

Tractatus de Romano Pontifice cum prolegomeno de Ecclesia (*Treatise on the Roman Pontiff with a Prolegomenon on the Church*)

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Section XL

The infallibility of the Magisterium and the Church asserted thus far extends to matters beyond merely revealed truths.

I. Indeed, there are not a few truths which, though not revealed, nevertheless have a special connection with revealed truths. This connection consists in the fact that, should the certainty of these non-revealed truths be deficient, or should error contrary to them be admitted or permitted, either the subjective faith of the faithful concerning certain dogmas could not stand firm (as though some condition were lacking), or the objective integrity of the faith among the faithful and the salvation of souls would be endangered to a greater or lesser degree. Hence, it is necessary to know with certainty what must be held in these matters. To the former category belong what are called dogmatic facts. To another class belong *a*) other matters based on fact, namely *dogmatic texts*; that is, texts of human origin, but which, regarding the doctrine they contain, are either conformable or non-conformable to revealed doctrine. The truth necessary to be known in these cases is whether or not these texts conform to truth, whether or not they contain heresy or error. *b*) To this class also belong several truths, whether speculative or practical, which are contrary to those false propositions from which danger to faith or to the salvation of souls might result.

For a clearer understanding, we must distinguish between that whose *certainty* is necessary for us in order that something else be *certain*, and that whose truth is necessary in order that something else be *true*. For that whose certainty (subjective, of course) is necessary for us can be something entirely extrinsic to the true matter, which is independent of the truth of the former: thus the certainty of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin requires certainty about the authority of the one who defined it; yet this truth is extrinsic to the truth of the immaculate conception, and not necessary for the latter

to be true. However, that whose truth is necessary for something else to be true, which is therefore such that if it itself were false, the other would necessarily be false as well, is so intrinsically connected with the truth of this other that it is a certain element of its adequate truth and is contained in the comprehension of that truth. Thus, an element of the truth of the soul's immortality is its spirituality. Therefore, an intellect that comprehends a thing, when it affirms one truth, intends also to affirm implicitly whatever is necessarily connected with that truth by a *connection of truth*: otherwise, there would be a certain contradiction in the affirmation. Indeed, it frequently happens that when people affirm something, they do not intend, or even positively do not wish to affirm that which nevertheless is intrinsically connected with what they affirm; but this arises from the fact that humans do not comprehend things and are subject to error: nevertheless, they intend to affirm whatever they believe to be intrinsically connected with the thing affirmed. Since, therefore, God comprehends all things, if He affirms something, by that very fact He implicitly affirms whatever is intrinsically connected with it by a connection of truth. However, it does not follow from this that all these truths are revealed. For a revealed truth is called that which is the terminus of such divine speech, that for holding it, no other motive is needed except the authority of God speaking. In it are also comprehended all things which are found in the revealed truth by analysis alone, for these are like parts or elements of the revealed truth, and they are manifested to us by God speaking. However, those truths which are gathered from revealed truth with the aid of another truth, by deduction more or less proximate, although implicitly affirmed by God, given the necessary connection of truths, are nevertheless not revealed by God; because they are not manifested to us by God speaking: for in order that we hold them, the authority of God is not sufficient, but some principle of reason is also required, which can ultimately err in forming a rationale. Therefore, some truths are revealed, while others are connected with revealed truths but not revealed. Now if those deduced truths are denied, faith can be endangered; for if the opposite error is admitted, one can arrive through reasoning from it to denying what is of faith. And if these truths pertain to morals, piety and the salvation of souls can be endangered if they are denied, for the same reason. Therefore, just as errors opposed to these truths can bring harm to faith and the salvation of souls, so the defense of these truths can be useful and necessary in order that faith be preserved intact and the salvation of souls be secure.

Just as truths connected with revealed truths are those which are gathered from them with the aid of another truth that is not revealed, so too there can be other truths which are presupposed by God who reveals, although they are not themselves revealed; should these be denied, certainty concerning revealed truths could not stand. For since the order of revelation presupposes the rational order, and God has not revealed all truths of this order, nothing prevents God from having presupposed some truths, affirming them implicitly indeed, but not manifesting them. Truths of this kind, moreover, would belong to the former class.

