

### INTRODUCTION

The inerrancy of Scripture is common ground for Protestants and Roman Catholics.<sup>1</sup> However, its interpretation is not. In fact, Catholic apologist Robert Sungenis asserts: “the written Word cannot cry out to you, ‘Wait! You have misinterpreted me!’ But the Church can.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, Roman Catholics believe that the Church, in the person of Peter’s successor and the bishops in communion with him, possesses “the charism of infallibility when authentically teaching matters of faith and morals.”<sup>3</sup> The papal bull, *Unam sanctam*, written by Boniface VIII in 1302, provides a provocative example of such teaching on salvation, the church, and the papacy. Indeed, *Unam Sanctam* concludes with the words: “we declare, say, define and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”<sup>4</sup> Commenting on this papal bull, Catholic apologist Mark Shea says: “When a Pope declares, pronounces and defines, he is using the formula to make crystal clear that he is delivering, not his personal opinion, but the dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, like the apostle Paul, we Protestants ask: “what does the Scripture say?”<sup>6</sup> In other words, might the

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Sungenis states that “official statements and teaching of the Catholic Church have always affirmed and continue to affirm that Scripture is written wholly and entirely in all its parts through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that it is absolutely inerrant” (Robert A. Sungenis, *Not by Scripture Alone: A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of Sola Scriptura* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing Company, 1997), 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Lumen Gentium (LG) 3.25, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, by Pope Paul VI, 1964, at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (accessed January 29, 2015). A ‘charism’ is a divine gift for the building up of the Body of Christ.

<sup>4</sup>As quoted by Mark Shea in “Just Exactly Where is the Church?” at Mark-Shea.com, <http://www.mark-shea.com/unam.html> (accessed March 10, 2015).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Rom. 4:3; Gal. 4:30. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation), 1995.

divine author be saying through Scripture that Boniface VIII has misinterpreted His inerrant Word?

The primary questions of interest in this study are: (1) Is EENS as articulated by Boniface VIII in *Unam Sanctam* consistent with Scripture?, and (2) Is EENS as formulated by Vatican II consistent with *Unam Sanctam* and/or Scripture? The initial assumption is that it is presumptuous to declare what is *absolutely* necessary for salvation (as Boniface VIII did), and unwarranted to speculate about those incapable of faith, such as infants or the profoundly retarded. The methodology I have chosen is to analyze *Unam Sanctam* in its historical context, drawing from Scripture and the writings of the church fathers and others, including Roman Catholic apologists, and then to evaluate its present interpretation according to Vatican II.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Published on November 18, 1302, the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* was prompted by a Church-State quarrel between Boniface VIII and King Philip IV of France that began in 1296 over taxation of the clergy.<sup>7</sup> Over the intervening years the power struggle escalated to encompass control of the clergy's attendance at rival councils called by the king and the pope. The pinnacle of hostilities occurred in September, 1303, ten months after *Unam Sanctam* was published, when an armed band from Philip briefly captured Boniface after hearing of his plans to excommunicate him. The pope died within a month. This episode represents just one of many chapters in Church-State conflicts over the centuries.

For example, after Christianity was declared a legal religion in 313, Constantine set the precedent for all of the Ecumenical Councils (AD 325 to 787) to be convened by the Roman emperor (and in one case, the Roman empress). Yet in 800, Pope Leo III presided over Charlemagne's coronation as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Church-state pendulum then swung the other way for more than two centuries of lay investiture, wherein feudal lords and vassals appointed bishops and other church officials. Pope Gregory VII (1073 – 1085) wrested power back to the Church, not only ending lay investiture, but also excommunicating and deposing King Henry IV of Germany. Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216) further consolidated

---

<sup>7</sup>For further reading, see *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII: State vs. Papacy*, ed. Charles T. Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967).

power by acquiring title to papal states, declaring all kings to be subject to the pope, and asserting that the pope, as Christ's vicar, could be judged by no man.<sup>8</sup> It is in this context that *Unam Sanctam* was published and has come to be viewed as "one of the most carefully drafted documents which emerged from the papal chancery . . . a formal exposition of the plenitude of papal power, spiritual and temporal."<sup>9</sup> In light of today's prevailing perspective wherein the powers of Church and State are considered to be largely complementary, Boniface's papal bull might seem irrelevant – were it not for his dogmatic claims about salvation and the papacy.

### *Boniface VIII's Unam Sanctam*

Boniface VIII makes five provocative claims in *Unam Sanctam*, each building upon the preceding ones. This study will briefly examine these claims in light of their historical context and the teaching of Scripture. The five claims are:

- (1) Salvation and forgiveness of sins can be found only in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- (2) There is one head of the Church: Christ and the Vicar of Christ (the pope).
- (3) The pope is the shepherd of all of Christ's sheep, and only those who are committed to the pope can be Christ sheep.
- (4) The plenitude of papal powers underscores the perils of resisting the pope.
- (5) It is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

The opening statement of *Unam Sanctam* offers an interesting mix of Scripturally-based ecclesiology and the provocative soteriological premise upon which Boniface builds a series of pretentious claims about the relationship between salvation, the Church, and the papacy.

---

<sup>8</sup>For further reading on Gregory VII and Innocent III, see Mandell Creighton, "Halfway House from Gregory VII to Luther," in Wood, 94 – 95.

<sup>9</sup>F. M. Powicke, "The Culmination of Medieval Papalism," in Wood, 103.

### *Unam Sanctam's Opening Statement*

Urged by faith, we are obliged to believe and to maintain that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and also apostolic. We believe in her firmly and we confess with simplicity that outside of her there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins, as the Spouse in the Canticles proclaims: 'One is my dove, my perfect one. She is the only one, the chosen of her who bore her,' and she represents one sole mystical body whose Head is Christ and the head of Christ is God. In her then is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.<sup>10</sup>

Much of this opening statement about the Church is scripturally sound. For example, the Church is one according to 1 Cor. 12:5-12 (the body of Christ is one, though the members are many). The Church is holy according to Eph. 5:25-27 (Christ cleansed the church "by the washing of water and the word . . . that she would be holy and blameless"). Moreover, 1 Cor. 1:2 attests to the catholic, or universal, scope of the Church, including "all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." In addition, Paul describes the apostolic character of the Church in Eph. 2:20 by affirming that the Church has been "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Boniface then reiterates the point that the Church is unique, "the only one" (Song of Songs 6:9; cf. Rom. 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13, 20; Eph. 2:16; 4:4; 5:25-32; Col. 1:24; 3:15; etc.), and he alludes to Col. 1:18, identifying Christ as the head of the Church, and to 1 Cor. 11:3, which says that the head of Christ is God. The paragraph concludes with a quote from Eph. 4:5, further describing the Church, marked by "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." These truths are common ground for Protestants and Roman Catholics.

