

Rev. Frederick William Faber, *An Essay on Beatification, Canonization, and the Processes of the Congregation of Rites* (1848), p. 116:

« A man desirous of signaling himself by novelty of teaching in the Church without actually incurring the awkward consequences of formal heresy, may find, if he has a tolerably hardened conscience, ample scope. In the extensive field of censurable matter, without running foul of one tittle that is *de fide*; for he may incur twenty-three different censures, and yet steer clear of formal heresy; his doctrines may be savouring of heresy, suspected of heresy, close upon heresy, schismatical, Jewish, pagan, atheistical, blasphemous, impious, erroneous, close upon error, savouring or suspected of error, scandalous, temerarious, seditious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, lax, likely to seduce the simple, insane, fabulous and lying, apocryphal, improbable, and antiquated! Propositions of this last kind are defined to be such as were anciently admitted to be probable, because no certain principle opposed to them was recognized, but which now, although not expressly condemned, find themselves incompatible with a later decree of the Roman chair. Thus we find ourselves at the end of censures where we were started in the principles of theology—at the *Cathedra Romana*. See Ferraris sub *Propp. Damnat.* 21—45. »

Joseph Sollier, “Theological Censures”, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume III, 1908:

« Doctrinal judgments by which the Church stigmatizes certain teachings detrimental to faith or morals. They should not be confounded with canonical censures, such as excommunication, suspension, and interdict, which are spiritual punishments inflicted on delinquents.

The right of censuring adverse doctrines has ever been asserted by the church, from St. Paul, who declares anathema on them who should pervert the Gospel of Christ unto another Gospel (Galatians 1:8), and warns his disciples to avoid the profane novelties of words and the oppositions of knowledge falsely so called (1 Timothy 6:20), down to Pius X, who condemned the errors of “Modernism”. It is an essential part of her magisterium which, says Newman, “acts in two channels, in direct statement of truth and in condemnation of error.” See the letter “*Gravissimas inter*” of Pius X and the constitution “*de fide*” (ch. iv) of the Vatican Council (Denzinger, nos. 1524 and 1645). That right belongs to the Church herself, but she may exercise it through popes, councils, Roman congregations, universities, or special commissions. Bishops, by virtue of their office, hold the power of censuring doctrines, but their judgment is not final, and their prohibition binds only within the limits of their respective dioceses. Private theologians, either individually or collectively have no authority officially to censure propositions, however they may, unless expressly enjoined from so doing in special cases, judge and qualify them according to existing doctrinal standards, and their initiative often goes far towards preparing the official action of the Church. History shows considerable variation in the exercise of the censuring power. In early days, when the cardinal truths of Christianity were at stake, an author, book,

or tract was purely and simply announced heretical and anathematized. In the Middle ages, which were the ages of theological speculation and also of subtlety, a more minute notation had to be resorted to, and even special organs were created for that purpose (see Index of Prohibited Books). In recent times specific notes are often discarded in favor of a more comprehensive mode of censuring; *damnandas et proscribendas esse*. The various documents embodied in nearly all modern textbooks of moral theology and in Denzinger's "Enchiridion" (to which we must now add the Holy Office Decree, 3 July, "Lamentabili sane exitu" and the papal Encyclical, 8 Sept., 1907, "Pascendi dominici gregis") shows a large number of theological censures or notes. Those most in use will be found in the Bulls "Unigenitus" and "Auctorem fidei" (Denzinger, CI and CXIV). We may divide them into three groups according as they bear principally upon (1) the import, or (2) the expression, or (3) the consequences, of condemned propositions.

(1) *Hæretica* (heretical), *erronea* (erroneous), *hæresi proxima* (next to heresy), *errori proxima* (next to error), *temeraria* (rash), etc.

A proposition is branded heretical when it goes directly and immediately against a revealed or defined dogma, or dogma *de fide*; erroneous when it contradicts only a certain (*certa*) theological conclusion or truth clearly deduced from two premises, one an article of faith, the other naturally certain. Even though a statement be not obviously a heresy or an error it may yet come near to either. It is styled next, proximate to heresy when its opposition to a revealed and defined dogma is not certain, or chiefly when the truth it contradicts, though commonly accepted as revealed, has yet never been the object of a definition (*proxima fidei*). The censure next, or proximate to error, whose meaning may be determined by analogy to the foregoing, is of less frequent use than that of rashness or temerity, which means opposition to sound common opinion (*communis*), and this either for paltry reasons or no reasons at all. A still finer shade of meaning attaches to such censures as *sapiens hæresim, errorem* (smacking of heresy or error), *suspecta de hæresi, errore* (suspected of heresy or error). Propositions thus noted may be correct in themselves, but owing to various circumstances of time, place, and persons, are prudently taken to present a signification which is either heretical or erroneous. To this group also belong some special stigmata with reference to determined topics, e.g. the preambles of faith (*infidelis, aversiva a fide*), ethical principles (*improbabilis, non tuta*), history (*antiquata, nova*) and Holy Scripture (*verbo Dei contraria*), etc.

