

De Ecclesia Catholica Praelectiones Apologeticae (*Apologetic Lectures on the Catholic Church*)

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Latin

ARTICULUS TRIGESIMUS
QUINTUS

De infallibilitate Ecclesiae circa facta
dogmatica

I. De notione facti dogmatici. — 1.
Factum dogmaticum dicitur factum quod
quidem in fontibus revelationis non
continetur, tamen cum doctrina revelata ita
nectitur ut illius facti notitia necessaria sit
ad dogma edocendum et illud tuto
conservandum (Mazzella).

2. Huiusmodi facta dogmatica sunt diversi
generis:

a) facta a quibus dependet auctoritas
conciliorum, romanorum Pontificum vel
etiam validitas ordinationis episcopalis ; ita
factum legitimae convocationis alicuius
concilii, electio legitima romani Pontificis,
consecratio valida alicuius episcopi sunt
facta dogmatica. Ita Ecclesia contra
Vetero-catholicos tenet Conc. Vatic. fuisse
legitime convocatum et Leo XIII
ordinationes anglicanas invalidas
declaravit.

b) Sensus signorum quibus doctrina
revelata vel exprimitur vel negatur = *textus
dogmatici* : ita factum dogmaticum est
sensus alicuius termini quo Ecclesia in
definiendo dogmate utitur, sensus alicuius

English

ARTICLE THIRTY-FIVE

On the Infallibility of the Church Concerning
Dogmatic Facts

I. On the notion of dogmatic fact. — 1. A
dogmatic fact is said to be a fact which, although
not contained in the sources of revelation, is
nevertheless so connected with revealed doctrine
that knowledge of that fact is necessary for teaching
a dogma and for safely preserving it (Mazzella).

2. Dogmatic facts of this kind are of different types:

a) facts upon which depends the authority of
councils, of Roman Pontiffs, or even the validity of
episcopal ordination; thus the fact of the legitimate
convocation of some council, the legitimate election
of a Roman Pontiff, the valid consecration of some
bishop are dogmatic facts. Thus the Church, against
the Old Catholics, holds that the First Vatican
Council was legitimately convoked, and Leo XIII
declared Anglican ordinations invalid.

b) The meaning of signs by which revealed doctrine
is either expressed or denied = *dogmatic texts*: thus
it is a dogmatic fact to determine the meaning of
some term which the Church uses in defining a

libri qui ab Ecclesia tanquam hæreticus damnatur.

In definitione enim alicuius doctrinæ præsupponitur et includitur iudicium de sensu terminorum definitionis sicut in damnatione alicuius libri præsupponitur et includitur iudicium de sensu illius libri.

Ita Concilium Nicænum librum « Thalia » Arii tanquam hæreticum damnavit, Concil. Ephesinum scripta Nestorii reprobavit et scripta Cyrilli Alex. approbavit, Conc. Constantinopolitanum II de « Tribus Capitulis » iudicavit, Conc. Trid. definivit, canonem missæ non continere errores^[1].

3. Casus celeberrimus est casus iansenisticus. Iansenius in libro qui « Augustinus » inscribitur, diversos errores tanquam doctrinam S. Augustini exposuit et defendit.

Innocentius X quinque propositiones ex libro excerptas tanquam hæreticas damnavit^[2]. Iansenistæ per distinctionem inter quæstionem iuris et facti responderunt, admittentes infallibilitatem Ecclesiæ in quæstione iuris, utrum sc. doctrina damnata secundum se sumpta et abstractione facta a libro in quo contineretur, sit falsa, negantes vero infallibilitatem circa quæstionem facti, utrum sc. doctrina damnata in libro « Augustinus » contineretur. At Alexander VII (1656) declaravit et definivit : « quinque propositiones illas ex libro Cornelii Iansenii, cui titulus est : Augustinus, excerptas ac in sensu ab eodem Cornelio intento damnatas fuisse^[3] ».

