

De Ecclesia Tractatus Historico-Dogmatici, Tomus II (*Historical-Dogmatic Treatises on the Church, Volume II*)

by **Hermannus Dieckmann S.J. (Hermann Dieckmann S.J.)**, 1925

[Online Location of Text Here](#)

- OCR of the original text by AI (*claude-sonnet-4-5-20250929*).

- Translation of the original text performed by AI (*claude-sonnet-4-5-20250929*).

- Last Edit: November 16, 2025.

- Version: 1.0

- Selection pages: 159-163

Quaestio 2. De objecto indirecto magisterii Ecclesiae. De factis dogmaticis

Latin

834. Alia ratione ac veritates philosophicae cohaerent cum deposito fidei *facta dogmatica*, videlicet non nexu logico et interno, sed externo, contingenti, historico, positivo. Sunt enim veritates historicae, *facta historica*, quae relationem habent ad religionem christianam ut positivam et historicam. *Dogmatica seu doctrinalia* haec facta vocantur, quia respiciunt doctrinam revelatam (christianam) et intime nectuntur cum dogmate fidei.

Non ergo loquimur de factis historicis, quae constituunt ipsum depositum fidei atque ut talia dogmatica vocari possunt. Quibus accensenda sunt non solum mysteria vitae Christi sed etiam aliae veritates revelatae, ut e. g. inspiratio sacrorum librorum, quae in comparatione cum aliis veritatibus recte auxiliaris nuncupari possit. Alia autem facta historica non quidem pertinent ad revelationem, attamen necessario certo constare debent, ut depositum fidei atque ipsa religio christiana incolumis servetur; e. g. legitimitas alicuius Concilii

English

834. *Dogmatic facts* cohere with the deposit of faith in a different manner than philosophical truths do, namely not by a logical and internal connection, but by an external, contingent, historical, positive one. For they are historical truths, *historical facts*, which have a relationship to the Christian religion as positive and historical. These facts are called *dogmatic* or *doctrinal* because they regard revealed (Christian) doctrine and are intimately connected with the dogma of faith.

Therefore, we are not speaking of historical facts which constitute the deposit of faith itself and as such can be called dogmatic. Among these should be counted not only the mysteries of Christ's life but also other revealed truths, such as, for example, the inspiration of the sacred books, which in comparison with other truths can rightly be called auxiliary. But other historical facts indeed do not pertain to revelation, yet they must necessarily be established with certainty so that the deposit of faith and the Christian religion itself may be preserved intact; for example, the legitimacy of some Ecumenical Council or Roman Pontiff, so that the truth of the dogma

Oecumenici seu Romani Pontificis, ut constet de veritate dogmatis ab ipso definiti. Talia facta, quae quidem *revelata non sunt*, attamen certa esse debent, ut ipsum dogma salvum sit, vocantur facta dogmatica *sensu proprio*.

835. In hisce autem iterum duas classes distinguere oportet. Sensus scilicet *generalioris* quodlibet factum historicum cum dogmate conexum dogmaticum nominari potest; sensu vero *technico* factum dogmaticum intellegitur sensus genuinus alicuius textus (libri) humani.

De prioribus nulla potest esse controversia. Nisi enim Ecclesia authentice atque etiam absolute indicare posset de legitimitate alicuius concilii vel Romani Pontificis, iam actum esset de ipsa auctoritate doctrinali Ecclesiae deque omni eius exercitio, immo de omni auctoritate ecclesiastica, quae sua virtute plane destitueretur. Maximis namque abusibus porta aperiretur, quibus societas religiosa, Ecclesia, necessario succumberet. Hanc normam Ecclesia ipsa secuta est, agnoscens decreta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (cf. *D* 164 173) ut legitima (cf. Interrogationes Wicleffitis et Hussitis proponendae: „Utrum credat, quod condemnationes Ioannis Wiclef, Ioannis Hus et Hieronymi de Praga, factae de personis eorum, libris et documentis per sacrum generale Constantiense Concilium, fuerint rite et iuste factae et a quolibet catholico pro talibus tenendae et firmiter asserendae” [D 659]; „Item, utrum credat, quod Papa canonice electus, qui pro tempore fuerit, eius nomine proprio expresso, sit successor beati Petri, habens supremam auctoritatem in Ecclesia Dei” [D 674]). Praeclare haec persuasio apparet in definitione primatus et infallibilitatis Romani Pontificis, facta in Concilio Vaticano. Innovatur Concilii Florentini definitio, „qua credendum ab omnibus Christi fidelibus est . . .” (D 1826). Ad probandam vero infallibilitatem Romani Pontificis illa imprimis Concilia Oecumenica

