

ANSWERS TO THE OBJECTIONS BASED ON THE UNIVERSAL PEACEFUL ACCEPTANCE

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This article addresses the issue of the universal peaceful acceptance of a Roman Pontiff by the Church, and explains how the doctrine of theologians on this question can be reconciled with the analysis provided by the Thesis.

1. Introduction.

One of the strongest objections presented to the conclusion of the Thesis that the “Vatican II popes” are not in fact true popes is based on the theological doctrine of universal peaceful acceptance (henceforth referred to as UPA): renowned theologians such as Cardinal Billot, John of St. Thomas, Suarez, Sylvester Berry, and many others, teach that the recognition of a given pope by the entire Church is an infallible sign that this pope is indeed a true pope, legitimately elected, endowed with the authority of Christ to rule the Church, and assisted by the Holy Ghost. Many theologians go as far as to say that the fact that a reigning pope is indeed a true pope is of divine faith. Based on this theological principle, the argument is made that, since the “Vatican II popes” have been universally recognized as true popes, it is not legitimate to question the validity of their pontificate, and to do so becomes equivalent to the denial of a fact which is of faith.

This objection is very strong and impressive, as it can easily be supported by statements of many renowned theologians, and could seem, at first glance, to be

inconciliable with the Thesis. A deepening of the theological principles involved in this question of UPA will prove necessary to properly be applied to the present crisis, and we shall see how the Thesis is able to account for all of them.

2. Method chosen.

In addressing this question, we shall strive to give an adequate presentation of the different objections relative to the doctrine of UPA, one after the other, while deepening the matter, so that the reader may better appreciate the depth of the difficulties involved, and realize how, taken out of context, they could easily convince people that the “Vatican II popes” have to be true popes, by default.

It will be well to state here, before we even proceed to present the objections, that these come from theological speculations: it has the authority of the theologians who propose them. Although these theologians are approved authors, and hence their speculation is permitted and encouraged by the Church, it does not bear the authority of the Church’s magisterium.

It will also be evident that theologians themselves disagree on a number of points, and regularly refute each other. Clearly, therefore, our argumentation cannot be founded on the fact that “one theologian says it.”

We also refuse to merely assert, as it has sometimes been done, that the theologians

were simply wrong. For they draw their conclusions from principles of faith, and the burden of proving that the Thesis does not contradict the principles of faith which are involved in this question is on us. This, however, will demand a greater familiarity with certain laws of logic, which we will endeavor to explain.

FIRST ARTICLE

IS NOT A PAPAL ELECTION PROTECTED BY THE HOLY GHOST?

3. Objection #1: Sixtus V taught that the election of the Roman Pontiff is accomplished with the assistance of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the Thesis, which affirms that the “Vatican II popes” are not true popes is false.

In his constitution *Postquam verus* of December 3rd, 1586, Pope Sixtus V said the following about the cardinals:

In this holy election, then they are to be thought of as true interpreters and inter-messengers of the Will of God; just as by His spirit, the whole body of the church is sanctified and is ruled, so also maximally the whole work of an election of this sort by the inspiration and impulse of the same One, is most certainly to be carried out, and made known to all.¹

Hence it is argued that the election of the Roman Pontiff, because of the assistance of the Holy Ghost, always and “most certainly” results in the election of a legitimate Pontiff.

4. Answer to objection #1: The quote is taken out of context, and does not mean that there can never be a doubtful election.

Sixtus V is not here defining the fact of an assistance of the Holy Ghost to the election of the Roman Pontiff, in such a way that it

¹ “in hac sacra electione censendi sunt veri interpretes, atque internuntii voluntatis Dei, cuius spiritu sicut universum Ecclesiae corpus sanctificatur, et regitur, ira maxime hoc totum huiusmodi electionis opus eiusdem afflatu, et instinctu absolvi certissimum est” (*Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, Taurinensis editio, T. VIII, 1863, pp. 808-816).

always is accomplished in a most certain way, but the pope is here extolling the dignity of the cardinals. Sixtus V speaks about the election of the Roman Pontiff as being a work in which the Holy Ghost participates, not in the sense that there can never be a doubtful or invalid election, as history has shown, nor in the sense that the one elected is always the best candidate, predestined by God to rule the Church, but rather, in the sense that such an event is always under the care of the special Providence of God, because the fate of the Church is attached to it. Thus Sixtus V relates this “inspiration” and “impulse” of the Holy Ghost in the work of the election of the Roman pontiff to the general assistance by which “the whole body of the Church is sanctified and is ruled.”

John of St. Thomas thus comments on this constitution of Sixtus V:

It is answered that the pope is not saying that an infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost is always owed to this election, so that the electors could never err... but he is saying that the work of the election is achieved by the instinct of the Holy Ghost, that is, when such an election is consummated, and is peacefully accomplished. Indeed, for as long as the election is doubtful, it is not achieved, but there is still something to do.²

² “Respondetur, pontificem non dicere quod electioni illi est semper debita infallibilis assistentia Spiritus sancti, ita ut nunquam errare possint electores... sed dicit opus electionis absolvi instinctu Spiritus sancti, id est, quando consummatur talis electio, et pacifice conficitur; quamdiu enim dubia est, non absolvitur, sed

The *Salmanticenses*³ share the same view, and add:

This election is perfectly achieved at the moment in which the elect consents to the election by accepting the pontificate; for then there is a mutual consent, corroborating itself mutually, and a spiritual matrimony is accomplished between the Church and the Pope, between the members and the head, between the sheep and the pastor.⁴

In addition, Pope Sixtus V is clearly not making here a statement on the issue at

adhuc aliquid restat.” (John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theologicus*, Vol. VII, Disp. II, art. II, n. IV).

³ The *Salmanticenses* is a group of discalced Carmelite theologians of Salamanca (Spain), authors of a very famous *Cursus Theologicus*, a complete “theological course,” published in the seventeenth century, meant to be used by theology professors at the university of Salamanca. Its authors were renowned scholastic theologians and faithful disciples of St. Thomas. Their work enjoys a particular prestige due to the fact that it is not the work of merely one person, but the fruit of the cooperation of many Carmelite theologians. Any doubt or controversy was slowly discussed, other theologians from other religious orders were also consulted, and the content was submitted to the superiors of the order. Hence this work represents the doctrine of many great theologians of the time, and in a certain way can be said to represent the theology of the entire order of the discalced Carmelites. The *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (t. 14, 1e p., col. 1017) provides a presentation of certain theological peculiarities which they may not share with other thomists.

⁴ “Quod perfecte absolvitur, cum electus consentit in electionem acceptando Pontificatum; tunc quippe adest mutuus consensus mutuo se corroborans, perficiturque matrimonium spirituale inter Ecclesiam et Papam; inter membra, et caput; inter oves, et pastorem.” (Salmanticenses, *Cursus Theologicus*, Tom. XI, Tract. XVII, Disp. IV, Dub. II, n. 24).

hand, since he is dealing with disciplinary matters, but he is trying to induce the cardinals to lead a holy life by reflecting on the loftiness of their vocation, as is manifest from what immediately follows the quote produced above:

...so that, from this very thing, at least, it may be perceived what great sincerity and purity is required among them...⁵

Thus John of St. Thomas comments:

Nor is Sixtus V making a definition by these words, but he says it so as to extoll the dignity of the cardinals, as is clear from the context.⁶

Lastly, the Council of Constance explicitly states that the election of the Roman Pontiff may sometimes be doubtful. This Council actually deposed doubtful Pontiffs, and proceeded to the election of Martin V. In order to ensure valid papal elections, this Council reserved the judgment of disputed or doubtful papal elections to the general council. In the case of an election brought about through fear, for example, it established the following:

The cardinals, however, may not proceed to another election until a council has reached a decision about the election, unless the person elected resigns or dies.⁷

This principle is essentially the same as what is defended by the Thesis, and it clearly

⁵ “ut vel ex hoc ipso perspicui possit, quanta in eis requiratur puritas, et sinceritas ab omni carnis affectu...” (Sixtus V, *loc. cit.*).

⁶ “Neque etiam Sextus in illis verbis definitive procedit, sed narrative ad tollendam cardinalium dignitatem, ut ex textu patet.” (*loc. cit.*).

⁷ Council of Constance, Session XXXIX, October 9th, 1417.

shows that an election could sometimes be invalid or doubtful.

SECOND ARTICLE

MARTIN V REQUIRED SUSPECTS OF HERESY TO RECOGNIZE THE REIGNING PONTIFF

5. Objection #2: Recognition of the reigning Pontiff was imposed as part of the investigation of heretics. Therefore the Thesis, which affirms that the “Vatican II popes” are not true popes, is worthy of censure and condemnation.

Martin V, through the bull *Inter cunctas*, of February 22nd, 1418, after having condemned 45 propositions of John Wycliffe and 30 propositions of John Hus, provided a list of 37 questions to be asked to those who were suspected of adhering to the same heresies.

These questions are therefore a way to determine that someone is not a heretic, and truly professes the Catholic faith, leaving no room for any ambiguity through which a disciple of Wycliffe or Hus could try to escape. These questions have been included in the *Denzinger* collection, numbers 657-689, showing that they have been recognized by theologians as having a dogmatic nature. The 24th question (D. 674) reads as follows:

Likewise, whether he believes that the pope canonically elected, *reigning at this time, and expressed by his proper name*, is the successor of the blessed Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God.⁸

⁸ “Item, utrum credat, quod Papa canonicè electus, qui pro tempore fuerit, ejus nomine proprio expresso, sit successor B. Petri habens supremam auctoritatem in Ecclesiam Dei.” Cf. *Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, Taurinensis editio, T. IV, 1859, p. 674.

We have indicated in italics, in this question, the part which must be replaced by the actual name of the reigning Pontiff. Thus, for example, under Pope Innocent XI, the question would be formulated in a way resembling the following:

Do you believe that Pope Innocent XI, now reigning, and having been canonically elected, is the successor of the blessed Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God?

The question is therefore very specific, and requires the person being interrogated to profess that the actual reigning Pope is indeed legitimate and enjoys supreme authority in the Church of God.

Commenting on this point, John of St. Thomas infers that this profession is a matter of faith:

These words are not referring to this common proposition: *Every duly elected pope is the supreme pontiff*, but they are referring in a particular way to the actual pope of the time by expressing his proper name, for example Innocent X. And Martin V commands that the one whose faith is suspect be asked about the pope whose proper name is expressed, whether he believes him to be the successor of Peter and the supreme Pontiff. Therefore, this belongs to the very act of belief, and is not arrived at by deduction, or moral certitude, since neither of them is to believe.⁹

⁹ “Quae verba non loquuntur de veritate illius propositionis in communi: Quod omnis rite electus

6. Answer to objection #2: To deny that an actual reigning pope is indeed the supreme Pontiff would normally make one worthy of censure, but does not make one a heretic.

This argument of John of St. Thomas, as strong and convincing as it might seem, has already been brilliantly refuted, long ago, by the Salmanticenses. They merely recalled the fact that many of the condemned propositions of Wycliffe and Hus are not necessarily labeled as heresies, but are rather deserving of lower censures:

But these assertions were not all manifest heresies, as is evident from the eighth session of the said Council (of Constance), in which the assertions of Wycliffe are respectively condemned. Indeed some of his articles, as it is said, were notoriously heretical, others erroneous, others scandalous, others blasphemous, others offensive to pious ears, lastly others were rash and seditious. Hence from this bull it appears that he who would deny that the present Pontiff is the legitimate successor of St. Peter would deserve some censure, and a very serious one, but it cannot be concluded that he would definitely be a heretic.¹⁰

est summus pontifex, sed in particulari de eo qui pro tempore est pontifex exprimendo nomen proprium verbi gratia Innocentium X et de hoc cujus nomen proprium exprimitur jubet pontifex, ut interrogetur suspectus in fide, an credat quod talis sit successor Petri, et summus pontifex; ergo hoc pertinet ad actum credendi, non ad illationem, aut ad moralem certitudinem, neutrum enim est credere.” (John of St. Thomas, *loc. cit.*, n. XIII).

¹⁰ “Non autem omnia illorum asserta fuerunt haereses manifestae, et fidei immediate contrariae, ut patet ex sessione 8 praedicti Concilii, ubi relatis Wiclephi assertis, cuncta damnantur respective; nam quidam ejus articuli,

This is evident from the eighth session of the Council of Constance, and it is evident from interrogation 11, where it is explicitly stated:

The above mentioned forty-five articles of John Wycliffe and the thirty of John Hus are not Catholic, but some of them are notably heretical, some erroneous, others audacious and seditious, others offensive to ears of the pious.¹¹

Lastly, this is confirmed once more by the text of the same bull *Inter cunctas*, where it is asked from the bishops that they punish delinquents with a proportionate canonical penalty.¹²

Obviously, to incur any censure or penalty from the Church, even if it is lower than the censure of heresy, is something very serious. But to understand the importance of this distinction, let us here reproduce the interrogation being discussed:

Likewise, whether he believes that the pope canonically elected, reigning at this time, and expressed by his proper name, is the successor of the blessed Peter,

ut ibi dicitur, erant notorie haeretici, alii erronei, alii scandalosi, et blasphemii, alii piarum aurium offensivi, alii denique temerarii, et seditiosi. Unde ex ea bulla appareret quidem concludi, quod qui negaret Pontificem praesentem esse legitimum successorem D. Petri, mereretur aliquam, et valde gravem censuram, non vero quod determinate esset haeticus.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 32).

