

De Valore Notarum Theologicarum et de Criteriis ad eas Dignoscendas (*On the Value of Theological Notes and on the Criteria for Recognizing Them*)

by Sixtus Cartechini, S.J. 1951

[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 15, 2025.
- Version: 1.0
- Selection pages: 46-62

CHAPTER 11: WHAT IS THEOLOGICALLY CERTAIN

I. WHAT IS THEOLOGICALLY CERTAIN IS DEFINED AND THE CRITERIA FOR RECOGNIZING IT.

Two elements define what proposition is theologically certain: one positive, the other negative.

The positive aspect is the certitude of the truth of the theological proposition itself that is theologically certain, which certitude is had either from the universality of consensus regarding it as a theologically certain proposition, or at least from an intimate connection with the doctrine of faith. The negative aspect is that this proposition is not proposed and proclaimed as certainly revealed and of the faith. The reason, moreover, why it is not considered to be simply of the faith, although it is universally held as certain, can be twofold: either because it is not sufficiently established that the consensus regarding it is not only as regarding a true proposition but also as regarding a revealed proposition to be believed as of the faith, and therefore before a definition of the Church exists concerning it, theologians generally acknowledge that it cannot be called simply of the faith; or because it is a **theological conclusion** deduced from one proposition that is indeed revealed, but from another that is certain from elsewhere, namely either theologically or by the light of reason.

1. **Theologically certain** is that which is admitted by all schools as intimately connected with Revelation.

It is a theological conclusion (I do not say scholastic). From this proposition it is evident that all systematic theses or those proper to some particular system are not theologically certain; or theses concerning which disputation is admitted among Catholics are not theologically certain. Thus: that there is one being in Christ; that negative reprobation does not exist; and concerning

the medium of knowledge of futuribles on the part of God; how quantity and natural stature exist in Christ in the Eucharist; how the influence of God upon an inspired man is to be explained.

Therefore, when in any given thesis there is found as *an adversary some Catholic theologian* who has not been evidently condemned by any official document, or whose doctrine is not evidently irreconcilable with the doctrine of any council or Pontiff posterior to that theologian, or whose opinion has not been evidently abandoned by all subsequent theologians, as frequently happens, for example,

with Durandus and Ockham or Biel: it is a sign that the thesis cannot be called theologically certain.

2. Intimately connected with Revelation, or virtually revealed, or theologically certain is that which is deduced from one proposition certainly revealed and from another certain, though not revealed.

[Certainty] can be certain from any field whatsoever, whether philosophical, theological, or historical. That prior certitude of the fact of Revelation is required is theologically certain: from the fact that the act of faith is (*dogma*) reasonable and irrevocable; that supernatural light is not required *per se* for knowing miracles, because it has been defined that miracles are the most certain signs of the fact of Revelation: which would not be true if subjectively they could not convince the *intellect* without that light; that inspiration implies illumination of the intellect, motion of the will, and assistance: because the *nature of inspiration* has been defined (Dz. 1787): God is the author of all Scripture; that the existence of God can be demonstrated; that natural knowledge of God in this life is *only mediate*: because in the Council of Vienne it was condemned that the beatific vision is natural: but the immediate perception of the Ontologists seems to be the same as the beatific vision; that we know God through a proper form: for natural knowledge is only mediate, as is evident against the Ontologists (this is deduced from one revealed [truth] and another theologically certain): therefore it is not through a proper form.

3. That which is only probably and not evidently deduced from revealed principles is not a theological conclusion, nor is it therefore theologically certain.

Example: that the vision of God is *absolutely* supernatural is common doctrine.

4. Those propositions in which all schools agree as certain propositions are theologically certain, but they do not agree [on them] as revealed propositions to be believed by faith.

The sign that they are theologically certain is that consensus which could not be present unless the matter were intimately connected with revealed truths: for in other matters—for instance, in certain philosophical theses—we see that many disagreements are present in the schools. Thus you understand this note which is sometimes given: it is theologically certain from the *consensus* of theologians that the soul of Christ possessed habitual grace and the beatific vision.

The dogmas here are, for the beatific vision, the *hypostatic union*; for habitual grace, that Christ is the meritorious cause of our justification.

5. That you may understand what a theologically certain proposition is, know that it is the contradictory of those which are called erroneous.

- a)\ That is erroneous which is opposed to some proposition which, although it is certain, nevertheless is not certain to be of the faith;
- b)\ or when the opposition, although it is contradictory to what is certainly of the faith, is not entirely certain and beyond doubt. In other words, here there would be a dispute about the opposition itself (concerning ontologism cf. P[ater] Lennerz, *de Deo uno*, p. 65: reasoning is required to demonstrate that opposition);
- c)\ which denies immediately a proposition that is not of the faith, but is a theological conclusion evidently deduced from one premise that is of the faith and another evident by the light of nature alone. e.g., only Bishops are the successors of the Apostles.