defined by him may be established. Such facts, which indeed *are not revealed*, yet must be certain so that the dogma itself may be safeguarded, are called dogmatic facts *in the proper sense*.

835. However, in these matters two classes ought again to be distinguished. In a *more general* sense, any historical fact connected with dogma can be called dogmatic; but in the *technical* sense, a dogmatic fact is understood to mean the genuine sense of some human text (book).

Concerning the foregoing matters, there can be no controversy. For unless the Church could indicate authentically and also absolutely concerning the legitimacy of any council or Roman Pontiff, it would already be finished with the very doctrinal authority of the Church and with all its exercise, indeed with all ecclesiastical authority, which would be entirely deprived of its power. For the door would be opened to the greatest abuses, to which religious society, the Church, would necessarily succumb. The Church itself has followed this norm, acknowledging the decrees of Ecumenical Councils (cf. *D* 164 173) as legitimate (cf. Questions to be proposed to Wycliffites and Hussites: “Whether he believes that the condemnations of John Wycliffe, John Hus, and Jerome of Prague, made concerning their persons, books, and documents by the sacred general Council of Constance, were rightly and justly done and are to be held as such by any Catholic and firmly asserted” [D 659]; “Likewise, whether he believes that the canonically elected Pope, whoever he may be at the time, his name being properly expressed, is the successor of blessed Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God” [D 674]). This conviction appears excellently in the definition of the primacy and infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, made in the Vatican Council. The definition of the Council of Florence is renewed, “which is to be believed by all the faithful of Christ . . .” (D 1826). To prove the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, those Ecumenical Councils are especially alleged “in which the East came together with the West in union of faith and charity . . .” (D 1832). Therefore, judgment concerning the legitimacy, universality, and supreme

allegantur, „in quibus Oriens cum Occidente in fidei caritatisque unionem conveniebat . . .” (D 1832). Iudicium igitur de legitimitate, universalitate atque summa auctoritate horum conciliorum potius supponitur ut factum indubie admissum et admittendum, quam ut probandum censeatur.

836. Paulo fusius agendum erit de factis dogmaticis sensu *technico*. Est enim quaestio in controversia *iansenistica* vehementer agitata atque hodie quoque gravissima; nam quaeritur, num Ecclesia authentice possit iudicare de sensu alicuius propositionis (sententiae, effati, textus) vel libri. Hoc autem iudicium complectitur et determinationem sensus, quem auctor cum verbis, prout iacent, coniunxit, et huius sensus vel approbationem vel reprobationem.

Factum videlicet dogmaticum sensu strictiore est *sensus genuinus alicuius textus vel libri humani determinati*. Textus vel liber humanus intellegitur; de interpretatione Sacrae Scripturae hic non agitur, quia constat libros sacros a Deo Ecclesiae traditos esse, „cuius est iudicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum sanctarum” (Concilium Vaticanum; D 1788), sicut in tractatu *De Scriptura* proprie probandum est. Quonam autem modo sumendus sit „sensus genuinus” clare patebit ex descriptione controversiae *iansenisticae*.

837. *Cornelius Jansen* (1585—1638), lector theologiae lovaniensis, postea episcopus yprensis, composuit librum, quem propter venerationem erga doctorem gratiae „*Augustinus*” nuncupavit. Post Iansenii mortem Fromondus librum edendum curavit (1640). Cum in hoc libro sententiae quaedam, spiritum calvinianum sapientes, innovarentur, iam *Urbanus VIII* (1642) eum prohibuit. At fautores libri, asserentes Bullam esse spuriam, non se subiecerunt. Magno deinde exorto discidio, res ab episcopis iterum Romam defertur, ad tribunal *Innocentii X*. Post longas deliberationes, per duos annos

authority of these councils is rather presupposed as an undoubtedly admitted and to-be-admitted fact, than considered as something to be proven.