(2) *Ambigua* (ambiguous), *captiosa* (captious), *male sonans* (evil-sounding), *piarum aurium offensiva* (offensive to pious ears), etc.

A proposition is ambiguous when it is worded so as to present two or more senses, one of which is objectionable; captious when acceptable words are made to express objectionable thoughts; evil-sounding when improper words are used to express otherwise acceptable truths; offensive when verbal expression is such as rightly to shock the Catholic sense and delicacy of faith.

(3) *Subsannativa religionis* (derisive of religion), *decolorativa canodris ecclesiæ* (defacing the beauty of the Church), *subversiva hierarchiæ* (subversive of the hierarchy), *eversiva regnorum* (destructive of governments), *scanderosa, pernicioso, periculoso in moribus* (scandalous, pernicious, dangerous to morals), *blasphemo, idolatra, supersticioso, magico* (blasphemous, leading to idolatry, superstition, sorcery), *arrogans, acerbo* (arrogant, harsh), etc.

This enumeration, though incomplete, sufficiently draws the aim of the third group of censures; they are directed against such propositions as would imperil religion in general, the Church's sanctity, unity of government and hierarchy, civil society, morals in general, or the virtue of religion, Christian meekness, and humility in particular.

The authority of theological censures depends upon the source from which they come and the intention with which they are issued. Condemnations coming from the seat of infallibility, pope or council, and vested with the usual conditions of an *ex cathedra* pronouncement are themselves infallible, and consequently require both our external obedience and internal assent. There is no reason for restricting the infallibility of the censures to the sole note *heretica* as some theologians would do. The difference between the note of heresy and other inferior notes is not one of infallibility, but of different matters covered by infallibility. The note of heresy attached to a proposition makes it contradictory to an article of faith, which is not the case with other notes, even if they are infallible. Condemnations coming from another source which, however, is not infallible are to be received with the external respect and implicit obedience due to disciplinary measures, and moreover, with that degree of internal assent which is justified by circumstances. In every case the extent of outward compliance, or of interior submission, or both is determined by a proper interpretation of the censures:

- Sometimes, as in the condemned propositions of Pistoia, there is little room for doubt, the precise meaning of the condemnation being explained in the very tenor of it.
- When categorical propositions are condemned in their import, and not in their wording or consequences only, their contradictories present themselves for our acceptance as *de fide*, *proximæ fidei*, *certæ*, or *communes* as the case may be.
- Condemnations issued on account of bad wording or evil consequences should at least put us on our guard against the hidden falsehood or the noxious tendency of the proposition.

- Modal propositions require special attention. The principal modalities in use are *in individuo*, *in globo*, *prout iacent*, *in sensu ab auctore intenta*. Propositions are not always, as was the case for the errors of Pistoia, condemned one by one, the proper qualifications being attached to each individually (*in individuo*). In the case of Wyclif, Hus, Luther, Baius, Molinos, Quesnel, etc., to a whole series of propositions a whole series of censures was attached generally (*in globo*). This mode of general censure is not ineffectual. To each of the propositions thus condemned apply one, or several, or all of the censures employed—the task of fitting each censure to each propositions being left to theologians. Again, some propositions are censured according to their obvious tenor and without reference to their context or author (*prout iacent*); while others e.g. those of Baius, Jansen, etc. are stigmatized in the sense intended by their author (*in sensu ab auctore intento*). Obviously the Church does not claim to read into the mind of a writer. What she claims is an operative doctrinal power including the double faculty of pointing out to her children both the error of a doctrine and the fact that such an erroneous doctrine is contained in such a book written by such an author. In such cases, a Catholic is bound to accept the whole judgment of the Church, although some theologians would make a difference between the assent due to the condemnation of the error and the assent due to the designation of the book or author.
- Vague censures of this kind, *Damnandas et proscribendas esse*, are more in the nature of simple prohibitions than censures. They mean that a Catholic ought to keep clear of such teachings absolutely, but they do not point out the degree of falsehood or danger attached to them.
- In a general matter, censures are restrictive laws and, as such, to be interpreted strictly. A Catholic is not debarred from the right of ascertaining, for his own guidance or the guidance of others, their legitimate minimum; but the danger, not always unreal, of falling below that minimum should itself be minimized by what Newman calls “a generous loyalty toward ecclesiastical authority” and the *pietas fidei*. »

Monsignor G. Van Noort, S.T.D., Dogmatic Theology, Volume III, The Sources of Revelation and Divine Faith, nos. 256-261, pp. 282-291:

« The Church employs a twofold method in teaching us what should be believed with divine faith or held with some other fitting assent. She may *positively affirm* that a given doctrine is contained in revelation, or, at least, inextricably bound up with it; or she may *reject* doctrines as being more or less contrary to revelation. Rejected doctrines are often branded with some sort of *censure*.

