

# RESPONSE TO BISHOP WILLIAMSON

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE VACANCY OF THE ROMAN SEE

*By Most Reverend Donald J. Sanborn*

## INTRODUCTION

BISHOP WILLIAMSON has recently placed on his *Kyrie Eleison* blog a series of articles attempting to refute sedevacantism. Having attracted to himself the staunchest antimodernists in the SSPX, Bishop Williamson, I believe, is finding among them a certain tendency toward sedevacantism. Some of them are professed sedevacantists, although opinionists in most cases. This means that while they *think* that Bergoglio is not the pope, they recognize that the opposite opinion, that Bergoglio is the pope, has some probable arguments in its favor. I am sure my visit to England recently stirred things up a bit as well.

In this article, I am responding to two of Bishop Williamson's blog articles, numbers 343 of February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and 344 of February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Let me state that I have no personal conflict with Bishop Williamson, despite our many years of opposition in the past. He has kept the discussion on a high and rational level, and I intend to do the same.

I have summarized and paraphrased his arguments for the sake of brevity.

## THE FIRST ARGUMENT [TAKEN FROM NUMBER 343]

Bishop Williamson defends Archbishop Lefebvre's stance of accepting Novus Ordo popes, but at the same time of sifting their teachings and disciplines for what is Catholic, and rejecting what is non-Catholic. He says that to do so by one's own personal choice is equivalent to heresy, but it is not equivalent to heresy if one makes the choice based on a two thousand year tradition.

**Response.** (1) Every heretic makes appeal to some form of revelation, whether Scripture or Tradition, in order to make his choice of doctrine which is contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church. So the traditional Catholic in choosing doctrine is not saved from the spirit of heresy. Why? Because he makes appeal to Tradition over and above the magisterium of the Church. The magisterium, however, is infallible, and it is therefore *necessarily* traditional. (2) The Catholic hierarchy is the guarantor of the conformity of the current teaching with the traditional teaching. We cannot on the one hand regard them as the authority, and at the same time say that their doctrine deviates from Tradition. To deviate from Tradition is to be in error. The very notion of infallibility includes that the doctrine which they teach is in conformity with Tradition. How could it be infallible if it deviates from Tradition? If their doctrine deviates from Tradition, there is but one thing to say: *they are not the authority*, since they manifest that they are not assisted by Christ in the promulgation of doctrine.

Catholics consequently need not and may not sift the Church's magisterium for error or heresy. The very purpose of the Catholic Church is to teach the human race infallibly in the name of Christ, who gives perpetual assistance to the Church to do this precise thing.

Furthermore, the system of sifting the magisterium for Tradition strips authority from the would-be popes and bishops. The authority in such a case really lies with the *sifter*, since he has the last word on what is Catholic or not. By thus stripping the Novus Ordo hierarchy of its authority to teach, rule, and sanctify the Church, Bishop Williamson is actually arguing for sedevacantism.

## THE SECOND ARGUMENT

[TAKEN FROM NUMBER 343]

Bishop Williamson cites the argument of sedevacantists that the Vatican II “popes” have promulgated false doctrines, disciplines, and worship. In so doing they destroy the indefectibility of the Church, if they are true popes. To counter this argument, he adduces the case of Pope Liberius [352-366] who, he alleges, signed a heretical formulary. In this case, he says, the indefectibility did not operate through the pope, but through Saint Athanasius, who remained orthodox. Likewise in our time, indefectibility is assured through Archbishop Lefebvre and those who follow him.

**Response.** There are three things to address here. (1) Pope Liberius *did not sign a heretical formulary*. He did sign an ambiguous one, giving to it an orthodox interpretation. But even if one concedes, for the sake of argument, that he did sign a heretical formulary, it is certain that Pope Liberius did not teach this doctrine to the whole Church. But the false doctrines of Vatican II have been promulgated to the whole Church by the Vatican II “popes” and their “bishops.” This fact makes for an *essential* difference between the case of Liberius and that of the Vatican II “popes.” Hence the analogy is false.