¹¹ D. 661: “Supradicti quadraginta quinque articuli Ioannis Wicleff et Ioannis Hus triginta non sunt catholici, sed quidam ex eis sunt notorie haeretici, quidam erronei, alii temerarii et seditiosi, alii piarum aurium offensivi.”

¹² Cf. *Inter cunctas*, nn. 9-11 (*Bullarum etc.*, *loc. cit.*).

having supreme authority in the Church of God.

This interrogation applies a universal principle, which is a truth of the faith, to a particular case. Namely, it is of faith that a reigning pope, canonically elected, is the successor of St. Peter, and possesses supreme authority in the Church of God.

Thus, if someone is asked whether Innocent XI, for example, possesses the supreme authority in the Church, and he answers in the negative, he is automatically deemed worthy of censure, since he becomes suspect of holding the general principle that a canonically elected pope does not possess supreme authority, which would be heresy.

The only way one could maintain that Innocent XI does not possess supreme authority is to say that Innocent XI was not canonically elevated to the supreme pontificate.

But in a situation where there appears no reason to deny the fact that Innocent XI has been canonically elevated to the supreme pontificate, to say that Innocent XI would not have the supreme authority would make someone suspect of heresy, because there is a suspicion that such a person, logically, is

holding something heretical: namely, that someone canonically elevated to the supreme Pontificate does not enjoy the supreme authority in the Church of God.

The logical implications which are being discussed will become more evident when we shall address the next objection. Let it suffice to say for now, that one cannot conclude, merely from this interrogation enforced by Martin V, that to deny the supreme authority of a reigning Pontiff is a heresy. Nor can it be concluded, merely from this interrogation, that the fact of a canonical election is itself a matter of divine faith, or only a moral certainty.

Indeed, even in the latter case, to answer to the interrogation in the negative would make the denier immediately suspect of heresy.

This having been addressed, it remains to discuss in a more precise way the strength of the UPA as such, namely, whether the universal peaceful acceptance of the Church provides one only with a moral certainty that a reigning Pontiff is indeed truly the pope, or whether it is a dogmatic fact, or a truth of the faith. This will be deepened in the answers to the next objections.

THIRD ARTICLE

IS NOT A PAPAL ELECTION A DOGMATIC FACT?

7. Objection #3: That a reigning Pontiff is indeed endowed with the authority of the supreme Pastor is a dogmatic fact, and can even be classified as a truth of faith, since it is a particular proposition contained in a universal proposition which is of faith. Therefore the Thesis , which asserts that the “Vatican II popes” are not in fact true popes, is false and against the faith.

8. Answer to objection #3, first part: This opinion itself does not belong to the faith.

We shall see later how to reconcile this argumentation, shared by many Thomists, with the present analysis of the Vatican II crisis provided by the Thesis. But it is here important to make a remark, which was explicitly made by the Salmenticensis themselves. Indeed, some people have argued, based on the argument presented above, that since the proposition that a recognized pope is indeed the supreme Pontiff is a proposition belonging to the faith, according to many theologians, they can therefore say that anyone disagreeing with them is contradicting the faith, and is defending something heretical. But this is utterly false, and is a very common sophism.

Indeed the fact that one or many theologians say that a truth belongs to the faith does not make their statement itself to belong to the faith. Hence if one were to defend, in the middle ages, that the Immaculate Conception is a truth belonging to the faith, it would not mean that anyone saying the opposite would necessarily be a heretic, because the fact that it belongs to the faith was not yet itself an object of faith. It

often happens that a truth revealed by God, and which is therefore objectively part of the deposit of faith, and is perhaps defended by many theologians as such, has not yet been proposed by the Church as having indeed been revealed by God. Hence, while the truth itself does in fact truly belong to the deposit of faith, this has not yet been determined by the definitive authority of the Church, and there might exist some discussion about it, as it is in our case.

The Salmanticenses give the following warning:

But observe, furthermore, that these two things are very different: *This proposition belongs to the faith*, and: *It belongs to the faith that this proposition belongs to the faith*. Indeed, in order that a proposition belongs to the faith, it is not required, among other things, that the definition of the Church be evident, or that it be clear enough to all, or that the fact of its definition be left without any doubt. And thus even if a proposition belongs to the faith in itself, and if many, even before the definition of the Church, assent to it by faith; nonetheless it is not of faith that such a proposition is of faith, and it is possible that some of the faithful are not giving to it an assent of faith. From this flows the fact that among theologians are often debated both the certainty of a given proposition and the kind of censure which the opposite doctrine would deserve.¹³

¹³ “Sed ulterius observa, haec duo longe differre: *Haec propositio est de fide: et, De fide est hanc propositionem esse de fide*. Cum enim ad hoc, ut aliqua propositio sit de fide, requiratur inter alia,

It is thus clear that anyone could deny, in good faith, the UPA argument, since although the great majority of theologians agree on it, a number of renowned theologians dissent from this more common opinion, and the Church herself has not settled this question authoritatively. One could not, therefore, be accused of heresy for that account. It is also plainly evident that no theologian ever considered the possibility of an apparently duly elected pope teaching heresy, which is the problem with which we are faced. It would therefore be vain today to abstract from the factual situation, and to conclude that such a situation is impossible. Reality is before us, and we cannot deny it. But we shall strive to explain how the common doctrine of theologians could be applied today.

Indeed, we do not even reject the common opinion on this question. We maintain that the theological principles laid out by eminent theologians are able to be perfectly reconciled with the principles and conclusions of the Thesis.

9. Answer to objection #3, second part: While we concede that certain statements of theologians, taken out of context and without proper understanding of the principles involved, would indeed contradict

quod Ecclesiae definitio non liquido constet, nec satis omnibus innotescat, sed sub aliquo dubio relinquatur, utrum propositio sit definita, neene? Et tunc licet propositio sit in se de fide, pluresque definitionem Ecclesiae penetrantes ei assentiantur per fidem; nihilominus de fide non est eam esse de fide, quocirca fieri potest, ut aliqui fideles ei assensum fidei non praestent. Et hinc procedit, quod inter Theologos controverti soleat circa certitudinem alicujus propositionis, et circa qualitatem censurae, quam doctrina contraria meretur.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 26).

the conclusions of the Thesis, we deny that these cannot be reconciled, by a proper analysis and understanding.

This objection, and the answer given to it, can only be understood after a thorough exposition of the question. We need to present the teaching of theologians concerning the objective strength of the UPA argument, and how it is arrived at: What, really, is the theological foundation upholding the proposition that a person accepted by UPA as “the reigning pope” is indeed the successor of St. Peter, and possesses supreme authority in the Church?

10. What theological note do theologians commonly ascribe to the UPA argument?

That a presently reigning and universally accepted pope is indeed a true pope is commonly classified as a “dogmatic fact” in a general sense of the term (which we shall explain below). The majority of theologians teach, as well, that it is a truth immediately of divine faith, and not a mere theological conclusion, or even less so, a mere moral certitude.

Let us here reproduce, by way of introduction, the brief explanation given by Father Sylvester Berry, with which the reader will already be able to appreciate the difficulty of the objection:

A dogmatic fact is one that has not been revealed, yet is so intimately connected with a doctrine of faith that without certain knowledge of the fact there can be no certain knowledge of the doctrine. For example, was the Vatican Council truly ecumenical? Was Pius IX a legitimate pope? Was the election of Pius IX valid? Such questions must be decided with certainty before decrees issued by any

council or pope can be accepted as infallibly true or binding on the Church. It is evident, then, that the Church must be infallible in judging such facts, and since the Church is infallible in believing as well as in teaching, it follows that the practically unanimous consent of the bishops and faithful in accepting a council as ecumenical, or a Roman Pontiff as legitimately elected, gives absolute and infallible certainty of the fact.

Whether a particular book or document contains heresy or true doctrine is also a dogmatic fact. Hence, the pope is infallible in condemning books as heretical if the condemnation is issued as an *ex cathedra* decision.¹⁴

To further the presentation of the strength of this objection, let us reproduce here a passage from Cardinal Billot's teaching on this question, where, using the UPA argument, he refutes the opinion of Savonarola, who claimed that Alexander VI was a heretic, and had therefore lost the papacy:

The following reason suffices to refute this opinion: it is indeed evident that when Savonarola was writing his letters to princes, all christendom adhered to Alexander and obeyed him as a true pontiff. Therefore, from this very fact, Alexander was not a false pontiff, but he was legitimate. Therefore he was not a heretic, at least not to the point that, by losing membership in the Church, it would, by the nature of things, deprive him of the pontifical power or any other ordinary jurisdiction.¹⁵

¹⁴ Sylvester Berry, *The Church of Christ*, 2nd edition, St. Louis, 1927, p. 507.

¹⁵ "...haec una sufficit: Constat nempe quod tempore quo Savonarola suas ad principes litteras

Now that we have presented an overview of the problem at hand, we will have to deepen our understanding of the principles involved in order to give a satisfying answer to this objection.

11. The UPA establishes a dogmatic fact, not in the stricter and technical sense, but only in a general and broader sense.

This distinction is commonly made by authors of different theological schools. Thus the Jesuit theologian Pesch explains:

In the broader sense a dogmatic fact is a fact connected to dogma in such a way that, if the fact is affirmed, dogma is affirmed, but if the fact is denied, dogma is denied. For example, the definitions of some ecumenical council are valid if the council is legitimate, hence the legitimacy of the council is a dogmatic fact.

In the stricter sense, it is a *doctrinal fact*, consisting in this: that in a certain book is contained an orthodox or heterodox doctrine. The judgment of the Church concerning this dogmatic fact regards two questions: a) whether a given doctrine is contained in a book or in some sentences (the actual meaning or the question of fact); b) whether this doctrine

scribebat, tota christianitas Alexandro adhaerebat et obediebat tanquam vero pontifici. Ergo eo ipso, Alexander non erat pontifex falsus, sed legitimus. Ergo non erat haereticus, ea saltem haecitate quae tollendo rationem membri Ecclesiae, pontificia potestate vel qualibet alia ordinaria jurisdictione ex natura rei consequenter privat." (Cardinal Billot, *De Ecclesia Christi*, T. I, Ed. 4^a, Rome, 1921, pp. 612-613).

conforms to right faith or not (the qualified sense or the question right).¹⁶

The majority of theologians explain things in a similar way.¹⁷

12. Corollary: The Thesis has recourse to the same principle, used by approved theologians, connecting the infallibility of definitions to the legitimacy of authority.

Let us here repeat the principle given by Pesch, in the number above:

A dogmatic fact is a fact connected to dogma in such a way that, if the fact is affirmed, dogma is affirmed, but if the fact is denied, dogma is denied. For

¹⁶ “Sensu latiore factum dogmaticum est factum ita nexum cum dogmate, ut stante facto dogma stet, ruente facto dogma ruat. E.g. definitiones alicujus concilii oecumenici solum valent, si concilium fuit legitimum, unde legitimitas concilii est factum dogmaticum. Strictiore sensu est *factum doctrinale, in eo consistens, quod in certo libro continetur doctrina orthodoxa aut heterodoxa*. Judicium ecclesiae de hoc facto dogmatico circa duas quaestiones versatur: a) num doctrina, de qua agitur, in libro vel verbis quibusdam contineatur (sensus qui seu quaestio facti); b) utrum haec doctrina sit conformis rectae fidei necne (sensus qualis seu quaestio juris).” (Pesch S.J., *Compendium Theologiae Dogmaticae*, T. I, Freiburg, 1913, n. 343, p. 250).

¹⁷ Cf. Van Noort (*De Ecclesia Christi*, Ed. 5^a, 1932, n. 89, p. 100); Mazzella (*De Religione et Ecclesia*, Rome, 1896, n. 817, p. 620); Vellico (*De Ecclesia*, Rome, 1933, pp. 487-488); Schultes O.P. (*De Ecclesia Catholica*, Paris, 1925, p. 315); Dieckmann S.J. (*De Ecclesia*, T. II, Freiburg, 1925, n. 834, p. 159); Bainvel (*De Magisterio Vivo et Traditione*, Paris, 1905, n. 106, p. 112); MacGuinness (*Commentarii Theologici*, T. I, Ed. 2^a, Paris, 1913, nn. 240-241, p. 329); Dorsh (*Institutiones theologiae fundamentalis*, Vol. II, *De Ecclesia Christi*, Innsbruck, 1914, p. 340); Lépicier (*De Ecclesia Christi*, Rome, 1935, p. 122).

example, the definitions of some ecumenical council are valid if the council is legitimate, hence the legitimacy of the council is a dogmatic fact.