### *Boniface's First Provocative Claim*

Embedded among Boniface's affirmations about the Church is his first provocative claim: that outside of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins. The general belief that "outside the church there is no salvation" was well-established long before Boniface's time, known by the Latin phrase, "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" (EENS). However, Boniface's precise language and his subsequent assertions about the

---

<sup>10</sup>The English translation of *Unam Sanctam*, unless otherwise noted, is quoted from Catholic Planet.com at <http://www.catholicplanet.com/TSM/Unam-Sanctam-English.htm> (accessed February 22, 2015). The name, *Unam Sanctam*, comes from the first words of the bull: *Unam sanctam ecclesiam catholicam* (one holy catholic church).

Church, the papacy, and salvation raise significant questions. How does this dogma, as understood by Boniface and the church fathers, stand up in the light of Scripture?

*Outside of the Church There is No Salvation (EENS)*

Boniface VIII justifies his premise by appealing to the story of Noah's ark. He writes: "For certainly, in the time of the Flood, the ark of Noah was one, prefiguring the one Church. . . . And outside of Her, everything standing upon the land, as we read, had been destroyed." Compare Heb. 11: 7 – "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world." Thus, the ark functioned as a safe haven during God's judgment of the world by the great flood: whoever was in the ark was saved, whoever was outside of the ark perished. Boniface infers that the Church will function in the time of God's future judgment as the ark did in Noah's time.

The EENS dogma is by no means unique to Boniface, having been articulated more than a thousand years earlier by Cyprian of Carthage. Cyprian quotes 1 Pet. 3:20, writing: "[Peter] said, 'In the ark of Noah, a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water; the like figure whereunto even baptism shall save you;' proving and attesting that the one ark of Noah was a type of the one Church." A number of other church fathers agree with Cyprian.<sup>11</sup> Yet, Augustine recognizes an important soteriological difference between the ark and the Church: "How many sheep there are without, how many wolves within!"<sup>12</sup>

Augustine's observation about the Church notwithstanding, those who leave the Church are singled out. Cyprian cites 1 John 2:19, "Let none think that the good can depart from the Church. . . . 'They went forth from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, surely they would have continued with us.'"<sup>13</sup> However, Cyprian takes this verse out of context. John is talking about 'antichrists,' who deny that Jesus is the Christ. Christians leave churches and other

---

<sup>11</sup>Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters* 75.2 (ca. AD 255), in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 5 (*ANF* 5), ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). Others who taught EENS prior to Boniface VIII include Irenaeus, Origen, Lactantius, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Innocent III, and Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>12</sup>Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 45.12, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1, vol. 7 (*NPNF* 1-07), ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1888).

<sup>13</sup>Cyprian, *Unity of the Church* 9, in *ANF* 5.

fellowships for many reasons, the vast majority having nothing to do with rejecting Christ. For example, John Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia during his first missionary trip, yet his faith remained intact, as Paul himself attests later (cf. Acts 15:38; 2 Tim. 4:11).<sup>14</sup> Hence, Cyprian's interpretation of 1 John is not a reliable test of whether or not someone is outside of the Body of Christ.

Cyprian also asserts that schismatics as well as heretics are outside the Church. For example, in the treatise, *Unity of the Church*, he quotes Luke 11:23 and comments: "'He who is not with me is against me, and he who gathereth not with me scattereth.' He who breaks the peace and the concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ; he who gathereth elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ."<sup>15</sup> Cyprian likens schismatics to Korah, who rebelled against Moses.<sup>16</sup> However, schisms are messy, and typically all participants share some fault.

Nevertheless, Augustine argues from 1 Corinthians 13: "You ask, do they [schismatics] have the baptism of Christ? Yes. You ask, do they have the faith of Christ? Yes. If they have these, what do they lack? . . . Listen to the Apostle: 'if I understand all holy things . . . if I have all prophecy . . . and all knowledge.' . . . Listen further: 'if I have all faith . . . so that I could move mountains. But if I have not love, I am nothing.'"<sup>17</sup> Augustine infers that if you have not love, your faith is nothing and you are therefore without Christ and have no hope of salvation. He continues: "Prove to me now that you have love: hold to unity. . . . If we praise one Father, why don't we recognize also one mother?"<sup>18</sup> However, if unity is the proof of love, unity with whom? For example, the "mother church" in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. The remaining churches still shared one Lord, one faith, one baptism; yet the schism between East and West in 1054 persists to this day.<sup>19</sup> Attempts to take sides in that schism by identifying the "mother

---

<sup>14</sup>Anti-popes might similarly be charged with schism; but was Hippolytus therefore outside the Church when he opposed the heretical Callistus, yet restored to the Church when he later reconciled with another pope?

<sup>15</sup>Cyprian, *Unity of the Church* 6.

<sup>16</sup>Cyprian, *Letters* 72.8 and 75.8.

<sup>17</sup>Augustine, *Address to the People of the Church at Caesarea* 3, translated by Jean Goodwin, at <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~goodwin/sermo.html> (accessed February 23, 2015).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. 5. More importantly, do we still recognize and love our brothers and sisters in Christ?

<sup>19</sup>There have been steps between the East and Rome to "forgive and forget," but the schism remains.

church” are futile. More importantly, do we recognize and love our brothers and sisters in Christ? Our Lord must grieve schisms, and we should strive to avoid them and to be reconciled one to another.

In spite of the strong tradition supporting EENS, not all church fathers limit salvation to membership in the Church, or even to faith in Christ. For example, Justin Martyr (ca. 170) writes: “[Those] who lived according to reason [logos] were really Christians, even though they were thought to be atheists, such as, among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them.”<sup>20</sup> However, salvation by reason alone is another gospel. Another church father, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200), asserts: “before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness,” because, he says, it brought the Greeks to Christ as the Law did the Hebrews.<sup>21</sup> Again, philosophy without Christ never saved anyone (cf. Acts 17:22-31).

In summary, EENS (“outside the Church there is no salvation”) has enjoyed a strong, though not unanimous, following since the third century. This tradition counts deserters, heretics, and schismatics as being outside the Church – notwithstanding John Mark’s desertion and the long-standing schism between the East and the West. In addition, EENS raises questions about the definition of the Church: are the Old Testament saints catalogued in Hebrews 11 members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church? Interestingly, even Calvin and the Westminster Confession endorse a version of EENS.<sup>22</sup> But – what does Scripture say about these things?

---

<sup>20</sup>Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 46, in *ANF* 1 (ca 170).

<sup>21</sup>Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.5, in *ANF* 2 (ca. 200).

