consensus. The fact is that Pope Pius IX attributed far more importance to the consensus of Catholic theologians than Germain Grisez is willing to grant to it.

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RESPONSE TO FRANCIS SULLIVAN'S REPLY

In an article that appeared in this journal in the same issue as John Ford's and mine, Joseph A. Komonchak asserted that "there is something like a *consensus theologorum* that the magisterial tradition behind *HV*'s condemnation does not constitute an infallible exercise of the teaching office."[1] That was an *alleged* consensus—the kind whose importance I belittle. However, I do not belittle the importance of authentic theological consensus, about which Pius IX taught.

Indeed, Ford and I noted in our article that *Tuas libenter* teaches "that the universal and constant consensus of Catholic theologians holding a point as pertaining to faith is evidence that the matter is one handed on by the ordinary magisterium of the Church dispersed throughout the world."[2] Then, having indicated "that the historical evidence shows that Catholic bishops dispersed throughout the world agreed in one judgment on the morality of contraception," we invoked the "constant consensus of Catholic theologians in modern times" as one fact among others that help gauge the "weight of this uniform teaching," and cited forty-one works to illustrate that consensus.[3] Since the previously existing ecclesial consensus was absent in 1978, we also argued that, once something has been taught infallibly, subsequent dissent cannot negate it.[4]

While a few theologians contributing to the pre-1962 consensus held that Pius XI had defined the teaching on contraception in *Casti connubii* and a few others explicitly held that it had been taught infallibly by the ordinary magisterium, most moralists, who seldom or never assigned theological notes, said nothing about the teaching's status.[5] Still, most manifested the conviction that the prohibition of contraception somehow pertains to faith, generally by treating it as a divine command and invoking some scriptural text.[6] Hence, the teaching on

[1] "*Humane Vitae* and Its Reception: Ecclesiological Reflections," *TS* 39 (1978) 221–57, at 250.

[2] "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium," *TS* 39 (1978) 258–312, at 272.

[3] Ibid. 278–80.

[4] Ibid. 273–74, 310.

[5] See John C. Ford, S.J., and Gerald Kelly, S.J., *Contemporary Moral Theology* 2: *Marriage Questions* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1963) 263–71.

[6] See Ford and Grisez, "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magiste-

contraception met Pius IX's condition: it was "held to belong to the faith by Catholic theologians with universal and constant consensus."[7]

Of course, many today will belittle the importance of that pre-1962 consensus. Some contemporary theologians deny infallibility altogether, and quite a few deny that it can extend to specific moral norms. *Loci theologici* and their use have changed, so that neither uninterrupted Christian tradition nor repeated and forceful papal reaffirmations of a traditional teaching impress those who deny it. With Catholic theology in this state, the absence of a theological consensus about the status of moral teachings no longer has the significance it would have had in 1863.

Moreover, Pius IX's teaching regarding the positive significance of a theological consensus following upon and bearing witness to the teaching of the ordinary magisterium spread throughout the world does not entail a corresponding negative significance for the absence of such a consensus. In other words, Pius clearly meant to specify *sufficient* conditions for identifying a nondefined doctrine as pertaining to faith, but it does not follow (and is hardly likely) that he regarded those conditions as *necessary*—say, for determining in 1863 the status of the doctrines subsequently defined in *Pastor aeternus*.

In sum, I acknowledge that Sullivan has drawn from *Tuas libenter* a theological argument for the importance of the consensus of Catholic theologians. Still, considering the state of Catholic theology today and the distinction between the significance of the presence of theological consensus and the significance of its absence, I remain convinced that, *for theologians,* lack of consensus for a position is no argument against it.

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rium" 282–85, esp. the quotation from Joseph Coppens clarifying the *theological* significance of traditional references to Gen 38:9–10 despite contemporary scholarship denying that Onan's sin was contraception (283).

[7] For one example to illustrate the view, common before 1962, that such moral teachings pertain to faith, see Karl Rahner, *Nature and Grace: Dilemmas in the Modern Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963) 51–53.