

Summa apologetica de Ecclesia Catholica ad mentem S. Thomae Aquinatis, Pars I (*Apologetic Summary of the Catholic Church According to the Mind of St. Thomas Aquinas, Part I*)

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Quaestio IX, Art. VI

With what faith the truths proposed by the Church must be believed.

I. Multiple types of faith. Faith is 1° divine; 2° divine and catholic; 3° ecclesiastical; 4° human.

1° *Divine faith* or *theological faith* refers to the assent which rests immediately upon divine revelation; the object of this kind of faith is revealed truths, believed on account of the truthfulness of God who reveals them. 2° Faith that is *divine and catholic*, or simply *catholic faith*, refers to revealed truths which are manifested in the doctrine of the Church; however, that revealed truths are manifested through the Church is accidental to faith, namely on our part; from which it appears that between divine faith and catholic faith there is essentially no difference. 3° *Ecclesiastical faith* rests upon the *assistance* of the Holy Spirit, by which the Church of Christ is preserved immune from any error in guarding the deposit of faith; hence it cannot be doubted that it is most firm and most certain.

4° *Human faith* rests upon the authority of men. — As for faith that is *mediately and indirectly divine*, by which not a few theologians maintain that theological conclusions, properly so called, are to be believed, this does not seem to differ from ecclesiastical faith.

II. Diversity of Truths. 1° Among the truths to be believed, *articles of faith* are foremost. Those beliefs are called *articles* which are primary credible truths that import a special connection to other credible truths, such that the rest are in some way contained within them. It is evident, however, that such credible truths are not divided with respect to the object *by which* and the formal reason of faith, because this is unique, namely the divine truth revealing; but with respect to the object *which*, that is, the mysteries that are

believed. In the Creed, some have distinguished twelve articles, others fourteen. Cf. St. Thomas II. II. question I. articles 6. and 8.; *Theological Compendium* chapter CCXLVI.

2° *Dogmas* are those truths which are contained in the written or transmitted word of God, and are proposed by the Church either by solemn judgment or by ordinary and universal magisterium as divinely revealed. Dogmas proposed by the solemn judgment of the Church are called *defined* dogmas, or simply dogmas of faith; dogmas proposed by the ordinary and universal magisterium, without any solemn definition, are called *catholic* dogmas, or *revealed* dogmas, or truths *pertaining to faith*.

3° *Theological conclusions formally* considered, that is, precisely as deduced from premises, can never be called the object of *divine* faith. But precisely as contained or *materially*, as they say, they are held partly as propositions of faith, as above, and partly as their own genre of truths. Those conclusions which, in a broader sense, are called theological are held as *propositions of faith* when, by reason of their signification, they are contained in the premises as a part in the whole, or as the particular in the universal, or as the implicit in the explicit. Indeed, in drawing these conclusions, we use only an *explicative* syllogism.

Theological conclusions understood in the stricter sense are those which are perceived through a *deductive* syllogism, and are contained in revealed truths not immediately, but by reason of natural connection, that is, either as a property in an essence, or as an effect in a cause. Cf. question VIII, article 6.

4° Truths, the contradiction of which has been proscribed by the Church under a censure less than heresy, e.g., as temerarious.

5° Truths which, by the common and constant consensus of Catholics, are held to be so certain that contrary opinions, while not deserving the censure of heresy, are nevertheless worthy of some other censure.

Theological conclusions, strictly so called, and the truths which we have enumerated under numbers 4 and 5, are also called *theologically certain truths*. — Cf. Vatican Council, session III, chapter III; Gotti, *Theologia scholastica*, tome I, treatise I, question I.

III. On truths which must be believed with divine and Catholic faith. With this kind of faith must be believed: 1° the articles of faith; 2° dogmas which are proposed by the Church, whether by solemn judgment or by ordinary and universal magisterium, as divinely revealed; 3° theological conclusions which are called by that name in a *broader sense*. For all truths of this kind rest *immediately* on divine authority.

You may ask I. Whether a conclusion must be believed with divine faith which is deduced from a *universal* revealed major premise as a *particular* [conclusion], but by means of a minor premise that is not revealed, which is either *not evidently certain* or contains a *contingent fact*.