(2) Indefectibility cannot be saved by the fidelity of one bishop or some bishops to whom the faithful must cling. The Catholic Church is essentially hierarchical, and consequently one cannot separate its acts and its attributes from the pope and the universal hierarchy. What they do, it does. If they defect, it defects. The gift of prophecy in the Old Testament, which was the mission to teach infallibly God’s revelation to the Jews, has been transferred by Christ in the New Testament to the Catholic hierarchy. Hence there can be no “prophet-bishop” like Archbishop Lefebvre who sifts the teaching of the Catholic hierarchy, thereby becoming himself the infallible authority. The infallibility and indefectibility of the Catholic Church must be operated by the pope and the bishops in union with him. It cannot be assured by one or a few bishops who establish themselves as correctors of the pope and the rest of the hierarchy. To hold such a theory ruins the very divine constitution of the Catholic Church. The *essence*

of Catholicism is that it is endowed with a hierarchy which has the power to teach, rule, and sanctify in Christ’s name and with one and the same authority as that of Jesus Christ. If the faithful, in order to discover supernatural truth, must run to prophet-bishops, whistle-blowers who pit themselves *against* this hierarchy, the very nature and essence of the Catholic Church falls into ruin.

In other words, no one can speak for God above or apart from the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

(3) Bishop Williamson’s system of sifting the magisterium in order to determine its conformity to Tradition completely overturns the Catholic rule of faith, which is the *magisterium of the Catholic Church*. His system is essentially that of the Protestants. They hold that each individual must decide for himself what is the true interpretation of the Scriptures. Bishop Williamson is saying that each Catholic must decide for himself what he considers to be in conformity with Tradition or not. Such a rule of faith would lead to exactly what Protestantism is: a collection of people who have no unity of faith whatsoever, who endlessly squabble about what the Scriptures say, and who have split up into a myriad of dogmatic camps.

There are many cases in the history of the Catholic Church in which this appeal to the higher court of Tradition over the head of the magisterium has led to serious error. The Donatists became schismatics, for example, because they thought that the Church was wrong about accepting as valid the sacraments of those who had lapsed into apostasy during persecution. The Greeks went into schism in the eleventh century because they said, among other things, that the use of unleavened bread in the Roman rite was not traditional, and therefore not valid. They also rejected the primacy of the pope on the grounds that it is not traditional. The Old Catholics in the nineteenth century likewise rejected papal infallibility alleging that it was not traditional. Even the Modernists argue that the Catholic Church developed with time into something which cannot be found in the primitive Church, and is therefore not traditional. The whole liturgical reform of the 1960’s was based on the false notion of *archaeologism*, namely that the medieval and tridentine periods created a liturgy which was not in conformi-

ty with the primitive tradition. The Feeneyites claim that the Catholic doctrine of Baptism of Blood and of Desire cannot be reconciled with Tradition, but was invented in the nineteenth century.

Bishop Williamson's notion of sifting tradition, which is a concoction of Ecône, is a potential hornet's nest of heresy and schism, and places the traditional Catholic in the worst company.

### THE THIRD ARGUMENT

[TAKEN FROM NUMBER 343]

Bishop Williamson correctly states: "What the bishops of the world teach, in union with the Pope, is the Church's Ordinary Universal Magisterium, which is infallible." He then proposes the argument of the sedevacantists that since Vatican II has been promulgated by the Vatican II "popes" and "bishops," it is impossible that they be true popes and true bishops. Bishop Williamson responds to this by saying that the Universal Ordinary Magisterium of Vatican II and of subsequent years has not been in accordance with Tradition. Therefore it is not universal ordinary magisterium. Therefore the argument of the sedevacantists is false.

**Response.** Bishop Williamson's notion of the universal ordinary magisterium (the usual order of the words, and hereinafter the UOM) is false. It comes from a theory which was commonly circulated at Ecône when I was there, that a teaching did not qualify as UOM if it was not in conformity with Tradition. It is therefore possible, in this view, that the Roman Pontiff together with the entire body of bishops could teach a doctrine to the whole Church which is in fact heretical. Such an assertion is *itself* heretical.