Theologians clearly establish, therefore, a necessary connection between the legitimacy of an ecumenical council or a Roman Pontiff, and the infallibility of its dogmatic pronouncements. This is the key principle on which we have previously established, based on the indefectibility of the Church in her doctrine, discipline, and liturgy, that the “Vatican II popes” were not true popes, and that Vatican II could not be a legitimate ecumenical council.

Pesch affirms: “**The definitions of some ecumenical council are valid IF the council is legitimate**” (emphasis added).

From a conditional proposition of this sort, the traditional rules given to us by logicians could draw a valid argument in two ways, thus summarized by Msgr Glenn, in his famous *Dialectics*:

From the truth of the antecedent follows the truth of the consequent, but not vice versa; and from the falsity of the consequent follows the falsity of the antecedent, but not vice versa.¹⁸

We thus can make two valid arguments based on the conditional principle given by Pesch:

(1) By affirming that the condition is verified, one must *necessarily* conclude that the consequent is also verified.

Let us consider the example of the following conditional proposition: “If it rains, we shall not play.” It is clear that when the

¹⁸ Glenn, *Dialectics*, St. Louis, 1954, pp. 140-141. This law of conditional syllogism is universally recognized and accepted.

condition is verified (i.e. “it is in fact raining”), then the consequent must be affirmed: “we shall not play.”

Thus, if indeed a council is recognized as legitimate, then its definitions must necessarily be valid.

This method of argumentation is referred to by logicians as the “put-method”: by affirming the antecedent (the condition) one *must* affirm the consequent (the conclusion).

It is the method used by theologians to argue that it is necessary for the Church to be certain of the legitimacy of a council (or Roman Pontiff) in order to accept its decisions.

But the other side of the coin, based on the same starting principle, is:

(2) By denying that the consequent is verified, one must *necessarily* deny that the antecedent (the condition) has been fulfilled.

Let us apply this rule to the example given above: “If it rains, we shall not play.” When the consequent is denied, then the antecedent is denied. This means that if “we shall not play” is false, then “it rains” is necessarily false as well. In other words, we could rephrase it thus: “if we shall play, then it is not raining.”¹⁹

Thus, to deny that the pronouncements of a council (or of a Roman Pontiff) are valid is to logically and necessarily deny the very legitimacy of the said council (or Roman

¹⁹ These two methods of argumentation are the only legitimate ones. Thus, from the example provided, “if it rains, we shall not play,” we can deduce only two arguments: “it rains, therefore we shall not play”; and “we shall play, therefore it is not raining.” Other arguments, such as “we shall not play, therefore it is raining,” are not legitimate and are not necessary, since we could cancel the game for another reason than the rain. But it is absolutely certain that if we indeed play, then it necessarily means that it is not raining.

Pontiff).

This method of argumentation is referred to by logicians as the “take-method”: by denying the consequent one *must* deny the antecedent (the condition).

This method of argumentation has the same strength as the first one. Hence, instead of being opposed to the Thesis, the argument brought forth by theologians in discussing this question is the same key principle which necessarily binds the legitimacy of pronouncements, laws, and decisions to the legitimacy of the authority promulgating these pronouncements, laws and decisions.

13. The heart of the debate among theologians is about the theological note to give to the proposition that X. (*X being the universally accepted pope*) is indeed a true pope, successor of St. Peter, endowed with supreme jurisdiction and infallibility.

The question is thus presented by Billuart:

There is none among Catholics who would not consider as something certain that Clement XIV, or whoever actually is reigning, is the supreme pontiff, but by a diverse degree of certainty. Some hold this by a mere moral certitude, others by a theological certitude, yet others, more commonly, and with whom we agree, by a certainty of faith.²⁰

The common opinion of the thomists, which is defended by Billuart, the Salmanticenses,

²⁰ “Nullus est inter catholicos qui non certo teneat Clementem XIV, vel quemcumque alium actu sedentem, esse summum pontificem, sed diverso gradu certitudinis. Quidam tenent id certum certitudine morali tantum, quidam certitudine theologica, alii et communius, quibus subscribimus, certitudine fidei.” (Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, Ed. Lequette, T. III, Paris, 1872, Dessert. IV, Art. IX).

and John of St. Thomas, among others, seems to be that the proposition belongs immediately to the faith. But let us first explain what it means.

14. On mediate and immediate faith.

The Salmanticenses give the following presentation, which is classical:

In order to understand the other terms it must be explained that a proposition can belong to the faith in two ways. It can belong to the faith, first, in an immediate way, when we should assent to it by an assent of faith, which happens when a proposition is immediately revealed by God, whether by itself, or in some universal proposition. Of this kind is the following proposition: *Christ is a man*. A proposition can belong to the faith, secondly, when the proposition is not revealed by God, but is necessarily deduced from another truth revealed by God, in which it is contained as an effect is contained in the cause. To such a proposition we do not assent by faith, but by theology. Of this kind is the following proposition: *Christ is risible*.²¹

In this context, and in the minds of the theologians and philosophers using this

²¹ “Pro aliorum vero terminorum intelligentia observandum est, dupliciter posse aliquam propositionem esse de fide: uno modo immediate, quando nimirum ei debemus assentiri per assensum a fide elicatum, quod accidit cum propositio est a Deo immediate revelata, vel seorsim, vel in aliqua universali; et ita se habet haec veritas, *Christus est homo*. Altero modo quando propositio non est revelata a Deo, deducitur tamen necessario ex alia a Deo revelata, in qua includitur tanquam effectus in causa; et huic propositioni non assentimur per fidem, sed per Theologiam: et ita se habet haec veritas, *Christus est risibilis*.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 25).

argument, to be “risible” means to have the ability to laugh. The ability to laugh is a property of human nature, called *risibility*. It is in this sense that the term “risible” is used here.

Thus, if a truth is immediately revealed by God, it is a truth of faith, in the strict sense, meaning that it is directly found in Sacred Scripture and, or, Tradition. Thus it is clearly revealed by God, directly, that *Christ is a man*. Billuart also mentions the fact that something could be immediately revealed, in a way which is implicitly contained in a universal proposition. For example, it is a truth of faith that *all men descend from Adam and Eve*. This is a *universal* proposition, meaning that it applies to an entire category of subjects: *all men*. Hence not only is it revealed, universally, that *all men descend from Adam and Eve*, but implicitly, as well, that every man, taken in particular, does indeed descend from Adam and Eve. Thus if Peter, Paul and John are men, then it is of faith that *Peter, Paul, and John descend from Adam and Eve*.

If, on the other hand, a proposition is not directly and immediately revealed by God, but must be deduced logically, by the intermediary of a natural truth, then that proposition cannot be said to be immediately revealed, but rather it is said to be *mediately* revealed, that is, it can be said to be revealed through the *mediation* of a truth of the natural order. Hence it is the truth of the natural order that *a man is risible*; it flows from the nature of man to be able to laugh. It is always true to say that the rational nature of man includes the ability to laugh, risibility, and thus it can be said that *all men are risible*. Now, since it is revealed that *Christ is man*, we can **deduce**, through the

mediation of a philosophical truth (*All men are risible*), that *Christ is risible*, that is, able to laugh. Thus many theologians consider this truth (*Christ is risible*) to be of mediate faith, or mediately revealed.

As a conclusion, let us here remind the reader that the Church is infallible in defining both immediately revealed truths, and mediately revealed truths, but the first kind opposes the faith directly, while the other contradicts the faith only *logically*, and thus, indirectly. Hence, to contradict an immediately revealed truth is a heresy, in the strict sense of the term, while to deny a mediately revealed truth is usually classified as an error. Thus the Salmanticenses conclude on this matter:

From this difference, it follows that to dissent from a proposition which is immediately of faith is a heresy; while to dissent from a proposition which is only mediately of faith is not a heresy, but an error in the faith, according to the common censure of Theologians.²²

15. How could the fact that a recognized pope be indeed the supreme Pontiff belong immediately to the faith?

After refuting a number of false arguments, some of which have been presented above in the first objections, the *Salmanticenses* present their conclusion, which is shared by many theologians:

It must be said that this proposition, *Innocent XI is the supreme Pontiff of the Church*, belongs immediately to the faith,

²² “Ex hac autem differentia oritur, quod dissentire propositioni, quae immediate est de fide, sit haeresis; dissentire autem propositioni, quae solum mediate est de fide, non sit haeresis, sed error in fide, juxta communem Theologorum censuram.” (Salmanticenses, *ibid.*)

in such a way that the assent which is due to it is immediately elicited by the virtue of faith. This conclusion is not found among the Scholastics and older Theologians, because they did not address this difficulty in those terms. But it can be deduced from what they openly taught. Among recent authors, however, this conclusion is very common.²³

And a list is provided of theologians who agreed with the Salmanticenses on this conclusion: Suarez, John of St. Thomas, Gonet, Lugo, etc.

The main argument is then presented as follows:

A particular proposition which is contained in a universal proposition revealed to the entire Church is immediately of faith, just like the universal itself is. But this proposition, *Innocent XI is the supreme Pontiff of the Church*, is contained in a universal proposition revealed to the whole Church. Therefore such a proposition is immediately of faith.²⁴

In other words, since the proposition *Every man duly elected to be the pope is the supreme*

²³ “Dicendum est hanc propositionem, Innocentius XI est Summus Ecclesiae Pontifex, pertinere immediate ad fidem, ita ut assensus illi debitus a fide immediate eliciatur. Haec conclusio non invenitur expresse apud Scholasticos, et Theologos antiquiores; quia difficultatem istam in propriis terminis non tractarunt; deducitur tamen ex iis, quae palam docuerunt. Inter Modernos autem est valde communis.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 33).

²⁴ “Propositio particularis contenta in universali toti Ecclesiae revelata est immediate de fide, sicut ipsa universalis: sed haec propositio, *Innocentius XI est Summus Ecclesiae Pontifex*, continetur in propositione universali toti Ecclesiae revelata: ergo hujusmodi propositio est immediate de fide.” (Salmanticenses, *ibid.*)

Pontiff of the Church is a universal proposition immediately revealed by God, it follows that, in particular, presuming that a given reigning pope has been legitimately elected to the papacy, it is of faith that he is the supreme Pontiff of the Church.

The Salmenticensis provide some examples to illustrate the logic behind their argument:

It is confirmed and explained further: there is no other reason why this particular proposition, *Salomon sinned in Adam*, belongs immediately to the faith, except because it is contained in the following universal proposition: *All men sinned in Adam*. This can be developed thus: *All children of Adam sinned in him* (meaning through him they all incurred original sin). *But Salomon is a child of Adam. Therefore Salomon sinned in Adam*. And it is impossible to deny this particular proposition without contradicting this universal proposition revealed by God.

For the same reason, he to whom it is certain that a particular infant has been duly baptized could, and must, believe him to be in the state of grace, because God has revealed the following universal proposition: *Any duly baptized infant receives grace*. It can indeed be thus construed: *Any duly baptized infant is in the state of grace. But this infant is duly baptized. Therefore this infant is in the state of grace*. And it is impossible to deny the assent of faith to this particular proposition without also denying the assent of faith to the universal one.

But the exact same reasoning is also true in our case. Indeed God has revealed to the whole Church this universal proposition: *Any man duly elected to be the successor of Peter is the supreme*

Pontiff of the Church. And it is otherwise certain that Innocent XI has been duly elected to be the successor of Peter, since this is presumed, and is evident from the universal consent itself. Therefore this particular proposition, *Innocent XI is the supreme Pontiff*, immediately belongs to the faith.²⁵

16. The certitude of the particular premise in this explicative syllogism.

According to the common explanation of theologians, as we have explained, the conclusion that, for example, *Innocent XI is the supreme Pontiff*, belongs to the faith, is not strictly speaking *deduced*, but rather *shown to be included* in a universal proposition which belongs to the faith. We

²⁵ “Confirmatur, et declaratur amplius: non alia ratione haec particularis, *Salomon peccavit in Adam*, est immediate de fide, nisi quia continetur in illa universali, *Omnes in Adam peccaverunt*; quae continentia explicatur sic: *Omnes filii Adae peccaverunt in eo: Salomon est filius Adae: ergo peccavit in eo*; nemoque potest hanc particularem negare, nisi falsificando illam universalem a Deo revelatam. Hac etiam de causa ille, cui certo constaret hunc particularem infantem esse rite baptizatum, posset, et deberet credere illum esse in gratia; quia hanc universalem revelavit Deus, *Omnis infans rite baptizatus consequitur gratiam*; sic enim convinceretur: *Omnis infans baptizatus est in gratia: Hic infans est rite baptizatus: ergo hic infans est in gratia*; et minime posset huic particulari negare assensum fidei, nisi illum negaret universali. Atqui eadem prorsus ratio militat in nostro casu, siquidem hanc universalem: *Omnis homo rite electus in successorem Petri est Summus Ecclesiae Pontifex*, Deus toti Ecclesiae revelavit; et aliunde certo constat Innocentium XI fuisse rite electum in successorem Petri, siquidem hoc supponitur, et satis liquet ex ipso universali consensu. Ergo haec particularis, *Innocentius XI est Summus Pontifex*, est immediate de fide.” (Salmanticensis, *ibid.*)

have explained how it can be developed into the following syllogism:

Any man duly elected to be the successor of Peter is the supreme Pontiff of the Church. But Innocent XI has been duly elected to be the successor of Peter. Therefore Innocent XI is the supreme Pontiff of the Church.

