmen at the time considered the denial of geocentrism heretical, but it does not show that the infallible teaching authority of the Church was exercised to promulgate that position. In order to shed more light on the authority or lack thereof of decisions promulgated by Roman Congregations and offices or courts of the Inquisition, it's very valuable to look at the case of St. Joan of Arc in this context.

#### THE TRIAL OF ST. JOAN OF ARC SHEDS LIGHT ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY OFFICE AND OTHER ROMAN CONGREGATIONS AND THEREFORE ON THE INFALLIBILITY OR LACK THEREOF OF THE DECISIONS AGAINST GALILEO

In regard to the issue of what constitutes "fidelity to the Church," it's extremely relevant to consider the case of St. Joan of Arc. Those familiar with her story know that St. Joan of Arc was an extraordinary saint whose unusual actions in 15<sup>th</sup> century France made her famous even among non-Catholics today. After being called by God and directed by supernatural voices to help the King of France drive the invading

English from France, she was captured by the English, condemned by a court of the Inquisition, and then burned at the stake as a heretic. (As an aside: the answer to the question why God would miraculously intervene to favor the armies of one Catholic country (France) over another (England) is found, I believe, in the fact that God foresaw that one century after Joan the new King of England, King Henry VIII, would plunge the country of England into schism and would have taken France with him if England had gained France. Thus, he used St. Joan to save France from Protestantism in advance. This provides just another example of God's detestation of Protestantism.) The verdict of the court of the Inquisition which condemned Joan of Arc as a heretic was not infallible, of course. It was overturned later on. St. Joan of Arc was beatified in 1909 and canonized in 1915.

It's important to remember, however, that St. Joan of Arc was condemned as a heretic by a court of the Inquisition. **The Holy Office, remember, is merely the supreme court of the Inquisition.** Its official name is: *Sacra Congregatio Romanae et universalis Inquisitionis seu sancti officii*. The Holy Office of the Inquisition was established by Pope Paul III on July 21, 1542. Therefore, the question must be asked: **if other courts of the Inquisition are fallible, as the one which condemned Joan of Arc was, is there something qualitatively different about the Holy Office, the Supreme Court of the Inquisition in Rome, which makes the decisions of its theologians and cardinals infallible?** In regard to infallibility, the only difference between the Holy Office of the Inquisition and local segments is that the pope is the head of the Holy Office. Thus, **any infallibility an act of the Holy Office (or some other Roman Congregation) would possess would come from its relationship to the pope.** Hence, we again arrive at the important distinction between acts of the Holy Office (and other Roman Congregations) which are approved *in common form* and those which are approved *in specific form* - the distinction between those decisions which a pope approves but don't inherit his special authority and those which he approves with his special authority.

#### **MORE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ACTS OF ROMAN CONGREGATIONS APPROVED IN COMMON FORM AND THOSE APPROVED IN SPECIFIC FORM**

If an act of the Holy Office is approved by a pope merely in common form - as were all of the acts against Galileo, including the 1633 act of the Holy Office - then *from the standpoint of infallibility* it would have the same degree of authority as **any statement the pope makes or agrees with.** Is any statement that a pope makes or agrees with infallible? Obviously not, as many instances in Church history prove. This kind of statement made or agreed with by a pope, which doesn't meet the requirements of a dogmatic definition or a clear statement on what the Church has always held, should be given respect unless it clearly contradicts something of greater authority or a known fact; but it doesn't possess infallibility. This would be the proper conclusion about the authority of acts of the Holy Office. Acts of the Holy Office which are approved by a pope only in common form should be heeded and respected and obeyed unless they contradict a known fact or something of greater authority; but they are not infallible unless in approving them the pope himself adds his own special authority by approving them in a specific form. This position follows logically when considering the history of divine revelation.

A pope possesses infallibility because Jesus Christ conferred supreme authority in the Church upon St. Peter and his successors in the Chair. The promise of Christ to a true pope is not that he cannot err in any way. It is a promise that the pope cannot err when he binds the universal Church to believe something on faith or morals in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority. **Roman Congregations were not instituted until the 16<sup>th</sup> century**. The Holy Office, as mentioned above, was instituted by Pope Paul III on July 21, 1542. The cardinals who assist the pope were not included, of course, in the original promise to St. Peter that his faith will not fail (Lk. 22:32). This was a promise made to St. Peter alone in virtue of the office that Christ would confer upon him and his successors. To hold that the decisions of the Holy Office approved by a pope merely in common form are infallible would logically require one to hold that the associates of the Bishop of Rome in the early Church (e.g., the inner circle of the clergy at Rome in the first few centuries) were infallible in their decisions on matters Catholic if the pope agreed with them. Obviously the Church doesn't teach this. It's also worth mentioning that the Holy Office doesn't have jurisdiction over cardinals (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13, 1913, p. 138). In order for something to be infallible, according to Vatican I, it must bind all Christians.

Some would attempt to respond to this position, concerning acts of Roman Congregations approved merely in common form not being infallible, as does Fr. William Roberts (more on him later), by citing a case during the reign of Pope Pius IX. After the works of one Anton Guenther were condemned by the Sacred Congregation of the Index with the pope's approval in common form, some questioned whether they were bound to adhere to the condemnation. Pope Pius IX responded by a brief to the Archbishop of Cologne, dated June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1857. Pius IX responded that the decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, which was approved by him in common form, should have sufficed for all to have decided the matter.