Nowhere can the Ecônian idea of sifting the UOM be found in the textbooks of dogmatic theology or in the teaching of the Catholic Church. The definition of UOM given by Fr. Reginald-Maria Schultes O.P., writing in 1931, is the following: "The *ordinary* and *universal* magisterium is exercised when the Church *preaches* revealed doctrine, *teaches* it in its schools, *publishes* it through the bishops, and testifies to it and explains it through the Fathers of the Church and theologi-

ans." [Emphasis in the original]<sup>1</sup> All Catholic theologians concur in this definition.

Fr. Sylvester Berry writes:

The *ordinary* teaching authority of the bishops is that which they exercise in teaching the faithful of their respective dioceses by pastoral letters, by sermons delivered by themselves or by others approved for that purpose, and by catechisms or other books of instruction edited or approved by them. When the bishops of the Church, thus engaged in the duty of instructing their people, are practically unanimous in proclaiming a doctrine of faith or morals, they are said to exercise *universal* teaching authority, and are then infallible in regard to that doctrine. In other words, a doctrine of faith or morals in which practically all the bishops of the Church agree, is infallibly true. The faith of the Church believing must correspond to the faith proposed by the bishops who constitute the teaching body in the Church. Therefore, if the bishops as a body were not infallible, the whole Church might be led into error at any time, and thereby cease to be the Church of Christ, the pillar and ground of truth.<sup>2</sup>

To further prove my point, I call your attention to the textbook of dogmatic theology written by Fr. Francis Diekamp in 1917, entitled *Theologiae Dogmaticae Manuale*. He says:

Individual bishops exercise the aforesaid ordinary magisterium both in their ordinary religious instruction or in instructions of this type which happen by their command and under their vigilance, and in judgements published by the Supreme Pontiffs and given in written form, in Synods whether provincial or diocesan, in the condemnation of errors in pastoral letters, in the publication of catechisms or books of devotion which are distributed to the whole diocese, etc.

Liturgical books prescribed by the bishops and especially by the Roman Pontiffs are of great importance in arguments regarding dogma. Laws, rites, and prayers contained in them testify to the faith of the pastors and of the faithful. From the consensus, according to which all the Western and Eastern churches agree on faith, comes the obligation of giving the assent of

<sup>1</sup> SCHULTES, REGINALD-MARIA, *de Ecclesia Catholica Praelectiones Apologeticae*, (Paris: Lethielleux, 1931), p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> BERRY, SYLVESTER, D.D., *The Church of Christ*, (Saint Louis: B. Herder, 1927) pp. 466-467.

faith. Pope Celestine I [422-432] taught this: “Let us look as well at the sacred mysteries of the priests’ prayers, which have been handed down from the Apostles and are uniformly celebrated in the whole world and in every Catholic church, *in order that the law of praying establish the law of believing.*” [Emphasis in original] (Epist. 21, 11)

The doctrine of bishops taken together, just like the definition *ex cathedra* of the Roman Pontiff, is not made infallible by the assent which the believing Church gives to it; instead it is infallible *in itself* by reason of divine assistance, by which it is preserved from error. [Emphasis added]

The doctrine expounded by these authors, as well as the description of the UOM, are in conformity with that of every Catholic theologian. It is beyond the scope of this article to adduce all of the proofs.

Bishop Williamson’s notion of the UOM, on the other hand, cannot be found in the book of any Catholic theologian or in the magisterium of the Church. Bishop Williamson’s idea of the UOM requires the universal teaching of the Church to be analyzed and adjudicated by the faithful for its conformity to Tradition. In this scenario, it is entirely possible that the hierarchy teach heresy at any given point, but that the Church’s infallibility and indefectibility are preserved by very *rejection* of this magisterium, on the grounds that the faithful do not find it conforming to Tradition. It is as absurd as saying “the Catholic Church is infallible except when it is wrong.” Furthermore, his system requires the faithful to make the judgement whether or not to accept the universal ordinary magisterium, based on a personal conviction that it is in conformity with Tradition or not. In other words, the faithful must *sift* the teaching of the universal Church, every single time it speaks, in order to distinguish truth from error. As I said above, such a notion of magisterium strips the



authority from the pope and hierarchy and shifts it to the individual, since he has the last word as to whether or not the doctrine conforms to Tradition.