Iansenistæ prætextum *silentii religiosi* adhibere cœperunt, negantes sc. necessitatem adhæSIONIS mentis ad decreta pontificia, admittentes tantum obligationem silentii religiosi. Inde Alexander VII anno 1664 hoc formularium submissionis Iansenistis proposuit : « Ego N... quinque propositiones ex Cornelii Iansenii libro, cui nomen Augustinus, excerptas et in sensu ab

dogma, or the meaning of some book which is condemned by the Church as heretical.

For in the definition of any doctrine there is presupposed and included a judgment about the meaning of the terms of the definition, just as in the condemnation of any book there is presupposed and included a judgment about the meaning of that book.

Thus the Council of Nicaea condemned the book “Thalia” of Arius as heretical, the Council of Ephesus rejected the writings of Nestorius and approved the writings of Cyril of Alexandria, the Second Council of Constantinople judged concerning the “Three Chapters,” and the Council of Trent defined that the canon of the Mass contains no errors^[1].

3. The most celebrated case is the Jansenist case. Jansenius, in the book entitled “Augustinus,” set forth and defended various errors as the doctrine of Saint Augustine.

Innocent X condemned five propositions excerpted from the book as heretical^[2]. The Jansenists responded by means of a distinction between the question of law and the question of fact, admitting the infallibility of the Church in the question of law—namely, whether the condemned doctrine, taken in itself and abstracted from the book in which it might be contained, is false—but denying infallibility concerning the question of fact—namely, whether the condemned doctrine was actually contained in the book “Augustinus.” But Alexander VII (1656) declared and defined: “that those five propositions were excerpted from the book of Cornelius Jansenius, whose title is ‘Augustinus,’ and were condemned in the sense intended by the same Cornelius^[3].”

The Jansenists began to employ the pretext of *religious silence*, namely denying the necessity of mental adhesion to pontifical decrees, admitting only the obligation of religious silence. Hence Alexander VII in the year 1664 proposed this formulary of submission to the Jansenists: “I, N..., with sincere heart reject and condemn the five propositions excerpted from the book of Cornelius

eodem auctore intento, prout illas... Sedes Apostolica damnavit, sincero animo reicio ac damno et ita iuro^[4] ». Clemens XI anno 1705 declaravit necessitatem audiendi Ecclesiam « non tacendo solum, sed et interius obsequendo » et statuit « damnatum in quinque propositionibus *Iansenii libri sensum* quem illarum verba præ se ferunt, ut præfertur, ab omnibus Christi fidelibus *ut hæreticum*, non ore solum sed et corde reici ac damnari debere^[5] ».

« *Sensus ab auctore intentus* » non est ille quem auctor forsitan *in secreto cordis* habuit et exprimere voluit, sed ille quem *verba* auctoris secundum communes et naturales regulas interpretationis *objective exprimunt* vel præ se ferunt.

4. Ut exempla adducta ostendunt, *Ecclesia* in suis decretis *factum proprie dogmaticum* communiter *indirecte enuntiat* : ita Conc. Trid. declarando canonem Missæ esse immunem ab erroribus, directe *veritatem doctrinæ* canonis declarat, indirecte de *sensu* canonis iudicat ; similiter concilia vel Romani Pontifices in libris approbandis vel damnandis. Duplex igitur iudicium Ecclesiæ distinguendum est : primum proprie dogmaticum de *veritate doctrinæ* alicuius libri, secundum de *sensu* libri — et huiusmodi secundum iudicium proprie est circa factum dogmaticum.

5. Plures quidem theologi, tum veteres tum recentiores, per factum dogmaticum intelligunt non solum factum historicum, quinam e. g. sit sensus alicuius libri, sed factum tum historicum tum doctrinale^[6]. Secundum hunc modum accipiendi ad facta dogmatica pertinet quod canon missæ est immunis ab errore, quod liber Iansenii est hæreticus, quod Vulgata continet verbum Dei. Sed melius cum aliis theologis sub nomine facti dogmatici solum factum historicum intelligimus, utique ut connexum cum doctrina : alia enim est quæstio facti, alia quæstio iuris.