In analyzing this argument, which was put forward by Fr. William Roberts, John Daly says this: "This argument in our view makes it absolutely necessary for any Catholics holding that it was lawful to continue to believe in heliocentrism, at least privately, after the decrees of 1616 and 1633, to maintain that Pope Pius IX, when called upon to evaluate the obligation in conscience created by the decisions of his own Sacred Congregations on his behalf, gravely exaggerated it. This is naturally difficult to credit." On the contrary, it is not difficult to hold that Pope Pius IX was mistaken about this matter or that he exaggerated the obligation which was created by his common form approval of an act of a Roman Congregation.

First of all, in expressing that his common form approval should have sufficed to settle the matter in a brief to an archbishop, Pius IX does not in any way use language which requires the decision be held to be infallible. It could be interpreted to mean that the decision simply requires obedience, which, as stated above, is what acts of Roman Congregations should receive unless they contradict something of greater authority or a clear fact. And what good reason was there to reject the decision against Guenther's works anyway? The original decision should have sufficed for all.

Secondly, if the above case shows that decisions of Roman Congregations approved by a pope in common form bindingly settle matters of faith once and for all, then Pope Pius IX was himself in violation of his own principle because he, *along with his immediate predecessors and successors*, allowed heliocentrism to be taught *well after*

*it had been condemned in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by numerous Roman Congregations.* He was obviously therefore either unaware or in knowing rejection of the binding nature of the past decisions of the Roman Congregations against heliocentrism. Now it is certainly possible that Pius IX, the reigning pope, was unaware of the specifics pertaining to Galileo's case. (This would go in line with our position that many theologians, and even some popes, failed to fully investigate, recognize and/or evaluate the dogmatic status of the absolute necessity of water baptism which excludes baptism of desire.) However, if Pope Pius IX and other popes ***could fail to see or remain unaware of the significance of the binding nature of the decisions of Roman Congregations in the case of Galileo, which were approved in common form by his predecessors,*** then it's equally possible that in expressing the normal obedience required to the decision of a Roman Congregation, vis-à-vis the obvious errors of Anton Guenther, the same pope might have exaggerated the meaning of his common form approval in his brief to the archbishop, or failed to note that they are not binding absolutely in every case, but just normally speaking when something of greater authority is not at issue.

#### THE LANGUAGE OF POPE ST. PIUS X SHOWS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN COMMON FORM AND SPECIFIC FORM APPROVAL TO ACTS OF ROMAN CONGREGATIONS

In this regard, it's very useful to look at the language used by Pope St. Pius X in his *Motu Proprio* of Nov. 18, 1907. In the first part of this extract, we see that Pope Pius X is addressing the authority of decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (another Roman Congregation) which were approved by him in common form. What we will see is that Pius X, even after stepping in to emphasize the authority of these decisions approved in common form, repeatedly emphasizes that they require "obedience." This lends strong support to the position that decisions of Roman Congregations approved by a pope should be followed and that they require obedience in the normal course of action, but they are not infallible and therefore could be contradicted if they were to contradict something of greater authority or a known fact.

Pope St. Pius X, *Motu Proprio*, Nov. 18, 1907: "... certain excellent decisions have been published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, very useful for the true advancement of Biblical studies and for directing the same by a definite norm. Yet we notice that there are not lacking those who have not received such decisions **with the obedience which is proper, even though they are approved by the Pontiff.**

"Therefore, we see that it must be declared and ordered as We do now declare and expressly order, that all are bound by the duty of obedience of conscience to submit to the decisions of the Biblical Pontifical Commission, both those which have thus far been published and those which will hereafter be proclaimed, **just as to the decrees of the Sacred Congregations which pertain to doctrine and have been approved by the Pontiff; and that all who impugn such decisions as these by word or in writing cannot avoid the charge of disobedience, or on this account be free of grave sin; and this besides the scandal by which they offend, and the other matters for which they can be responsible before God, especially because of other pronouncements in these matters made rashly and erroneously.**" (Denz. 2113)

We can see the emphasis on obedience. Pius X does mention the concept of grave sin for those who "impugn" such decisions, but he mentions it in the context of "disobedience." This makes sense: to rashly impugn the decision of a Roman Congregation would be very wrong since it represents the careful decision of cardinals chosen by the pope and acting with the pope's tacit approval. However, this does not mean that if, in a very rare case, something of greater authority were to contradict such a decision that one couldn't reject it. This is further corroborated by the point below.