836. It will be necessary to treat more extensively the question of dogmatic facts in the *technical* sense. For this is a question that was vehemently debated in the *Jansenist* controversy and remains most serious even today; namely, whether the Church can authentically judge concerning the meaning of some proposition (sentence, statement, text) or book. Moreover, this judgment encompasses both the determination of the meaning that the author joined with his words, as they stand, and either the approval or disapproval of this meaning.

A dogmatic fact in the stricter sense is, clearly, *the genuine meaning of some determined human text or book*. A human text or book is understood; the interpretation of Sacred Scripture is not at issue here, because it is established that the sacred books were handed down by God to the Church, “whose it is to judge concerning the true meaning and interpretation of the holy Scriptures” (Vatican Council; D 1788), as must be properly proven in the treatise *On Scripture*. But in what manner the “genuine meaning” should be understood will be made clear from the description of the *Jansenist* controversy.

837. *Cornelius Jansen* (1585—1638), lecturer of theology at Louvain, later bishop of Ypres, composed a book which, out of veneration for the doctor of grace, he called “*Augustinus*.” After Jansen’s death, Fromondus arranged for the book’s publication (1640). Since certain opinions in this book, savoring of the Calvinist spirit, were being promoted as innovations, *Urban VIII* had already prohibited it (1642). But the supporters of the book, asserting that the Bull was spurious, did not submit themselves to it. Then, with a great controversy having arisen, the matter was again brought to Rome by the bishops, to the tribunal of *Innocent X*. After lengthy deliberations, drawn out over two years, judgment was finally rendered and published in the

protractas, iudicium demum latum est atque publicatum in Constitutione „*Cum occasione*” (de die 31 Maii 1653), in qua quinque propositiones ex libro Iansenii depromptae declarantur haereticae (D 1092 sqq.).

Huic autem sententiae iansenistae — iam enim factio quaedam orta erat, duce imprimis *Antonio Arnauld* (1612—1694) et adiuvante monasterio Port-Royal, cui praeerat *Angelica Arnauld* ut abbatissa O. Cist. — minime acquieverunt. Confugerunt nimirum ad varios sensus, quibus verba Iansenii intellegi possent; distinxerunt sensum haereticum (lutheranum et calvinisticum), pelagianum, verum. Hinc dixerunt sententias quidem ab Innocentio iuste esse damnatas, sed eas ab Iansenio nequaquam esse assertas. Postea vero, cum *Innocentius* edixisset sententias eo sensu esse damnatas quo in libro „*Augustinus*” leguntur, Arnauld negavit Ecclesiae *ius* competere iudicandi de talibus factis dogmaticis; quaestionem quidem *iuris* (num aliqua doctrina sit revelationi conformis) Ecclesiam posse solvere, quaestionem autem *facti* (num aliqua sententia certis verbis doceatur et contineatur) transgredi potestatem magisterii; talibus proinde decretis tribuendam esse non subiectionem internam, sed ad summum silentium reverentiale (1655).

Alexander VII, rogatus ab episcopis plurimis Galliae, anno insequente (1656) haec constituit: „Quinque illas propositiones ex libro . . . Cornelii Iansenii Episcopi Ypresis, cui titulus est: *Augustinus*, excerptas ac in sensu ab eodem Cornelio intento damnatas fuisse, declaramus et definimus” (D 1098). Iansenistae hanc sententiam Romani Pontificis non acceptarunt; hinc formula subiectionis omnibus subscribenda praecipitur, qua „quinque propositiones . . . excerptas et in sensu ab eodem auctore (*Iansenio*) intento, prout illas per dictas Constitutiones Sedes Apostolica damnavit” reiciuntur et damnantur (D

Constitution „*Cum occasione*” (of May 31, 1653), in which five propositions drawn from Jansen’s book are declared heretical (D 1092 sqq.).