Jansenius entitled *Augustinus*, and in the sense intended by the same author, just as the Apostolic See has condemned them, and thus I swear^[4].” Clement XI in the year 1705 declared the necessity of hearing the Church “not only by remaining silent, but also by interior submission,” and established that “the sense of Jansenius’s book condemned in the five propositions, which the words of those [propositions] convey, as is alleged, must be rejected and condemned by all the faithful of Christ *as heretical*, not only with the mouth but also with the heart^[5].”

The “*sense intended by the author*” is not that which the author perhaps had *in the secret of his heart* and wished to express, but that which the author’s *words* according to common and natural rules of interpretation *objectively express* or convey.

4. As the examples adduced demonstrate, the *Church* in her decrees commonly *enunciates a dogmatic fact proper indirectly*: thus the Council of Trent, by declaring that the Canon of the Mass is immune from errors, directly declares the *truth of the doctrine* of the Canon, and indirectly judges concerning the *meaning* of the Canon; similarly with councils or Roman Pontiffs in approving or condemning books. A twofold judgment of the Church must therefore be distinguished: the first, properly dogmatic, concerning the *truth of the doctrine* of some book; the second, concerning the *meaning* of the book—and this second judgment is properly about a dogmatic fact.

5. Many theologians indeed, both ancient and recent, understand by “dogmatic fact” not only historical fact—what, for example, is the meaning of some book—but both historical and doctrinal fact^[6]. According to this way of understanding it, it pertains to dogmatic facts that the Canon of the Mass is immune from error, that the book of Jansenius is heretical, that the Vulgate contains the word of God. But it is better, along with other theologians, to understand under the name “dogmatic fact” only historical fact, certainly as connected with doctrine: for one thing is a question of fact, another is a question of law.

II. Doctrina catholica de infallibilitate Ecclesiæ circa facta dogmatica præsertim in casu Ianseniano manifeste apparet, inquantum constitutiones apostolicæ assensum internum et inconditionatum ad damnationem libri Iansenii secundum sensum ab auctore intentum et per quinque propositiones excerptas expressum, exigunt. Idem tamen in aliis damnationibus et iudiciis circa facta dogmatica apparet. Accedit consensus communis theologorum.

III. Thesis: Ecclesia est infallibilis circa facta dogmatica.

Prob. 1. Ex obiecto et fine infallibilitatis. Ecclesia est infallibilis circa revelata custodienda et exponenda. Atqui revelata infallibiliter custodire et exponere non potest si circa facta dogmatica errat.

Prob. 2. Ex natura et conditione magisterii Ecclesiæ. — Magisterium Ecclesiæ docet per verba, tanquam per signa conceptuum et doctrinæ. Atqui error circa signa vel sensum signorum simul errorem circa doctrinam importat. Ergo Ecclesia necessario etiam circa signa doctrinæ infallibilis est.

Similiter P. MARIN-SOLA, l. c., I, 454 ss.

Prob. 3. Absque infallibilitate circa facta dogmatica tota infallibilitas Ecclesiæ vana et inefficax redderetur. Ad quid definitiones dogmaticæ Conciliorum et romanorum Pontificum valerent si legitima convocatio vel electio in dubium vocari potest? Ad quid valet ipsa definitio dogmatica si dubitatur utrum Ecclesia terminum verum ad veram doctrinam exprimendam adhibuerit? Quis symbola credere potest si de sensu terminorum non constat?

IV. Obiectiones. — 1. Facta dogmatica nullo modo sunt revelata, e. g. quod Pius XI sit legitime electus. Ergo omnino extra obiectum infallibilitatis sunt.

Resp. Inde facta dogmatica nullo modo ad obiectum primum pertinent, attamen ad obiectum secundarium, quod sc. etiam

II. The Catholic doctrine concerning the infallibility of the Church regarding dogmatic facts appears most clearly in the Jansenist case, insofar as the apostolic constitutions require internal and unconditional assent to the condemnation of Jansenius's book according to the sense intended by the author and expressed through the five propositions that were extracted from it. The same principle, however, appears in other condemnations and judgments concerning dogmatic facts. To this is added the common consensus of theologians.

