

Synopsis theologiae dogmaticae fundamentalis, ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis, hodiernis moribus accommodata: de verâ religione, de Ecclesiâ Christi, de fontibus theologicis (*Synopsis of Fundamental Dogmatic Theology, According to the Mind of St. Thomas Aquinas, Adapted to Modern Circumstances: On True Religion, the Church of Christ, and Theological Sources*)

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De Ecclesia Christi, Caput II, No. 195

(A) The Supreme Pontiff is infallible regarding theological conclusions. This is certain. A theological conclusion, which is also called a virtually revealed truth, is *a conclusion which is deduced with certainty and evidence through proper reasoning from two premises, of which one is formally revealed, while the other is naturally known*;¹ such is, for example, the proposition asserting that the Son proceeds from the intellect of the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the love of the Son and the Father, which is not directly contained in the Word of God, but is logically inferred from it. Hence thus: The Pontiff is infallible in all things which are necessary for preserving the deposit of faith uncorrupted; but the deposit of faith cannot be preserved uncorrupted unless infallibility extends to theological conclusions; for it is natural for man to deduce conclusions from revealed truths, and if false conclusions are inferred, the dogmas of faith are endangered by virtue of the connection which the mind naturally perceives between principles and conclusions; thus in the case mentioned, if someone denies that the Word proceeds from the intellect of the Father, soon he will deny that there is a real distinction between the Father and the Son, or between the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is confirmed by the *practice* of the Church; for, to be silent about other examples, *Pius VI*, through the Constitution *Auctorem fidei* (August

¹ {org. 1} This definition is explained in the *Treatise on Faith*, n. 40.

28, 1794), condemned eighty-five propositions of the Synod of *Pistoia*, among which many are found that are not directly opposed to the faith, but only to theological conclusions. Moreover, this Constitution was received as an irreformable judgment *ex cathedra*. Therefore. Nevertheless, these theological conclusions are more probably not the object of divine faith, as we will prove in the *Treatise on Faith*, n. 42-46.

195. (B) *The Supreme Pontiff is infallible regarding dogmatic facts.* This is the common and true opinion. A dogmatic fact in general is *that which is so connected with a dogma of faith that knowledge of it is necessary for teaching the dogma or for safely preserving it.* (a) Of this kind are facts concerning the legitimacy of the Supreme Pontiff or an Ecumenical Council: for unless it is known with certainty that this Pontiff is the legitimate successor of Peter, or that this Council is truly ecumenical, it will not be established whether they have authority over the universal Church. All admit that the Church enjoys infallibility concerning the legitimacy of the Supreme Pontiff, and therefore cannot err when it unanimously recognizes this Pope as legitimate; otherwise the body of the Church would be separated from its center and head, which is contrary to its indefectibility and unity. It is likewise certain that the Church and the Pontiff can infallibly determine which Council is ecumenical or not; otherwise it would be doubtful whether the decrees issued by it are infallible or not. (b) Among dogmatic facts is also included the fact that a certain book contains some orthodox or heterodox doctrine, e.g., the fact that the five propositions condemned by *Innocent X* are truly contained in Jansenius's book "*Augustinus*". For better understanding, these points can be established: we do not contend that the Pope is infallible in judging that this book is by this or that author, or that the author, whose propositions are condemned, intended in his mind the sense which the words themselves convey; but that he can infallibly determine what sense the words of any book, considering the context, convey,² and whether this sense is orthodox or not. For unless this were so, a heretic could spread errors with impunity and escape condemnation by saying that the Supreme Pontiff did not correctly understand the sense of the book. The Jansenists resorted to this subterfuge after the condemnation of the five propositions of Jansenius; but *Clement XI* openly declared that *respectful silence* is not sufficient, but that "the condemned sense of Jansenius's book in the five aforementioned propositions, *which their words convey*, must be received and condemned as heretical by all Christ's faithful not only with the mouth, but also with the *heart*."³

This is confirmed by the practice of the Church; for the Council of Nicaea condemned the book of Arius entitled "*Thalia*"; the Council of Ephesus condemned the writings of Nestorius; the Second Council of Constantinople condemned the Three Chapters; Leo X

² {org. 1} Hence, when the Pope condemns propositions *according to the sense intended by the author*, it concerns not the subjective sense which perhaps the author had, but the natural and obvious sense, as it is derived from the book itself, with all things duly considered.

³ {org. 2} In *Denzinger*, Enchiridion, n. 1317.

repudiated the errors of Luther; Pius V condemned the propositions of Baius; Pius VI condemned the propositions of the Synod of Pistoia; and these judgments have been held as irreformable.⁴

⁴ {org. 1} It is objected that Vigilius issued contradictory judgments concerning the Three Chapters (i.e., the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa), at one time condemning them and at another time revoking the condemnation. We indeed acknowledge that he was not always consistent with himself: but he consistently taught that in the writings in question there were most serious errors, and he wavered only concerning the opportuneness of condemning the authors of these errors by name: therefore, variations of this kind pertain neither to doctrine nor to dogmatic fact, but to prudence in action or discipline. Cf. Hefele, *op. cit.* vol. III, § 258 ff.; Alzog, *Church History*, § 122; Duchesne, *Vigilius and Pelagius, Review of Historical Questions*, Oct. 1884.