

# A Manual of Dogmatic Theology, Volume I

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## Part I, Tract IV, Chapter II

252 2. **The direct object of infallibility.** This object is to define what has been revealed, to decide on the words of the definition, to establish the canon of Scripture, to condemn heresy, etc.

253 3. **The indirect object of infallibility.** This comprises all that is intimately united with what has been revealed.

*The Church is infallible:*

a. *In regard to truths of the natural order connected with dogma*, which are necessary for protecting the deposit of faith; for example, the existence of God<sup>1</sup>.

b. The Church is infallible *in regard to theological conclusions*. (This is certain.) A *theological conclusion* is one which is certainly and manifestly deduced from two premises, one of which is formally revealed and the other is known naturally. It is necessary that the Church be infallible in regard to these theological conclusions in order to preserve the deposit of faith. If false theological conclusions are propagated, dogma is endangered because of the logical connection which the mind naturally perceives between the principles and the conclusions deduced from these principles. Whether theological conclusions are the object of divine faith we shall consider later in section 326.

254 c. **The Church is infallible when it condemns a certain proposition with some doctrinal censure.** A doctrinal censure is “*a qualification or restriction which indicates that a proposition is opposed, in some way, to faith or morals*”. It is *de fide* that the Church is infallible when she specifies that a doctrine is heretical; it is *certain* that the Church is infallible when she states that a doctrine approaches heresy, or that a doctrine errs in a matter of faith, or that it is false. All this is apparent from the consensus of theologians, and from the practice of the Church since its earliest days. The Church always made judgments against false propositions and also imposed upon the faithful the obligation of

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<sup>1</sup> {org. 1} Syllabus, prop. II; D. B., 1711; Vatican Council, D. B., 1798.

adhering to these judgments. Many assert that in all doctrinal censures the Church is infallible<sup>2</sup>.

255 d. **The Church is infallible in regard to dogmatic facts.** A *dogmatic* fact is one which is *so much connected with a doctrine of the Church that knowledge of it is necessary in order to understand the doctrine and to preserve it safely*.

Dogmatic facts can be *threefold*: historical, doctrinal and hagiographical. Thus, dogmatic facts are the legitimacy of the *Holy Pontiff*, the *ecumenical (universal) nature of a Council*.

That the Church is infallible in regard to dogmatic facts is certain. For if the Church could make a mistake concerning the authority of the Holy Pontiff or of a Council, then there would always be grounds for doubting whether their decisions were infallible and accordingly for rejecting these decisions. So, too, for the question of whether a certain book contains orthodox teaching or heretical doctrine. Theologians commonly teach that the Church can infallibly determine what sense or meaning the words of a book convey once the context has been considered<sup>3</sup>; also whether this sense is orthodox or not. Otherwise, the Church would not be able to prevent heretics from spreading their errors and from avoiding condemnation.

The heretics could say that the meaning of the book has not been correctly understood. Thus Clement XI declared “the sense (or meaning) conveyed by the five afore-said propositions of Jansenius’ book is condemned; this sense, as is evident, must be rejected and censured as heretical by all Christ’s faithful not only by word of mouth but also in the heart<sup>4</sup>.

256 e. The Church is infallible *in regard to moral precepts* since general laws for the universal Church cannot be in opposition to the natural or positive divine law, for the Church has received the obligation of leading souls to salvation. Therefore, it can enjoin nothing which has not been approved by God.

f. For a similar reason the Church is infallible *in the matter of giving definitive approbation to a religious Order*.

g. The Church is infallible in regard to *canonization of saints*, but not to beatification. This opinion is true and common: truly the Church cannot make a mistake in matters which

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<sup>2</sup> {org. 1} QUILLIET, a. Censures doctrinales, in D. T.

<sup>3</sup> {org. 2} When propositions are condemned *according to the meaning intended by the author*, the condemnation results not from the subjective meaning which the author probably had in mind, but from the natural and obvious sense or meaning, as it is taken from the book itself after everything has been duly considered.

<sup>4</sup> {org. 1} D. B., 1350.

concern a profession of faith and morals, when she is making known a definitive judgment and is imposing a precept on the faithful.