

§ 6. Catholic Truths

Corresponding to the purpose of the Teaching Authority of the Church of preserving unfalsified and of infallibly interpreting the Truths of Revelation (D 1800) the primary object (*obiectum primarium*) of the Teaching Office of the Church is the body of immediately revealed truths and facts. The infallible doctrinal power of the Church extends, however, secondarily to all those truths and facts which are a consequence of the teaching of Revelation or a presupposition of it (*obiectum secundarium*). Those doctrines and truths defined by the Church not as immediately revealed but as intrinsically connected with the truths of Revelation so that their denial would undermine the revealed truths are called *Catholic Truths* (*veritates catholicae*) or Ecclesiastical Teachings (*doctrinae ecclesiasticae*) to distinguish them from the *Divine Truths* or Divine Doctrines of Revelation (*veritates vel doctrinae divinae*). These are proposed for belief in virtue of the infallibility of the Church in teaching doctrines of faith or morals (*fides ecclesiastica*).

To these Catholic truths belong :

1. *Theological Conclusions* (*conclusiones theologicae*) properly so-called. By these are understood religious truths, which are derived from two premisses, of which one is an immediately revealed truth, and the other a truth of natural reason. Since one premiss is a truth of Revelation, theological conclusions are spoken of as being mediately or virtually (*virtualiter*) revealed. If however both premisses are immediately revealed truths, then the conclusion also must be regarded as being immediately revealed and as the object of Immediate Divine Faith (*Fides Immediate Divina*).
2. *Dogmatic Facts* (*facta dogmatica*). By these are understood historical

facts, which are not revealed, but which are intrinsically connected with revealed truth, for example, the legality of a Pope or of a General Council, or the fact of the Roman episcopate of St. Peter. The fact that a defined text does or does not agree with the doctrine of the Catholic Faith is also, in a narrower sense, a "dogmatic fact." In deciding the meaning of a text the Church does not pronounce judgment on the subjective intention of the author, but on the objective sense of the text (D 1350 : *sensum quem verba prae se ferunt*).

3. *Truths of Reason*, which have not been revealed, but which are intrinsically associated with a revealed truth, e.g., those philosophic truths which are presuppositions of the acts of Faith (knowledge of the supersensual, possibility of proofs of God, the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of will), or philosophic concepts, in terms of which dogma is promulgated (person, substance, transubstantiation, etc.). The Church has the right and the duty, for the protection of the heritage of Faith, of proscribing philosophic teachings which directly or indirectly endanger dogma. The Vatican Council declares : *Ius etiam et officium divinitus habet falsi nominis scientiam proscribendi* (D 1798).

§ 7. Theological Opinions

Theological opinions are free views on aspects of doctrines concerning Faith and morals, which are neither clearly attested in Revelation nor decided by the Teaching Authority of the Church. Their value depends upon the reasons adduced in their favour (association with the doctrine of Revelation, the attitude of the Church, etc.).

A point of doctrine ceases to be an object of free judgment when the Teaching Authority of the Church takes an attitude which is clearly in favour of one opinion. Pope Pius XII explains in the Encyclical "*Humani generis*" (1950): "When the Popes in their Acts intentionally pronounce a judgment on a long disputed point then it is clear to all that this, according to the intention and will of these Popes, can no longer be open to the free discussion of theologians" (D 3013).

§ 8. The Theological Grades of Certainty

1. The highest degree of certainty appertains to the immediately revealed truths. The belief due to them is based on the authority of God Revealing (*fides divina*), and if the Church, through its teaching, vouches for the fact that a truth is contained in Revelation, one's certainty is then also based on the authority of the Infallible Teaching Authority of the Church (*fides catholica*). If Truths are defined by a solemn judgment of faith (definition) of the Pope or of a General Council, they are "*de fide definita*."

2. Catholic truths or Church doctrines, on which the infallible Teaching Authority of the Church has finally decided, are to be accepted with a faith which is based on the sole authority of the Church (*fides ecclesiastica*). These truths are as infallibly certain as dogmas proper.

3. A Teaching proximate to Faith (*sententia fidei proxima*) is a doctrine, which is regarded by theologians generally as a truth of Revelation, but which has not yet been finally promulgated as such by the Church.

4. A Teaching pertaining to the Faith, i.e., theologically certain (*sententia ad fidem pertinens*, i.e., *theologicæ certa*) is a doctrine, on which the Teaching

Authority of the Church has not yet finally pronounced, but whose truth is guaranteed by its intrinsic connection with the doctrine of revelation (theological conclusions).

5. Common Teaching (*sententia communis*) is doctrine, which in itself belongs to the field of the free opinions, but which is accepted by theologians generally.

6. Theological opinions of lesser grades of certainty are called probable, more probable, well-founded (*sententia probabilis, probabilius, bene fundata*). Those which are regarded as being in agreement with the consciousness of Faith of the Church are called pious opinions (*sententia pia*). The least degree of certainty is possessed by the tolerated opinion (*opinio tolerata*), which is only weakly founded, but which is tolerated by the Church.

With regard to the doctrinal teaching of the Church it must be well noted that not all the assertions of the Teaching Authority of the Church on questions of Faith and morals are infallible and consequently irrevocable. Only those are infallible which emanate from General Councils representing the whole episcopate, and the Papal Decisions *Ex Cathedra* (cf. D 1839). The ordinary and usual form of the Papal teaching activity is not infallible. Further, the decisions of the Roman Congregations (Holy Office, Bible Commission) are not infallible. Nevertheless normally they are to be accepted with an inner assent which is based on the high supernatural authority of the Holy See (*assensus internus supernaturalis, assensus religiosus*). The so-called "*silentium obsequiosum*," that is "reverent silence," does not generally suffice. By way of exception, the obligation of inner agreement may cease if a competent expert, after a renewed scientific investigation of all grounds, arrives at the positive conviction that the decision rests on an error.

§ 9. Theological Censures

By a theological censure is meant the judgment which characterises a proposition touching Catholic Faith or Moral Teaching as contrary to Faith or at least as doubtful. If it be pronounced by the Teaching Authority of the Church it is an authoritative or judicial judgment (*censura authentica or iudicialis*). If it be pronounced by Theological Science it is a private doctrinal judgment (*censura doctrinalis*).

The usual censures are the following: A Heretical Proposition (*propositio haeretica*). This signifies that the proposition is opposed to a formal dogma; a Proposition Proximate to Heresy (*propositio heresi proxima*) which signifies that the proposition is opposed to a truth which is proximate to the Faith (*Sent. fidei proxima*); a Proposition Savouring of or Suspect of heresy (*propositio haeresim sapiens or de haeresi suspecta*); an Erroneous Proposition (*prop. erronea*), i.e., opposed to a truth which is proposed by the Church as a truth intrinsically connected with a revealed truth (error in *fide ecclesiastica*) or opposed to the common teaching of theologians (*errorologicus*); a False Proposition (*prop. falsa*), i.e., contradicting a dogmatic fact; a Temerarious Proposition (*prop. temeraria*), i.e., deviating without reason from the general teaching; a Proposition Offensive to pious ears (*prop. piarum aurium offensiva*), i.e., offensive to religious feeling; a Proposition badly expressed (*prop. male sonans*), i.e., subject to misunderstanding by reason of its method of expression; a Captious Proposition (*prop. captiosa*), i.e., reprehensible because of its intentional ambiguity; a Proposition exciting scandal (*prop. scandalosa*).

As to the form of the censures a distinction is made between *Damnatio Specialis*, by which a censure is attached to an individual proposition, and the *Damnatio in Globo*, in which censures are imposed on a series of propositions.