This is not really a *deductive* syllogism or an *argumentation*, but rather an *explanation* or *explicative* syllogism.

We have explained how, since the universal premise belongs to the faith, and the particular premise is shown to be included in the universal premise, we must infer that the conclusion itself belongs to the faith: *Innocent XI is the supreme Pontiff of the Church.*

But this conclusion is entirely based on that particular premise: that *Innocent XI has indeed been duly elected as the successor of St. Peter.*

The question then arises: What is the certitude itself of this particular premise? And if it is a simple observation of moral certitude, could the conclusion still belong to the faith? In what sense? We need to deepen our understanding of certitude, before we may address this difficulty.

17. On moral certitude.

Moral certitude in scholastic philosophy and theology refers to a certainty of the moral order. This means that the thing has not been physically verified (because then one would have a *physical* certitude), nor has it been proven to flow from the nature of things (which would give *metaphysical* certitude), but it relies on what is normal and common in human life, and which would be enough of

a reason to act prudently. It excludes the probability of the opposite, but does not exclude the intrinsic possibility of it.

For example, one who sees the rain outside has a *physical* certitude that it is raining, because he has physical evidence of it.

The fact that no square could ever be of a round shape is a *metaphysical* certitude, which is evident to the mind once the natures of “square” and “circle” are known. It does not have to be experienced, or attempted, to be recognized as impossible.

The fact that there is no gorilla hiding under your bed at night is a *moral* certitude, however, since although it is not impossible in itself that there one day be a gorilla under your bed, it is not probable at all, and this possibility should not be even considered seriously. This means that it would be irrational to check under your bed every night, to acquire *physical* certainty that there is indeed no gorilla under your bed. A *moral* certitude is sufficient in this case.

18. Moral certitude in the UPA argument.

In the case of the papacy, a few theologians have defended the legitimacy of a reigning pope as a *moral* certitude. It would be irrational and even scandalous to think that the pope is not the pope, so they say, but it is not impossible in itself. Hence a reason could be discovered (for example, that he was invalidly baptized) which would show that he was not a true pope.

The same thing could be argued about a consecrated host in the tabernacle. It is of faith that a consecrated host is the Body of Christ. Yet, it is not in itself impossible that a host be invalidly consecrated, for different reasons: perhaps the priest himself had been invalidly ordained, or he mispronounced the

words of consecration, etc. What kind of certainty do we have, therefore, that a host truly contains the Body of Christ? We have a moral certainty: a certainty which is sufficient for prudent action, and hence we must adore the host. Although indeed it is *possible* that the host be invalidly consecrated, if we have no positive indication towards such a doubt, it would be irrational and imprudent to even consider it.

Some people have argued in the past that, on account of the *possibility* that a host be invalidly consecrated, one should always adore the host conditionally. Cardinal Cajetan, commenting on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas²⁶, clearly answered that the host should be adored not *conditionally*, but *absolutely*, and in his answer he actually made the parallel with the case of the supreme Pontiff, saying:

It is manifest that we venerate the supreme Pontiff in an absolute way, and also the other Bishops. And yet according to the fear that they have, they would have to be venerated in a conditional way, since who knows, if so and so was baptized? and who knows if the person baptizing him had the intention to confer the sacrament of baptism?²⁷

²⁶ “The faith of the believer is not directed to such and such accidents of bread, but to the fact that the true body of Christ is under the appearances of sensible bread, when it is rightly consecrated. Hence if it be not rightly consecrated, it does not follow that anything false comes under faith.” (II-II, q. I, a. III, ad 4).

²⁷ “Manifeste adoramus summum Pontificem absolute, et similiter alios Episcopos. Et tamen secundum istorum timorem sub conditione essent venerandi, quia quis scit, si iste fuit baptizatus? et si ille, qui baptizavit eum, habuit intentionem conferendi Sacramentum Baptismi?” (Cajetan, II-II, Q. I, Art. 3, ad 4).

Cardinal Cajetan explains the reason:

A human act is morally good when it has a proper object and is done when, how, where, etc., it ought to be done. But such is the voluntary act of the one believing in an absolute way that this host is consecrated. *Ergo*. The minor is proven. It is true that, at least in most cases, hosts are rightly consecrated, and this is true unless there is an impediment. Hence it follows that if there seems to be no impediment at all, the act of the believer bears on a proper object, namely, inasmuch as it is in most cases, and inasmuch as there appears no rational impediment in this particular case.”²⁸

The application of these principles to the UPA argument is evident: if there appears no reason to doubt that so and so has been properly elected and has properly accepted the election, then one ought not to doubt it, and ought to act accordingly, believing in an absolute way that so and so is indeed the legitimate pope. To doubt it without reason would indeed make one suspect of denying a truth of faith, as explained above, namely, that a man duly elected as successor of St. Peter really is the supreme pontiff.

Thus, in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and Cajetan, the fact that one has

²⁸ “Actus humanus cadens super debita materia quando, sicut, ubi, etc., oportet, est bonus moraliter: sed actus voluntarius credentis absolute hanc hostiam esse consecratam est huiusmodi: ergo. Probatur minor. Quia cum, ut in pluribus saltem, sit verum hostias rite consecrari; et quod ut in pluribus invenitur, nisi impedimentum aliquod adsit, verificetur: consequens est ut, nullo apparente quovis modo impedimento, actus credentis feratur super materia debita, scilicet vero ut in pluribus et in hoc singulari non impedito, quantum apparet rationabiliter.” (*loc. cit.*)

only a moral certitude about the consecration of a host, does not impede one from making an act of faith in the Real Presence of Christ, in an absolute way.

In Cajetan's view, therefore, an immediate act of faith is not incompatible with a premise whose certainty is only a moral certitude.

It is true, however, that many theologians have positively asserted that the certitude of this particular premise, *Innocent XI is the duly elected successor of St. Peter*, far surpasses the moral certitude that a host has been duly consecrated. We shall now address this objection.

FOURTH ARTICLE

IS NOT THE UPA AN INFALLIBLE SIGN THAT THE POPE-ELECT IS LEGITIMATE?

19. Objection #4: Some renowned theologians have taught that the UPA gives an infallible certainty non only that the election was legitimate on the part of the Church electing and accepting the elect, but also on the part of the elect, namely, that he is indeed able to be elected, and has all the requirements necessary to receive the papacy.

We have presented the analogy which Cardinal Cajetan makes between the fact that a host is truly consecrated and the fact that a pope has truly been elected. This analogy was rejected as being too weak by many theologians, who argue that the canonical designation of the pope belongs to the very indefectibility of the Church. For if the Church could be universally misled in this matter, they argue, then (1) the very apostolic succession could be lost; and (2) the whole Church would adhere to a false rule of faith. We will analyze and answer this objection in great detail. Let us first reproduce the teachings brought in support of this objection.

First, the Dominican De Groot expresses his disagreement with Cajetan, saying:

If the minor premise is not positively and *evidently certain*, the conclusion cannot be of faith. In regard to *contingent facts*, a conclusion of faith cannot be had, unless the certainty of the fact absolutely excludes all doubt. Therefore this proposition: “This host ought to be adored” is not believed by divine faith. For although the major premise is revealed: “All duly consecrated host is

worthy of adoration”; the minor premise, however, that “this very host is indeed duly consecrated,” is only morally certain. However, a contingent fact is sometimes so certain, that any doubt whatsoever is evidently removed. In this case the conclusion seems to be of faith, since it is merely a *particular instance* of the major premise. Thus the proposition “Pius X has been duly elected Roman Pontiff” cannot be put into doubt after the acceptance of the Church, by which even an illegitimate election can be ratified. For this reason the Salmanticenses, Billuart, and others, argue that in the following syllogism the

conclusion most probably belongs to the faith.²⁹

Since De Groot makes reference to the Salmanticenses and to Billuart, let us here reproduce a few passages from their works, to complement the objection taken from De Groot.

Thus Billuart says:

Hence there is a distinction with the host: for the Church does not declare that this host has been consecrated, and is therefore contained in the universal premise; while the Church does declare practically (*in actu exercito*) that Clement XIV is accepted by the Church as a successor of St. Peter.³⁰

²⁹ “Si minor positive et evidenter certa non sit, conclusio esse de fide non potest. Quod ad facta contingentia attinet, conclusio de fide non habetur, nisi facti certitudo omne dubium prorsus excludat. Proinde haec propositio: *haec hostia adoranda est*, fide divina non creditur; quamvis enim major revelata sit: *omnis hostia rite consecrata est adoranda*, minor tamen: *haec numero hostia rite consecrata est*, moraliter tantum vera habetur. Verumtamen factum contingens quandoque tam certum est, ut quovis dubium evidenter excludatur. Quo in casu conclusio, ut pars certa majoris, esse de fide videtur. Sic illa propositio: *Pius X. Romanus Pontifex rite electus est*, accedente ecclesiae acceptione, qua etiam electio illegitima rata fit, in dubium revocari non potest. Quamobrem Salmanticenses, Billuart et alii judicant, esse probabilius de fide conclusionem, quae ex hujusmodi ratiocinatione sequitur: *Omnis homo rite electus in successorem Petri est Summus ecclesiae Pontifex. Atqui Pius X. est rite in successorem Petri electus. Ergo est Summus ecclesiae Pontifex.*” (De Groot, *Summa Apologetica de Ecclesia Catholica*, Ratisbonne, 1906, q. X, art. VI, p. 385).

³⁰ “Unde est disparitas de hostia: Ecclesia enim non declarat hanc hostiam esse consecratam, adeoque contineri sub universali, sicut in actu exercito declarat Clementem XIV esse acceptatum

The Salmanticenses explain further:

The active election, on the part of the Church, is evidently certain to us by quasi sensible and experimental evidence. Now to this active election, on the part of the Church, corresponds infallibly a passive election, or ability, on the part of the elect... For although these conditions are in themselves contingent, they become infallible by their relation to the universal judgment of the whole Church, and on account of the promise of Christ. They are known indeed by the following reasoning: “The Church does not err in things which belong to faith and morals. But the universal Church has elected Innocent XI as the pope, for which it is required that he be a man, and that he be baptized. Therefore Innocent XI has these conditions.”³¹

Both Suarez and John of St. Thomas present a similar argumentation. It is founded on two arguments: (1) the promises of indefectibility made by Christ to the Church, which demand that the Church may never universally designate or accept a false head, since it would lead to the loss of apostolicity. It is also founded (2) on the fact

ab Ecclesia in Petri successorem.” (Billuart, *loc. cit.*).

³¹ “Electio activa, et ex parte Ecclesiae, nobis certo constat evidenter evidētia quasi sensibili, et experimentalī; huic autem infallibiliter correspondet electio passiva, sive capacitas ex parte electi... Licet enim ipsae [conditiones] sint secundum se contingentes, redduntur infallibiles per habitudinem ad iudicium universale totius Ecclesiae, et ad promissionem Christi. Cognoscuntur autem hoc discursu: ‘Ecclesia non errat in his, quae pertinent ad fidem, et mores: sed Ecclesia universalis elegit Innocentium XI, in Pontificem, ad quod requiritur, quod sit vir, et baptizatus: ergo Innocentius habet has conditiones’.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 43).

that the Church may never follow a false rule of faith.

20. Answer to objection #4: These principles can be reconciled with the Thesis, by applying traditional theological distinctions.

The Thesis is able to account for both aspects of this argument: (1) the Thesis does not contradict the infallibility of a universal recognition of the election, since it does not contest the election. On the other hand, (2) the Thesis clearly establishes that not the whole Church was misled by the false rule of faith of the “Vatican II popes,” thus satisfying the demands of the *passive infallibility*, or *infallibility in belief*, by which it is impossible that the entire *learning Church* be led astray from the faith.