What Bishop Williamson says about Tradition could also be ascribed to Scripture. What if I think that some act of the Church’s magisterium is not in accordance with Sacred Scripture? Do I then have a right to reject it, all the while regarding the Scripture-denying pope as the true Vicar of Christ?

The chilling reality is that Bishop Williamson’s ideas conform exactly to what the arch-Modernist heretic Hans Küng says in his 1970 book entitled *Infallibility? An Inquiry*. In it, he says that the Church’s infallibility is not tied to dogmatic formulas, which, he says, in fact can be wrong, but to the Church’s overall and long-term commitment to the truth. Küng states:

Infallibility, indeceivability in this radical sense, therefore means a *fundamental remaining of the Church in truth, which is not annulled by individual errors.* [Emphasis in original]<sup>3</sup>

But the Church’s being true is not absolutely dependent on quite definite infallible propositions, but on her remaining in the truth throughout all — even erroneous — propositions.<sup>4</sup>

He cites Yves Congar, a fellow arch-Modernist at the Council:

“One part or another of the Church can err, even the bishops, even the pope; the Church can be storm-tossed: in the end she remains faithful.”<sup>5</sup>

And this statement of Küng’s resembles very closely Bishop Williamson’s stance:

“Where, then, in these dark ages, was the Church’s indefectibility really manifested? Not in the hierarchy and not in theology, but among those innumerable and mostly unknown Christians — and there were always some bishops and theologians also among them — who even in the Church’s worst pe-

<sup>3</sup> KÜNG, HANS, *Infallibility? An Inquiry*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, page 183.

riods, heard the Christian message and tried to live according to it in faith, love and hope.”<sup>6</sup>

“They were the true witnesses of the truth of Christ...”<sup>7</sup>

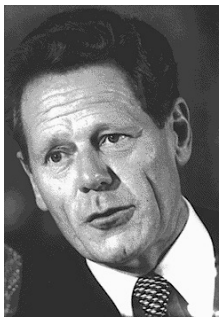
Küng cites the Eastern schismatics in order to prove his point:

The schismatic patriarchs wrote to Pius IX in 1848: “Among us, neither Patriarchs nor Councils could ever introduce new teaching, for the guardian of religion is the very body of the Church, that is the people (*laos*) itself.”<sup>8</sup>

Küng quotes the Russian schismatic theologian Alexei Khomiakov, who says:

“The unvarying constancy and the unerring truth of Christian dogma does not depend on any hierarchical order; it is guarded by the totality, by the whole people of the Church, which is the Body of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

In the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles we read: “As the Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.”



Hans Küng, a Jesuit, who together with suit-and-tie Ratzinger and Rahner, formed the arch-Modernist triumvirate of Vatican II.

Bishop Williamson cannot escape agreement with these Protestant heretics, since by maintaining that the Modernist hierarchy is the Catholic hierarchy, he cannot escape the conclusion that “the Church of Rome has erred.” On the other hand, the sedevacantist holds that the false teachings and practices of Vatican II do not come from the Church of Rome, but from a group of ecclesiastical thugs, heretics, who are pretending to be the Catholic hierarchy. The duty of the Catholic in this crisis is to *unmask* these pretenders, and to denounce them as false hierarchs.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, page 189.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, page 200.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, page 201.

It is true that we must compare anything that *anyone* says to the traditional teaching of the Church. In like manner we compare everything we hear to the first principles of reason, and reject immediately that which is contradictory. In a case like ours in which we have seen the apparent Catholic hierarchy teach false doctrine, and promulgate false worship and sinful disciplines, it is necessary to conclude that they are not true popes or bishops, since it is impossible that true popes or bishops, taken as a whole, do such a thing. Vatican II’s defection from the truth, and its teaching of heresy to the universal Church, are an *infallible sign* that Paul VI was not a true pope, and never was a true pope. For all the authority of any general council depends on the pope.