<sup>22</sup>According to Calvin, “Moreover, beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, can be hoped for . . . the paternal favour of God and the special evidence of spiritual life are confined to his peculiar people, and hence the abandonment of the Church is always fatal.” However, he cites Joel 2:32, “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape . . .” (*Institutes of Christian Religion* 4.1.4, trans. Henry Beveridge [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989]). Thus, according to Calvin, the Church includes Jews. *The Westminster Confession* similarly states that there is “no ordinary possibility of salvation” out of the visible Church, “which consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and their children” (25.2). See *The Westminster Confession*, in *Reformed Confessions Harmonized: with an annotated Bibliography of Reformed Doctrinal Works*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

### *A Scriptural Evaluation of EENS*

First, nowhere does Scripture articulate EENS. Instead, Scripture teaches broadly that “Whoever calls upon the name of the LORD will be saved” (Joel 2:32; cf. Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13).<sup>23</sup> And, according to Gen. 4:26, “men began to call upon the name of the LORD” in the time of Adam and Eve. Interestingly, the Old Testament name, YHWH, translated LORD, is incorporated in Jesus’ name, which means “YHWH saves” (cf. Matt. 1:21). Thus, Old Testament saints, in effect, called upon the name of Jesus. Hebrews 11 gives many examples of such saints who lived long before the Church was founded, and yet have come to the “heavenly city.” Moreover, Rev. 7:4-8 explicitly identifies twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel as “sealed bond-servants of our God,” and Rev. 21:9-27 depicts the bride of Christ as having twelve gates representing the tribes of Israel and twelve foundation stones representing the apostles (cf. Eph. 2:20; Rev. 4:4, 10; etc.).<sup>24</sup> In summary, according to Scripture, salvation is not confined to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church – but extends to all who call upon the name of the LORD (YHWH, Jesus).

In particular, Scripture promises salvation and forgiveness of sins to all who are ‘in Christ’ by grace through faith. For example, “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13; cf. Rom. 1:16). Moreover, Peter declares in Acts 10:43, “Of Him [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” Furthermore: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:27). In other words, no one “in Christ” can be outside the Church since the Body of Christ *is* the Church, according to Col. 1:18.

### *Boniface’s Second Provocative Claim*

Boniface’s second provocative claim is that there is one head of the Church: Christ and the Vicar of Christ (the pope). Like EENS, the primacy of Peter has a long history in the Church, but the church fathers did not articulate it as *Unam Sanctam* did. For example, Cyprian writes of Peter:

---

<sup>23</sup>The phrase, “the name of the LORD,” appears more than one hundred times in Scripture.

<sup>24</sup>Israel, with its unique gifts and calling, should not be confused with the Church (cf. Rom. 9-11). Members of both are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev. 21:27; cf. Dan. 12:1; Rev. 12-13).



“upon whom He built the Church, and whence He appointed and showed the source of unity.”<sup>25</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 450) also says of Rome: “For that holy see has precedence over all churches in the world.”<sup>26</sup> However, no church father ever suggested that Christ and the pope constitute one head of the Church. From where did this idea come?

According to *Unam Sanctam*: “[The ark] had one pilot and helmsman, that is, Noah, and outside of Her, everything . . . had been destroyed. . . . And so, of the one and only Church there is one body and one head, not two heads like a monster; that is, Christ and the Vicar of Christ, Peter and the successor of Peter.” In other words, since the ark prefigured the Church (as Boniface previously argued), and the ark had “one pilot and helmsman,” so also must the Church have only one pilot and helmsman. However, Noah could not have been the pilot of the ark because he, like the other passengers, was stowed deep inside, tossed by the waves and driven by the winds and currents to land on Mt. Ararat. Rather, God was the pilot and helmsman of the ark.

Nevertheless, Boniface continues to argue that since Christ is the head of the Church and there can only be one head (lest the Church be like a two-headed monster), then Christ and “Vicar of Christ” must be one head. Boniface is right that Christ is the head of the Church and there is only one head. But one plus one is not one. Peter and his successors cannot say “I and Christ are one” in the same way that Jesus said “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).<sup>27</sup> Jesus alone, being both divine and human, is capable of being the head of the whole Church, of both those in heaven and on earth (cf. Col. 1:18; 2:19). Moreover, Peter and his successors are undeniably members of Christ’s body, not the head of the body. Thus Boniface commits a category mistake. Furthermore, Peter himself acknowledges that he is not the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4).<sup>28</sup> Boniface is mistaken: Christ has no peer in the Church; He alone is its head. The

---

<sup>25</sup>Cyprian, *Epistles* 72.7, in *ANF* 5 (ca. 255).

<sup>26</sup>Theodoret, *Epistles* 116, in *NPNF* 2-03 (ca. 450).

<sup>27</sup>Jesus, having taken human nature while remaining eternal God, makes an ontological claim when he says, “I and the Father are one.” That God subsists in three persons is not a contradiction. One person (the Father) plus one person (the Son) plus one person (the Holy Spirit) is three persons and at the same time one God.

<sup>28</sup>On the other hand, Stephen Ray notes that the President of the United States does not deny his office when he addresses his audiences, “My fellow Americans.” However, the President does not say, “When your President comes . . . ,” as Peter says of the Chief Shepherd. See Stephen K. Ray, *Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 59.

ramifications of Boniface's claim, which implies two heads of the Church, become clearer as the text of *Unam Sanctam* unfolds.

### *Boniface's Third Provocative Claim*

Boniface next argues that the pope is the shepherd of *all* of Christ's sheep. On what grounds? He writes: "there is one head [of the Church]. . . Christ and the Vicar of Christ, Peter and the successor of Peter, since the Lord speaking to Peter Himself said: 'Feed my sheep', meaning, my sheep in general, not these, nor those in particular, whence we understand that He entrusted all to him [Peter]." The idea that Peter was the universal teacher or the chief shepherd of the Church was by no means new with Boniface. For example, John Chrysostom late in the fourth century cites John 21:17-19: "'Tend My sheep' . . . 'Follow Me' . . . And if any should say, 'How then did James receive the chair at Jerusalem?' I would make this reply, that He appointed Peter teacher, not of the chair, but of the world."<sup>29</sup> Gregory the Great, at the turn of the seventh century, also comments on Acts 10:25-26 thus: "When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'Stand up; I too am just a man.' It is hence that the chief Shepherd of the Church . . . refers to the equality of his creation."<sup>30</sup> However, it is one thing to make claims about Peter; it is another to apply them to Peter's successors.

Interestingly, regarding Jesus' prophecy in John 10 to bring other sheep into his flock, Catholic apologist Tim Staples asks: "Who does our Lord use as the shepherd to bring this prophecy to pass?" He then suggests that John 21:17 supplies the answer: "Jesus the shepherd here commissions Peter to be *the prophetic shepherd* of John 10:16 to shepherd the entire people of God!" Staples next asserts that the prophecy is fulfilled in Acts 10 when Peter "commanded [Cornelius and his household] to be baptized . . . There was now one fold and one shepherd for

---

<sup>29</sup>Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* 88, in *NPNF* 1-14.

<sup>30</sup>Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job* 21.24, trans. John Henry Parker and J. Rivington (1844) at <http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoralia/Book21.html> (accessed March 19, 2015). Cf. *Book 5, Epistle 18*.

Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>31</sup> However, Staple ignores the fact that Christ had *already* decided that Paul would be entrusted with *all* of the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:5).