III. Thesis: The Church is infallible concerning dogmatic facts.

Proof 1. From the object and purpose of infallibility. The Church is infallible concerning revealed truths to be guarded and expounded. But it cannot infallibly guard and expound revealed truths if it errs concerning dogmatic facts.

Proof 2. From the nature and condition of the Church's magisterium. — The magisterium of the Church teaches through words, as through signs of concepts and doctrine. But error concerning signs or the meaning of signs simultaneously involves error concerning doctrine. Therefore, the Church is necessarily infallible also concerning the signs of doctrine.

Similarly P. MARÍN-SOLÁ, l. c., I, 454 ff.

Proof 3. Without infallibility concerning dogmatic facts, the entire infallibility of the Church would be rendered vain and ineffectual. To what purpose would the dogmatic definitions of Councils and Roman Pontiffs serve if their legitimate convocation or election can be called into doubt? To what purpose does a dogmatic definition itself serve if there is doubt whether the Church has employed the correct term to express true doctrine? Who can believe the symbols of faith if the meaning of the terms is not established?

IV. Objections. — 1. Dogmatic facts are in no way revealed, e.g., that Pius XI was legitimately elected. Therefore, they are entirely outside the object of infallibility.

Response. Hence dogmatic facts in no way pertain to the primary object, yet they do pertain to the secondary object, which indeed also comprehends

connexa cum revelatis comprehendit.

Ob. 2. Ecclesia sibi aliquando in iudicio circa facta dogmatica contradixit adeoque infallibilis non est : ita præsertim in quæstione de tribus capitulis. Etenim Conc. Chalced. Theodoretum et Ibam tanquam orthodoxos declaravit, dum Conc. cpt. II, scripta Theodori Mopsvesteni, Theodreti et Ibæ tanquam hæretica damnavit et Vigilius Papa huiusmodi sententiam approbavit.

Resp. Concilium Chalced. *personas* Theodreti et Ibæ orthodoxas declaravit, attamen tantum post quam illi doctrinam Nestorii anathemativerunt ; Conc. vero cpt. II *scripta* damnavit illorum sicut et Papa Vigilius^[^7].

Unde nulla contradictio. De reliquo notandum est, in Conc. Chalc. non fidem internam Theodreti et Ibæ approbatam fuisse, sed confessionem fidei ab ipsis præstitam ; similiter Conc. cpt. II sensum obviu scriptorum Theodreti et Ibæ damnavit, non vero sensum quem forsitan intenderunt sed non expresserunt ; immo non absque fundamento dici potest, scripta Theodreti et epistolam Ibæ damnata fuisse secundum sensum in quo a Nestorianis intellegebantur. Idem dicendum est quoad damnationem scriptorum Nestorii, licet sensus obviu illorum sat manifeste hæresim indicet^[^8].

V. De modo quo Ecclesia de factis dogmaticis iudicet. — Factum dogmaticum duplici modo considerari potest : *a)* secundum se et ut merum factum historicum : et sic est extra ambitum infallibilitatis Ecclesiæ ; *b)* ut est connexum cum aliquo dogmate : et sic fit obiectum infallibilitatis.

Inde sequitur modus quo Ecclesia de facto dogmatico iudicet. Factum enim mere historicum argumentis historicis determinatur : et huiusmodi argumenta Ecclesia minime negligit ; factum vero dogmaticum ut tale, i. e. ut connexum cum

things connected with revealed truths.

Objection 2. The Church has sometimes contradicted herself in judgment concerning dogmatic facts and therefore is not infallible: thus especially in the question of the Three Chapters. For indeed the Council of Chalcedon declared Theodoret and Ibas to be orthodox, while the Second Council of Constantinople condemned the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, and Ibas as heretical, and Pope Vigilius approved this kind of sentence.

Response. The Council of Chalcedon declared the *persons* of Theodoret and Ibas to be orthodox, but only after they had anathematized the doctrine of Nestorius; however, the Second Council of Constantinople condemned their *writings*, just as Pope Vigilius did^[^7].