The doctrine I have just expounded is entirely in accordance with Sacred Scripture, in which Saint Paul in Galatians I: 8-9 states: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. As we said before, so now I say again: If any one preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema.” Notice that he does not tell them to *sift* the teacher of falsehood for tidbits of good doctrine, but instead tells them to reject him altogether. *Let him be anathema.* This doctrine is also in conformity with Pope Paul IV’s bull *Cum ex apostolatus* of 1559, which calls for the utter rejection of a Roman Pontiff found to be heretical, and not for the sifting of his doctrine.

I summarize my response: The universal ordinary magisterium, which is the teaching concerning faith and morals of all the bishops dispersed throughout the world, together with the Roman Pontiff, is infallible. This doctrine was *defined* at the Vatican Council of 1870, and is in the Code of Canon Law of 1917. Hence it is heretical even to call into doubt what is taught by the universal ordinary magisterium. If what appears to be universal ordinary magisterium contradicts the teaching of the Church, then the *necessary* conclusion is that it cannot have come from the true hierarchy of the Catholic Church, who are assisted by Christ from making errors in this regard. **It is contrary to the Church’s constitution to reject the universal ordinary magisterium as false, while at the same time to accept the hierarchy which promulgates**

it as the true Roman Catholic hierarchy. Bishop Williamson's notion of the universal ordinary magisterium is false, and extremely dangerous, since it leads the Catholic to believe that the entire teaching Church, the Roman Pontiff with all the bishops, is capable of teaching error in matters that pertain to faith. Hence Bishop Williamson's principles concerning the universal ordinary magisterium cannot be used against the arguments for sedevacantism, since his principles are false.

### THE FOURTH ARGUMENT

[TAKEN FROM NUMBER 343]

Here Bishop Williamson tries to defuse the argument of sedevacantists which states that since the Vatican II popes are public heretics, they cannot be popes. He responds that the Conciliar popes, although they have stated objective heresies, subjectively are not guilty of the sin or crime of heresy, owing to the fact that we cannot prove, outside of a court of law, that they are really conscious of contradicting Church teaching.

**Response.** It is first necessary to review the distinction between the *sin* of heresy and the *crime* of heresy. The sin of heresy is the act of doubting or denying a truth of Catholic Faith. It may be *formal* or *material*. Formal heresy is to doubt or deny the truth with the knowledge that what you are doubting or denying is in fact a Catholic dogma or moral teaching, and not merely a theological conclusion or the opinion of some theologians. Material heresy is to doubt or deny what is objectively a Catholic dogma or moral teaching *without* the knowledge that the teaching pertains to faith.

Heresy is also a crime, that is, a violation of Church law, for which there are certain penalties.<sup>10</sup>

In both cases, however, the commission of the sin or the crime, if done publicly, carries with it an automatic severance from the Catholic Church.

Moral theologians are clear in stating that the only thing which excuses from *formal* heresy is ignorance. One has to be ignorant of the fact that he is contradicting a Catholic doctrine which pertains either to the solemn magisterium of the Church, or to the universal ordinary magisterium.

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Cekada has done an excellent article on both the sin and crime of heresy, which can be found on [traditionalmass.org](http://traditionalmass.org)

Bishop Williamson would have us believe that, once the fact of heresy is established, i.e., that someone has pronounced a heresy, ignorance is presumed, until the contrary be proven in a court of law.

In fact the opposite is true. One is innocent until proven guilty in all courts of law with regard to the *fact* of a crime, but never in regard to the *formality* (personal guilt) of the crime. If this were true, it would be necessary to have two trials for every crime: one to prove the fact, and the other to prove that the perpetrator really knew what he was doing when he did it. All law *presumes* formal guilt when the *fact* of the crime is known. The same is true for sin. Lack of formality in the sin — that someone is guiltless for lack of knowledge — must be proved.