The Jansenists, however — for by now a certain faction had arisen, led principally by *Antoine Arnauld* (1612—1694) and aided by the monastery of Port-Royal, over which *Angélique Arnauld* presided as abbess of the Cistercian Order — by no means acquiesced to this judgment. They took refuge, to be sure, in various meanings by which the words of Jansenius could be understood; they distinguished between the heretical sense (Lutheran and Calvinist), the Pelagian sense, and the true sense. Hence they said that the propositions had indeed been justly condemned by Innocent, but that they had never been asserted by Jansenius. Later, however, when *Innocent* had decreed that the propositions were condemned in the sense in which they are read in the book „*Augustinus*,” Arnauld denied that the Church possessed the *right* to judge concerning such dogmatic facts; that the Church could indeed resolve questions of *law* (whether some doctrine conforms to revelation), but that questions of *fact* (whether some proposition is taught and contained in certain words) exceeded the power of the magisterium; therefore, such decrees should be accorded not internal submission, but at most respectful silence (1655).

Alexander VII, asked by very many bishops of France, established the following in the subsequent year (1656): “We declare and define that those five propositions excerpted from the book of Cornelius Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, which is entitled *Augustinus*, have been condemned in the sense intended by the same Cornelius” (D 1098). The Jansenists did not accept this judgment of the Roman Pontiff; hence a formula of submission was prescribed to be signed by all, by which “the five propositions... excerpted and condemned in the sense intended by the same author (*Jansenius*), as the Apostolic See condemned them through the said Constitutions” are rejected and condemned (D 1099).

1099).

838. Cum autem hoc tempore moveretur quaestio de libertate ecclesiae gallicanae (cf. D 1322 sqq.), atque plurimi errores de rebus moralibus, qui vel laxismo vel rigorismo indulgebant, ab Ecclesia damnarentur (cf. D 1101 sqq.; 1151 sqq.; 1291 sqq.), effugia aliqua iansenistis patebant, ita ut nullam curam gererent decretorum romanorum e. g. erroris damnati a S. Officio die 7 Decembris 1690: „Ubi quis invenerit doctrinam in Augustino clare fundatam, illam absolute potest tenere et docere, non respiciendo ad ullam Pontificis bullam”, et „Bulla Urbani VIII *In eminenti* est subreptitia” (D 1320 sq.), quae asserta sunt aperte iansenistica.

Post mortem Arnauld *P. Quesnel* factionem vel potius sectam iansenisticam regendam excepit, qui postulanti *Innocentio XII*, ut intelligerentur propositiones damnatae sensu *naturali et obvio*, (anno 1694) respondit se omnino consentire, sed negare hunc sensum inesse in verbis Iansenii. Neque confirmatio constitutionis Alexandri VII, facta per eundem *Innocentium XII*, quidquam profuit (cf. D 1099, nota 3). Tandem *Clemens XI* in Constitutione „*Vineam Domini Sabaoth*” de die 16 Iulii 1705, rogatus a rege Galliae, confirmavit decreta praecessorum suorum, atque declaravit silentium obsequiosum minime satisfacere „obedientiae, quae praeinsertis apostolicis constitutionibus debetur . . .”; sed damnatum in quinque praefatis propositionibus Iansenii libri sensum, quem illarum verba prae se ferunt, ut praefertur, ab omnibus Christi fidelibus ut haereticum, non ore solum, sed et corde reici ac damnari debere . . .” (D 1350).

Paucis annis post (1713) errores Paschasii Quesnel (1634—1719) ab eodem Clemente damnati sunt (D 1351 sqq.)(5).

839. Hac tam diuturna tamque vehementi controversia quaestio *facti dogmatici*

838. However, since at this time a question was being raised concerning the freedom of the Gallican church (cf. D 1322 ff.), and very many errors concerning moral matters, which indulged either in laxism or rigorism, were being condemned by the Church (cf. D 1101 ff.; 1151 ff.; 1291 ff.), certain loopholes remained open to the Jansenists, so that they paid no heed to Roman decrees, for example the error condemned by the Holy Office on December 7, 1690: “Where anyone finds doctrine clearly founded in Augustine, he can absolutely hold and teach it, paying no regard to any papal bull,” and “The bull of Urban VIII *In eminenti* is surreptitious” (D 1320 f.), which assertions are openly Jansenistic.