Response. If the minor premise is not positively and *evidently certain*, the conclusion cannot be said to be of faith. As for *contingent facts*, the conclusion is not held to be of faith unless the certainty of the fact absolutely excludes all doubt. Therefore this proposition: *this host is to be adored*, is not believed by divine faith; for although the major premise is revealed: *every properly consecrated host is to be adored*, the minor premise: *this particular host is properly consecrated*, is held to be only morally certain.

Nevertheless, a contingent fact is sometimes so certain that it manifestly excludes any doubt whatsoever. In which case the conclusion, as a certain *part* of the major premise, seems to be a matter of faith. Thus that proposition: *Leo XIII was duly elected as Roman Pontiff*, with the Church's acceptance following—by which even an illegitimate election becomes valid—cannot be called into question. Therefore the Salamancan theologians, Billuart, and others consider it more probable that a conclusion is a matter of faith when it follows from reasoning of this kind: *Every man duly elected as successor of Peter is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church. But Leo XIII was duly elected as successor of Peter. Therefore he is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church.*

Similarly, the authors whom we have mentioned teach that the legitimate celebration of an ecumenical council, for instance the Council of Trent, is manifestly certain. For they reason thus: *Any council, accepted by the Church as ecumenical, is a rule of faith. But the Council of Trent is held by the Church to be ecumenical. Therefore it is a rule of faith. This conclusion, they affirm, is a matter of faith.* Cf. Salmanticenses, *De fide* disp. IV. dub. II. §. 1—3. Billuart, *De reg. fidei*, diss. IV. art. 9. Bannez, however, along with others, denies that these conclusions pertain to faith; nevertheless he does not hesitate to declare that “it would be highly rash and scandalous if, after the Church has accepted someone as Supreme Pontiff, anyone were to deny that he is the true Supreme Pontiff.” In II. II. quaest. I. art. 10. dub. 2.

Question II. Whether facts connected with doctrinal law, or dogmatic facts, ought to be believed with the same faith as dogmas.

Response: Dogmatic facts must be believed with ecclesiastical faith; for these facts do not seem to be believed immediately on account of divine revelation, but rather because of that infallibility which perpetually accompanies the Church in guarding and expounding revealed truths.

Question III. Whether private revelations ought to be believed with divine faith.

Response: Many authorities confirm that private revelations, if evident motives of credibility are present, ought to be believed with divine faith, though not with catholic faith, as the Salmanticenses [theologians of Salamanca] maintain in “On Faith,” dissertation I, doubt IV, §. 1. 2. *With divine faith*; because the object of divine faith is the First Truth revealing. But such an object is proposed when God, by a special influence supplying the proposition of His Church, privately reveals truth to individuals. Therefore private revelations ought to be believed with divine faith. — *Not with catholic faith*; because the object of catholic faith is the First Truth manifested *through the teaching of the Church*.

St. Thomas says: "In each age, there have never been lacking some possessing the spirit of prophecy, not indeed for the purpose of *setting forth new doctrine of faith*, but for the direction of human acts." Summa Theologica II-II, question CLXXIV, article 6, reply to objection 3.

IV. On the truths which must be believed with ecclesiastical faith. 1° Theological conclusions in the stricter sense; 2° judgments of the Church concerning propositions condemned below the note of heresy; 3° other points of doctrine which, if I am not mistaken, are held by the common and constant consensus of Catholics as theologically certain, must be believed with ecclesiastical faith, and all Catholics are bound in conscience to submit to them. They are not, however, thought to be believed with *divine* faith, because we do not assent to them immediately on account of divine revelation, but on account of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which ensures that the Church remains far from error even in this class of truths.

Query I. Whether those propositions which, outside the matter of what must be believed with divine faith, contradict the teachings of the Church, can be called heretical.