I will give some examples. In the case of the Colorado mass shooting in a movie theater which took place in 2012, the defense lawyers of this young man are not in any way contesting the *fact* that their client performed the shootings and murders. They are trying to prove that the shooter was not in his right mind, and therefore, on the grounds of insanity, is not truly guilty of the crime before the law. The burden of proof is upon them; there is no presumption of law in the young man's favor.

There was also the famous case in Oyster Bay Cove, New York, in a building which is now serving as a Mass center of the Society of Saint Pius V. Many decades ago there was a murder in that building, performed by the wife of a man whom she took to be a prowler in the middle of the night. She admitted to shooting him, but maintained that she did so by mistake, not realizing that he was her husband. She was acquitted. The burden of proof of ignorance, however, was upon her, since the presumption of law was against her.

Then there was the famous case in Washington during the American Civil War, in which the plea of temporary insanity won an acquittal. A man came home unexpectedly and found his wife with another man. The husband went into such a rage that he took a gun immediately and shot the woman's lover. He admitted in court to having done the act, but pleaded that he was innocent because of lack of formality of the act, namely that

he was temporarily insane because of his extreme anger.

The point is that all law, including moral theology and Canon Law, presumes guilt once the fact of the sin is admitted. The person who claims he is not guilty owing to ignorance must prove his lack of formality by evidence.

Bishop Williamson would have us believe, therefore, the absurdity that the Vatican II “popes” are ignorant of the Catholic Faith. We are meant to believe that Benedict XVI, who publicly denies the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world, *does not know* that this doctrine is a part of the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

Bishop Williamson’s fourth argument therefore collapses because it is based on false principles concerning formal guilt, and upon the absurd assumption that the Modernist “popes” could actually be ignorant of the Faith.

It is the public *sin* of heresy, moreover, and not the canonical crime, which is sufficient to be an obstacle to the reception of papal authority.

#### RESPONSE TO NUMBER 344

This installment is an explanation of the Church’s infallibility, but which suffers from the same errors, similar to those of Hans Küng, which we mentioned above. It seeks to detach infallibility and indefectibility from the hierarchy.

In the second paragraph, Bishop Williamson very clearly expresses the Catholic notion of the infallibility of the Church. Essentially he says this: that Christ assists the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in such a way that He preserves them from error in teaching Catholic doctrine.

In the third paragraph, however, he says that because God does not wish to take away free will, these same churchmen, who in paragraph two were assisted by Christ from making errors, are in fact capable of error. This makes no sense.

He tries to save infallibility by saying that God does not allow his Church to become “wholly defectible.” Proof of this is that even the Vatican II popes taught some things which were true. We may conclude that the Church could defect partially, i.e., teach some error, but not all.

Then he asks the question: “How is someone able to distinguish truth from falsehood in such a case?” The answer: by *sifting*, that is, by comparing what is taught by the Vatican II “popes” to the traditional magisterium.

He then repeats the Küng thesis that the Church’s infallibility rests not with the hierarchy only, but with the whole Church. “It [Tradition] has been that for which God endowed his Church as a whole, and not just the Popes, with the guidance of the infallible Holy Ghost.” [Emphasis in the original]

Hans Küng would applaud this statement with ardent enthusiasm. Küng says:

**The Church, however, is not simply to be equated with the official Church, with pope and bishops.** It is rather the hidden, but completely real Church of those who truly believe, which cannot err, because Christ in accordance with his promise remains with her to the end of the world; she is the “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (I Tim. III: 15) **To this extent the Church has been preserved even under an erring and failing papacy.**<sup>11</sup>

Bishop Williamson’s theory would have us believe that the Church’s infallibility and indefectibility are preserved by the faithful’s sifting of the papal magisterium in order to discover its errors. In such a case, the Holy Ghost assists the believing Church when He has failed to assist the teaching Church, i.e., the hierarchy.

This makes absolutely no sense. What can the assistance of the Holy Ghost be to the pope and bishops, if He fails to preserve them from teaching error to the whole Church? If He fails to preserve them from error, what guarantee do we have that Tradition is the truth?