Furthermore, it should be noted that in order to defend what we propose in the Thesis, it is not necessary for us to determine specifically which are these truths connected with revealed ones; but having proven the possibility of their existence, which we have already

demonstrated, it is sufficient for us to speak hypothetically: namely, if there are truths of this kind and consequently errors opposed to them, the infallible authority of the Church can be exercised concerning these matters. For the adversaries of the Church must be refuted, who object against her authority, saying that many things which are defined by her are not revealed but rational or philosophical; and therefore beyond the scope of the Church's authority. However, to refute these objectors, it is sufficient to establish that even if these truths are not revealed, nevertheless the infallible authority of the Church's magisterium extends to them. For this is the Church's understanding, namely that she has the right to use the authority of her magisterium both concerning revealed truths and also concerning others. This understanding is clear from the following. First, the Church, in proscribing false propositions, has not only proscribed those which are worthy of the censure of heresy, but also those which are erroneous, false, pernicious, scandalous, rash, offensive to pious ears, etc. Furthermore, the Roman See has declared this more evidently, specifically Pius IX in the Brief *Gravissimas inter* of December 11, 1862, and in another *Tuas libenter* of December 21, 1863. Cf. Denzinger's *Enchiridion*, 4th edition, pages 436 and 463.

Concerning these matters, therefore, we contend that the infallibility of the Church operates. This question was raised by the Jansenists regarding dogmatic facts, on the occasion of the condemnation of Jansenius's book titled *Augustinus*. Dogmatic texts are specially connected with revealed doctrine, for they either contain it or contain doctrine opposed to it. Since it is impossible for any doctrinal book not to contain some doctrine, which must be either true or false; just as it is impossible to speak in a human manner without saying something: these two elements—a certain doctrine which is the object of the book and which in itself pertains to law, and the expression of it through the book which is the fact itself—are inseparable and constitute one reality, namely the expression of doctrine through writing, or doctrine expressed in writing. If it is defined that a certain book contains true or false doctrine, the direct object of the definition, that is, what the intention of the one defining directly aims at, is the fact itself, while the law, which is defined simultaneously with it, is indirect: for if you say that this book contains heresy, you also say that the doctrine contained in it is heresy. The definition of this fact amounts to defining the sense of the book. However, a twofold sense must be distinguished: the sense existing in the mind of the author and the sense which the words constructed and arranged together present from themselves and are naturally able to generate in the minds of those who understand those words. The former can be called the subjective sense, the latter the objective sense. The reason why this distinction must be made is that one can say something other than what one has in mind and wishes to signify, and the Church cannot judge purely internal acts. The objective sense, however, is rightly said to be intended by the Author; because it is justly presumed that he wanted to say what he says. Moreover, this formula signifies that the sense attributed to the book is not fabricated and imposed, as it were, from outside, but truly emerges from the entire context of the writing produced by the Author. Furthermore, the Church's definition falls only upon this sense. Nor when a book is defined as heretical is it thereby defined that the author was formally a heretic: for he could have erred imprudently.

II. Having established these points, in order to proceed with our demonstration, it is necessary to establish that the Church is not merely a *witness* to truth, but a *teacher and judge*. That is to say, the Church was instituted to lead men to salvation: it leads first by teaching, namely by transmitting saving doctrine and removing errors hostile to salvation. Therefore, the purpose of the Church demands that it be the teacher of all salvific truth, and through it men can avoid all errors that might impede the attainment of salvation. Hence, the Spirit of truth has been promised to the Church's magisterium, which will lead it into all truth, namely all truth necessary for human salvation. Insofar as the Church teaches truth and proscribes errors, and executes this with coercive authority, it is a *teacher of truth*. And because it was necessary that controversies concerning doctrine be resolved by the same authority, the Church, insofar as it accomplishes this, is said to be a *judge of doctrine*. Insofar as it, while teaching or judging, conveys that truth which it received from God the revealer, it is said to be a *witness to truth*; for it carries out the duty of one who testifies. These things cannot be denied by anyone. The question, however, is whether the office of *teacher* extends as far as the office of *witness*: the office of witness is understood as the office of authentically testifying to the fact of revelation of some truth: but revealed truth is understood as that which we defined above. All our controversy with adversaries, who maintain that the Church can only teach what God has revealed, comes down to this. We therefore prove: 1) that the authority of the Church's magisterium extends to other truths, namely to those of which we have already given the notion; 2) that in teaching these truths, as well as in proscribing opposing errors, the Church's magisterium is infallible.

Indeed, concerning the first point, the Magisterium of the Church aims to direct the faithful toward salvation through true doctrine. Therefore, it must be able to teach everything that is necessary or useful to know for salvation, and it must be able to remove all errors that could impede the attainment of salvation. Likewise, the Church has been entrusted with preserving the deposit of revelation completely and inviolately. Thus, the duty falls upon the Church to carefully ensure that the faith of Christians remains pure and unblemished, that truth is preserved free from any mixture of error, and that the danger of deception is removed. Consequently, the Church has the duty to ensure that nothing is proposed as requiring belief or acceptance that could undermine the true knowledge of faith. Now, there are many truths beyond revealed ones that are necessary or useful to know; there are many errors, even if not directly opposed to revealed truths, which it is again necessary or useful to recognize as such, so that faith may be preserved whole and unblemished in the minds of the faithful, so that the danger of losing true faith may be avoided, and thus the faithful may be able to securely take the path of salvation. The major premise is evident; the minor premise is clear from what has already been said. For suppose the faithful were to be doubtful about those facts which we have called dogmatic, or were to deny them—for instance, that the Vatican Council was not legitimate—their faith concerning what it defined could not persevere. Suppose they were to think that some heretical book contained Catholic doctrine, since many people, especially, are not capable of discerning between truth and falsehood, they would very easily be deceived and embrace heretical doctrine. Suppose they were to hold doctrines opposed to deductions from revealed