Here the notion of error explained above is verified. For he who denies a theologically certain conclusion is not a heretic, because he does not deny something formally revealed, unless he also denies the premise of faith from which it is inferred; nevertheless, he errs most gravely, because he denies that from whose denial it can be proved, by applying another evident natural principle, that he must deny an object of faith (*example*: concerning infallibility in theological conclusions and in dogmatic facts). For he who denies a theological conclusion evidently deduced from a certain premise of faith and from another premise evident by the light of nature, is thereby necessarily led to denying the premise of faith, insofar as concerns the object denied, because the naturally evident premise necessitates him not to deny it; moreover, it is established from logic that a conclusion cannot be false unless one of the premises is false, because the false does not proceed from the true but only from the false, although the true could be deduced from the false. Therefore, since the inference is also evident and cannot be denied, it is necessary that he deny the premise of faith, which alone can be freely denied, because the other is naturally evident.

6. Therefore, a certain and easy sign for recognizing some theologically certain proposition is to consider whether from its denial there follows the denial of some dogma.

Cf.\ thesis concerning things virtually revealed and concerning dogmatic facts; concerning the individual parts which are inspired.

7. Our theses are often, although they are drawn from councils, nevertheless not dogmas but only theologically certain, because they contain some determination which is not in the council and which nevertheless is deduced from the council.

For councils are accustomed to observe this rule: in defining, they choose some sufficiently generic formula which can be explained according to various theological systems; because the council wishes, so to speak, to respect or preserve all systems, provided they are not evidently false. Wherefore they define the minimum which suffices to exclude the contrary error. In the books of theologians, however, the matter is set forth with some greater determination, which certainly is immediately deduced from the definition, but nevertheless is not found in it. The theologian, however, possesses a greater determination, because this is precisely one of the chief aims of theology: to deduce conclusions from the principles of faith, so that the comprehension and extension of the dogma may be distinctly evident in its consequences.

I say that thus the comprehension of the text is increased: for example, the fact of inspiration is defined, and analyzing it I arrive at those three elements: motion in the will, illumination in the

intellect, assistance in execution. *Extension*: it is a dogma that Christ suffered for us; I extend it and say also for all men. I give many other examples.

The existence of God can be demonstrated: The Council says: “can be known.” At least it is theologically certain that the soul is immortal by its nature, because the Council says that it is immortal. That the first parents were constituted in grace is at least theologically certain; the Council says that they were constituted in original justice and holiness: and this is a dogma of faith.

That original sin does not formally consist in concupiscence is theologically certain, because it is defined that original sin is taken away by baptism and yet concupiscence remains.

Concerning what must be held from the Vatican Council: (Dz 1839) it defines “to be held”: it does not say “to be believed”: from which it is deduced that [the Church] is also infallible in connected truths, which is theologically certain. Concerning justification, that it is not merely forensic is defined; it is at least theologically certain that it is something remaining physically in our soul.

II. HOW THEOLOGICALLY CERTAIN TRUTHS ARE DEDUCED FROM DOGMA^[^4]

You will see what is theologically certain from any dogma if:

- a) before all else you eliminate what has not been defined; and these are: the word itself, the phantastic image, the technical concept;
- b) then you precisely discern the defined point;
- c) finally, if you attentively consider what is necessarily presupposed by this dogma or is necessarily connected with it, or is necessarily deduced from it.

1. Words, as is evident, are not defined.

If anyone wishes to employ another term to signify supernatural revelation, or mystery, or dogma, or faith, or the Trinity, or hypostatic union, or grace, he is not a heretic: for words are conventional signs, although in the use of words no one ought to depart from the common sense: therefore the Apostle also forbade novelties of expression, because a single poorly chosen word can be the cause of many disputes and revolutions (cf. “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*”). Nearly all things that are explained in our modern universities are profane novelties of expression.

2. But neither is the phantasm of the imagination defined, as is evident:

“He descended into hell”; “Then the king shall say to those who shall be on his left hand”; “he sitteth at the right hand of the Father”; “the inspiration of the Holy Spirit”.

3. When any definition is given by Councils or by the Pope, the concept which is defined is the common concept, as it is understood by all, and not a technical or systematic concept proper to some particular system.

Here are many most celebrated examples:

That the soul is the form of the body (Dz. 481): the technical concept is the Aristotelian concept of form with its relations; this concept is not defined; but the Council wished to define this: that the soul and body effect a unity and not a merely casual or accidental composite, and that the soul is the specific, or perfective, or formal element of the body; in other words, that from which the body has that it is a human body, and not that of an animal, is the soul.

He wished, therefore, to define the fact of the union, as is evident in the case of the mystery of the Incarnation: because if the union were accidental, the passion of the body would not have been the passion of any rational and free soul, and the entire redemption would perish because the passion which took place in the body of Christ would perish. Hence if anyone should wish to be a Cartesian or an atomist, it is not contrary to the Council, although he could cohere only with the greatest difficulty with its words.

Thus the notions of Person and Nature which are defined in the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation (Dz. 428-429) are not technical Aristotelian definitions, namely for nature: the principle of motion and rest in that in which it is and not accidentally; for person: an individual substance of a rational nature.

But by nature in dogma is understood that from which something is constituted as such, e.g., man, and by which it is distinguished from an angel and from an animal; and by person: the sense of some rational individual fully distinct from another equally individual, by which is said: someone, some man, and by which one answers the question: who is it? It is Peter or Paul. While nature answers the question: What is it? It is a stone, or a horse, or a man, or God.