In addition, the authors of the book, *Jesus, Peter, and the Keys*, assert that because other disciples were present when Jesus commanded Peter to feed his sheep, that Jesus gave Peter a distinct and supreme office, ruler over all the flock.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, they say, “Our Lord did not say feed *these* lambs, nor *those* lambs. He said *My* lambs . . . He does not abdicate His office of pastor when He appoints a Vicar; He makes him co-pastor with Him and in Him. All the lambs and sheep of Christ are Peter’s also. No one in the whole flock, no disciple of Christ, can claim exemption from the jurisdiction of Peter.”<sup>33</sup> Yet Rom. 1:5 and other passages indicate otherwise.

According to the book, *Upon This Rock*, by Stephen Ray, even the apostle John was subordinate to Peter’s successors after Peter’s death. He asserts that John, writing his gospel thirty years after Peter’s death, paid special attention to the claims of Peter “because Peter was living on in his successors who even during John’s own lifetime . . . were exercising Peter’s prerogative of shepherding the entire flock.” He continues, “Whatever John’s position . . . he was still inferior not only to Peter but to Peter’s successors, for to John was not given the supreme commission to feed the entire flock of Christ.”<sup>34</sup> However, John’s own disciples knew nothing of this. Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 105) addressed a fellow-disciple of the apostle John, Polycarp, as the “Bishop of the Church of the Smyrnaeans, or rather, who has, as his own bishop, God the Father, and Jesus Christ.”<sup>35</sup> The apostolic fathers, therefore, did not recognize a special Petrine office.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>Catholic Answers, “The Papacy in Scripture, no Rocks Required,” by Tim Staples, at <http://www.catholic.com/blog/tim-staples/the-papacy-in-scripture-no-rocks-required> (accessed March 6, 2015). Staples also attributes supernatural strength to Peter who “heaves the entire net of fish to shore by himself” (the net, according to Staples, is a symbol of the church). Staples fails to acknowledge that moving a heavy object in water requires no special strength, as long as the object is buoyed by water (water was used by NASA to simulate the moon’s much lighter gravity when training astronauts in the 1960s).

<sup>32</sup>Scott Butler, Norman Dahlgren, and Rev. Mr. David Hess, *Jesus Peter, and the Keys: A Scriptural Handbook on the Papacy* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing Company, 1996), 118 – 22.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. 123. Notice the similar language vis-à-vis *Unam Sanctam*: “not *these* lambs, nor *those* lambs.”

<sup>34</sup>Stephen K. Ray, *Upon This Rock*, 49n64 (quoting Hugh Pope).

<sup>35</sup>Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to Polycarp* preface, in *ANF* 1. Ignatius was also a disciple of John.

<sup>36</sup>Roman Catholics cite Ignatius’ letter to Rome as evidence for the primacy of that See, but the text merely mentions “the region of the Romans” (*ANF* 1). Moreover, Ignatius asserts that all authorities,

### *A Scriptural evaluation of the pope as universal shepherd*

Scripture portrays the broad extent of Peter's shepherding role as temporary at best. In fact, Christ personally entrusted a significant portion of His sheep to Paul during Peter's lifetime. As Paul writes in Galatians: "Those who were of high reputation" (Peter, James, and John) recognized "that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised" (Gal. 2:6-9; cf. Acts 22:21; Rom. 15:15-16). In fact, Paul writes to *the church of Rome* that he, not Peter, was entrusted with the Gospel to *all* of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5). Moreover, as Peter addresses his fellow shepherds of Christ's flock, he admits that he is *not* the Chief Shepherd: "I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder . . . shepherd the flock among you. . . . And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:1, 2, 4; cf. Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:20).<sup>37</sup> Finally, Jesus did not say to Peter, "Feed *all* my sheep;" whereas Scripture affirms that He *did* entrust Paul with the gospel to *all* the Gentiles. Boniface's interpretation of John 21:17 does not follow.

Furthermore, Jesus leaves no doubt in John 10 who is the 'one shepherd': "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, . . . and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:14-16). Jesus thereby identifies Himself as "the good shepherd," claiming a personal relationship with each of His lambs, whom He will bring into one fold, where they hear His voice and follow Him (cf. vv. 27-28). No bishop is capable of such a personal relationship with all of Christ's sheep. Moreover, by laying claim to all of Christ's sheep, Boniface creates tension between Christ and His alleged Vicar. No one can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). There is no question, then, that Boniface's interpretations of John 10 and John 21 are contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the testimony

---

including Caesar, should be subject to the [*local/regional*] bishop, as their bishop is to Christ (*To the Philadelphians* 4, in *ANF* 1).

<sup>37</sup>Because shepherding requires personal relationships, the office of shepherding Christ's flock on earth is distributed among many: "He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers" to spiritually feed the members of Christ's flock under their care (cf. Eph. 4:11).<sup>37</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* agrees in principle: "the office of shepherding the Church, which the apostles received . . . [is] to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops." *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 862, at <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p123a9p4.htm#889> (accessed March 1, 2015).

of the apostolic fathers. Jesus Christ is and always has been the only universal shepherd of the Church.

*Corollary to Boniface's Third Provocative Claim*

Having just argued that the pope is the universal shepherd of all of Christ's flock, Boniface then claims that *only* those committed to the pope can be Christ's sheep. He writes: "Therefore, if either the Greeks or others declare themselves not to be committed to Peter and his successors, they necessarily admit themselves not to be among the sheep of Christ, just as the Lord says in John, 'there is one sheepfold, and only one shepherd.'" Ironically, he also likens the Church to Christ's seamless tunic which was not torn (cf. John 19:23-24), yet now he specifically cites the Greeks. What about the Greeks who had followed Christ since Paul brought them the gospel, and who continued to follow Christ after the East-West schism?

About commitment to the Petrine office, Catholic apologist Mark Shea says, "It is impossible to accept Christ without accepting the authority of Peter's office to some degree or other. If you say to Jesus, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' you are submitting to the judgment of Peter, who said it first (Matthew 16:16)."<sup>38</sup> Shea forgets that the thief on the cross never heard Peter's confession, so it was not possible for him to submit to Peter's judgment. Jesus also said that Peter's confession was a revelation from God, *not* the result of human judgment. In fact, Scripture teaches "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Furthermore, the context of Boniface's statement has nothing to do with King Philip's response to Peter's confession. Boniface is instead warning the king against resisting the pope, which he more fully articulates in the next section of *Unam Sanctam*.