After the death of Arnauld, *P. Quesnel* took over the leadership of the Jansenist faction or rather sect. When *Innocent XII* demanded that the condemned propositions be understood in their *natural and obvious sense* (in the year 1694), Quesnel responded that he entirely agreed, but denied that this sense was present in the words of Jansenius. Nor did the confirmation of the constitution of Alexander VII, made by the same Innocent XII, accomplish anything (cf. D 1099, note 3). Finally, *Clement XI*, in the Constitution “*Vineam Domini Sabaoth*” of July 16, 1705, at the request of the King of France, confirmed the decrees of his predecessors and declared that respectful silence by no means satisfies “the obedience which is owed to the aforementioned apostolic constitutions...; but that the sense condemned in the five aforesaid propositions of Jansenius’s book, which those words convey, as stated above, must be rejected and condemned by all the faithful of Christ as heretical, not only with the mouth, but also with the heart...” (D 1350).

A few years later (1713) the errors of Paschasius Quesnel (1634—1719) were condemned by the same Clement (D 1351 ff.)(5).

839. By this controversy, so prolonged and so

penitus tractata atque soluta est. Ecclesia nimirum sibi attribuit ius iudicandi non solum de *doctrina* (de gratia et libertate) sed etiam de facto aliquam doctrinam *certis verbis* enuntiari. Potest ergo authentice solvere et quaestionem *iuris* et *facti*. Quaestionem autem facti ita diiudicat ut declaret, quisnam sit *sensus naturalis verborum* prout praeiacent (D 1092), prout igitur intendebantur ab auctore, qui haec verba protulit (D 1098). Ergo ipse *auctor* ut talis damnatur erroris; auctor quidem, ut aiunt, *obiectivus*, neque vero *subiectivus*. Auctor etenim obiectivus cognoscitur ex verbis eorumque sensu, qui eruitur secundum regulas communiter vigentes (ex sensu verborum nativo — ex contextu et conexu — ex lege fundamentali hominem sanum verbis suis non contrarium exprimere illius, quod ipse exprimere velit). Auctor vero *subiectivus*, qui forte mendose scripsit, vel inscius vel sciens contrarium suae sententiae exhibet, ab Ecclesia non iudicatur(6).

Ex eadem controversia necessitas elucet, ut Ecclesia iudicet et iudicare valeat de factis dogmaticis, i. e. de sensu naturali et obvio verborum alicuius propositionis. Doctrina enim neque ab errore arceri neque rite exponi et proponi potest nisi verbis apte delectis. Ecclesia igitur, magistra gentium et custos revelationis christianae, iudicare debet non solum de sensu sed etiam de signis, quibus hic sensus apte exhibetur, i. e. de verbis. Nam, ut ait *Aquinas*, „si sit inordinata locutio circa ea, quae sunt fidei, sequi potest ex hoc corruptio fidei” (2, 2, q. 11, a. 2 ad 2). Ita demum Ecclesia omne periculum erroris a suis fidelibus auferre atque depositi fidei sensum penitus explicare secure et clare valebit.

840. Hinc Ecclesia inde ab initio hoc ius exercuit, definiendo certos terminos, e. g. θεοτόκος, ὑπόστασις (D 113 sq.), φύσις,

vehement, the question of *dogmatic fact* has been thoroughly treated and resolved. The Church, to be sure, attributes to herself the right of judging not only concerning *doctrine* (about grace and freedom) but also concerning the fact that some doctrine is enunciated *in certain words*. She can therefore authentically resolve both the question of *law* and of *fact*. Moreover, she adjudicates the question of fact in such a way that she declares what is the *natural sense of the words* as they lie before us (D 1092), as they were therefore intended by the author who uttered these words (D 1098). Therefore, the *author* as such is condemned for error; the author indeed, as they say, *objectively*, but not *subjectively*. For the objective author is known from the words and their sense, which is drawn out according to commonly prevailing rules (from the native sense of the words—from the context and connection—from the fundamental law that a sound man does not express through his words something contrary to what he himself wishes to express). But the *subjective* author, who perhaps wrote falsely, whether unknowingly or knowingly presenting something contrary to his own opinion, is not judged by the Church(6).