Now please notice the very different language that Pope St. Pius X uses in reference to the Decree of the Holy Office entitled *Lamentabili*. This was the list of the errors of the Modernists condemned by the Holy Office on July 3, 1907. This Decree of the Holy Office is a prime example of one that was approved by a pope *in specific form*:

Pope St. Pius X, *Motu proprio*, "Praestantia Scripturae," Nov. 18, 1907:  
"In addition to this, intending to repress the daily increasing boldness of spirit of many Modernists, who by sophisms and artifices of every kind endeavor to destroy the force and efficacy not only of the Decree, 'Lamentabili sane exitu,' which was published at Our command by the Sacred Roman and Universal Inquisition on the third of July of the current year, but also of Our Encyclical Letter, 'Pascendi Dominici gregis,' given on the eighth of September of this same year by Our Apostolic Authority, We repeat and confirm not only that Decree of the Sacred and Supreme Congregation, but also that Encyclical Letter of Ours, adding the penalty of excommunication against all who contradict them; and we declare and decree this: if anyone, which God forbid, proceeds to such a point of boldness that he defends any of the propositions, opinions, and doctrines disproved in either document mentioned above, he is ipso facto afflicted by the censure imposed in the chapter *Docentes* of the Constitution of the Apostolic See, first among those excommunications *latae sententiae*..."

We see that Pius X specifically repeats and confirms the Holy Office's Decree *Lamentabili*, thus ratifying it *in specific form*. We also see that Pius X's language concerning those who contradict the Decree *Lamentabili* (which he has approved *in specific form*) is much stronger than what is used for those who contradict the decisions of the Biblical Commission, which were promulgated *in common form*. Those who contradict *Lamentabili*, which has received his approval in specific form, are excommunicated. This lends strong support to the position which has been discussed above concerning the distinction of authority between acts of Roman Congregations approved in common form and those approved in specific form, and further corroborates the position I have enunciated above on the proper evaluation of the acts of Roman Congregations vis-à-vis Galileo, geocentrism and heliocentrism.

Objection-

Syllabus of Errors, #12: "The decrees of the Apostolic See and of the Roman Congregations hinder the free progress of science." - condemned by Pope Pius IX (Denz. 1712)

Some would use this quote to argue that the decrees of the Roman Congregations against heliocentrism and the denial of geocentrism had to be correct; otherwise, they say, they would have hindered the “free progress of science.” I would respond by pointing out that the error condemns those who say that *the decrees of the Apostolic See and* of the Roman Congregations hinder the free progress of science. The Apostolic See is the See or Chair of the Bishop of Rome. In other words, “the Apostolic See” refers to acts of the Chair of St. Peter. Even though some use “the Apostolic See” loosely and incorrectly to describe the Roman Congregations, it only describes acts from the Chair of Peter, as we see in these dogmatic definitions from Vatican I. Vatican I equates acts from “the Apostolic See” with the infallible declarations from the Chair of St. Peter:

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, Session 4, Chap. 4:

“And since the sentiment of Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be passed over when He says: ‘Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church’ [Mt. 16:18], these words which were spoken are proven true by actual results, since in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved untainted, and holy doctrine celebrated.” (Denz. 1833)

Pope Pius IX, *Vatican Council I*, Session 4, Chap. 4, ex cathedra: “... knowing full well that the See of St. Peter always remains unimpaired by any error, according to the divine promise of our Lord the Savior made to the chief of His disciples: ‘I have prayed for thee [Peter], that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren’ (Lk. 22:32).” (Denz. 1836)

Thus, #12 of the Syllabus of Errors doesn’t indicate that acts of Roman Congregations are infallible. It indicates that decrees of the Apostolic See (the pope speaking from the Chair of Peter) and Roman Congregations couldn’t both hinder the free progress of science.

#### CONTINUING WITH THE CASE OF ST. JOAN TO SEE WHAT CONSTITUTES “FIDELITY TO THE CHURCH”

It’s important now to continue with the analysis of the case of St. Joan of Arc. Since St. Joan of Arc was captured by the English in France, she was turned over to the French bishop, Pierre Cauchon. He was the former rector of the University of Paris, considered the foremost university in the world at that time. She was eventually turned over to a court of the Inquisition dominated by many learned theologians from her own country. The subject at issue was the origin of her voices, and whether she would submit to the Church’s decision on them:

“When all the arguments as to responsibility have been heard, there remains one certain fact: French priests and lawyers tried and condemned Joan, and every witness against her was French... As it was, **five bishops, thirty-two doctors of theology, sixteen bachelors of theology, nine doctors of civil and canon law, seven doctors of medicine, and more than eighty other priests and lawyers were involved in her trial.** Except for five, every one of them was French.” (John Beevers, *St. Joan of Arc*, Doubleday, 1959, pp. 138-139.)

This is once again a powerful illustration of the falsity of the argument, often preached from the housetops by baptism of desire supporters, that one should not

depart from the teaching of theologians. What's most fascinating about this case, however, is the main charge lodged against Joan at her trial. **The main charge lodged against Joan at her trial - the charge which primarily got her condemned by the court as a heretic - was that she supposedly refused to submit to "the decision of the Church."** I would like to quote a few paragraphs so that the reader becomes acquainted with a few of the details:

John Beevers, *St. Joan of Arc*, pp. 138-139: "[At the trial] Then something new was put to Joan. **It was the exceedingly dangerous question: 'Will you submit what you have said and done to the decision of the Church?'**

Her reply was, 'All I have said and done is in the hand of God and I commit myself to Him. I would neither say nor do anything against the Christian faith, and if I held anything which the clergy should declare to be against that faith, I would not hold fast to it, but would cast it from me.' Now this was not a satisfactory answer in any way. The 'clergy' are not the Church, nor does Joan say what members of the clergy she should obey. She could have had in mind those ecclesiastics of Poitiers who had long ago found her without fault. **She was asked again if she would submit to the decision of the Church.** This time she answered, 'I commit myself to Our Lord, Who sent me, to Our Lady, and to all the saints of Paradise. Our Lord and the Church are all one, so why do you make difficulties.'