So also concerning grace which is the formal cause of justification (Dz. 799): formal cause signifies that grace is something intrinsic in us from which we are really just; but the strictly Aristotelian sense of some co-principle which as act is composed with potency or with matter is not defined.

So it is concerning the light of reason (Dz. 1806) and concerning conversion in the Eucharist (Dz. 877).

4. Now give some synthesis of the concepts common to all and of systematic concepts.

a) Common and immutable principles:

These are the points of doctrine in which all Catholic theologians agree and ought to agree, and from which, when conjoined with revealed truths, theologically certain truths can be deduced.

These themselves, as presuppositions in the definition, are at least theologically certain: (from a synthesis of philosophy).

i)\ That truth exists and that we are capable of knowing the truth, against skepticism (cf. the thesis concerning the one God).

ii)\ The objectivity of knowledge, against idealism or immanentism (cf. the condemned Modernism).

- iii)\ That truth is absolute, i.e., the same for all; against relativism: for if only that which now appeared were true, no standard of comparison would be given for distinguishing between the true and the false; whence every affirmation would be equivalent to its negation.
- iv)\ That our concepts are, at least in some way, universal: for if you admit no universality, there would be no distinction between nature and person, and the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation would be a contradiction.
- v)\ That merely natural certitude, although not scientific, is nevertheless true, e.g., in the faith of simple people.
- vi)\ That man is capable of reasoning; for it is theologically certain that he can demonstrate the existence of God.
- vii)\ And therefore: the first principles of being, such as [the principles] of contradiction, sufficient reason, causality, [and] finality. Wherefore you cannot say: according to Kantian or Hegelian logic these principles have no meaning; for that logic is *absolutely heretical*.
- viii)\ The objectivity of relations, such as causality [and] similarity: for knowing the existence and essence of God, which is a dogma against the agnostics.
- ix)\ In some manner: the existence of substance and accident (although not necessarily with all the Aristotelian determinations). For otherwise Transubstantiation and grace could not be explained—[grace] which is not the same as the soul and yet is in the soul.
- x)\ That changes occur: for it is a dogma that man can lose grace, and that he can grow in it.
- xi)\ Distinctions of reason with foundation in reality; for example, in the Trinity.
- xii)\ That extended things or bodies exist.
- xiii)\ That being in place and in time signify something real, or that time and space have foundation in reality; for otherwise it would have no meaning that Christ lived in such a place or time.
- xiv)\ In general, that spiritual being exists, against materialism.
- xv)\ That man has a spiritual and immortal soul.
- xvi)\ That in man the soul is only one: because if you say that the sensitive soul is other than the intellectual soul, the sensible sufferings of Christ would not have been the sufferings of any spiritual soul.
- xvii)\ That man is man from the union of soul and body: the soul is the form of the body.
- xviii)\ That in man the senses are not altogether the same as the intellect, because concupiscence is distinguished from sin.
- xix)\ That man has free will (this is a dogma).
- xx)\ That man can know and demonstrate the existence of God.
- xxi)\ That God is not the same as the world, against pantheism.

xxii)\ That He is personal, free, and therefore can speak with us.

xxiii)\ And that we know Him as personal, because we know Him as beginning and end.

xxiv)\ That man is bound to religion, and if God should speak, that he is bound to hear Him.

xxv)\ That from the very nature of things there exists a distinction between good and evil; that man can know this distinction; and that therefore he is bound to do good and avoid evil.

xxvi)\ That it is easy to know and to make at least the first applications of the natural law: such as to love parents, not to kill, to help one's neighbor.

These principles are the common patrimony of the entire human race in all time; contingent systems change, but these do not change; they are, moreover, necessary for thinking and for affirming dogma.

If any theology or philosophy calls these things into doubt or in no way speaks of these things, it is fully heretical, as the Encyclical *HUMANI GENERIS* also teaches:

“those things which were composed by common consensus of Catholic doctors over many centuries for the purpose of attaining some understanding of dogma, without doubt do not rest upon so fragile a foundation. For they rest upon principles and notions deduced from a true knowledge of created things; in which deductions, indeed, the divinely revealed truth shone forth, like a star, through the Church upon the human mind. Wherefore it is not surprising that some notions of this kind have not only been employed by Ecumenical Councils, but have even been sanctioned, *so that it is wrong to depart from them.*” (p. 566)

And for this reason the same Encyclical teaches that all, *even in philosophical matters*, must direct their mind with due reverence to the magisterium of the Church, “whose office it certainly is, by divine institution, not only to guard and interpret the deposit of divinely revealed truth, but also to keep watch over the philosophical disciplines themselves, lest Catholic dogmas suffer any harm from incorrect theories” (p. 575).

b) Systematic Points:

Others, on the contrary, are certain systematic points:

i)\ The principle of act and potency;

ii)\ the real distinction between nature and person;

iii)\ the distinction of matter and form, of essence and existence in created things;

iv)\ that faculties, habits, and acts are specified by their formal object;

v)\ concerning quantity, concerning qualities;

vi)\ concerning diverse predicaments specifically understood;

vii)\ concerning the vital principle in brute animals;

viii)\ concerning species in cognition;

- ix) concerning the agent intellect;
- x) concerning the five ways specifically understood.