truths; they could finally be led to deny the revealed truths themselves. Thus indeed the purity of faith is violated and the way of salvation is impeded, from which error, especially in moral matters, necessarily leads away. Furthermore, these issues cannot be addressed except through the magisterium. The Church, which has been established as the teacher of all in matters pertaining to salvation, and to which alone the deposit of revelation has been entrusted, has the right and duty to teach. Therefore.

The same is confirmed by the practice and doctrine of the Church which, besides heresies, has also proscribed errors contrary to truths which faith presupposes, or which are deduced from faith and reason: cf. the articles of Nicholas of Autrecourt condemned by the Holy See in 1348 (Denzinger p. 183), the articles of Wycliffe and Hus condemned at the Council of Constance, and so many propositions condemned by subsequent Pontiffs. Specifically regarding dogmatic texts, the Fifth Council was convened to proscribe the Three Chapters; regarding dogmatic facts, Martin V in the Bull *Inter cunctas*, commands that those suspected be asked “whether they believe that the canonically elected Pope, whoever he may be at the time, his proper name being expressly stated, is the successor of blessed Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God.” Therefore, it is not only defined that this truth is to be believed generally, namely that one canonically elected to the Roman See is the successor of Peter; but that this person (for this is what the words *his proper name being expressly stated* mean), say this man who is called Leo XIII, is the successor of Peter, having authority in the Church: this indeed is a dogmatic fact. The Church, therefore, considers that it has the authority to propose such truths and to demand faith in them from its subjects.

III. We say secondly that the magisterium of the Church is infallible with respect to these truths as well. Indeed, this is required for the same reason that the authority of the Church is required in these matters, which could not adequately fulfill its purpose if it were fallible. For if this were the case, the Church could neither oblige the faithful to believe what it proposes, nor would it be certain that what it teaches is true; thus, the purpose of this magisterium would not be achieved. And indeed, the Church must be infallible in guarding the deposit of faith; for it is the pillar and foundation of truth: therefore it must be infallible in those acts by which the deposit of faith is safeguarded. But such acts are not only definitions of revealed dogma and condemnations of heresy, but also those by which errors are proscribed—from which damage to the faith can arise—and opposing truths are established, and by which the meaning of dogmatic texts is determined: therefore, in defining these matters as well, the Church is infallible. Likewise, infallibility is a necessary endowment of the Church’s magisterium; therefore it will extend as far as the authority to teach extends by virtue of the office imposed upon it: but this authority extends also to other truths; therefore [the infallibility extends to them as well].

And indeed it has always been believed in the Church, in which it has always been absolutely affirmed and maintained that the magisterium of the Church is infallible; in which, although things have been defined that were not revealed, such as, for example, that the Three Chapters are heretical, nevertheless faith has always been demanded of the kind that is owed to the infallible magisterium. Moreover, the Church, by such definitions,

commands an interior assent of the mind, which Clement XI (Constitution *Vineam Domini*) has decreed and declared to be necessary, and which Pius IX, in the places cited above, has taught to be owed in conscience. However, a fallible authority cannot command an assent of the mind to its definitions, which would be owed in conscience, consequently under penalty of eternal damnation: therefore the Church considers itself to be infallible in these matters as well.

Specifically, however, regarding dogmatic texts, the Jansenists can be refuted by an argument *ad hominem*. For they themselves concede that the Church is infallible in condemning heretical propositions, e.g., the five propositions of Jansenius. But whoever concedes this, concedes that the Church cannot err in determining the meaning of a condemned proposition; unless this were true, the Church could denounce as heretical a catholic proposition and thus teach heresy when it proscribes a proposition. But a single proposition and the entire context of a book do not differ in kind, but only materially according to greater or lesser extent: therefore, if the Church infallibly determines the meaning of a proposition, it can also infallibly determine the meaning of an entire book. And indeed, if it can do so for one proposition, it can do so for another and so on: and from propositions a book is formed. Or let the Jansenists tell us how great must be the size of a proposition, beyond which the infallibility of the Church ceases¹.