Nevertheless, Boniface's assertion that Greeks or others not committed to the pope are not Christ's sheep rests on a false premise. Peter could not hand down a universal office that he himself did not hold. Moreover, it is striking that Boniface denies that some are Christ's sheep without regard to Christ's own relationship with them. Indeed, Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and I give eternal life to them, . . . and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28). Furthermore, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one

---

<sup>38</sup>Shea, "Just Exactly Where is the Church?"

who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). Indeed, “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2:19). Scripture thus refutes Boniface’s arbitrary exclusion of Greeks (who were originally entrusted to Paul anyway) and others (such as the thief on the cross) from Jesus’ flock. Moreover, Boniface exposes his own duplicity: claiming to be “one head” with Christ, he could not be further from the mind of our Savior, who desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

### *Boniface’s Fourth Provocative Claim*

So far, Boniface has focused on commitment to the pope; he focuses next on the dangers of resisting the papacy.<sup>39</sup> In the fourth section of *Unam Sanctam*, he asserts that the pope possesses a plenitude of powers, and consequently anyone who resists papal authority does so at his own peril.<sup>40</sup> Among these powers, Boniface asserts that the Church has ‘two swords’ – one spiritual and the other, temporal. He supports this claim by citing Luke 22:38, where Peter asks Jesus if two swords are enough as they head to Gethsemane following the Last Supper. His interpretation simply does not follow. He also claims that the Church has been appointed over the nations and kingdoms of the earth, as God says of Jeremiah in Jer. 1:10. Yet Rom. 13:4 declares that civil government with its temporal power is a minister of God, not of the Church. Third, he asserts that the supreme spiritual power [the pope] judges all things but he himself is judged by no one (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15). Innocent III made this same claim a century earlier. Perhaps this assertion explains the impunity of past immoral popes?<sup>41</sup> Did not Jesus say, “You shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15-19); and did not Peter himself say, “Let another man take his office” (Acts 1:20; cf. Deut. 21:21; 1 Cor. 5:11-13)?

Boniface bases all of these powers on Jesus’ words to Peter in Matthew 16: “Christ ‘disclosed [Peter] to be the firm rock, just as the Lord said to Peter himself: ‘Whatever you shall bind, etc.’” He describes this authority as “a divine power given by divine word of mouth to

---

<sup>39</sup>*Unam Sanctam* merely escalates warnings to the king communicated a year earlier (1301) in his papal bull, *Ausculta fili*. Not long after *Unam Sanctam* Boniface VIII wrote a bull of excommunication against King Philip.

<sup>40</sup>The text for this fourth claim is actually divided among four sections (4 – 8) of *Unam Sanctam* as translated at catholicplanet.com.

<sup>41</sup>Roman Catholics acknowledge the gross immorality of popes such as John XII (AD 955), Benedict IX (1032–48), and Alexander VI (1492–1503), but they say that the Vicar of Christ does not have to be impeccable (sinless) to be infallible. However, the point is that such men should have been deposed and replaced.

Peter and confirmed to Peter and to his successors by Christ himself.” However, Jesus gave the other apostles the same power to bind and loose, and He never addressed Peter’s successors (Matt. 18:18; cf. John 20:23). Moreover, throughout the history of the Church there has never been a unanimous interpretation of ‘this rock’ in Matthew 16:18.<sup>42</sup> For example, although Tertullian (ca. 210) and some early church fathers describe Peter as “the rock on which the church is built,”<sup>43</sup> Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 365) and others say that Jesus was speaking of “the rock of confession whereon the Church is built.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Augustine declares: “For the Rock was Christ; and on this foundation was Peter himself also built. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.”<sup>45</sup> After all, Christ is the corner stone (Eph. 2:20; cf. Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11).

Nevertheless, Boniface assumes the “plentitude of papal powers” to be his, and adds, “Whoever, therefore resists this power so ordained by God, resists the ordinance of God. . . .” (cf. Rom. 13:1-2). By claiming all of these powers, Boniface portrays himself as Christ’s equal. Furthermore, his appropriation of Paul’s teaching about civil authority projects a certain ominous tone, leading to his fifth, and most provocative, claim.

### *Boniface’s Fifth Provocative Claim*

*Unam Sanctam* concludes with the words: “Furthermore, we declare, say, define and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”<sup>46</sup> This claim seems to rest on an implicit assumption: that the pope is an arbiter

---

<sup>42</sup>In spite of the diversity of interpretations of Matt. 16:16-19 noted, Stephen Ray asserts that “preconceived biases or anti-Catholic sentiments, and not objective study of the passage itself, compel the objector to resist the clear meaning of the biblical passage” - clear only to those who agree with Ray? (*Upon This Rock*, 61n82)

<sup>43</sup>Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics* 22, in *ANF* 3. Cyprian, Origen, Ephraem the Syrian, Basil of Caesarea, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Cyril of Alexandria also said Peter was the rock upon which the Church was built. Some of these church fathers also endorse other interpretations of ‘this rock’ in Matt. 16.

<sup>44</sup>Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity* 6.36, in *NPNF* 2-09. Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret also identify the rock as Peter’s confession or his faith.

<sup>45</sup>Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 124.5, in *NPNF* 1-07. Eusebius, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, and John of Damascus agree that Christ was the rock upon which the Church was built.

<sup>46</sup>Thomas Aquinas’ *Contra Errores Graecorum* (ca. 1265) contains a number of assertions favorable to the papacy, including: “It is also shown that to be subject to the Roman Pontiff is necessary for salvation” (part 2, 38). See *Contra Errores Graecorum*, trans. Peter Damian Fehlner, ed. Joseph

of salvation. Boniface thereby usurps the prerogative of Jesus, the author of salvation (Heb. 2:10). Whatever the power of the keys of the kingdom might be, salvation is from the Lord alone. “There is no savior besides Me,” declares the Lord in Hosea 13:4 (cf. Isa. 45:21; 1 Tim. 4:10; Tit. 1:4). In fact, Peter himself, filled with the Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus: “there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Neither Peter nor his successors are able to save.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the conclusion of *Unam Sanctam*, invoking the formula of papal infallibility, contradicts Scripture and is therefore false.

In summary, Boniface argues in *Unam Sanctam* (1) that the pope is Christ’s peer in the Church, outside of which there is no salvation or forgiveness of sins; and (2) that the power of the keys passed down to Peter’s successors extends to salvation itself. However, Scripture and reason counter every provocative claim Boniface makes. Christ alone is Savior and head of the whole Church. Moreover, the Body of Christ has flourished in Orthodox and Protestant Churches around the globe for centuries apart from the pope. How, then, have Roman Catholics (especially, as taught by Vatican II) understood the provocative claims asserted by *Unam Sanctam*?

As background, it is important to recognize that Roman Catholics cannot ignore Pope Boniface VIII’s ‘infallible’ teaching, thanks to the dogma adopted at Vatican I in 1870.<sup>48</sup> Yet, *Unam Sanctam* has been divisive for Roman Catholics: some, like Leonard Feeney, assert that it and Vatican II are incompatible; whereas most, like Dave Armstrong, believe that Vatican II and *Unam Sanctam* are consistent.<sup>49</sup> Yet others express various personal opinions, such as this one by

---

Kenny, at <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraErrGraecorum.htm#b38> (accessed March 2, 2015). The editor says he has supplied “missing chapters,” but does not identify which chapters were thus supplied and why they were missing. Nevertheless, the assertions about the papacy attributed to Aquinas are addressed in this study.

<sup>47</sup>“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy” (James 4:12).

<sup>48</sup>At Vatican I, Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of papal infallibility while declaring his previous (1854) teaching of Mary’s “Immaculate Conception” to be infallible. Canon 18 of Session 3 asserts: “this is the infallibility which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals.” The formula used by Pius XII in his later declaration of Mary’s bodily assumption into heaven (1950) is almost identical to that of *Unam Sanctam*.