Hence there is no contradiction. For the rest, it should be noted that in the Council of Chalcedon, it was not the internal faith of Theodoret and Ibas that was approved, but the confession of faith provided by them; similarly, the Second Council of Constantinople condemned the obvious sense of the writings of Theodoret and Ibas, but not the sense which they perhaps intended but did not express; indeed, it can be said not without foundation that the writings of Theodoret and the letter of Ibas were condemned according to the sense in which they were understood by the Nestorians. The same must be said regarding the condemnation of the writings of Nestorius, although their obvious sense quite clearly indicates heresy^[^8].

V. Concerning the manner in which the Church judges dogmatic facts. — A dogmatic fact can be considered in two ways: *a)* according to itself and as a mere historical fact: and thus it is outside the scope of the Church's infallibility; *b)* as it is connected with some dogma: and thus it becomes an object of infallibility.

From this follows the manner by which the Church judges dogmatic fact *de facto*. For a merely historical fact is determined by historical arguments, and the Church by no means neglects arguments of this kind; but a dogmatic fact as such—that is, as connected with the law of

iure doctrinæ, argumentis dogmaticis diiudicatur, i. e. argumentendo et procedendo a veritate dogmatis quod est in quæstione ; atque tali modo Ecclesia proprie de facto dogmatico iudicat atque in tali iudicio per assistentiam Spiritus S. ab errore præservatur.

Qua ratione Rom. Pontifices propositiones ex libro Iansenii excerptas ut hæreticas damnaverunt (iudicium doctrinale) ac proinde simpliciter tenuerunt propositiones excerptas re vera in libro dicto contineri (iudicium de facto dogmatico).

[^1]: {org. 1} Sess. XXII, can. 6, cf. c. IV ; DENZ., 953, 942.

[^2]: {org. 1} DENZ., 1092.

[^3]: {org. 2} DENZ., 1098.

[^4]: {org. 3} DENZ., 1099.

[^5]: {org. 4} DENZ., 1350.

[^6]: {org. 1} Ita Cl. DE GROOT scribit : « Factum dogmaticum duabus rebus continetur : sc. quæstione iuris, utrum talis sententia doctrinæ revelatæ conveniat an cum ea discrepet ; et quæstionem facti, utrum talis verborum formula seu in casu Iansenii talis liber huiusmodi sententiam contineat », p. 318.

[^7]: {org. 1} Cf. TIXERONT, *Histoire des dogmes*, III, c. III, § 2 et ch. v, § 2 3.

[^8]: {org. 1} Cf. R. SCHULTES, *Die Bewährungslehre des Nestorius, in Katholik*, 1913; vol. XI, p. 233-247, et vol. XII, p. 126-134.

doctrine—is adjudicated by dogmatic arguments, that is, by arguing and proceeding from the truth of the dogma which is in question. In this manner the Church properly judges concerning dogmatic fact, and in such judgment is preserved from error through the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

By this method the Roman Pontiffs condemned propositions excerpted from the book of Jansenius as heretical (a doctrinal judgment) and consequently simply held that the excerpted propositions were truly contained in the said book (a judgment concerning dogmatic fact).

[^1]: {org. 1} Sess. XXII, can. 6, cf. c. IV; DENZ., 953, 942.

[^2]: {org. 1} DENZ., 1092.

[^3]: {org. 2} DENZ., 1098.

[^4]: {org. 3} DENZ., 1099.

[^5]: {org. 4} DENZ., 1350.

[^6]: {org. 1} Thus Cl. DE GROOT writes: “A dogmatic fact is contained in two things: namely, a question of law, whether such a teaching agrees with revealed doctrine or disagrees with it; and a question of fact, whether such a verbal formula or, in the case of Jansenius, such a book contains a teaching of this kind,” p. 318.

[^7]: {org. 1} Cf. TIXERONT, *History of Dogmas*, III, ch. III, § 2 and ch. v, § 2 3.

[^8]: {org. 1} Cf. R. SCHULTES, *The Doctrinal System of Nestorius, in Katholik*, 1913; vol. XI, p. 233-247, and vol. XII, p. 126-134.