"The report of the trial continues: 'She was told that there is the Church Triumphant, where God is together with the saints and all the souls who are saved; there is also the Church militant, and that consists of our Holy Father the pope, the Vicar of Christ on Earth, the prelates of the Church, the clergy, and all good Catholics. This Church in good assembly cannot err under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. **Therefore, she was asked if she would submit to the Church Militant; that is, the Church on Earth.** She answered that she came to the king of France in God's name and in the name of the Blessed Virgin and of all the blessed saints in Paradise and of the Church Triumphant above. It was to that Church that she submitted all her good deeds and all she had done or should do. **And she would do nothing more about her submission to the Church Militant.**"

We here hit upon the heart of the matter of this controversial issue and many other issues relevant to our day. What actually constitutes "submitting to the decision of the Church"? Is it necessarily found in submitting to the teaching of theologians? Is it found, in every case, in submitting to the decision of ecclesiastical courts? In the view of her ecclesiastical judges, Joan would have been refusing to submit to "the Church" if she refused to reject her voices when the court judged them to be of the Devil. But Joan knew that she could not denounce her supernatural voices as diabolical - voices which had guided her from her youth and had been confirmed by extraordinary results which astonished multitudes - just because this pack of theologians said so. She knew that didn't make any sense. At the same time, Joan was not learned enough - nor were all the distinctions involved even necessarily clear to the learned at that time and to many today - **to be able to point out that by refusing submission to the decision of this ecclesiastical court of theologians in France she was not refusing submission to the infallible Church.** She was unable to debate with her theologian-judges when they defined their court's decision as the "decision of the Church Militant," and thus she honestly had to hesitate in giving assent to the Church Militant.

We can see that, had they been there, quite a few of the most outspoken proponents of baptism of desire in our day (including many sedevacantist priests who consider the denial of baptism of desire to be heresy or mortal sin) would have almost certainly been right there with the judges in condemning St. Joan of Arc as a heretic and turning her over to be burned - a heretic who had "departed from the teaching of the Church." This is because they hold a gravely flawed view of what constitutes fidelity to the teaching of the Church. All of this demonstrates, once again, that fidelity to the Church, fidelity to the Magisterium, fidelity to the mind of the Church is not necessarily found in fidelity to the teaching of theologians or Roman Congregations or lesser decisions, but, first and foremost, in fidelity to the indisputably infallible teaching of the Church.

5) In 1664-1665, Pope Alexander VII promulgated on his own authority an Index forbidding all works favoring heliocentrism and denying geocentrism; it was prefaced by his papal bull which declares the Index to be part of the bull and bearing its papal authority.

Of all the arguments in favor of the infallibility of the geocentric position, this would be the strongest because it is the only one which involves something which emanates from the pope *in forma specifica* (in specific form). In my view, however, this argument also fails to prove the point. This argument fails because **the bull of Pope Alexander VII concerns the promulgation of an Index of forbidden books**. This is a disciplinary measure. It is not a definition of a point of faith or morals to be believed by the universal Church (i.e., the extraordinary Magisterium); nor does it constitute a pope stating that the Church has always held this or that point of faith, which would involve the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

Just because a pope uses solemn language to forbid the propagation of a book, that does not infallibly prove that such a book is bad. To help illustrate this point it's useful to mention that **Pope Clement XIV solemnly suppressed the Jesuit order in a 1773 papal bull with the fullness of his papal authority**. Pope Clement XIV further declared that his constitution could never be revoked.

Pope Clement XIV, *Dominus ac Redemptor noster*, 1773: "We declare the aforesaid society to be dissolved, suppressed, disbanded, and abolished for all eternity... We declare all their offices, authorities, and functions to be null and void..."

Does that infallibly prove that the Jesuit order is bad? No, of course not; it was a disciplinary measure and it was overturned later on.

But what about the fact that the Index promulgated by the bull of Pope Alexander VII includes the past decrees of the Holy Office which condemned the movement of the Earth on the grounds that such a notion denies the faith? In other words, those decrees against heliocentrism from the Roman Congregations, which were covered earlier, were attached to his bull. Does that not show that Pope Alexander VII's bull infallibly teaches the content of those past decrees against the movement of the Earth *on the grounds of faith*? The answer, in my view, is *no*. I will attempt to

substantiate this position now. The answer is *no* because **Pope Alexander VII makes it clear why he is attaching those past, lesser decrees against the movement of the Earth to his disciplinary bull.** To make this point I must now introduce Fr. William Roberts. Fr. William Roberts was the author of *The Pontifical Decrees Against the Movement of the Earth and the Ultramontane Defense of Them* (London: Parker & Co, 1885).