These are the theses which the ecclesiastical Magisterium prefers among others, but which it does not presuppose in its definitions, although the words of the definitions are drawn from this system.

Note, moreover, that all these things can be employed to signify common concepts, because some distinction between essence and existence, between act and potency, is absolutely necessary.

Thus the concept of nature: it is a common and necessary notion for theology in this sense, that in all men there be something identical and stable which we can know and in relation to which we can say with infallible certitude: this is owed to it, that is not owed to it.

From these theses applied to revealed propositions, no theologically certain proposition is deduced, nor can you call this theologically certain precisely because they are not presupposed in the councils. (The thesis concerning the diverse supernatural formal object in faith, although it seems true, is no more than more probable). These notions are technical or systematic; these are not defined; or rather: *what is defined by a council or by a Pontiff does not belong properly to any one system alone*.

III. ON THE TWOFOLD MANNER OF DEDUCING SOMETHING FROM DOGMA

a) Solely a priori

Among theologically certain propositions, certain ones are obtained by way of reasoning solely a priori: these are called by some *theologically certain*, by others *implicitly revealed*.

And certainly they can be called *implicitly revealed* if the deduction can be made with complete certitude and truly a priori, i.e., by employing only the first principles of reason. For revealed truths are understood by us insofar as they are projected into our mind and received, assimilated, and comprehended by our reason with its apparatus of necessary first principles.

Wherefore, if by employing these first principles we bring to light diverse aspects of the initially given objective revealed datum, we do not conclude to truths that are truly new. Just as general metaphysics is constructed by proceeding from some initial given datum, i.e., from objective human thought, without recourse to experience, because it is the science of the necessary laws of objective thought, the laws of being, and therefore one does not obtain truths that are truly new but rather a greater explication of some object by way of analysis: so likewise the same mode of analyzing some object according to its essential parts in theology is nothing other than explicative reasoning by which formally implicitly revealed truths are deduced.

Thus parts are found in the whole and vice versa (seven Sacraments); likewise the elements of some definition are found in the object that is known; likewise particular ideas are found in the general idea.

If you call these propositions theologically certain, nevertheless these propositions seem capable of being defined as matters of Catholic faith. For in these matters reasoning serves only to explain the meaning of a premise which is revealed and insofar as it is revealed.

b) With the Addition of a Contingent Fact

If the explication is made by recourse to some truth of fact, then there is the following class.

This is the class of those conclusions whose genesis supposes the introduction into the reasoning of some truth that is not revealed but known through experience.

Dogmatic facts are those which as elements of fact enter into some proposition which no one can deny either as a matter of faith or as theologically certain: that the Church is infallible in dogmatic fact is at least theologically certain.

All these are enumerated:

- i)\ the fact of the legitimacy of some Pope or of some council, such as Trent, (it enters as an element of fact in all the dogmas of the Council of Trent).
- ii)\ the meaning of some proposition or of some book in relation to the faith (cf. Jansenius).
- iii)\ the heretical character of some person (Nestorius, Wyclif): it may be necessary to define this lest the faithful be infected by their doctrine.
- iv)\ the orthodoxy of some Father of the Church or of some book of his.
- v)\ the sanctity of some person (in canonization).
- vi)\ the nullity or reality of such an ordination, for example, that of the Anglicans.
- vii)\ the value of the sanctification of such a religious order (the approbation of religious orders; not thereby are all rules in particular approved as better).
- viii)\ the authenticity of the Vulgate.
- ix)\ the fact of such an obligation which arises from such an ecclesiastical law, for example, of confessing oneself once a year, or of communicating at Easter.
- x)\ the existence of sacramentals.
- xi)\ the existence of such impediments in matrimony.

It matters little if we cannot resolve the question whether certain of these facts are dogmas or only theologically certain: for on the one hand these particular things seem to be revealed: this being is created, this man is redeemed, the Council of Trent is infallible, this Pope is infallible: because in these cases there is no addition to Revelation but an explication or application of it; on the other hand, however, it must be known that many things are revealed by God in general, so that they are to be believed only in general: for I am not bound to make an act of faith that this child is born in original sin, or that this Pope is infallible: but I am bound to make or elicit an act of faith concerning those things which he himself defines.

Or you can say that certain things are revealed or spoken by God no longer for the purpose of making or eliciting an act of faith, but per accidens or in relation to the articles of faith (for example, concerning the cloak of St. Paul).

For God, in speaking with us, accommodates Himself to human customs, just as an orator says certain things incidentally or obliquely.