21. First observation: These theologians always presuppose a legitimate election, in the full sense of the term.

In perfect accordance with the principles on which the Thesis is founded, it is clear, in the mind of these great theologians, that the election is not fully achieved for as long as consent has not been given by the elect, to become pope and successor of St. Peter. Thus the Salmanticenses, when they explain what they mean by a “legitimate election,” clearly require the proper consent of the elect:

This is perfectly achieved when the elect consents to the election by accepting the Pontificate; because there is then a mutual consent which corroborates itself mutually, and a spiritual marriage is contracted between the Church and the

Pope, between the members and the head, between the sheep and the pastor.³²

We have shown elsewhere how this consent, which must be externally manifested, is internal by its very essence. A internally vitiated consent would render this “spiritual marriage” invalid in reality and before God, although it has been legally contracted.

22. Hence, when theologians argue that the UPA is an infallible sign of the legitimacy of a reigning pontiff, based on the infallible faculty of the Church to designate her head, and to not be universally mistaken about it, they do not assert anything contrary to the Thesis.

It is, however, a real difficulty for those who deny the very legitimacy of the elections of John XXIII and his successors. This is particularly true if they base their argumentation on a claim of “public heresy.” For they would then be faced with the contradictory assertion that John XXIII’s heresy would be public enough to render his election invalid, while this election was publicly and universally recognized. Such an assertion would directly contradict the teaching of theologians asserting that the Church is infallible in the universal recognition of a legitimate election.³³

³² “Quod perfecte absoluitur, cum electus consentit in electionem acceptando Pontificatum; tunc quippe adest mutuus consensus mutuo se corroborans, perficiturque matrimonium spirituale inter Ecclesiam et Papam; inter membra et caput; inter oves, et pastorem.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 24).

³³ And even if one were to admit, for the sake of argument, their premise that the election was invalid due to the personal heresy of the elect; the UPA would still provide a legal presumption of

To suppose that one could put into doubt the legitimacy of a universally recognized election would destroy the very certainty of the Church. Suarez explains:

Catholic truth could not subsist, nor the certitude of which is Christ's only Church, since these depend altogether on the union with the true head, and requires true and legitimate priests, pastors, and ecclesiastical hierarchy. But all these things depend on whether or not the true and legitimate Pontiff, taken individually, is certain. And the reason why I could doubt the legitimacy of one Pontiff would allow me to doubt the legitimacy of his predecessor, and thus of the entire series before them. Therefore, one could also doubt the legitimacy of the bishops and cardinals which they have created, and **thus any certainty of the true Church and of the hierarchical order would be ruined.** How could the heretics be refuted, who argue that true succession has ceased at least from the time of Pope Urban. They indeed seem to infer that it could not anymore be certain enough, whether he has truly succeeded

to the supreme pontiff, or where among the nations is the true visible Church.³⁴

Thus, according to Suarez, to deny the absolute certainty of a universally recognized election would destroy the very certainty of the visible Church, since it would put into doubt its very apostolic succession. The Thesis, which insists on the continuity of a legitimate material succession, explained elsewhere, is in perfect agreement with this statement. On the contrary, a certain brand of *sedevacantism* which argues that all the episcopal sees of the entire world are now both factually and legally vacant, on account of public heresy, contradicts these demands of theology. This system is theologically impossible. It does not merely assert that the see of Peter and the episcopal sees are in fact vacant, it implicitly denies the possibility to ever fill them again. This brand of *sedevacantism* would do well to rebrand itself as *ecclesiavacantism*, since the see is not merely vacant, but has itself disappeared, and the entire Church together with it.

³⁴ “Imo neque catholica veritas et certitudo hujus numero Ecclesiae posset recte consistere, quia haec maxime pendet ex conjunctione cum vero capite, requiritque veros ac legitimos sacerdotes, pastores, et ecclesiasticam hierarchiam; at haec omnia pendent ex eo quod verus et legitimus Pontifex in individuo sit certus, et qua ratione possum dubitare de hoc Pontifice, potero et de antecessore, atque adeo de tota retro serie; ergo de veritate Episcoporum et Cardinalium qui ab his creati sunt; atque ita ruet tota certitudo verae Ecclesiae et hierarchici ordinis: quomodo argumentantur haeretici, contententes a tempore saltem Urbani Papae defecisse veram successionem; hinc enim satis sibi videntur inferre jam non posse esse certum, an vere Summo Pontifici succedatur, aut ubi gentium vera Ecclesia visibilis extent.” (Suarez, *Opera Omnia*, T. XII, tract. *de Fide*, Disp. X, S. V, Emphasis added).

validity which would have to be publicly broken by an authoritative statement to the contrary.

23. Second observation: The infallibility of the UPA is not the same as an infallible definition.

An infallible definition is proclaimed by the *Teaching Church* (“*Ecclesia docens*”), which is endowed with *active infallibility*. This always presupposes the presence of a real supreme pontiff, which is the very thing being now discussed. Hence, for a pope to define that he is the pope as a way of establishing the fact that he is indeed the pope would be a circular reasoning, since such a “definition” would be valid only if he is the pope, to begin with.

Rather, theologians explain that the UPA is covered by *passive infallibility*, which is the infallibility of the *Learning Church* (“*Ecclesia discens*”), also called *infallibility in believing*.

This is alluded to by MacGuinness, who gives a reference to Franzelin,³⁵ where this great theologian discusses certain aspects of indefectibility and infallibility of the Church when the see of Rome is vacant. MacGuinness says of this infallibility of universal acceptance:

However this infallibility ought perhaps to be called infallibility in believing and *in preaching*, rather than infallibility in defining.³⁶

Father Berry says similarly:

Since the Church is infallible in

³⁵ Franzelin, *Theses De Ecclesia Christi*, Th. XIII, Rome, 1887.

³⁶ “Haec tamen forsitan dicenda esset infallibilitas in credendo et praedicando, potius quam in definiendo.” (MacGuinness C.M., *Commentarii Theologici*, T. I, Ed. 2^a, Paris, 1913, n. 240, p. 329).

believing as well as in teaching, it follows that the practically unanimous consent of the bishops and faithful in accepting a council as ecumenical, or a Roman Pontiff as legitimately elected, gives absolute and infallible certainty of the fact.³⁷

Now, in order to properly apply the principle in question, we need to deepen our knowledge of *passive infallibility*.

24. The notion of passive infallibility.

De Groot explains this classical distinction commonly established by theologians between active and passive infallibility:

Passive infallibility is immunity of the Church from error in *believing* and in *learning*; *active* infallibility is immunity from error in *teaching*. In this thesis it must be asked in general whether the prerogatives of infallibility have been granted to the Church. We understand the Church here to be the group of the faithful, both of those that learn and of those that teach. The infallibility of this Church in *believing* and in *professing* is contained in those things which follow. [1] The faith of the Church is not able to defect. [2] The Church is not able to defect in believing. This must be understood in the sense that it cannot be deceived by an error, even through no fault of its own, and that it cannot be moved to error even unknowingly. [3] Not only was the ancient Church incapable of erring, but also the Church which now exists, and that which will be until the consummation of the world,

³⁷ Emphasis added. Sylvester Berry, *The Church of Christ*, 2nd edition, St. Louis, 1927, p. 507.

cannot err in faith, and will not err in faith.³⁸

Passive infallibility guarantees that the Church never loses the faith universally, and that it adheres to the definitions given by the Teaching Church, endowed with active infallibility. Thus passive infallibility guarantees both aspects of the question at hand: (1) the universal recognition of an election is infallible. On the other hand, (2) the Church cannot be universally misled by a false rule of faith. These two aspects are actually similar, as we shall see when presenting Cardinal Franzelin's teaching, since it protects the Learning Church both from universal heresy and from universal schism.

25. Passive infallibility ensures infallibility of a universally recognized election.

Passive infallibility makes the *Learning Church* ("Ecclesia discens") to be always docile to the doctrinal directives of the *Teaching Church* ("Ecclesia docens"). This docile conformity to the definitions of faith is infallible: the *Learning Church* will indeed always conform to the doctrine taught by the *Teaching Church*. It is therefore impossible that the *Teaching Church*, endowed with active infallibility, become forever lost or unknowable to the *Learning Church*. The *Learning Church*, although it cannot make definitions of faith, will always infallibly know where to find these infallible definitions of the Church and the truth of Catholic doctrine; in other words, it is *passively infallible* in knowing which subject must be endowed with the charism of active

³⁸ De Groot, *op. cit.*, Q. VIII, Art. III.

infallibility. This is demanded by passive infallibility, since otherwise there would be no way to infallibly embrace the definitions pronounced by the *Teaching Church*.

As a consequence, an imperfect general council, that is, a council of the bishops of the Church deprived of its head, the pope, which cannot represent the *Teaching Church*, and therefore cannot pronounce definitions, since it is deprived of its necessary head, would however represent adequately the universal *Learning Church*, in such a way as to decide the identity of the Roman Pontiff.

This is clearly taught by St. Robert Bellarmine, when speaking of the Council of Constance:

For, even if the council without a pope cannot define new doctrines of faith, still it can judge in a time of schism who is the true pope, and provide a true shepherd for the Church when there is not one, or there is a doubtful one, and this is what the Council of Constance rightly did.³⁹

In relation to this passive infallibility of the Church in providing for a new pope, Cardinal Franzelin teaches very explicitly the indefectibility of the Church in both procuring and recognizing a new pope:

Just as the truth of the faith [cannot be universally lost] against heresy, so also it must be said for the same reason about the unity of communion against universal schism. The law and the divine

³⁹ "Concilium sine Papa non potest definire nova dogmata fidei; potest tamen judicare tempore schismatis, quis sit verus Papa, et providere Ecclesiae de vero Pastore, quando is nullus est aut dubius, et hoc est quod recte fecit Concilium Constantiense." (St. Robert Bellarmine, *De Conciliis*, L. II, C. 19, ad 3^m).

promise of a perpetual succession in the see of Peter, as in its root and the center of Catholic unity, does indeed remain. And to this law and promise corresponds on the part of the Church not only a right and a duty, but even **an indefectibility in legitimately procuring and receiving the succession**, and in keeping the unity of communion with the see of Peter even when it is vacant, on account of the successor who is therein expected and will come without failing.⁴⁰

In the mind of Cardinal Franzelin, passive infallibility protects the Learning Church both from universal heresy and from universal schism, which are the two aspects of our discussion. We have already explained how the argument of an infallible election, so to speak, does not contradict the Thesis. We now need to address the indefectibility of the Church in refusing to follow a false rule of faith.

26. What does passive infallibility ensure, with regard to the rule of faith?

Some theologians have compared the infallibility of the Church in universally recognizing a reigning Pontiff as the proximate rule of faith to the infallibility of the Church in recognizing the remote rule of

⁴⁰ Emphasis added. “Idem quod de veritate fidei contra haeresim, dicendum etiam est ex eadem ratione de unitate communionis contra schisma universale. Manet enim lex et promissio divina perpetuae successionis in sede Petri ut radice et centro catholicae unitatis, huicque legi et promissioni respondet ex parte Ecclesiae non modo jus et officium sed etiam indefectibilitas in legitime procuranda et suscipienda successione et in servanda unitate communionis cum sede Petrina etiam vacante, intuitu successoris in ea expectandi et indefectibiliter futuri.” (Franzelin, *Theses De Ecclesia Christi*, Th. XIII, Rome, 1887, p. 228).

faith of Sacred Scripture. Thus Suarez makes the following argument:

Indeed it must then be most certainly believed that an error could never happen in the universal Church concerning so serious a matter, such as would be an error about the very living rule of faith to be believed, for this error is equivalent to an error in the faith. If indeed the rule could be false, even regularly, and if there would be an intolerable error in the Church, were she to universally consider some book as canonical when it really is not, that book being however an inanimate rule of faith, it would be much more intolerable for the Church to err about the living rule of faith.⁴¹

The Church has, however, defined by living magisterium which books are in fact inspired, and which are not inspired. The Church does not, properly speaking, “define” that a man is in fact the true pope, by the UPA. This will be confirmed by the analysis of the case of past popes.

In the case of inspired books of Sacred Scripture, the Council of Trent has defined the authenticity of the Vulgate, in the sense that it is the official Latin translation of Sacred Scripture, and that it is free from error against faith or morals. To issue this definition, the Council of Trent based itself on the fact that the Vulgate has been

⁴¹ “Tunc enim certissime credendum est non potest accidere errorem in universali Ecclesia in re adeo gravi, qualis esset deceptio in ipsa viva regula fidei credenda, nam is error aequiparatur errori in fide; si enim regula posset esse falsa, etiam regulatim, atque si intolerabilis error esset in Ecclesia, quando tota crederet librum aliquem esse canonicum, qui vere non esset, cum tamen ille sit quaedam regula fidei inanimata, multo intolerabilius esset errare in viva regula.” (Suarez, *loc. cit.*).

universally used: the indefectibility of the Church is itself an infallible sign of the authenticity of the Vulgate.