Fr. William Roberts was a supposed Catholic priest who had major problems with the dogma of Papal Infallibility around the time it was defined in 1870. In other words, he was a heretic. He was also a totally convinced advocate of the position that the Earth is not the center of the universe. He wrote a book which treated in detail of the decisions against Galileo and heliocentrism. He attempted to show that these decisions were authoritatively endorsed by the Roman Pontiff in an infallible capacity and therefore constituted an indisputable proof that Papal Infallibility is false - since, in his view, the condemned non-geocentric position was indisputably the true position. In attempting to make his argument that the bull of Pope Alexander VII (referred to above) is infallible, what Fr. Roberts says below is extremely relevant. After quoting him, I will focus on some words which Fr. Roberts uses in summarizing the points of the bull from Pope Alexander VII. The point that I will focus on is what I believe disproves his argument that the bull of Pope Alexander VII is infallible:

Fr. William Roberts, *The Pontifical Decrees Against the Movement of the Earth*: "Towards the end of his Pontificate, it occurred to Alexander VII that it was his duty as guardian of the household of Israel, to compose and place before the faithful a new Index of prohibited books that should be complete up to his time, and be more conveniently arranged than former indices. Whereupon, he set to work with a specially chosen number of Cardinals; and in the March of 1664 there issued from the Vatican press a book entitled Index Librorum prohibitorum Alexandri VII Pontificis Maximi jussu editus. It was prefaced by a Bull wherein the Pope describes the composition of his Index, and gives reasons for putting it forth. Amongst other things, the Pontiff says that the books noted therein will not be found distributed into three classes as they were in the Tridentine Index. That method of arrangement has been found inconvenient, and has given rise to mistaken estimates of the relatively bad character of the books prohibited. Yet it is so far retained that the class to which each book belongs will be found cited where the book is named, and also the decree by which the book was originally prohibited, in order that the whole history of each case may be known.

"For this purpose," pursues the Pontiff, "we have caused the Tridentine and Clementine Indices to be added to this general Index, and also all the relevant decrees up to the present time, that have been issued since the Index of our predecessor Clement, that nothing profitable to the faithful interested in such matters might seem omitted. Since then all these directions have been faithfully and accurately carried out, and a general Index of this kind has been composed - to which also the rules of the Tridentine Index, with the observations and instructions added to the Clementine Index, have been prefixed; this same general Index as it is put forth, composed by our order, revised, and printed at the press of our Apostolic Camera, and which should be considered as though it were inserted in these presents, together with all, and singular, the things contained therein, we, having taken the advice of our Cardinals, confirm, and approve with Apostolic authority by the tenor of these presents, and command and enjoin all persons everywhere to yield to this Index a constant and complete obedience."

"[Fr. Roberts says:] Turning to this Index, we find among the decrees the pope caused to be added thereto, the following: Quia ad notitiam of 1616; the monitum of 1620, declaring the principles advocated by Copernicus on the position and movement of the earth to be "repugnant to Scripture and to its true and Catholic interpretation;" the edict signed by Bellarmine prohibiting and condemning Kepler's *Epitome Astronomie Copernicanae*; the edict of August 10th, 1634 prohibiting and condemning the *Dialogo di Galileo Galilei*; and under the head "Libri," we find: 'Libri omnes docentes mobilitatem terrae, et immobilitatem solis, in decr. 5 Martii, 0505.'

These, therefore, were some of the things the Pope confirmed and approved with Apostolic authority by the tenor of his Bull."

First of all, notice that the bull of Pope Alexander VII has as its subject a disciplinary measure: the promulgation of a new Index of forbidden books. That is why "obedience" is required to this disciplinary decision. This new Index had many past decrees attached to it, as we read above. In promulgating this disciplinary measure, **the pope did not infallibly declare that all must believe the things contained in those past decrees of the Holy Office, etc. which were attached to the Index.** No, as Fr. Roberts says, Pope Alexander VII attached those other decrees "in order that the whole history of each case may be known." To have lesser decrees attached to a disciplinary measure *in order that the history of each case may be known* is very different from solemnly declaring (to be believed by the universal Church) all the points contained in those decrees attached to the Index. I believe that this clearly shows that the bull of Pope Alexander VII was a disciplinary measure which did not infallibly promulgate the decrees attached to that disciplinary measure. Since his bull did not solemnly declare any point of faith, it was not an *ex cathedra* pronouncement. The popes in the years to come, such as Pope Benedict XIV, Pope Pius VII, Pope Gregory XVI, Leo XIII, Pope Benedict XV, etc., obviously agreed with this assessment.

Therefore, I believe it is clear that the correct position, on the controversial question of whether the Catholic Church has ever infallibly defined the geocentric view of the universe as a binding teaching, is that it has not.

But what about the teaching of Sacred Scripture itself?

#### DOES THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE ITSELF REQUIRE ONE TO ACCEPT A GEOCENTRIC VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE?

Thus far I have evaluated the question of whether any of the acts against Galileo or the movement of the Earth constitute an infallible teaching of the Church in favor of the geocentric view of the universe. I believe that I have shown that the answer is *no*. But does the language of scripture require one to hold such a view? For instance:

*Psalm 103:5:* " [God] Who hast founded the earth upon its own bases: it shall not be moved for ever and ever."