<sup>49</sup>Leonard Feeney (1897-1978) was excommunicated for teaching that Jews and Protestants could not be saved; however, other “old school” Roman Catholics remain. For example, several years ago, a contributor on Stephen Ray’s *Defenders of the Catholic Faith* apologetics forum (<http://www.catholic->



Phil Porvaznic (“Philvaz”): “a non-Catholic CANNOT submit or be subject to the Pope, even if the person sincerely desired to obey the Pope in everything and believe all his teachings. Only CATHOLICS can submit to the Pope . . . Therefore, *Unam Sanctam* applies only to Roman Catholics.”<sup>50</sup> Porvaznic’s opinion, however, is not compatible with Boniface’s explicit assertion that Greeks not committed to the pope are not among Christ’s sheep. Nor is his opinion consistent with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the documents of Vatican II, the official sources of Roman Catholic teaching that will be considered next.

### *Unam Sanctam Revisited: Vatican II*

Vatican II largely retains the perspective of *Unam Sanctam*, albeit with some significant revisions. For example, the dogma that outside the Church there is no salvation (EENS) is now stated thus: “Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.” The Catechism continues: “those, who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church” but “who seek God with a sincere heart” and try to do his will according to their conscience, “may achieve eternal salvation.”<sup>51</sup> Thus Vatican II recognizes “invincible ignorance” as an exception to the rule of “no salvation outside of the Church.”

### *Invincible Ignorance*

Catholic apologist Dave Armstrong affirms “invincible ignorance” as taught by Vatican II and claims it was known and accepted by Boniface VIII. He cites Thomas Aquinas to support this position. However, *Unam Sanctam*, exempts *no one* from the “absolute necessity” of being subject to the pope. Moreover, according to Aquinas, if unbelievers “who have heard nothing about the faith are damned, it is on account of other sins, which cannot be taken away without

---

convert.com/) told me, “You are separated from the Mystical Body of Christ and the wrath of God does indeed remain upon you.”

<sup>50</sup>Phil Porvaznic, “The Unam Sanctam ‘Problem’ Resolved: Can Non-Catholics Be Saved?” at <http://www.philvaz.com/apologet0ics/debate9.htm> (accessed February 12, 2015).

<sup>51</sup>CCC 846-47; cf. LG 16. Pope Pius IX was the first pope to tie ‘invincible ignorance’ to EENS (*Singulari Quadem*, 1854). The tradition articulated by Pope Innocent III (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215), Pope Boniface VIII (*Unam Sanctam*, 1302), Pope Eugene IV (*Cantate Domino*, 1441), and Pope John XXIII (1958) has been revised.

faith, but not on account of their sin of unbelief.”<sup>52</sup> Aquinas therefore denies that invincible ignorance saves anyone. Rather, as Scripture repeatedly affirms: salvation requires faith in the name of the Lord (cf. Joel 2:32; Hos. 13:4; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 11:6; 1 Pet. 1:5, 9; etc.). God may overlook ignorance, but He does not reward it.

According to Jesus, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). Moreover, Paul affirms that “whoever calls upon the Lord will be saved” and asks, “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:13-14). Thus, according to Paul it is necessary to hear and believe in order to call on the Lord. Paul demonstrates this in Acts 17, where he finds Athenians groping for an unknown God and he responds by telling them about Jesus, saying: “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring that all *people* everywhere should repent” (cf. Acts 17:22-31). Instead of excusing ignorance, Paul asserts that God now demands repentance from all peoples. Therefore, Vatican II appears to be at odds with the Apostle by asserting that ignorance (if ‘invincible’) exempts one from needing to call upon the *name of the Lord*, which requires knowing who the Savior is (cf. Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 10:13-14). Rather, fulfillment of Jesus’ Great Commission is *necessary* for the salvation of “some from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.”

### The Head of the Church

Vatican II also differs from *Unam Sanctam* in its treatment of the head of the Church. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “[A]ll salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body.”<sup>53</sup> *Lumen Gentium* adds that the successor of Peter is “the Vicar of Christ, the visible Head of the whole Church.”<sup>54</sup> Vatican II thus stops short of calling the pope ‘one head’ with Christ. Yet Christ and the pope cannot both be head of the whole

---

<sup>52</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* vol. 2, part 2 of 2, 10.1 (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947). Aquinas also denies that one who has a false opinion of God (e.g., other religions) knows Him (ibid. 2.2.10.5). Dave Armstrong cites Aquinas, arguing that invincible ignorance is not a sin; but he fails to recognize the burden of other sins that, without faith, condemn all humans. See “Dialogue on ‘Salvation Outside the Church’ and Alleged Catholic Magisterial Contradictions” (2004), at Biblical Evidence for Catholicism with Dave Armstrong, <http://socrates58.blogspot.com/2007/03/dialogue-on-salvation-outside-church.html> (accessed March 10, 2015).

<sup>53</sup>CCC 846.

<sup>54</sup>LG 3.18; cf. CCC 882.

Church; you cannot serve two masters.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Eph. 1:22-23 teaches that Christ is “head over all things to the church, which is His body.”

Not surprisingly, Vatican II has retained Boniface VIII’s claim that the pope is the shepherd of all of Christ’s sheep. As expressed by *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Christ “selected Peter, and after his confession of faith determined that on him He would build His Church. Also to Peter He promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and after His profession of love, entrusted all His sheep to him to be confirmed in faith and shepherded in perfect unity.”<sup>56</sup> The claim that Christ entrusted all of His sheep to Peter and his successors has already been refuted.

### *Christ’s Sheep and Unity*

On the other hand, Vatican II views Christ’s sheep in a radically different way than *Unam Sanctam*. In fact, instead of saying that anyone not committed to the pope cannot be among Christ’s sheep, *Unitatis Redintegratio* declares: “The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter.”<sup>57</sup> This document calls such Christians “separated brethren” (more will be said about this later).

Regarding unity, Vatican II asserts: “The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful.”<sup>58</sup> Catholic apologist Tim Staples ties this interpretation to Luke 22:24-32, where “Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail, so that ‘he may be the source of strength and unity for the rest of the

---

<sup>55</sup>Conflict occurs when requiring religious assent and submission to the teaching of the pope (such as in *Unam Sanctam*) that can be reasonably shown to contradict the teaching of Christ and His apostles (cf. *LG* 3.25).

<sup>56</sup>*Unitatis Redintegratio* (*UR*) 1.2, a decree of Vatican II, at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_unitatis-redintegratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html) (accessed February 28, 2015). At the same time, CCC 862 affirms “the office of shepherding the Church, which the apostles received . . . to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops.”

<sup>57</sup>*UR* 1.3. Interestingly, this broader view of Christ’s sheep has incited a backlash from some conservative Roman Catholics who claim Vatican II ushered in a realm of anti-popes who have corrupted the Church’s dogmas. The fact is, the Protestant situation today is in principal the same as it was for the Greeks in Boniface’s day.

