

# Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae (*Manual of Dogmatic Theology*)

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## Pars II, Caput III, Articulus III, 3° De factis dogmaticis

**514. The Notion of a Dogmatic Fact.** — A *dogmatic* fact in general is any *fact* which is not revealed *in itself*, but is so *connected with dogma* that it is necessary for recognizing, preserving, explaining, or properly presenting dogma. *Three* types can be distinguished: 1. primarily *historical*, by which the rule of faith is recognized, e.g., the legitimacy of some ecumenical council or of a Pope; 2. *doctrinal*, such as a judgment concerning the meaning of some book in relation to faith; 3. *hagiographical*, such as the canonization of saints.

We speak only of the last two in the present discussion, since the infallibility of the Church regarding the first naturally flows from what has been said above concerning councils, the Pope, and the indefectibility of the Church itself. “For what would it profit to profess in the abstract the infallible authority of ecumenical councils (or of Roman Pontiffs), if it were permitted to doubt the *legitimacy* of any council” or Pope?<sup>1</sup>

**515.** The Church is infallible in judging the meaning of a book as it relates to faith [*Theologically certain*]. — The Church judges not the *purely subjective* meaning of the author, which perhaps remained hidden in the author’s mind, but rather the objective and apparent meaning which the words themselves convey, and which the author must have intended if, knowing the significance of the words, he spoke *sincerely*. This judgment therefore concerns *these two aspects*: 1. whether such doctrine *is conformable* to right faith or not (question of law); 2. whether this doctrine *is contained* in such a book (question of fact).

That the Church is infallible in judging both of these matters is *proven*:

**a) From the very nature of infallibility:** For the Church is infallible in questions of *law*, as all concede; but unless it were also infallible in questions of *fact*, it could neither preserve

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<sup>1</sup> {org. 1} Van Noort, n. 89; cf. D. 212, 657, 658, 674, etc.

the deposit of faith intact nor effectively safeguard the faithful from errors, and its infallibility would be entirely vain and illusory, since anyone could spread false doctrines with impunity and escape condemnation by saying that the Church had not correctly understood the meaning of his book. Therefore.

**b) From the practice of the Church:** The Church does not err in determining the object of its infallibility. And indeed, from ancient times, the Church has pronounced infallible judgment concerning the orthodox or heterodox doctrine of many writers, imposing it upon all the faithful as *definitive and absolute*; for example, the *Nicene* Council condemned *Arius's book*, which was entitled "Thalia"; the *Ephesian* Council rejected *Nestorius's writings* and approved Cyril's works; the Second Council of *Constantinople* proscribed the *three chapters*; the Council of *Constance* ordered that anyone suspected of the errors of *Wycliffe, Jerome of Prague, and Huss* be questioned: "whether he believes that the condemnations... made of their persons, books, and documents were properly and justly made, and should be *held and firmly asserted as such by every Catholic*"<sup>2</sup>.

Pius IX declared the doctrine asserted by *Frohschammer* to be alien to the Doctrine of the Church, deserving of reproof and condemnation. Likewise, Leo XIII confirmed the decree of the *Holy Office*, by which it "judged that the propositions of A. *Rosmini* were to be reproved and proscribed in the proper sense of the author"<sup>3</sup>.

**c) Especially from the case of Jansenius:** 1. Jansenius, in his book "Augustinus," expounds and defends various errors as though they were the doctrine of St. Augustine. Innocent X, in 1652, condemned five propositions extracted from the book as heretical<sup>4</sup>. 2. The Jansenists, to evade condemnation, distinguished between questions of *law* and *fact*, and contended that these propositions, taken *in themselves*, were *rightly* proscribed, but that *in fact*, the condemned doctrine was not contained in the book "Augustinus." 3. But Alexander VII defined, in 1656, that these propositions had been condemned "in the sense intended by Jansenius himself" and imposed, in 1665, a formula by which the same was expressed; when the Jansenists still did not acquiesce, Innocent XII, [1694 and 1696] again declared that the propositions of Jansenius were condemned in their *obvious* sense<sup>5</sup>. 4. When the Jansenists maintained that internal assent to this definition was *not* required but that "*religious silence*" was sufficient, Clement XI, in 1705, decreed that "the *sense* of Jansenius' book condemned in the five propositions, which their words manifest, as

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<sup>2</sup> {org. 1} D. 214-247, 225, 387, 659 sq.

<sup>3</sup> {org. 2} D. 1667, 1669, 1673, 1675; D. 1930 a.

<sup>4</sup> {org. 3} D. 1092 sq.

<sup>5</sup> {org. 4} D. 1098, 1099 and n. 3.

stated, must be rejected and condemned by all the faithful of Christ as *heretical*, not only with the *mouth*, but also with the *heart*”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>{org. 1} D. 1350. Concerning these matters, cf. *Dict. théol.* [Dictionary of Theology], art. Jansenism, col. 500-522; art. Quesnel, col. 1467 sq., 1500 sq.; Zapelena, vol. 2, p. 238 sq.