

served for characterizing the certainty of Scripture and the rule of faith (*regula fidei*). Nor did he say anywhere that the pope could not err (*papa non potest errare*).⁹⁷ Thomas spoke not of a pope who could not err, but of a church—and he did so frequently. The term *inconcussa fide*, which describes the disposition by which the church has to comply with the *determinatio summi pontificis*, is the sole equivalent for Thomas—and at the same time the most important one—to the papal privilege expressed in the formula *papa non potest errare*.

—We have come to the end of our consideration of Thomas's view of papal teaching authority. Complicated arguments and difficult solutions arise from the very nature of this subject, one in which so many historical and theological problems converge. Why did Thomas leave so many questions unanswered? The reason is simple: our questions and categories were not his own. Nevertheless, the answers he did give considerably influenced later discussions. This leads to a final question, which will receive some clarification in the following chapters. Is Thomas a direct witness to, or an immediate forerunner of, the dogma of infallibility? At the First Vatican Council the minds of the bishops were divided.⁹⁸ As we shall see, even among the Thomists the journey to that council made its way not along a straight path, but along a very winding road.