It does not mean, however, that the Vulgate can never be amended or corrected, to be better conformed to the original text. The Vulgate has been declared free of errors against the faith, but this translation is not thereby to be declared free from errors of translation or transcription, which would not compromise the faith, such as the name of a place, or the age of a man, or other minor details of this kind.

Pope Pius XII said it explicitly:

Hence this special authority or as they say, authenticity of the Vulgate was not affirmed by the Council particularly for critical reasons, but rather because of its legitimate use in the Churches throughout so many centuries; by which use indeed the same is shown, in the sense in which the Church has understood and understands it, to be free from any error whatsoever in matters of faith and morals; so that, as the Church herself testifies and affirms, it may be quoted safely and without fear of error in disputations, in lectures and in preaching; and so its authenticity is not specified primarily as critical, but rather as juridical.⁴²

Hence, the argument can be made that, clearly, the infallibility of the Church only demands that the Vulgate contain no error against the faith, but it does not exclude that some passage may actually not be from the original, or may have been mistranslated, in a way which does not compromise the faith. That such a passage be considered, even

⁴² Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, September 30th, 1943.

universally, as belonging to an inspired book, which is a remote rule of faith, clearly does not seem to contradict the passive infallibility of the Church, the infallibility *in believing*. Continuing the same analogy between the proximate and remote of faith, we may therefore infer that the passive infallibility of the Church merely demands that the Church be not led astray, in her faith, by a false pope actually teaching error or heresy. But it does not seem to be in anyway contrary to the Church's indefectibility that for a short period of time, even a few years, the Church would recognize someone as the rule of faith, who truly is not, for as long as the Church is not thereby universally led astray into heresy.

On the other hand, this argument does not go against the "infallibility," so to speak, of a universally accepted election.

Thus, if we apply these two aspects to the "Vatican II popes", we clearly see that both aspects were perfectly preserved. While the number of those who have contested the validity of election of the "Vatican II popes" has always been insignificant, the number of Catholics who do not actually follow the "Vatican II popes" and the official "magisterium" of Vatican II as the rule of faith has been quite significant from the beginning of the imposition of errors, and continues to grow.

While this seeming contradiction has been frustrating for many a sedevacantist, we believe that there are two aspects flowing from the indefectibility of the Church; and although they are usually not reconciled in a satisfying theological system, they are perfectly explained and reconciled in the analysis provided by the Thesis.

27. The case of past popes.

The analysis of this case will confirm a number of points established above.

That the principles of moral certitude apply to popes of past history is admitted by all. Although what belongs to the faith at a given moment in history cannot, later on, cease to belong to the faith, in itself, yet it might not be evident to us anymore that such or such a pope was indeed a true pope, successor of St. Peter. Historians, very famously, have long debated who was the true pope in the period of the Great Western Schism. Billuart summarizes the principles involved:

Nothing belongs to the faith, in our estimation [*quoad nos*] unless it is proposed by the Church as belonging to the faith. And although the Church now proposes, as an object of faith, that Clement XIV is the supreme Pontiff and the head of the Church, it does not follow that in a hundred years the Church will propose as belonging to the faith that he was indeed the supreme pontiff, just as the Church does not so propose, today, the other deceased pontiffs, because this is not necessary for the common government of the Church. To what purpose is it, for the present government and the common good of the Church, to know how many and who were the popes in the past? But this we know only by human testimony, which can be false. Some make the exception of the deceased pontiffs by whom some dogma was defined and is proposed by the Church to our belief; it seems indeed that by that very fact the Church proposes a pontiff to have indeed been a true pontiff and the rule of faith. Otherwise the dogma which

he defined would not be to be believed by divine faith.⁴³

28. Conclusions to be deduced from Billuart's explanation.

It is important to notice that from his explanation a few points may be inferred:

(1) That a given pontiff was indeed a real pope is not and was not, properly speaking, a definition. This is clear from his assertion that the Church could forget, so to speak, the fact that a given pope was indeed at some point a real pope. Because the Church could not forget, and has never forgotten, a defined truth of the faith. Neither could the Church ever forget that a book of Sacred Scripture (the *Acts of the Apostles*, for instance) is indeed inspired Holy Writ.

(2) That a given pontiff was indeed a real pope is relevant “for the present government and the common good of the Church.” This confirms the two aspects which we have

⁴³ “Quod est semel de fide semper est de fide quoad se, conc.; quoad nos, neg. Multa enim tempore Christi fuerunt de fide quoad nos, quae non sunt modo. Ratio est, quia nihil est de fide quoad nos nisi proponatur ab Ecclesia, ut ad fidem pertinens: quamvis autem nunc proponat Clementem XIV ut summum pontificem et caput Ecclesiae tanquam ad fidem pertinens, non sequitur quod intra centum annos proponet ut quid ad fidem pertinens quod fuerit summus pontifex, sicut nunc non proponit alios pontifices defunctos, quia id non est necesse ad regimen commune Ecclesiae. Quid enim facit ad regimen praesens et bonum Ecclesiae scire quot et qui fuerint olim pontifices? Id autem noscimus tantum ex testimonio humano cui potest subesse falsum. Quidam excipiunt casum quo Ecclesia proponeret credendum aliquod dogma definitum a tali defuncto pontifice; videtur enim quod hoc ipso proponeret eum fuisse pontificem et fidei regulam, sine quo dogma ab ipso definitum non foret fide divina credendum.” (Billuart, *loc. cit.*, Inst. 3).

insisted upon: (1) continuity of government and (2) indefectibility of faith. We have seen how these two are preserved by passive infallibility, and can be applied today to the two distinct aspects of the Thesis.

29. Third observation: the explanation of the UPA by the Thesis can be substantially found in the writings of some traditional theologians.

The Thesis explains the absence of authority in the “Vatican II popes” based on an argument of lack of proper intention to accept the papacy. In other words, the Thesis holds that the “Vatican II popes” did not truly consent to their election, because they did not accept the papacy for what it is and as it has been established by Christ. This has been duly explained in a dedicated chapter.

This argument the Thesis holds despite the public and evident fact that all Catholics accepted the election of John XXIII, and even Paul VI, to mention only them.

Hence the Thesis holds that the “Vatican II popes” were not true popes despite the morally universal consent of Catholics to the opposite. We have already seen the difficulties involved in resolving this issue. It should however be noted that the argument of the Thesis, which is the lack of due consent on the part of the elect, has been considered by traditional theologians as a valid theological explanation.

In order to be a valid argument, UPA requires indeed a moral unanimity, which certainly would not be compromised by a rejection coming from a handful of individual Catholics, and certainly not from one individual alone. The only exception to this is that the pope himself should certainly be part of this universal acceptance. In other words,

there is no universal acceptance if the elect himself does not accept to be the pope. And this is exactly what the Thesis said had happened in the case of the “Vatican II popes.”

We have already explained this point to some extent, showing how the Thesis could be reconciled with the principles of the UPA. We should now stress the fact that theologians always presuppose the consent of the pope-elect himself as an essential part of the UPA. It will then be evident to the reader that the Thesis seems to be the only way that one can reconcile the principles of the UPA with the present crisis.

Let us here repeat the words of the Salmanticenses, showing that what they mean by a “legitimate election” clearly requires the proper consent of the elect:

[The election] is perfectly achieved when the elect consents to the election by accepting the Pontificate; because there is then a mutual consent which corroborates itself mutually, and a spiritual marriage is contracted between the Church and the Pope, between the members and the head, between the sheep and the pastor.⁴⁴

There is thus a mutual consent, which “corroborates itself mutually”, between the pope-elect and the Church. Hence if there is universal acceptance on the part of Catholics, only a lack of acceptance on the part of the elect himself could explain a failure to

⁴⁴ “Quod perfecte absolvitur, cum electus consentit in electionem acceptando Pontificatum; tunc quippe adest mutuus consensus mutuo se corroborans, perficiturque matrimonium spirituale inter Ecclesiam et Papam; inter membra et caput; inter oves, et pastorem.” (Salmanticenses, *loc. cit.*, n. 24).

produce this “spiritual matrimony” of which theologians are here speaking.

The Dominican theologian Domenico Maria Marchese (1633-1692) emphasizes that UPA always presupposes the acceptance of the pope-elect, to such a point that UPA could never produce a dogmatic fact without the acceptance of the elect:

Indeed, the acceptance of the Church, which renders the fact that the elect is the Pope a truth of faith, includes also the Pope himself. It would not indeed be of faith that this man is the Pope, and indeed he would not be the Pope, unless, being elected, he accepts himself as the Pope.⁴⁵

Thus, it is evident that the UPA is directly dependent on the acceptance of the Papacy by the elect himself. It cannot be a truth of faith that a given man is the pope if this man does not accept to be the pope in the first place. It is comforting to see that this principle had already been laid out by past theologians, and it is certainly interesting to note that this seems to be the only exception given by past theologians to the force of a morally universal acceptance of Catholics.

⁴⁵ “Acceptatio enim Ecclesiae, qua facit esse de fide electum esse Papam includit etiam ipsum Papam. Non enim esset de fide hunc hominem esse Papam, immo non esset Papa, nisi electus acceptaret seipsum in Papam.” (Marchesius O.P., *De Capite visibili Ecclesiae*, Disp. V, dub. ult.; found in Rocaberti, *Bibliotheca Maxima Pontificia*, Tomus IX, Romae, 1698, p. 801).

FIFTH ARTICLE

ON THE ANALOGY WITH THE UNIVERSALITY OF ORIGINAL SIN

29. Objection #5: Theologians say explicitly that the certitude that a reigning pontiff has been duly elected is an absolute certitude similar to the certitude of original sin. Therefore the distinctions established by the Thesis are false.

We have seen how a number of theologians have rejected the analogy between the certainty that a pope has been duly elected and the certainty that a host has been duly consecrated. It is easy to understand that a host could have been invalidly consecrated, and thus the certainty that a given host contains the Real Presence of Christ always presupposes the moral certainty that this host has been duly consecrated.

Some have therefore had recourse to another example, which admits of no possible exception, so as to build an argument where the minor premise is always certain, without any exception possible. Thus the conclusion, they say, would certainly be of faith. Billuart uses indeed this analogy:

Hence that some discourse is presupposed, not as motive on account of which an assent is given, but as applying a universal revelation to this particular subject, is not incompatible with a knowledge or assent of faith. This is evident, for example, in the following proposition: “David sinned in Adam.” Even though this proposition is of faith, in order to be believed it requires, however, this discourse: “All men descending from Adam sinned through

him. But David descends from Adam. Therefore he sinned in Adam.”⁴⁶

30. Answer to objection #5: Far from being an objection, this analogy will serve as a summary and a confirmation of the principles presented above.

Bouix establishes the same argument as Billuart, and summarizes very well the explanation as to how the legitimacy of a universally accepted pontiff may be argued to belong to the faith:

But, on the other hand, when some universal proposition is *of faith*, by this very fact all the particular propositions contained in it are also *of faith*. Thus, for example, since the following proposition is of faith, that *all men* (besides the most blessed Virgin) *have contracted original sin*, the following particular propositions are also of faith: *Caesar, Cicero, etc., has contracted original sin*. Therefore the proposition that *Pius IX is the supreme pontiff*, is simply *of faith*, inasmuch as it is a particular proposition certainly contained in a universal proposition which is *of faith*, namely in this one: *Any duly elected man is the supreme pontiff and the successor of Peter in the primacy*. Not can it be objected that *it is not of faith* but only *certain* that Pius IX is one

⁴⁶ “Non repugnat ergo cognitioni seu assensui fidei, quod supponat aliquem discursum, non tanquam motivum propter quod praebeatur assensus, sed per quem revelatio universalis applicatur huic particulari subjecto, ut patet in hac propositione: ‘David in Adam peccavit’, quae licet sit fidei, indiget tamen, ut credatur, hoc discursu: ‘Omnes posterii Adam in ipso peccaverunt: atqui David est ex posteris: ergo peccavit in Adam.’” (Billuart, *loc. cit.*).

of the duly elected men. For it is enough that it be *certain* that a particular proposition is contained in a universal proposition which is *of faith*, in order for that particular proposition to also be *of faith*. That Cicero, for example, has existed, is not *of faith*, but only historically *certain*; and yet the following proposition is *of faith*: *Cicero has contracted original sin*.⁴⁷

Based on this argument of universality of original sin, many theologians and doctors have struggled to defend theologically the possibility of the Immaculate Conception. For if the premise that *all men have sinned in Adam* belongs to the faith, then it seems that one would have to infer, as a truth of faith, that Our Blessed Lady Herself would have contracted original sin. And we know this conclusion to be false, and against the faith. But the difficulty remains: How is the universal principle that *all men sinned in*

⁴⁷ “Aliunde, autem quando universalis aliqua propositio est *de fide*, simul hoc ipso *de fide* sunt omnes propositiones particulares in ea contentae. Sic, verbi gratia, quia de fide est universalis haec propositio, *omnes homines* (praeter Beatissimam Virginem) *originale peccatum contraxerunt*, etiam de fide sunt propositiones particulares, *Caesar, Cicero, etc., originale peccatum contraxit*. Igitur propositio, *Pius IX est summus Pontifex*, est simpliciter *de fide*, utpote propositio particularis, certo contenta in propositione universali *de fide*, videlicet in ista: *Omnis canonice electus est summus Pontifex et Petri in primatu successor*. Nec objiciatur, *non esse de fide* sed *certum* sollummodo, Pium IX esse unum de canonice electis. Nam sufficit hoc esse *certum*, ut propositio particularis contineatur in universali *de fide*, ac proinde ipsa etiam *de fide* sit. Quod Cicero, verbi gratia, extiterit, non est *de fide*, sed duntaxat *certum* historice; et tamen *de fide* est propositio: *Cicero peccatum originale contraxit*.” (Bouix, *Tractatus De Papa*, T. I, Paris, 1869, p. 205).