From the same controversy, the necessity becomes clear that the Church should judge and be able to judge concerning doctrinal facts, that is, concerning the natural and obvious meaning of the words of any proposition. For doctrine can neither be protected from error nor properly expounded and proposed except through aptly chosen words. The Church, therefore, as teacher of nations and guardian of Christian revelation, must judge not only concerning the meaning but also concerning the signs by which this meaning is aptly expressed, that is, concerning words. For, as Thomas Aquinas says, “if there be disordered speech concerning those things which are of faith, corruption of faith can follow from this” (Summa Theologica II-II, q. 11, a. 2 ad 2). Only in this way will the Church be able to remove every danger of error from her faithful and securely and clearly explain the complete meaning of the deposit of faith.

840. Hence the Church from the very beginning has exercised this right, defining certain terms, e.g. θεοτόκος, ὑπόστασις (D 113 ff.), φύσις, τριάς,

τριάς, οὐσία (D 213), „transsubstantiatio” (D 877). Porro damnavit errores haereticorum, velut „scelerata et perversa Nestorii dogmata” (D 125) in Concilio Ephesino(7), „impia Theodoriti conscripta”, qui ut auctor horum scriptorum simul cum Nestorio ipse vocatur „impius” (D 226). *Innocentius II* anno 1141 „universa ipsius Petri (*Abaelardi*) (ait) dogmata . . . cum suo auctore damnavimus eique tamquam haeretico perpetuum silentium imposuimus” (D 387). Wicleffitae et Hussitae interrogandi sunt, num „condemnationes Ioannis Wicleff, Ioannis Hus et Hieronymi de Praga, factas de personis eorum, libris et documentis . . .” agnoscant ut rite factas (D 659). De iansenistis cf. supra n. 837 sq. Pius denique IX in epistula sua „Gravissimas inter” de die 11 Decembris 1862 haec scribit: „Iacobum Frohschammer . . . suis operibus . . . gravissimos tueri errores. . . . Itaque eadem Congregatio . . . iudicavit auctorem in pluribus non recte sentire eiusque doctrinam a veritate catholica aberrare” (D 1667).

Quaerenti, quaenam sit *qualificatio theologica* huius partis, respondendum erit hanc partem esse saltem *theologice certam*; sed inspectis iudiciis Ecclesiae tot tantisque minime dubiis, maior etiam gradus certitudinis dogmaticae eidem tuto vindicari potest, praesertim cum poenae gravissimae infligantur iis, qui statutis Romani Pontificis (Clementis XI; D 1350) non oboediverint.

οὐσία (D 213), “transubstantiation” (D 877). Furthermore, it condemned the errors of heretics, such as the “wicked and perverse dogmas of Nestorius” (D 125) in the Council of Ephesus(7), the “impious writings of *Theodore*,” who as the author of these writings is called “impious” along with Nestorius himself (D 226). *Innocent II* in the year 1141 (says): “all the dogmas of this same *Peter (Abelard)* . . . we have condemned along with their author, and we have imposed perpetual silence upon him as a heretic” (D 387). The Wycliffites and Hussites are to be questioned whether they acknowledge “the condemnations of John Wycliffe, John Hus, and Jerome of Prague, made concerning their persons, books, and documents . . .” as rightly done (D 659). Concerning the Jansenists, cf. above n. 837 ff. Finally, Pius IX in his letter “Gravissimas inter” of December 11, 1862, writes these words: “Jakob Frohschammer . . . defends very serious errors in his works. . . . Therefore, the same Congregation . . . judged that the author thinks incorrectly on many points and that his doctrine deviates from Catholic truth” (D 1667).

To one inquiring what the *theological qualification* of this position might be, it must be answered that this position is at least *theologically certain*; but having examined the judgments of the Church—so numerous and weighty as to be beyond doubt—an even greater degree of dogmatic certitude can safely be attributed to it, especially since the most grave penalties are inflicted upon those who have not obeyed the statutes of the Roman Pontiff (Clement XI; D 1350).