I propose in another manner the preceding most difficult point: in relation to those things which can be deduced, namely:

In relation to virtually revealed truths, two cases must be distinguished:

i)\ certain conclusions are obtained from dogma by means of reasoning uniquely *a priori*, that is, without recourse to experience or to any contingent fact. In such conclusions it is very difficult to define precisely which are formally implicitly revealed, which on the contrary are only virtually implicitly revealed; *it seems that distinction between a merely ostensive syllogism and a truly illative syllogism should not be admitted.*

For before the definition of the Church such conclusions are called theologically certain, as the Immaculate [Conception] before the definition; after the definition theologians come and say confidently: that is formally implicitly revealed. In fact in these conclusions there is had either only a new concept of the same reality: just as when I say: the knowledge of God is a dogma, therefore demonstration is theologically certain: for demonstration is a more determined concept of knowledge; or there is had a property which is contained in the defined reality as in a root: it is a dogma that Christ is man: therefore it is theologically certain that He is capable of laughter.

These conclusions can be said to be implicitly revealed if the deduction can be made with *true certitude employing only the first principles of reason*. In these matters the reasoning of Suresius and Lugo is fully valid; such conclusions can be defined and are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith.

The sole reason why they often cannot be defined is that they are not certain, because they are deduced with some minor premise of reason which is not absolutely certain. But if the premise of reason were absolutely certain and *a priori*, certainly the conclusion could be defined.

And in fact such conclusions fall into that category which the authorities approve when they say that what is formally implicitly revealed is the definition in the defined, the conclusion in the premises: those new concepts, those properties, pertain to the definition of the thing: for no one can always distinguish with certainty between essence and essential property, and in distinctions of this kind there is always contained something of arbitrariness.

And furthermore: if such conclusions could not be defined, nothing new could be defined except what is in express words in Scripture: for in every syllogism we employ the first principles of reason; for example, to deduce that the Son is consubstantial with the Father from the fact that Christ says: "I and the Father are one," I employ the principle of identity and contradiction.

Let us now suppose that the Thomistic opinion is true that a person is constituted by its own existence, why could it not be defined that in Christ there is only one being? The reason precisely why this cannot be defined is not because that thesis concerning one existence in one person is a new truth, but because it is not a certain truth.

All authors say: whoever formally and explicitly testifies to some truth, implicitly testifies to all that which under these circumstances, and also in the future for God, is the same truth to the one hearing. Now indeed, hearers can be diverse: if Christ says before some workman: "I and the Father are one," he understands almost nothing; if He says this before a theologian, the theologian says: He is consubstantial with the Father; and at the end of the world when the knowledge of Revelation on the part of the Church will be greater, they will understand still better that truth, and all things which are necessarily deduced from it can be said to be formally implicitly revealed.

Whence what the ancient theologians said is most true: those consequences are implicitly revealed which are deduced from revealed truth by good and necessary consequence.

ii)\ But there are other conclusions, not *a priori* but *a posteriori*, in whose premises is contained some contingent fact, e.g., the sanctity of some person in canonization; or in the authenticity of the Vulgate; in the impediments to marriage, which impediments are established by the Church in an entirely contingent manner; or in the ceremonies of the Sacrifice of the Mass and of the Sacraments, which are also established by the Church in an entirely contingent manner.

These things are defined and yet they do not appear to be revealed. But the reason why they are not to be believed as matters of divine and Catholic faith seems to be this: it is not yet a dogma of faith that the Church in defining these matters is infallible; it is theologically certain. If it were a dogma, then even for these matters the reasoning of Suárez and Lugon would be fully valid: all definitions of the Church, of whatever kind, will be dogmas of faith.

For if Christ had said: I reveal to you that the Church in all things which it defines is infallible, or speaks the truth, Christ Himself with that general proposition would have affirmed the truth of those definitions. For what is it to affirm any proposition except to say: it is true? Indeed, the infallibility of the Church is one truth, the proposition defined by the Church is another truth; but they are two truths necessarily connected: whence whoever affirms the one, also affirms the other: just as whoever says: "I and the Father are one," also affirms consubstantiality, and whoever affirms principles and sees conclusions thereby affirms the conclusions which he sees must necessarily be deduced from them.

Briefly therefore: those things which are deduced with absolute certainty solely from a priori reasoning, appear all to be revealed; the only distinction is whether they are implicitly or explicitly revealed; and in fact the Encyclical "HUMANI GENERIS" also speaks only of such a distinction, where it says:

"It is likewise true that theologians must always return to the sources of divine revelation: for it is their task to indicate by what reasoning those things which are taught by the living Magisterium are to be found in Sacred Scripture and in divine 'tradition,' whether explicitly or implicitly" (p. 568). (Pius IX, *Inter gravissimas*, 28 October 1870, *Acta*, vol. I., p. 260).

Another distinction between what is formally revealed and what is virtually revealed—as though what is virtually revealed cannot be defined, even though it is deduced with certainty from what is revealed—seems not to be admissible.

IV. WHAT THEREFORE IS FORMALLY REVEALED, WHETHER EXPLICITLY OR IMPLICITLY; WHAT IS VIRTUALLY REVEALED; THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THEM

1. I explain before all else whence is derived the distinction of reasoning reason:

... namely, from the different relations of one thing or concept to other things; Man: rational animal (these would be merely extrinsic denominations); but the distinction of reasoned thing is derived from the same thing which provides the foundation for such a distinction.