Adam reconciled with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception?

31. The exception of the Immaculate Conception.

Theologians explain that although Our Lady *should have* contracted original sin, and did in fact need to be redeemed, she was redeemed in a singular way, and on account of her singular role of Mother of the Savior, the redemption was applied to her in such a way that she never was, even for one instant, in the state of original sin. This she obtained, by a special grace of God, in ordaining her will to God at the very moment of her conception, for the love of God, and the salvation of souls.

Her victory over sin is all the more radiant and glorious that she should have contracted it, were it not for this singular privilege.

32. Our Lady was united to Christ for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. So also should the pope be united to Christ for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Parallels and analogies between Our Lady and the Church are many, and union with Christ in the salvation of souls is certainly a characteristic shared both by Our Lady and the Church. No one was more united to Christ than Our Lady, in the work of the Redemption. And no one should now, on earth, be more united to Christ, in applying the fruit of the Redemption for the salvation of the souls, than the Roman Pontiff. He constitutes one head of the Church, through his union to Christ. On account of this prerogative, he infallibly guides souls to heaven through doctrine, discipline, and worship.

33. The situation of the “Vatican II popes” is a very great evil.

Now the analogy which we want to establish is an analogy by contrast, an analogy of opposite extremes. Evil is not merely a pure absence of good, it is an absence of a good which ought to be present. There is now on earth no union with Christ in the salvation of souls more direct than the office of the Roman Pontiff. Hence the evil of one who *should have* this union with Christ, and does not, is a most grave evil.

If the Church, and a true pope, is a living image of the cooperation that Mary had in the salvation of souls, by contrast, a false pope, who *should cooperate directly* to the salvation of souls, and refuses to do so, is a most tragic and evil counter-image in respect to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

34. The argument of UPA based on the universality of original sin actually gives us an occasion to reflect on the gravity of the current crisis.

Far from diminishing the gravity of the situation, by some sort of supposed compromise, by recognizing that the “Vatican II popes” *should have* received the papacy, the Thesis actually reveals the diabolical character of this crisis, by portraying a problem diametrically opposed to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception

Mary *should have* contracted original sin, and was exempt from it by uniting herself from the first moment of her conception to the will of Christ. She should have been conceived in a state of enmity from God, but instead was united in the work of the Redemption by a singular privilege.

On the other hand, the “Vatican II popes” *should have* received authority, and be united

with Christ in the work of the salvation of souls. Instead, by a defect of their will, they established themselves as ravening wolves. For “he that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.”⁴⁸

35. The analogy of original sin does not therefore present a valid objection to the Thesis.

The universal premise, which is of faith, would seem to have to be applied to the “Vatican II popes”: *Any duly elected pope is the supreme pontiff*, just as any man descending from Adam is deemed to be born with original sin.

And yet, just like Our Lady was singularly exempted from contracting sin by her union with Christ in the salvation of souls, so also, by contrast, the “Vatican II popes” represent an odd exception to the universal application of the UPA argument, this time on account of the fact that they precisely are not united with Christ.

⁴⁸ Lk. XI, 23.

SIXTH ARTICLE

PASSIVE INFALLIBILITY AND “*UNA CUM*”

36. Objection #6: Thesis holders generally argue that the Mass today should not be celebrated in union with the “Vatican II popes.” Yet it seems that all Catholic Masses were for a number of years, after the death of Pope Pius XII, offered in union with (*una cum*) the “Vatican II popes.” As a consequence, (1) their stance on the *una cum* question is false; and (2) John XXIII and Paul VI must necessarily have been true popes.

37. Answer to objection #6: The explanation presented above on the *passive infallibility* of the learning Church exercised by the UPA perfectly fits the facts of recent history.

Let us elaborate this answer step by step.

38. The problem of the Mass celebrated *una cum* a false pope is theological, and not directly canonical.

Since the vacancy of the Roman See has not been established by the Church’s authority, the argument that the Mass should not be offered in union with (*una cum*) the “Vatican II popes” is not a canonical one, such as the duly recognized canonical renunciation of the office of the papacy, or a canonical vacancy of the same office. If this were the case, indeed, then the universal Church would have had to be immediately (according to moral possibility) “*non una cum*.” But the Thesis argues that the problem is not directly canonical, but rather springs from a lack of due intention in the acceptance of the papacy. As a consequence, the question of the “*una cum*” is theological as well, and will have to

be briefly explained, in order to be able to comprehend the solution to the objection stated above.

39. The role of the Church in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Pope Pius XII teaches in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (n. 82, emphasis added):

By means of the Eucharistic Sacrifice Christ our Lord willed to give the faithful a striking manifestation of **our union among ourselves and with our divine Head**, wonderful as it is and beyond all praise. For **in this Sacrifice the sacred minister acts as the viceregent not only of our Savior but of the whole Mystical Body** and of each one of the faithful. In this act of Sacrifice through the hands of the priest, by whose word alone the Immaculate Lamb is present on the altar, the faithful themselves, united with him in prayer and desire, offer to the Eternal Father a most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the needs of the whole Church. **And as the Divine Redeemer, when dying on the Cross, offered Himself to the Eternal Father as Head of the whole human race, so “in this clean oblation” He offers to the heavenly Father not only Himself as Head of the Church, but in Himself His mystical members also**, since He holds them all, even those who are weak and ailing, in His most loving Heart.

Let us underline here some of the principles presented by pope Pius XII:

- 1) Christ offered Himself on Calvary as head of the human race.

- 2) This sacrifice of Calvary is applied through the celebration of Mass, when **the Church** offers this sacrifice, united to Christ the Head as its mystical body.
- 3) In the Mass, **Christ offers not only Himself, but His Mystical Body, united to Him.**
- 4) The priest is therefore both minister of Christ and minister of the Church, in the celebration of Mass.

It flows from these principles that it is inasmuch as the Church is identified with Christ and mystically united to Him, as His Mystical Body, that she can offer Christ's sacrifice, and that Christ can offer His Church as He offers Himself. It is in this manner that the Church does actually benefit from this sacrifice.

Hence it is clear that to be of any benefit, the Mass has to be offered not only by Christ, but also by the Church. The priest offering Mass offers Mass validly if he truly is a minister of Christ, through the sacrament of Holy Orders. He thus acts *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. He offers Mass licitly, however, and therefore fruitfully, only if he is also a minister of the Church. He then acts also *in persona Ecclesiae*, in the person of the Church. This is regularly ensured by an explicit delegation coming through canonical faculties given by the Church's hierarchy.

When discussing the value of Masses offered by heretics and schismatics, St. Thomas Aquinas uses precisely this argument:

The priest, in reciting the prayers of the mass, speaks in the person of the Church, in whose unity he remains; but in consecrating the sacrament he speaks as

in the person of Christ, Whose place he holds by the power of his orders. Consequently, if a priest severed from the unity of the Church celebrates Mass, not having lost the power of order, he consecrates Christ's true body and blood; but because he is severed from the unity of the Church, his prayers have no efficacy.⁴⁹

40. Role of the Church's hierarchy in the celebration of Mass.

Christ's mission to teach, rule, and sanctify has indeed been given to the Church, but directly entrusted to the Church's hierarchy. It follows that the mission of the Church cannot be pursued against the Church's hierarchy, for it is the hierarchy, and in particular the Roman Pontiff, who has been entrusted with the task of directing the Church's mission. The Roman Pontiff in the whole world, and the bishop in his diocese, are the Church's official pastors, entrusted with the Church's mission. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the Church's main action and most efficacious means to accomplish this mission, has been therefore confided to the direction of the Roman Pontiff in the Church, and the bishop in his diocese. Thus the celebration of Mass is strictly regulated by the Roman Pontiff, generally acting through the Sacred Congregation of

⁴⁹ "Sacerdos in Missa in orationibus quidem loquitur in persona ecclesiae, in cuius unitate consistit. Sed in consecratione sacramenti loquitur in persona Christi, cuius vicem in hoc gerit per ordinis potestatem. Et ideo, si sacerdos ab unitate ecclesiae praecisus Missam celebret, quia potestatem ordinis non amittit, consecrat verum corpus et sanguinem Christi, sed quia est ab ecclesiae unitate separatus, orationes eius efficaciam non habent." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 82, a. 7, ad 3^{um}).

Rites. The delegation to say Mass is also regulated, and must be sought, in any given diocese, ultimately from the ordinary (bishop of the place). He has the right and the duty to oversee and direct the celebration of Mass in his diocese. This is true to such a point that any visiting priest, even if he is incardinated in another diocese, must obtain from the bishop of the place in which he is the permission to celebrate Mass.

41. The meaning and ecclesiological import of the “*una cum*.”

This dependency on the Church’s hierarchy to offer Mass is explicitly manifested in the very celebration of Mass. Indeed, in its most sacred part, which is the Canon, the names of the Roman Pontiff and of the local ordinary are mentioned. These names are introduced by the Latin locution “*una cum*” whence comes the common expressions of “*una cum* Mass” and “*non una cum* Mass” referring to the fact that the names of the “Vatican II popes and bishops” are respectively mentioned or omitted from the beginning of the Canon.

Much discussion has taken place in regards to the exact meaning of the Latin expression. Different interpretations may be given, which all underline true principles of Catholic doctrine:

To my knowledge, there are three differing opinions of how this phrase should be understood. The first is to take *una* as an adjective, modifying *Ecclesia*, thus rendering the meaning to be “one with” or “united with.” The basis for this opinion is the fact that the Roman Pontiff is the principle of unity of the Catholic Church as a whole, and the local bishop the principle of unity of the particular

Church. The second is to take *una* as an adverb modifying *offerimus*. “We offer...together with etc.” The reason for this opinion is that the Mass is an ecclesial act, offered not merely by a particular priest, but by the whole Church, in the name of which the priest is functioning. Since the Roman Pontiff is the head and principle of unity of the whole Church, it is fitting that his name be mentioned as the principal offerer. The third interpretation is to take the *una cum* phrase as an appositional link with *Ecclesia*, by which it would mean essentially *including*: “...which we offer Thee for Thy holy Catholic Church, which includes...”⁵⁰

Whether one accepts the first, the second or the third interpretation as the correct meaning of the Latin expression, it is nonetheless clear that the underlying principles are all understood and expressed by these words. The Roman Pontiff is mentioned as he is the Roman Pontiff, that is, the principle of unity for the whole Church, the supreme legislator, having the right and duty to codify and regulate the celebration of Mass. The bishop of the diocese is mentioned as the bishop of the diocese, and not merely as he is a private person. He is mentioned as the principle of unity of the diocese, having the right and duty to delegate priests to offer Mass in the name of the Church.

This is clearly taught by theologians who have studied this question. Let it suffice to adduce the words of Pope Benedict XIV, who, before becoming the Roman Pontiff, was known for his great learning:

⁵⁰ Bp. Donald Sanborn, *Nomen religioni obnoxium*, in *Sacerdotium*, VI, Winter 1993.

But whatever can be said about this controverted point of ecclesiastical learning, it is sufficient for us to be able to affirm that the commemoration of the Roman Pontiff in the Mass as well as the prayers said for him in the Sacrifice are considered to be, and are a certain declarative sign, by which the same Pontiff is recognized as the head of the Church, the Vicar of Christ, and the Successor of Saint Peter, and becomes a profession of a mind and will firmly adhering to Catholic unity; as Christian Lupus correctly indicates, writing on the councils (Tom. 4. Editionis Bruxell. pag. 422): *“This commemoration is the supreme and most distinguished kind of communion.”* Nor is this any less proven by the authority of Ivo Flaviniacensis (in *Chronicle*, p. 228) where it reads: *“Let him know that he separates himself from the communion of the whole world, whoever does not mention the name of the Pope in the Canon, for whatever reason of dissension”*; nor [by the authority of] the well-known Alcuin, who, in his book *De Divinis Officiis* (chap. 12) wrote this: *“It is certain, as Blessed Pelagius teaches, that those who, for whatever reason of dissension, do not observe the custom of mentioning the name of the Apostolic Pontiff in the sacred mysteries, are separated from the communion of the whole world.”* This fact is further proven by a more severe statement of the Supreme Pontiff Pelagius II, who held the Apostolic throne in the sixth century of the Church, and who in his letter contained in the *Labbeana Collectio Conciliorum* (Tome 5, col 794 sq. and col 810) left this in writing concerning our subject: *“I am shocked at your separation from the whole Church, which I cannot tolerate; for when blessed Augustine, mindful of Our Lord’s words which*

placed the foundation of the Church in Apostolic Sees, says that he is in schism whosoever shall separate himself from the authority of or communion with those who preside in these same Sees, and who does not publicly profess that there is no other Church than that which is established in the pontifical roots of the Apostolic Sees, how can you not esteem yourselves to be cut off from the communion of the whole world, if you withhold the mention of my name in the sacred mysteries, as is the custom, in whom, though unworthy, you see at the present time the strength of the Apostolic See through the succession of the episcopate?”