Some advocates of the geocentric view of the universe say that this passage of scripture binds all to hold the geocentric position:

John Daly, *The Theological Status of Heliocentrism:* "While some of the other texts which naturally suppose a geocentric system (*Matthew 45:45* [sic] and *Ephesians 4:26*, for instance) could, at a stretch, be understood to refer to appearances and to employ common parlance without vouching for its scientific accuracy, this clearly does not apply to the foregoing or to *Psalm 103:5:* 'Who hast founded the earth upon its own bases: it shall not be moved for ever and ever.'"

In this context, people often cite a similar verse from Psalm 92:

Psalm 92:1- "The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded himself. For he hath established the world which shall not be moved."

To form a better opinion about whether these texts prove the geocentric view of the universe, here are three passages of scripture which, to my knowledge, have not yet been brought forward in this context:

Proverbs 10:30- "The just shall never be moved: but the wicked shall not dwell on the earth."

Psalms 14:5- "He that hath not put out his money to usury, nor taken bribes against the innocent: He that doth these things shall not be moved for ever."

Psalms 111:5-6 "Acceptable is the man that showeth mercy and lendeth: he shall order his words with judgment. Because he shall not be moved for ever."

We see that the scriptural declaration, it "shall not be moved for ever," is not only applied to Earth, but three times to the just man. Since we are obviously not required to hold that the just man is the immoveable center of the universe, this might show that the words in the book of Psalms do not necessarily mean that Earth stands immoveable at the center of the universe.

What about the other passages of Holy Scripture that are frequently cited in this regard?

John Daly: "As to the factual question of whether Holy Scripture does indeed unequivocally teach the geocentric system, we consider any attempt to deny the fact to share the same absurdity of those who would reconcile *Genesis* with evolution. In *Josue 10:12,13* is recounted the miracle by which, in order to prolong the day for the Israelites to defeat the five kings who attacked Gabaon, God arrested the movement of the sun and the moon: 'And the sun and the moon stood still...the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down the space of one day.'

"A similar miracle is recounted at *4 Kings 20:1* when the prophet Isaias actually caused the sun to move *backwards* as a sign to Achaz. It is true that the text refers only to the retrograde motion of the shadow on the sundial which, on the heliocentric hypothesis, could equally have been produced by reversing the diurnal motion of the earth, but this interpretation is ruled out by *Isaias 38:8* which recounts the same event in objective terms: 'And the sun returned ten lines by the degrees by which it was gone down.'"

What about these arguments from the book of Josue and 4 Kings? In answering this it must be reiterated again that the Bible is the infallible and inerrant word of God. It is true in all its parts, in all its history and in all the subjects it teaches. It would be heretical to assert that Sacred Scripture errs in its history or in its description of things as they took place. However, as Pope Leo XIII points out in his encyclical on Sacred Scripture:

Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (#18), Nov. 18, 1893: "... 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 to salvation' [St. Augustine]. 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. Ordinary speech primarily and properly comes from the senses; and somewhat in the same way the sacred writers - as the Angelic Doctor [St. Thomas Aquinas] reminds us - 'went by what sensibly appeared,' [*Summa Theologica*, Pt. I, q. 70, a. 1, ad. 3] or put down what God, speaking to men, signified, in the way men could understand and were accustomed to."

Take, as an example of what Pope Leo XIII is talking about, the following passage from Josue 18 - the same book which figures very prominently at the heart of the geocentrism controversy:

Josue 18:15-16- "But on the south side the border goeth out from part of Cariathiarim towards the sea, and cometh to the fountain of the waters of Nephtoa. **And it goeth down to that part of the mountain that looketh on the valley of the children of Ennom**: and is over against the north quarter in the furthest part of the valley of Raphaim, and it goeth down into Geennom (that is the valley of Ennom) by the side of the Jebusite to the south: and cometh to the fountain of Rogel..."

Here we see a clear example of what Pope Leo XIII is talking about. Do mountains look upon things? No. Sacred Scripture's declaration about the mountain is nevertheless absolutely true. It is describing the side of the mountain which faces the valley of the children of Ennom. That was signified, as Pope Leo XIII says, "in the way men could understand and were accustomed to," in this case by referring to "that part of the mountain that looketh on the valley," even though mountains don't literally "look upon" things.

Another example would be a phrase which occurs throughout the Old Testament: God repeatedly promises His people that He would deliver their enemies "into their hands."

Josue 10:8 - " And the Lord said to Josue: Fear them not: for **I have delivered them into thy hands**: none of them shall be able to stand against thee."

The Bible also declares after the fact - in other words, as a historical fact - that the Lord delivered the Chanaanite and the Pherezite into their hands:

Judges 1:4- "And Juda went up, and **the Lord delivered the Chanaanite, and the Pherezite into their hands**: and they slew of them in Bezec ten thousand men."

Did the Lord literally deliver all ten thousand of them "into their hands"? Most of them were probably killed by the sword and didn't literally enter into all of their

hands. So, even though some today might consider that statement to be improper according to the literal rule of how things are understood and expressed today, it was absolutely correct and historically accurate according to how things were expressed and understood then; for the Lord delivered their enemies into their power to be eliminated.