Because something can be revealed formally explicitly or formally implicitly: those things which are distinguished from the revealed concept by a distinction of reasoning reason (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*), such as the Trinity, *όμοούσιος* [consubstantial], and hypostatic union, are formally implicitly revealed; those things which are distinguished by a distinction of reasoned reason (*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*) are also formally implicitly revealed, but before they are proposed by the Church, they are commonly called theologically certain; after they have been proposed, however, they are true dogmas. Those things, moreover, which are distinguished really [*realiter*], are not revealed, unless it is established from another source.

2. That which is formally explicitly revealed is that which the very terms of the expression convey.

This can be done by a proper term: mighty God, God has spoken what is in the sacred books, the Word was made flesh, He has spoken through the prophets. It can be done by a metaphorical term: Lord of hosts, I am the vine, you are the branches.

But that which is signified in expressed words in any proposition must not be confused with that which is perceived at first glance from the mere reading or hearing of the proposition. For it can happen that the sense of the words becomes known only after long inquiry, and there are many truths explicitly revealed which do not appear as such unless many arguments are applied.

3. That which is formally implicitly revealed is what is formally contained in the explicitly revealed, or is formally the same as the explicitly revealed.

It is thus contained:

- a) the definition in the thing defined and vice versa: this is my body: transubstantiation;
- b) the relative in its correlative: thus, with one proposition having been revealed, it is revealed that the contrary and contradictory [proposition] is heretical;
- c) the essential physical parts in the whole and the whole in the parts;
- d) the particular proposition in the universal;
- e) the conclusion in the premises. For the principle from which the syllogism proceeds is related to the conclusion as the whole to the part, and the conclusion is related to the principle as the part to the whole. Wherefore the consequent is part of the antecedent.

I give an example: the beginning of faith is a supernatural act; for every supernatural act grace is required; therefore for the beginning of faith also grace is required.

It is evident that in these matters, in order to pass from one to another, the explication of terms suffices, because each of these enters into the definition of the other. He who has spoken to us in the Son, by that very fact has said that revelation is possible, has said that it is fitting (Dz. 1807). Above I have spoken of propositions which are obtained from a revealed proposition solely *a priori* or by the metaphysical way: these are they.

I give, moreover, examples which prove that these, before they are defined by the Church, are held as theologically certain:

- a) that the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Eucharist are mysteries;
- b) that contrary arguments are not cogent or evident;
- c) that the Trinity, even after divine Revelation, cannot be demonstrated by reason alone.

Here, however, note a certain difference in the terminology of authors. Concerning the mystery of the Incarnation, some say it is Catholic doctrine that it is a mystery, because Pius IX names it a mystery in a certain epistle, bringing it forward as an example of mysteries, and that the reasons [for it] are not evident they say is theologically certain; concerning the Trinity, that it cannot be demonstrated; others say it is proximate to the faith.

4. A witness, in bearing witness to some truth formally and explicitly, equivalently or implicitly bears witness to everything that is contained in his words in these circumstances, and also in future ones for God.

These are things which can be deduced purely *a priori* with firm certitude from his attested proposition. For it is a question of the sense of the utterance of the one bearing witness. Thus he who bears witness that Christ is a perfect man thereby bears witness that He has a human will; God who bears witness that He is with the Apostles until the end of the world, bears witness that there will be certain successors of the Apostles (bishops); he who bears witness that mysteries are given (Dz. 1796) ("we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery which is hidden"), by that very fact reveals that revelation is necessary for knowing the mysteries.

5. But certain circumstances can occur in future centuries in which words inspired by the Holy Spirit are more fully understood; just as we now perceive certain things in Scripture and Tradition which previously they did not perceive.

This criterion well explains how something can now be a matter of faith which previously was, for example, only theologically certain, or Catholic doctrine, without, however, any new revelation now being made.

For you must retain and reconcile these two things:

- i) Revelation was closed with the Apostles, which is at least *theologically certain*.

For:

- a) it is *too evident from Scripture* that the present economy of the Church of Jesus Christ is the ultimate and supreme state of divine manifestation for this mortal condition of the human race.

b)\ Christ at the Last Supper says to the Apostles, speaking of the Holy Spirit: *he will teach you all truth*, namely, the whole saving truth to be revealed; but it is clear that this regards the Apostles personally, for they are the ones who cannot now bear the many things which Christ was about to say, and who, on the contrary, when the Spirit of truth shall come, will be taught all truth.

c)\ Moreover, Christ ascending into heaven says to the Apostles: *teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*; and this explains what are those all things of which He was speaking at the Last Supper;

d)\ St. Paul always commends to his disciples to guard the deposit and forbids them to receive those who put forward anything beyond the doctrine which “you have learned,” because all the faithful are to be built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, and not upon another foundation.

e)\ If any doubt should still remain, the question is decided from the express teaching and practical mode of acting of the entire Church. For this principle has always held: whatever is new does not pertain to the faith, but to heresy. Moreover, to define that some article pertains to the Catholic faith is the same thing, according to the style of councils, as [to say] that such a doctrine has come down to us as revealed by the Apostles, whether in divine Scripture or in Tradition even without writing.

ii) Although Revelation is closed, nevertheless there are now certain dogmas which were not previously known explicitly.