<sup>58</sup>*LG* 3.23; cf. Cyprian, *Epistles* 72.7 (ca. 255).

apostles”<sup>59</sup> However, it does not follow that Jesus’ prayer for Peter’s faith makes his successors *the permanent* “source of strength and unity for the whole Church.”

Scripture never teaches that Peter’s successors are the source of unity; in fact, the papacy, with its antipopes and its roles in the great schisms of the Church, has a mixed record on unity.<sup>60</sup> According to Eph. 4:4-5, unity is found in “one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” In fact, perhaps baptism, with its confession of the one faith, is a better visible sign and symbol of unity of the Church.<sup>61</sup>

### *Papal Powers*

Regarding papal powers, Vatican II says: “The pope’s power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, . . . the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power.”<sup>62</sup> This claim is based on Jesus’ promise to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). For most Catholics, this is the strongest Scriptural argument for the exclusive claims of the papacy. For example, Scott Hahn argues that the keys imply a permanent office requiring perpetual succession from Peter throughout the history of the Church.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, it is not at all clear (1) what power and authority Peter possessed that was not shared by other apostles, and (2) what authority Peter actually handed down to his

---

<sup>59</sup>Staples, “The Papacy in Scripture.”

<sup>60</sup>There have been more than forty antipopes (including Boniface VII). Moreover, the pope initiated both the Great East-West Schism (1054) and Martin Luther’s excommunication (1521), resulting in lasting schisms within the Body of Christ. In addition, not long after Boniface VIII, two or three popes simultaneously claimed to be the only valid successor of Peter for forty years (1378 to 1418) – a situation *Unam Sanctam* did not anticipate.

<sup>61</sup>The Eucharist is (should be) another visible sign and symbol of the unity of the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17). Sadly it has become a symbol of divisions within the Body. Similarly, the assembly of Christians for worship can be either a sign of unity or division, depending on the context. It, too, often is a sign of the latter.

<sup>62</sup>LG 3.22; cf. CCC 882.

<sup>63</sup>Catholic-pages.com, Scott Hahn on the Papacy, at <http://www.catholic-pages.com/pope/hahn.asp> (accessed March 26, 2015). Interestingly, Calvin identifies the keys as a metaphor for the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13). See *Institutes of Religion* 4.6.4. He says “heaven is opened to us by the doctrine of the Gospel.”

successors.<sup>64</sup> As already noted, the other apostles shared the power to bind and loose (Matt. 18:18), and Christ subsequently entrusted Paul with the Gospel to *all* of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5; cf. Gal. 2:9). Thus, Peter himself held no permanent exclusive power or authority (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).<sup>65</sup> Moreover, none of Peter's successors walked on water or exhibited any other signs and wonders to confirm this alleged supreme office. Furthermore, none of Peter's successors are part of the foundation of the Church, as the apostles were. There is simply no basis in Scripture or in history for the presumption that Christ granted supreme perpetual power to Peter or to his successors.

### *Separated Brethren and EENS*

Regarding the salvation of Christians separated from the Church, Vatican II takes a cue from Augustine's understanding of EENS. Having argued that unity is the proof of love, without which faith is nothing, Augustine continues:

Outside the Catholic Church there can be everything except salvation. He can hold office, he can have sacraments, he can sing "alleluia," he can respond "amen," he can hold to the gospel, he can have faith and preach in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But never except in the Catholic Church can he find salvation.<sup>66</sup>

Apparently Augustine recognized in his day that Christians "outside of the Catholic Church" demonstrated all the visible signs of Church life. Yet, he felt compelled to insist on *institutional* unity as the test of the widely accepted dogma that outside the Church there is no salvation. Nevertheless, does not Scripture teach that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9-11)? Sadly, Vatican II followed the tenets of EENS rather than Scripture, and said: "[I] is only

---

<sup>64</sup>Another question might be: How does anyone today know to which of Peter's successors "the keys" were actually bequeathed? For example, Mark, a well-known protégé of Peter was the first patriarch of Alexandria; and the line of succession from Peter in Rome is not reported consistently by the church fathers.

<sup>65</sup>Roman Catholics cite Isa. 22:15-25 as a type of the keys Jesus offered to Peter. However, in Isaiah, Shebna, the incumbent, is deposed and replaced by Eliakim, something that has never happened with the papacy ("the supreme spiritual power is judged by no one"). Instead, there were often 'anti-popes,' and only in hindsight did "the Church" decide which were the rightful heirs of 'Peter's Chair'.

<sup>66</sup>Augustine, *Address to the People of the Church of Caesarea* 6.

through Christ's Catholic Church . . . that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation."<sup>67</sup> In addition, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2.22 states: "Baptism, therefore, envisages a complete profession of faith, complete incorporation in the system of salvation such as Christ willed it to be, and finally complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion." Therefore, according to Vatican II, 'separated brethren' cannot "benefit fully from the means of salvation" because they lack "complete incorporation in the system of salvation." Consequently, how do Roman Catholics today believe Protestants are saved?

Roman Catholics find it difficult to articulate how Protestants are saved because of the dogma of EENS. What follows is an attempt to explain this complex issue in simple terms. According to Vatican II, a person is incorporated into the Church by Trinitarian baptism, which does not have to be administered by a priest (*UR* 1.3, *CCC* 1256). Thus, Protestants are incorporated into the Church by baptism. However, the new life conferred at baptism requires ongoing nourishment, which Rome attributes to the Eucharist based on John 6:53: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves" (cf. *CCC* 1392).<sup>68</sup> Roman Catholics are required to partake of this "spiritual food" at least annually, which in turn requires preparation by the sacrament of Reconciliation (*CCC* 1389). However, Rome asserts that only priests possessing sacramental Orders conferred through apostolic succession can administer a valid Eucharist, in which the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Christ (*CCC* 1400).<sup>69</sup> Moreover, according to Joseph Ratzinger (later,

---

<sup>67</sup>*UR* 1.3; cf. *CCC* 845. *CCC* 830 defines the means of salvation to be: "correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession." *CCC* 1129 says that the sacraments are *necessary for salvation*: "The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior." *CCC* 1816 also says that "service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation" (cf. Matt. 10:32-33).

<sup>68</sup>Protestants view John 6:63 as the key to Jesus' Bread of Life discourse: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." Tertullian says of this passage: "we ought therefore to desire Him in order that we may have life, and to devour Him with the ear, and to ruminate on Him with the understanding, and to digest Him by faith" (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 37, in ANF 3). Similarly, Irenaeus writes: "Eat ye from every Scripture of the Lord" (*Against Heresies* 5.20.2). Consequently, Protestants seek spiritual nourishment primarily by coming to Christ through the written Word of God: through reading, prayer, and preaching; although Anglicans celebrate the Liturgy of the Word together with the Liturgy of the Sacrament. See the footnote below for more on the Anglican perspective of the Eucharist.