Moreover, Pope Leo XIII emphasizes (while quoting St. Thomas) that the sacred writers accurately expressed “what sensibly appeared.”

Josue 10:12-13 - “Then Josue spoke to the Lord, in the day that he delivered the Amorrhite in the sight of the children of Israel, and he said before them: **Move not, O sun, toward Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, toward the valley of Ajalon. And the sun and the moon stood still, till the people revenged themselves of their enemies. Is not this written in the book of the just? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down the space of one day.**”

Everyone who was present at this miracle would have seen the same thing according to external appearances: the sun and the moon stood still and did not go down. But, as Pope Leo XIII emphasizes, in accurately reporting this miracle and what occurred according to external phenomena, they did not “seek to penetrate the secrets of nature”; that is to say, the sacred books didn’t seek or intend in this area to explain whether this external appearance was because the sun actually stood still or was created because the Earth actually did. Even today astronomers will speak of the sunrise at Philadelphia.

Thus, even if the geocentric view of the universe is not correct, these passages of the Bible do not in any way detract from the power, the historical truth, or the accuracy of Sacred Scripture in all aspects of its teaching; for what is recorded is exactly what was observed according to external phenomena (as a result of a miracle of God), without penetrating into the reasons for the creation of these external phenomena.

All that being said, I am open to the possibility that those passages of Sacred Scripture referred to above do indeed teach the geocentric view of the universe. I simply don’t know one way or the other. The point of this article is not to attempt to demonstrate which position is true, but to examine whether the Catholic Church has infallibly taught the geocentric view of the universe or condemned the denial of it. I believe that the answer is no.

### IMPORTANT CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF POINTS

<u>In favor that geocentrism is binding</u>	<u>Against that it’s binding</u>
<p>1616- eleven theologians of the Holy Office condemn heliocentrism with tacit approval of Pope Paul V</p> <p>-St. Robert Bellarmine transmits this decision to Galileo and considers it binding; he considers geocentrism to be de fide</p>	<p>1757- Pope Benedict XIV suspends Decrees of the Congregation of the Index against Heliocentric works</p> <p>1822- With approval of Pope Pius VII, the Holy Office decides that books on movement of Earth could be printed at Rome</p>

<p>- The Cong. of the Index published a Decree forbidding all works favoring heliocentrism</p> <p>1633- The Holy Office considers Galileo suspect of heresy for favoring heliocentrism; he is required to make an abjuration which indicates that heliocentrism is heretical and that geocentrism is <i>de fide</i>; this is done with approval from Pope Urban VIII</p> <p>1664-1665- Pope Alexander VII promulgates an Index on his own authority forbidding all works which contradict geocentrism</p>	<p>1921- Pope Benedict XV explicitly states that the Earth might not be the center of the universe in <i>In Praeclara Summorum</i></p> <p>-All popes from 1757 to 1958 at least tacitly agree that heliocentrism or a non-geocentric view of the universe may be held</p>
---	---

I believe I have shown that the acts against the denial of geocentrism are not infallible. In conclusion I would like to emphasize that this case sheds much light on the parameters of Church infallibility. In fact, it **has ramifications for so many issues** that it would be very difficult to include them all in this article. The facts on this issue **obliterate popular arguments in favor of baptism of desire**. In addition, these facts have major significance in refuting arguments in favor of Natural Family Planning, that Mary is the Co-Redeemer, that saints couldn't be mistaken in good faith about the dogmatic status of truths without being heretics or schismatics, etc. Allow me to summarize:

- ▶ The argument that baptism of desire must be true because St. Alphonsus (Doctor of the Church) thought that baptism of desire is *de fide* **has been totally refuted**. St. Robert Bellarmine thought that geocentrism is *de fide* and he was contradicted by numerous popes.
- ▶ The argument that to deny baptism of desire is contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church because Fr. Feeney was denounced in a 1949 letter of two members of the Holy Office, **has been obliterated**. It has been shown that in 1616 eleven theologians of the Holy Office denounced heliocentrism and in a 1633 abjuration composed by the Holy Office geocentrism was declared to be *de fide* and the denial of it heretical. Both of these acts were contradicted by later popes.
- ▶ The similar but different argument that the absolute necessity of water baptism *could not have been* solemnly defined by Pope St. Leo the Great or the Councils of Florence and Trent because then St. Alphonsus would have been a heretic **has also been refuted**. I will quote baptism of desire advocate John Daly who unwittingly proves the point: "*... if heliocentrism has been infallibly condemned by the Holy See, there has never been any point in the history of the Church when this has been universally recognised to be the case and **nearly four centuries have now passed during which hardly any Catholic has correctly realised the true theological status of heliocentrism.***" What he didn't add is that if heliocentrism has not been infallibly condemned by the Holy See, then numerous popes (e.g., Paul V and Urban VIII) and a Doctor of the Church (St. Robert Bellarmine) acted like it had been and thus were unaware of the true theological status of this issue. If they could have been

completely wrong about the true theological status of this controversial point, then certainly St. Alphonsus and others could have been as well concerning the dogmatic status of the absolute necessity of water baptism. Thus, either way our point is proven.