For it is one thing for a proposition to be of the faith *in itself*, another thing indeed for it to be of the faith *for us*. For the first it suffices that it be revealed by God; for the second it is required that the sense and signification of the Revelation be sufficiently established to us.

An example is in Scripture: when those words were written on the wall before King Belshazzar: *mene, tekel, peres*, by which it was signified that God had numbered the kingdom of Belshazzar and that kingdom was at its end; therefore, once that writing was set forth, this truth was already revealed by God, and Daniel, as soon as he had read that writing, ought to have believed that object from faith as revealed by God. The king, however, before it was explained by Daniel concerning what object God was speaking, neither ought to have nor could have believed that truth as of the faith. Therefore that truth was already *of the faith in itself*; for the king, however, and for others it was not yet of the faith.

Thus God has already said to us in Scripture and Tradition all that He wished to say; but we understand according to our capacity; in future ages they will not deny what we say, because dogmas are immutable, but *they will understand more fully*. For who could fully expound that text: *The Word was made flesh?* Who could exhaust the meaning of those words: *I am the vine, you are the branches?*

Hence the Encyclical “*Humani Generis*” teaches:

“... each source of divinely revealed doctrine contains so many and such great treasures of truth that they can never really be exhausted.” (p. 568)

With this criterion the entire scientific apparatus of the Modernists collapses, (Dz. 2039; 2040), who think they are removing a great difficulty from the Church by the fact that certain dogmas cannot be historically proven throughout the entire course of centuries beginning from the Apostles down to us. It is not indispensable to prove everything from past centuries: the Holy Spirit even today assists the Church and by ways unknown to us directs its attention to a better understanding of what He Himself has spoken through the prophets.

6. If the metaphysical essence of something has been revealed, its metaphysical properties have also been revealed, but not its physical properties as well; if the essence has been revealed in its connatural state, the connatural properties have been revealed; if the essence has been revealed as in a perfect state, all accidental perfections have also been revealed.

Thus concerning Christ, the human essence was revealed as considered metaphysically and in a perfect state, but not in its connatural state; from this threefold consideration St. Thomas constructs theses concerning the properties of that human nature. In the Eucharist, the presence of Christ was revealed, but not in a connatural state because He does not occupy a place.

It was revealed that Mary is the Mother of God, but not in a natural mode because *by the Holy Spirit*: to be Mother and to be Mother in a natural mode are really distinguished.

I summarize by giving examples:

- a) (i) “The Word was made flesh” (*formally explicitly revealed*).
 - (ii) The Word is personally or hypostatically united to human nature (*implicitly revealed*).
 - (iii) Therefore the concept of person in general is in some way distinguished from the concept of nature (*theologically certain*).
- b)(i) “But he who does not believe will be condemned.”
 - (ii) Faith necessary and irrevocable (*implicitly revealed*).
 - (iii) Therefore prior certitude of the fact of Revelation is required (*theologically certain*).
- c)(i) “They were naked and were not ashamed.”
 - (ii) They did not have concupiscence (*implicitly revealed*).
 - (iii) Therefore integrity is an unowed gift, because through sin concupiscence came and yet nature is not corrupted.
- d)\(i) “This is my body.”
 - (ii) Transubstantiation.
 - (iii) Therefore the accidents remain.
- e)\(i) “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not”.
 - (ii) Therefore Peter is infallible.

- (iii) Therefore he is infallible also in dogmatic fact.
- f)\ (i) The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God.
- (ii) Therefore they are consubstantial.
- (iii) Therefore there is at least a rational distinction between nature and person in general.

7. Also from the practice of the Church, namely from canon law, from the liturgical, ascetical, and mystical life of the Church, just as certain matters which are dogmas can be proven, so also certain matters which are Catholic doctrine or theologically certain connected with them can be proven.

Especially concerning the mystical and ascetical life, there are many doctrinal documents both positive and negative which establish doctrine or condemn errors concerning the spiritual life (Denzinger 1221 ff.).

There are also practical documents:

a) in ecclesiastical laws pertaining to various states which either require perfection or strive to attain it, such as the ecclesiastical and religious state: from which is made clear what the mind of the Church is concerning the means suitable for obtaining perfection and concerning the dangers to be avoided in its pursuit; all these matters can be called Catholic doctrine or theologically certain.

On this point today one frequently hears: what are they doing, for example, those nuns who never go out? Why do they not go out to engage in Catholic action? *I respond* that they make a sacrifice of their life, which is the greatest thing that can be done in this world for Catholic action.

If Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus had thought thus, today we would not have in the Church such a prodigy of sanctity. But neither did Christ himself think thus: he remained for 30 years in the life of a craftsman. Why rather did he not go out to engage in Catholic action? Which, as is evident, is an exceedingly foolish question.

b)\ when the Church approves religious orders, she authentically declares that such a form of life is a suitable means for pursuing perfection: whence the fact that the rule of Saint Francis or Saint Dominic or Saint Ignatius is a rule suitable even today if the Church does not judge it ought to be changed, is Catholic doctrine or theologically certain. I do not speak, as is evident, of individual rules in minor matters.