<sup>69</sup>According to Rome, even Anglicans, who claim apostolic succession, do not have a valid priesthood, nor a valid Eucharist, because they deny transubstantiation. Thomas Aquinas explains this dogma in *Summa Theologica*, vol. 2, 3.73 – 83. According to Aquinas, "the entire Christ could be in both

Pope Benedict XVI), Protestant “Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element [the Eucharist] of the Church.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, Protestants are deprived of ongoing spiritual nourishment through a valid Eucharist. Hence, according to the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants lack what Jesus said is necessary for [spiritual] life. Nevertheless, like Augustine, Roman Catholics cannot deny the vibrant spiritual life manifest in many Protestant communities today. Consequently, Roman Catholics conclude that Protestants may be saved by means of extra-ordinary grace, being excused from the ordinary means of grace provided through the Eucharist because of non-culpable ignorance.<sup>71</sup> However, this is essentially the same means of salvation that Vatican II articulates for unbelievers. Why is “by grace you have been saved through faith” not enough?

## CONCLUSION

### *Summary and Scriptural Reflections on the Papacy*

In summary, Vatican II differs substantially from *Unam Sanctam* as follows: (1) it says that those who are invincibly ignorant, yet sincerely seek God, may be saved outside of the Church (vs. “there is no salvation outside of the Church”); (2) it recognizes baptized Christians not in communion with Rome as Christ’s sheep (vs. only those committed to the pope are Christ’s sheep); and (3) it distinguishes Christ, the (invisible) Head of the Church, from the pope, the

---

His hands and mouth. Now this could not come to pass were His relation to place to be according to His proper dimensions” (3.81.1 ad 2). Also, “God ‘wedded His Godhead,’ i.e. His Divine power, to the bread and wine, not that these may remain in this sacrament, but in order that He may make from them His body and blood” (3.75.2 ad 1). These are highly strained interpretations of Jesus’ words, “This is My body.” The Apostle Paul suggests an alternative in 1 Cor. 10:2-4, where he identifies manna as spiritual food and says that the rock that gave the Israelites spiritual drink “was Christ.” The substance of the manna and the water did not change, yet they provided both physical and spiritual nourishment. Thus the sacrament can be affirmed as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (the Anglican view).

<sup>70</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, *Dominus Iesus* 17, [2000]. See

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html) (accessed March 22, 2015). According to Ratzinger, Protestants worship in “ecclesial communities” which “cannot be called ‘Churches’ in the proper sense” because “these Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element [the Eucharist] of the Church” (cf. CCC 1275). However, the Eucharist was originally celebrated house to house with more than 3000 people *without* the sacrament of Orders (cf. Acts 2:42, 46-47). Protestant clergy fulfill the requirements and functions of church leaders defined in 1 Tim. 3; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1; Heb. 13:17; etc.

<sup>71</sup>This explanation was given by Andrew Preslar in private correspondence, August 18, 2015.

visible head of the whole Church (vs. Christ and the Vicar are “one head,” not “two heads like a monster”). However, Vatican II does claim that the papacy is the “supreme and universal power over the Church” as well as “the perpetual source of unity.” Finally, Vatican II asserts that all baptized Christians – except for those who do not know any better – must be completely incorporated in “the system of salvation” available through the Church (vs. the “absolute” necessity for *all* humans to be subject to the Roman Pontiff).

In contrast, Jesus says that *whoever* believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. What is necessary for salvation? Trusting the Savior who has revealed Himself through the prophets and in the person of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:13-14; Heb. 11:6).<sup>72</sup> We Protestants affirm salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone (the “five *solas*”). Nevertheless, the Church plays a significant role in nurturing God’s children on their journey of salvation.

Regarding the nurturing role of the Church, Scripture suggests several ways the papacy may be affirmed. For example, as a bishop, the pope is called to preach the gospel and teach the mysteries of God, as well as to exhort, rule, and manage the church of God under his care (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5-9).<sup>73</sup> Moreover, as the spiritual leader of more than one billion Christians, he has great responsibility and power (Heb. 13:17). Therefore, he must be careful not to usurp the authority and role of the Head and Chief Shepherd of the Church, nor disparage the authority of other overseers of Christ’s flock (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-5). In addition, as Paul writes: “Render to all what is due them” (Rom. 13:7). Christians who are under the pope’s care are to follow his example and to obey him, as he watches over their souls (Heb. 13:7, 17); Protestants, as well, should love, honor, and respect the pope as a brother in Christ and as the leader of many of Christ’s sheep.

Finally, with a sincere desire to seek reconciliation between Christians who are separated from one another by various divisions, I commend the following from Vatican II: “Sacred Scriptures provide for the work of dialogue an instrument of the highest value in the mighty hand of God for the attainment of that unity which the Saviour holds out to all” (*UR 2.2*).

---

<sup>72</sup>It is vain to call on the name of the Lord without faith (cf. Job 35:13; Psa. 18:41; Isa. 1:15; Rom. 10:9).

<sup>73</sup>The pope, like all other bishops and overseers of the Church, must meet the qualifications of and fulfill the responsibilities of the office.



## APPENDIX: Summary of *Unam Sanctam*'s Claims and Responses

- (1) Salvation and forgiveness of sins can be found only in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church – a questionable assertion, in view of Joel 2:32 and Hebrews 11. Salvation is from the Savior, who is not bound exclusively to a New Testament institution.
- (2) There is one head of the Church: Christ and the pope – nonsensical (one plus one is not one); a category mistake (Peter is a member of the body, not the head). Christ is the sole head of His body, the Church.
- (3a) The pope is the shepherd of all of Christ's sheep – refuted in Rom. 1:5 and Gal. 2:9 (Christ entrusted Paul with the Gospel to the Gentiles); and by John 10 (according to Jesus, the shepherd has a personal relationship with each sheep; there is one heavenly shepherd and many earthly shepherds).
- (3b) Only those committed to the pope can be Christ's sheep – contrary to Scripture: Jesus promises eternal life to all who come to him; and no one will snatch His sheep (including the Greeks) from His hand (cf. John 10:27-29).
- (4) The plentitude of papal powers underscores the perils of resisting papal authority – claims based on eisegesis, wrongly portraying the pope as Christ's peer.
- (5) It is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff – it is presumptuous for the pope to set himself up as an arbiter of salvation (Heb. 2:10); salvation is from the Lord alone (Hos. 13:4; Acts 4:12).

Copyright © 2016 Michael A. Field – *All rights reserved*

Mike Field is a graduate of Southern Evangelical Seminary (MA-Apologetics), a lover of Jesus and His Word, and a member of Church of the Cross (Anglican) in Austin, TX. Hoping to retire soon to spend more time in ministry, Mike currently helps his wife, Leanne, train people in healthcare informatics and health IT at the University of Texas.

This essay is reproduced at <http://normangeisler.com> with permission of Mike Field. It originally appeared in the March 2016 issue of the Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics. For additional resources by Dr. Geisler on Roman Catholicism, please visit <http://normangeisler.com/rcc/>.