► The argument that *baptism of desire or salvation for "the invincibly ignorant" couldn't be heretical* because numerous popes (especially starting in the late 1800's) allowed these ideas to be circulated and spread in fallible sources (catechisms, theology manuals, etc.) without condemning them **has been totally refuted**. As the table above shows, numerous popes disallowed the circulation of heliocentrism for reasons of faith, and then just as many allowed it. Thus, the fact that popes such as Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius X reigned when clear heresies against the salvation dogma were taught in many catechisms, theology manuals, etc. proves absolutely nothing.

► The argument brought forward by Bishop Pivarunas of the CMRI, the vigorous defender of "natural" birth control, *that Natural Family Planning or the rhythm method must be acceptable because it was taught in speeches by Pope Pius XII, and even by members of the Holy Office in response to queries as far back as the 1880's, **has been totally refuted***. Just as the numerous decisions made by members of the Holy Office in the Galileo affair did not settle that case and were completely contradicted by Pope Benedict XV, the decisions and statements from members of the Holy Office and Pius XII on NFP were not infallible and contradict the more solemn teaching of Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii*. Further, Benedict XV's statement that the Earth might not be the center of the universe in an encyclical is more formal than the speeches in which Pius XII taught NFP and baptism of desire. Yet, the position enunciated by Pope Benedict XV in his 1921 encyclical was not held by Pope Paul V and Pope Urban VIII, who gave their approval to the opposite position.

► The argument *that it cannot be contrary to dogma to say that Mary is our Co-Redemptrix because Pope Leo XIII and one or two other popes called her such in non-infallible statements **has been refuted***. The above facts show that numerous popes held that geocentrism was a settled issue of faith, while numerous other popes did not. Thus, our position that one cannot call Our Lady "Co-Redemptrix" because the Councils of Trent (Denz. 984-987) and Florence (Denz. 711) specifically declare that Jesus Christ alone is our Redeemer is perfectly theologically sound from the standpoint of papal evidence and the fact that popes can, in their *fallible* capacities, fail to recognize this.

These facts provide a striking vindication to the approach to these issues which we have enunciated at Most Holy Family Monastery. This approach sticks uncompromisingly to the infallible definitions of the Catholic Church and their definitions "as once declared" (Vatican I, Denz. 1800), even if numerous statements from esteemed fallible authorities or popes in *fallible capacities* contradict them. This information not only vindicates our position, but illustrates in a powerful way that the pernicious heretics, such as Fr. Cekada, Bishop Dolan, Bishop Kelly, Bishop McKenna, Bishop Pivarunas, Bishop Sanborn, John Daly, John Lane, etc., who have misled many people based on their pseudo-intellectual appearance of fidelity to the

Church by arguments from theologians, from St. Alphonsus, from the condemnation of Fr. Feeney, and their disregard for arguments from dogmatic definitions, have been completely refuted and proven wrong.

*Victory, victory, victory once again and always for those who adhere uncompromisingly to the indisputably infallible dogmatic definitions, and have not been cowed by those who appeal from the authority of the Church itself to the authority of men!*

Pope St. Leo the Great, dogmatic letter to Flavian, *Council of Chalcedon*, 451:

"Let him heed what the blessed apostle Peter preaches, that sanctification by the Spirit is effected by the sprinkling of Christ's blood (1 Pet. 1:2); and let him not skip over the same apostle's words, *knowing that you have been redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your fathers, not with corruptible gold and silver but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without stain or spot* (1 Pet. 1:18). Nor should he withstand the testimony of blessed John the apostle: *and the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, purifies us from every sin* (1 Jn. 1:7); and again, *This is the victory which conquers the world, our faith. Who is there who conquers the world save one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? It is He, Jesus Christ, who has come through water and blood, not in water only, but in water and blood. And because the Spirit is truth, it is the Spirit who testifies. For there are three who give testimony - Spirit and water and blood. And the three are one.* (1 Jn. 5:4-8) IN OTHER WORDS, THE SPIRIT OF SANCTIFICATION AND THE BLOOD OF REDEMPTION AND THE WATER OF BAPTISM. THESE THREE ARE ONE AND REMAIN INDIVISIBLE. NONE OF THEM IS SEPARABLE FROM ITS LINK WITH THE OTHERS."

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Can. 2 on the Sacrament of Baptism, Sess. 7, 1547, *ex cathedra*: "If anyone shall say that real and natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit' [John 3:5], are distorted into some sort of metaphor: let him be anathema." (Denz. 858)

Pope Eugene IV, *The Council of Florence*, "Exultate Deo," Nov. 22, 1439: "Holy baptism, which is the gateway to the spiritual life, holds the first place among all the sacraments; through it we are made members of Christ and of the body of the Church. And since death entered the universe through the first man, 'unless we are born again of water and the Spirit, we cannot,' as the Truth says, 'enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5]. The matter of this sacrament is real and natural water." (Denz. 696)

Pope Paul III, *The Council of Trent*, Sess. 7, Can. 5 on the Sacrament of Baptism, *ex cathedra*: "If anyone says that baptism [the Sacrament] is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation (cf. Jn. 3:5): let him be anathema." (Denz. 861)

[www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com](http://www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com)