#### CONCLUSION

Bishop Williamson is laboring under some grave misconceptions about the nature of the magisterium, of the infallibility of the Church, of the indefectibility of the Church, and of the nature of the sin and crime of heresy, as well as of basic points of the moral law and common criminal

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<sup>11</sup> KÜNG, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

law. His theories about the magisterium make him and his followers logically committed to the heresy that the universal ordinary magisterium could actually teach something contrary to faith.

**Bishop Williamson's central error is this: that he separates the infallibility and indefectibility of the Roman Catholic Church from the hierarchy of that same Church, and transfers it to the sifting faithful.**

**Conversely the strength of the sedevacantist argument is that it absolutely and exclusively identifies infallibility and indefectibility with the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Consequently a defective hierarchy is no hierarchy at all.**

Bishop Williamson, however, is missing a bigger picture and something which is absolutely fundamental: Are Vatican II and its reforms a substantial change of the Catholic Faith, or merely accidental? Put in another way: Is the religion which I find on my local parish, operated under the guidance and approval of "Pope" Francis, and the local Novus Ordo "bishop," the Catholic religion? Yet another way: If I practice the religion which is given to me by what Bishop Williamson says is the Pope and the Roman Catholic bishops, will I go to heaven? Is this religion pleasing to God, or displeasing? Is it the true religion or a false one?

If we affirm that the new religion is substantially the same as the pre-Vatican II Catholicism, that it is the Catholic religion, and that a person can save his soul by embracing and practicing it, then what need do we have of the traditional movement? To resist these changes would be to resist the Catholic Faith. It would be to sign our own eternal death warrant.

If, on the other hand, the new religion is a substantial change of Roman Catholicism, if it is not the Catholic religion, and it is displeasing to God and the path to hell, then how can we say that it is promulgated by an infallible and indefectible Church?

Bishop Williamson in his explanations is giving the standard Ecône line in order to justify their *recognize and resist* stance. They want to recognize the Novus Ordo hierarchy as the true Roman Catholic hierarchy, but at the same time resist them in *nearly everything*. They condemn the Council, the New Mass, the new sacraments.

They tell people not to attend the Masses approved by this so-called Roman Catholic hierarchy. Since none of this makes a bit of sense in Catholic theology, a *new theology* had to be concocted by Ecône in order to justify itself. I remember it. I heard all these things before. I heard Archbishop Lefebvre say in a conference: "The magisterium of Vatican II is only the ordinary magisterium, which is not infallible." At the time, I believed it; I found out later that it was a very serious error, even heresy, as it stands. It was also Archbishop Lefebvre who used the analogy and word of *sifting* the magisterium and disciplines of the Novus Ordo hierarchy to determine what is Catholic and what is Modernist.

**Ecône's theology removes the infallibility and indefectibility of the Church from the Catholic hierarchy, which is the teaching Church, and places it in the faithful, or believing Church. To do so is to make the Catholic Church the Protestant Church, in which individuals are inspired by the Holy Ghost to figure out the truth.**

The Catholic doctrine is that the *teaching Church*, the Roman Catholic hierarchy is the infallible preserver of Tradition, and infallibly proposes it to the whole Church. Indeed, if this were not true, there would be no Tradition to which to compare Vatican II and its reforms. For, as the nineteenth century theologian De Groot said in his treatise on the Church: "Whoever separates the guardianship and preservation of traditions from the infallible magisterium of the Church, takes away the *infallible* certitude of these traditions with *regard to men*." [Emphasis in original]<sup>12</sup>

Ironically both Bishop Williamson and Hans Küng separate the guardianship and preservation of traditions from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

While certainly Bishop Williamson wants nothing to do with heresy, nevertheless he has, through his Ecône theology, found himself a next door neighbor to Hans Küng.

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<sup>12</sup> DE GROOT, J.V., O.P., *Summa Apologetica de Ecclesia Catholica*, (Ratisbon: G.J. Manz: 1906) p. 765.