The import of the “*una cum*” is therefore undeniable:

It is clear from this text that the mentioning of the name of the reigning pope is not a mere friendly gesture, but rather a test of communion with the Roman Catholic Church, and that failure to mention the name of the reigning pope is a sure sign of schism from the one, true Church.

The mentioning of the name of the pope in the Mass, therefore, has always been commonly taken as a token of recognition of and submission to the power of the reigning pontiff; its omission has been taken as a sign of lack of recognition of and of submission to the reigning pontiff. Thus the eastern schismatics omitted the name in their Masses, and, when they returned to the unity of the Catholic Church, would resume the mention of the name, and purposely omitted any name which was

obnoxious to the Catholic Church, such as that of the schismatic patriarch.⁵¹

42. Should the sacrifice of the Mass be offered “*una cum*” the “Vatican II popes and bishops”?

From what has been explained, it is evident that to mention the “Vatican II popes and bishops” in the Canon of the Mass is tantamount to recognizing in them Christ’s authority to teach, rule and sanctify the faithful. It is implicitly to admit that the religion which they profess is the Catholic religion, that their doctrine is the Catholic doctrine, that their laws are Catholic discipline, that their sacraments are licit and valid Catholic sacraments.

But if the doctrine, discipline, and liturgy of the Vatican II religion are not Catholic, then they could not come from Christ’s Church. For the very indefectibility of the Church forbids us to ascribe false doctrine, and evil discipline to the authority of the Church.

The very same logic, which makes us conclude that those promulgating the Vatican II religion cannot have the authority of Christ to do so, makes us now also conclude, conversely, that to recognize their authority by naming them in the Canon of the Mass is to be logically committed to accept them as the rule of faith and discipline in the Church of Christ. These are the two sides of the same coin. The authority of the Church and the true religion of Christ necessarily go together: *Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia; ubi Ecclesia, ibi nulla mors, sed vita aeterna.*⁵²

⁵¹ Bp. Donald Sanborn, *loc. cit.*

⁵² “Where is Peter, there is the Church; where is the Church, there is no death, but eternal life.” (St. Ambrose, *In Ps. XL*).

To mention the name of the “Vatican II popes and bishops” is thus tantamount to an acceptance of the Vatican II religion, and of the New Mass. In this way, it is an implicit denial of the very foundation of our resistance to these errors and evil reforms. It is an avowal that we are wrong, that our defense of the traditional faith is mistaken and unjustified.

Moreover, if the priest or the faithful assisting at an “*una cum*” Mass are themselves convinced that the “Vatican II popes and bishops” are not endowed with the authority of Christ, are not the rule of Catholic faith, and are not the principle of unity of the diocese and of the universal Church, then the priest and the faithful actively participating in the “*una cum*” Mass are effectively lying, since they express something which they know to be absolutely false and repugnant to Catholic doctrine. Furthermore, they lie in what is most sacred, namely, the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Moral theologians agree that lying in the celebration of the sacraments of the Church is a sacrilege.

In addition, if the celebration of the said Mass is not in fact allowed by the “Vatican II popes and bishops”, then it is another lie to declare this Mass to be offered in union with them, and with their delegation, and in their communion.

Such is the ecclesiological nightmare of the “*una cum*” Mass. It is inconsistent, and is objectively tainted with communion to a false hierarchy. It often is, as well, a sacrilegious lie.

It cannot be justified and ought to be utterly shunned by the faithful.

43. Is not an “*una cum*” Mass a valid Mass?

Supposing that the priest is a valid priest (ordained according to the traditional rite of the Catholic Church), yes, the celebration of the traditional Mass is valid. As we have explained, through Holy Orders the priest is made a minister of Christ, and is able to validly offer Mass.

But we have also explained that for the Mass to be of any benefit, it ought to be offered by the Church, through a priest who truly is acting as minister of the Church. And this is where the problem of the “*una cum*” is important. By being “*una cum*” the “Vatican II popes and bishops” a priest would explicitly make himself their inferior and delegate. He would be a minister of the Church inasmuch as he is united to their hierarchy. But if they are not in fact, formally, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, then to attach oneself to them does not make one a minister of the Church. In fact, the very opposite is true: one would profess participation in their false religion, one would recognize them as the rule of faith and authority of the Church. One would become a minister of their false mission and apostolate, but not a minister of the Church.

Although an “*una cum*” Mass could therefore be valid, it is however objectively gravely illicit, and of no benefit.

44. Could the whole Church be offering a Mass both illicit and of no benefit?

Certainly, no, that is inconceivable and would argue against the Church’s indefectibility. The Catholic Church could not be universally offering a Mass objectively illicit, just as it cannot promulgate an evil universal discipline. We must therefore

analyze the case of Masses offered universally “*una cum*” John XXIII and Paul VI, at least until the promulgation of Vatican II, or even the promulgation of the New Mass, when Mass began to be offered “*non una cum*” by faithful clergy.⁵³

45. When did it begin to be illicit to celebrate Mass “*una cum*”?

The objection presupposes that it would have already been illicit and wrong to say Mass “*una cum*” before Vatican II and before the promulgation of the New Mass. Since the Thesis argues that the “Vatican II popes” were not true popes before the promulgation of Vatican II and the New Mass, then it would follow, says the objection, that faithful priests would have had to be “*non una cum*” already before Vatican II, and not merely as a consequence of it.

But this is manifestly false.

First, it is impossible for the Church to be universally celebrating Mass illicitly. This principle is certainly accepted by the defenders of the Thesis. If history shows that the Mass began to be celebrated “*non una cum*” only after Vatican II, then certainly it could not possibly have been wrong to do so before Vatican II.

Secondly, the objection is based on the assumption that, to support the unlawfulness of the “*una cum*” Mass, the Thesis would

⁵³ Let it be noted, however, that those who present us this objection, based on the principle that the Church could not be tainted with a universal liturgy objectively illicit, are sometimes the same persons who openly denounce the New Mass as precisely that: an illicit rite, which has been promulgated as an universal liturgical law. If they were consistent, they would realize that their position suffers from the very weakness which they try to blame on the Thesis.

base itself on the argument that the “Vatican II popes” were not popes on account of a canonical obstacle of public heresy. We have already proven this assumption to be false. While it is true that the “Vatican II popes” were not true popes, we have proven that, until declared and condemned, public heresy is not a canonical impediment to election.

Otherwise, certainly it would be inconceivable for the whole Church to have offered Mass “*una cum*” a public heretic, whose election was invalid and against divine law. In such a case, indeed, all the objections of the UPA could not be resolved, and the idea that the universal Church could be submitted and in communion with a public heretic (whose heresy would be both *materially* and *formally* public) is utterly repugnant to the Church’s holiness and indefectibility. Let those who defend this position resolve this difficulty.

The Thesis, on the other hand, argues that Mass should not be offered “*una cum*” the “Vatican II popes and bishops” because it would be to implicitly recognize Vatican II, the New Mass, and all the errors and evil reforms which accompany them. This, of course, cannot be blamed before it actually happens.

In addition, theologians have often and very commonly argued that Christ could temporarily supply His authority to a false pope, for the good of the Church. Certainly

Christ could not supply authority for something which is evil, such as Vatican II and the New Mass. But certainly Christ could supply authority for the continuation of the sacred mission of the Church to teach, rule and sanctify the faithful, which mission includes first and foremost the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Hence, an invalid canonical delegation given to celebrate the traditional Mass could be supplied either by the Church or by Christ, during the intermediary period between the death of Pope Pius XII and the overthrow of the Catholic religion by Vatican II and the New Mass. The mention of the “*una cum*” during this time is thus perfectly in accordance with the Church’s law, and perfectly justifiable, theologically.

It was not an implicit acceptance and participation in a false religion, nor was it a sacrilegious lie.

He who was canonically elected, and according to appearances, deemed to be endowed with Christ’s authority (and whose actions were indeed able to be supplied by Christ), was duly mentioned in the Canon of the Mass just as prescribed by the rubrics. Among the theologians addressing the possibility of a temporary suppli-ance of authority by Christ to a false pope, none has ever seen that as a difficulty for the Church’s indefectibility.

SEVENTH ARTICLE

CONCLUSION

46. The UPA is a difficult point of theology, and should not distract us from the evident defection of Vatican II.

All the explanations above have shown to the reader that the problem of universal peaceful acceptance is a question involving a great amount of philosophical and theological principles. It is a question whose underlying principles escape the grasp of the majority of Catholics.

Let it not be a distraction for a problem which is blatant and evident to all: the Vatican II religion represents a substantial rupture from the Catholic religion. In virtue of the indefectibility of the Church, we could not ascribe these evil reforms to the authority of the Church, which is always assisted by Christ. This is an observation easily accessible to the mind of lay Catholics.

That being said, UPA nonetheless represents a forceful objection to anyone seriously versed in theology, and is deserving of a thorough theological answer.

47. What should be remembered.

Far from being a point of difficulty for the Thesis, the deep analysis presented above makes it clear that the UPA actually confirms a number of points upheld by the Thesis:

(1) The election of a pope is not infallible. In fact, a number of past elections were doubtful.

(2) To reject the legitimacy of a duly elected and universally recognised reigning Pontiff makes one suspect of heresy.

(3) Before the universal acceptance of an election by the Church, the certainty that an election was duly performed is a moral

certainty: it is enough to act prudently, but the opposite is not impossible.

(4) The election is considered to be complete when the pope-elect has actually given consent to his election. But this is precisely what the “Vatican II popes” have not properly done, according to the Thesis.

(5) There is no universal acceptance of a reigning pope if the “pope” himself does not accept to become the pope. But this is precisely what the “Vatican II popes” have not properly done, according to the Thesis.

(6) Thus one could not apply the argument of the UPA in a strict manner to the “Vatican II popes.”

48. The two underlying principles of the UPA actually confirm the two principles of the Thesis.

The universal acceptance of the reigning Pope by the whole Church is deemed to be infallible on account of the very indefectibility of the Church, and this is understood in two respects:

(1) It is impossible for the entire Church to follow a false rule of faith into heresy. But clearly this did not happen, since the heresies of the Vatican II religion have been rejected, and continue to be rejected by an increasing number of Catholics. The “Vatican II popes” have not, in fact, been universally accepted as the rule of faith. Even those who recognize the “Vatican II popes” as true popes do not, in many cases, accept their teachings and disciplines (e.g., the SSPX).

(2) It is impossible for the universal Church to fall into universal schism, which would happen if there were no objective principle of

unity concerning the succession of the Roman Pontiffs. This means that the universal Church (with negligible exceptions), in accepting the election of the “Vatican II popes”, is indeed correct in knowing that in them *should be* the rule of faith and the center of Catholic unity, and that although the “Vatican II popes” do not fulfill this role at the present, nonetheless the permanence of their material succession provides the Church with an objective and universally accepted way to procure for the succession in the see of Peter. This, according to Cardinal Franzelin, is demanded by the Church’s indefectibility. For if it were lost, then the very institution of the Papacy would be lost by the Church.

The law and the divine promise of perpetual succession in the see of Peter as the root and center of Catholic unity remains. To this law and to this promise corresponds, on the part of the Church, not only the right and the duty, but even the indefectibility, in legitimately providing and receiving a succession, and in keeping the unity of communion with the see of Peter even when it is vacant, in view of the successor which is expected, and which will infallibly come.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ “Manet enim lex et promissio divina perpetuae successionis in sede Petri ut radice et centro catholicae unitatis, huicque legi et promissioni respondet ex parte Ecclesiae non modo ius et officium sed etiam indefectibilitas in legitime procuranda et suscipienda successione et in servanda unitate communionis cum sede Petrina etiam vacante, intuitu successoris in ea exspectandi et indefectibiliter futuri...” (Joannis Bapt. Franzelin, *Theses De Ecclesia Christi*, Opus Posthumum, Th. XIII, Romae, 1887, p. 228).