IV. We have said that the Church can infallibly define those truths whose certain knowledge is necessary or *useful*. The reason why we have added this is because if certain knowledge of a truth is useful for preserving the integrity of dogma or for securing the salvation of souls, or if likewise it is useful for the same end to know that some proposition is false and should be rejected, there already exists a connection between that truth and dogma, insofar as it contributes to preserving its integrity, and likewise a connection between error and dogma, insofar as it would lead to undermining it. Moreover, the Church, having the right to the end, also has the right to the means, that is, to that which is useful for the end, and therefore also to defining a truth whose knowledge is useful for the end which it ought to pursue.

From what has been demonstrated, it is clear that the authority of the Church and its infallibility in such definitions is a revealed truth, although the defined object may not be revealed. We shall explain shortly in what follows what kind of act of faith this is.

COROLLARY. Therefore, the Church rightly claims for itself the right to mark with censures other than the censure of heresy those propositions by which the faith and moral integrity are in any way attacked.

¹ {org. 1} Cf. Garnier's 4th Dissertation on Marius Mercator p. 7, *on Subscriptions etc.*: where he well demonstrates that the Church had this in view when it condemned not only errors but also persons, and required subscription to both condemnations, as in the case of the Pelagian heresy.

V. The question is asked, what kind of act of faith is that which is given to the Magisterium teaching these things which are not revealed. It is not an act of divine faith, which relies on the authority of God revealing; since revelation is lacking; but it is an act of religious faith, which relies on the authority of the divinely instituted infallible Magisterium. This faith is owed; because the divinely instituted and infallible Magisterium has the right to demand assent to those things which it teaches.

Furthermore, observe that this religious faith given to the teaching Magisterium also has its place when the Church proposes revealed truths to be believed: for we believe the teaching Church that God has revealed those things; although we also embrace this same truth by divine faith, as Theologians teach in the Treatise on Faith.

VI. The Church proposes doctrine through sensible signs, which are generally propositions consisting of words whose meaning is already fixed and known and must be so, so that people may grasp what the Church says. This does not prevent the Church from coining new compound words, when the force of their components is known, and, if multiple possible meanings of a word exist, from determining the sense in which it is understood by her and should be understood by others in the doctrine of faith. Furthermore, from this necessary method of teaching—namely that the Church must use signs, and indeed words when defining (for although doctrine can be proposed by other signs as well, since the definitions of the Church must be clear so as to settle questions, and since signs of this kind are none other than words, it is necessary that when controversies arise within the Church itself, the definitive judgment of the Church be proposed in words)—and from the purpose of definition, which is to manifest truth to men and to overthrow error, it necessarily follows that the Church is infallible in the use of formulas by which she proposes doctrine. This infallibility consists in this: that the words employed by the Church truly represent what the Church wishes to teach, and it cannot happen that the Church errs in the selection and use of such signs; that is, it cannot happen that the Church says outwardly through signs something contrary to or different from what she conceives and wishes to say. Indeed, if this could happen, the institution of the Church's teaching authority and its infallibility would be utterly useless; for men would learn nothing and could not be made certain of anything, since, even after the Church had spoken, they would still be ignorant of what they should believe according to the Church's decree. Or if people were to believe whatever the Church manifested through words in her teaching, since they could only believe what they understood through those words, men would frequently be led into error by the Church's magisterium. Therefore, since the Church's magisterium is sensible and infallible in its exercise, it is necessary that the sensible form by which truth is represented be infallibly true as well.

Nor is this another infallibility, but it is the very infallibility of the magisterium, which is essentially social and perceptible: for the magisterium refers to disciples, and since it refers to human beings, it does so in a perceptible manner; hence the infallible magisterium of the Church is a magisterium that infallibly teaches humans in a perceptible way.

And indeed *faith in the heart leads to righteousness, but confession with the mouth leads to salvation* (Romans X. 10); namely, a profession of faith is required, which cannot be made without certain verbal formulas: and this profession must be true and must be made under the direction of the Church's magisterium. Therefore, it is necessary that the Church be immune from error in determining these formulas.

Hence the Apostle instructs Timothy in his 2nd epistle, I. 13, to *have a form of sound words* and requires both *namely, a form of sound words and the safeguarding of the good deposit*: "Hold," he says, "the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." Cf. 1st Timothy VI. 20.

Hence the many professions of faith proposed by the Church with the obligation of believing what is contained in them, that is, what is signified by them according to the common usage of speaking: hence the sanctioning of certain terms by which the dogma of Faith would be most certainly represented, such as ὁμοούσιος (homoousios), θεοτόκος (theotokos), *transubstantiation*, so that those who would deny and disapprove of their true meaning have been considered heretics.

What we have said concerning the infallibility of the Church's magisterium in verbal formulas of the profession of Faith must likewise be said about other signs, such as paintings and images, by which the Church represents the doctrine of faith through her ordinary and universal magisterium; for the reasoning is the same.