Response. Let us establish three points here. a) Something pertains to faith "in two ways: in one way directly and principally, as the articles of faith; in another way indirectly and secondarily, such as those things from the denial of which follows the corruption of some article; and concerning both there can be heresy, in the same way as there can be faith." St. Thomas, II-II, question 11, article 2. Thus, in the propositions of which we have spoken, heresy is often indirectly maintained; directly they are not heretical.

b) Those propositions which are known to be opposed to a theological conclusion, taken in the stricter sense, are considered by theologians not simply as heretical, but as erroneous and inferentially heretical; and the Salmanticenses teach that this type of error is "heresy in the second degree, or mediately and secondarily; because although it is immediately opposed only to a theological conclusion, it nevertheless mediately conflicts with the assent of faith." *On Faith*, disp. IX, doubt IV, §. 3. From this teaching, however, Cano along with some others seems to depart, stating: "this truth (a truly theological conclusion) will be considered catholic in such a way as if it were revealed by Christ himself; and one who opposes it will be equally heretical as if he were contradicting the Sacred Scriptures or Apostolic traditions." *On Theological Topics*, book XII, chap. VI, rule 7.

c) Generally, it must be established that it cannot be denied without error that those *qualifications* by which the Church condemns objectionable propositions with a censure lower than that of heresy, such as the note of *temerity*, infallibly apply to these same propositions; from which it plainly follows that a proposition to which the Church has applied such a mark must undoubtedly be considered *temerarious*, etc. However, propositions thus noted are not in themselves considered heretical; yet from the degree of censure and the greater or lesser connection of the condemned doctrine with the doctrine of faith, one must discern whether a particular proposition approaches heresy more closely or more remotely. Cf. Johannes de Turrecremata, *Summa de ecclesia*, book IV, part

II; Melchior Canus, *De locis*, book XII, chapters VII-X; Francisco Suárez, *De fide*, disputation XIX.

Question II. Into what error does one fall who asserts that the Church, in pronouncing censures lower than the note of heresy, is not immune from error?

Response. Among all Catholic doctors there is agreement that the Church's *dogmatic* and *infallible* judgments extend to proposing truths *connected* with immediately revealed matters; and also to condemning errors below the level of heresy. This opinion of the doctors is a truth that is at least *theologically certain*. Wherefore Bañez says: "It is an error—or nearly an error—to assert that the Church can err in such censures." In II. II. question XI, article 2. Indeed, this assertion is called heresy by others.

It follows that the aforementioned doctrinal judgments of the Church bind consciences and require internal assent of the mind. This is confirmed by the Council of Constance, specifically by the mandate of Martin V concerning those suspected of the errors of Wycliffe and Hus: "In particular, the learned person shall be asked whether he *believes* that the judgment of the sacred Council of Constance regarding the 45 articles of John Wycliffe and the 30 articles of John Hus described above is *true* and catholic: namely, that the aforementioned 45 articles of John Wycliffe and 30 of John Hus are not catholic, but some of them are notoriously heretical, some *erroneous*, others *temerarious* and *seditious*, others *offensive to pious ears*."

Likewise, in the draft of the dogmatic constitution on the Catholic faith of the Vatican Council, there was contained this canon: "If anyone says that it is permissible to hold or teach opinions condemned by the Church, *provided they are not condemned as heretical*, let him be anathema." This canon was omitted; however, the *principle* asserted in the canon seems to be confirmed by this report of the illustrious Lord Pie, Bishop of Poitiers: "The delegated Fathers, having more carefully considered the matter, deemed it better that an assertion of such importance and *such necessity* should be expressed *more explicitly and clearly* (than in the chapter corresponding to this canon) in another constitution, where the judicial teaching authority of the Church would be treated directly and thoroughly." *Collectio Lacensis*, Vol. VII, col. 1632 and 208. Cf. *Syllabus of Errors*, proposition 22, and the encyclical *Quanta cura*.

Inquiry III. Whether it can happen that a doctrine which is proposed by the Church as more probable could be false.

Response. From the fact that a proposition is more probable, it does not in itself follow that it is true. Nevertheless, Lugo does not teach absurdly when he says, "it can be piously believed that, although there exists no divine promise concerning this, God nevertheless will not permit any doctrine to be proposed by the Church as more probable which is in reality false, . . . because it would give the faithful great occasion to adhere more and more to false doctrine." *On Faith*, disputation XX, n. 129.