Here too one sometimes hears: there are many things to be reformed, these are old things, medieval things.

I too think that many things ought to be better adapted to modern requirements and changed times, but this adaptation must be made by the Pontiff and by the bishops. But can the initiative come from private persons?

I grant it, but an initiative which is founded on discretion, on modesty, on patience, on humility.

c) in the canonization of saints it is Catholic doctrine, or theologically certain, that the life of the saint be an outstanding exemplar of Christian life: what is sanctioned is indeed the general complex of the life of the Servant of God, but not the value of individual acts and much less their imitability or aptitude to be imitated by all. This is not sanctioned. Whence it does not follow that because something was done or said by some saint, this alone can be the reason why it may be done by all.

Thus St. Paul resisted Peter to his face because he was to be blamed: and yet it would be exceedingly dangerous to wish to imitate him in this point.

8. Whoever denies a proposition that is truly theologically certain and knows it to be a theologically certain proposition commits a grave sin.

This fault is in its own way against the faith by reason of the connection which a theological conclusion or dogmatic fact has with the faith.

PART TWO: CONCERNING THE SIGNS COMPARED TOGETHER

NUMBER	THEOLOGICAL NOTE	CENSURE	ASSENT
1	DOGMA OF FAITH = OF FAITH, = OF CATHOLIC FAITH; = OF DIVINE AND CATHOLIC FAITH (Denzinger 1792). Doctrine (= judgment) revealed, by public revelation, concerning faith and morals, defined as revealed	<i>Anathema sit</i> Heresy against divine faith	<i>Absolute</i> from the light of divine faith
2	OF ECCLESIASTICAL FAITH DEFINED	<i>Anathema sit</i> Heresy against ecclesiastical faith	<i>Absolute</i> From the light of ecclesiastical faith
3	OF DIVINE FAITH = Matter revealed but not proposed by the Church	Error in faith	<i>Absolute</i> From the light of divine faith
4	PROXIMATE TO FAITH	Proximate to error	<i>Theological</i> from the light of: • faith • Magisterium of the Church reason
5	THEOLOGICALLY CERTAIN	Error in theology	<i>Theological</i> from the light of: • faith • Magisterium of the Church reason
6	CATHOLIC DOCTRINE Some place this before <i>Theologically Certain</i>	At least rash	<i>Theological</i> from the light of: • faith • Magisterium of the Church reason
7	CERTAIN, COMMON AND CERTAIN, MORALLY CERTAIN For some =	Rash	<i>Theological</i> from the light of: • faith

NUMBER	THEOLOGICAL NOTE	CENSURE	ASSENT
	<i>Theologically certain</i>		• Magisterium of the Church reason
8	SAFE or SECURE The contrary cannot be safely taught	Rash	<i>External</i> (+) <i>Internal</i> unless a grave reason stands in the way)
9	MORE COMMON, MOST COMMON — which says less than <i>common</i>	None	Free
10	MORE PROBABLE, PROBABLE • with extrinsic probability from authority • with intrinsic probability from the nature of the thing	None	Free

SIN/ERROR	EXPLANATIONS	EXAMPLES
<i>Mortal</i> Directly against the faith + canonical penalty	= Dogma solemnly defined by the Pope or by a General Council Of Defined Faith	• Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary • Sacrifice of the Mass • Jurisdiction of the Pontiff defined at Vatican
<i>Mortal</i> Directly against the faith + canonical penalty	= Dogma proposed by the ordinary Magisterium in official documents and in creeds	• Absence of all error in inspired text (Dz 1952) • Athanasian Creed
<i>Mortal</i> Directly against the faith + canonical penalty	Matter not revealed but defined <i>ex cathedra</i>	• Communion under one species (Dz 626) • Chrismation (Dz 872) • minor orders (Dz 962)
<i>Mortal</i> Directly against the faith	Differs from dogma because it is not proposed by the Church	• Christ from the beginning of his life said he was the Messiah • He merited for his soul impassibility and glory of body
<i>Mortal</i> Indirectly against the faith	From nearly unanimous consent it is held as revealed	• Habitual grace and beatific vision in Christ • Monogenism against polygenism
<i>Mortal</i> Indirectly against the faith	• From revealed propositions and certain from elsewhere • Dogmatic facts	• The existence of God can be demonstrated • The Council of Trent is legitimate
<i>Mortal</i> Indirectly against the faith	Not yet as Word of God but expressly and authentically taught, e.g. in encyclicals	Inspired authors are true but secondary authors
<i>Possibly mortal</i> of temerity	• Common to all schools • Certain but less immediately concluded from revealed truth	• That integrity is an unowed gift • Sacraments are true causes
<i>Mortal</i> of	It is absolutely not repugnant that	• What is contained in the doctrinal

SIN/ERROR	EXPLANATIONS	EXAMPLES
<i>disobedience</i>	there be something false	decrees of the Roman Congregations
None	It is absolutely not repugnant that there be something false	• Deletion of sin through the very infusion of grace • Adoptive filiation from created grace itself
None	It is absolutely not repugnant that there be something false	Systems (e.g. Molinism or Bañezianism)