Censures fall into one of two major categories: *ecclesiastical* and *theological*. Ecclesiastical censures are those inflicted by the Church on persons who are guilty of some crime. These censures are dealt with in Canon Law. Theological censures are directed at doctrines, not persons.

A *theological* censure may be defined as: a qualification which brands some proposition as more or less harmful to faith or religion.

Theological censures are divided into: (a) *merely doctrinal* (or *private*) censures which are inflicted by theological experts who do not possess an authoritative magisterium—such, for example, were the censures inflicted in former ages by the theological faculties of universities: (b) *authoritative* (public, *judicial*) censures. These are inflicted by the Church’s infallible magisterium, or, at least, by her authentic magisterium. Here we are solely concerned with the authoritative or judicial censure. Obviously a merely doctrinal or “private” censure has no more weight to it than the intelligence and arguments of the man inflicting it. Finally, it is well to recall here the prohibition issued by Innocent XI against the rash use of censures by private theologians:

“Finally, so that doctors whether scholastic or any other people whatsoever may in the future abstain from damaging quarrels and that peace and charity may be safeguarded, the same Holy Pontiff orders them under holy obedience, both in printed books and manuscripts and in theses, disputations and sermons as well, to avoid every censure and note and also all violent outcries against those propositions which are still disputed here or there among Catholics until the matter has been brought to the attention of the Holy See and a judgment passed upon those same propositions.” (DB 1216)

Theological censures should not be confused with either the mere prohibition of the reading of some book, which occurs by placing it on the *Index*, or with disciplinary decrees which, for the sake of peace and to avoid scandal, forbid for a time the public defense of some doctrine, or order some public controversy to be discontinued.

1. Censures may be inflicted either categorically, or in global fashion.

a. *Categorically*. A censure is said to be inflicted categorically when each individual proposition deserving condemnation has annexed to it the precise censure which belongs to it. Frequently, several censures may be attached to a given proposition. These should not be taken to be synonymous for they express different degrees of reprobation. The most famous example of categorical censures is found in the bull of Pius VI: *Auctorem fidei*.

b. *In global fashion*. Censures are inflicted globally, or in cumulative fashion, when one finds not individual censures attached to individual propositions, but rather a number of censures gathered together as a unit and annexed to a *whole series* of propositions. Such censures are said to belong to the propositions *respectively*, that is, each individual proposition adduced deserves at least one of the annexed censures, and each of the annexed censures refers to at least one of the series of propositions. An example of this

global type censure is found in the condemnation of the propositions of Michael de Molinos and Quesnel.

2. Propositions may be censured “just as they lie,” or, “in the author’s meaning.”

a. They are said to be condemned *just as they lie* when the propositions such as they are found in the decree of condemnation, even apart from any inspection of the context from which they were extracted, obviously exhibit a meaning which deserves condemnation. An example of this is found in Denzinger-Bannwart’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos. 1151-1212.

b. They are said to be condemned “*in the author’s meaning*” when the propositions taken concretely, i.e., as found in the author’s work from which they were extracted, possess a perverse connotation but are expressed in such fashion that gazed at nakedly in themselves (such as they are found in the document condemning them) they could still reasonably be interpreted as having an orthodox sense. Notice very carefully that “the author’s meaning” does *not* signify the meaning which the author himself may have in his own mind; it signifies that meaning which the words as found in this author’s book and in this context express *objectively*. An example of condemnation “in the author’s meaning” is found in Denzinger’s *Enchiridion*, nos. 1001-1079.

To this condemnatory category of “the author’s meaning” are also referred those cases in which a proposition is censured, not precisely because of the very meaning directly disclosed by the words, but either because of the *manner* of its utterance—which is injurious or scandalous—or because of the *implied* tendency or implied meaning of the author. Examples of this type censure are found in Denzinger-Bannwart, nos. 1441, 1525, 1450; for the implied meaning of the author was this: all these points are verified in us, the Jansenists.

A great number of censures are listed by the theologians. Those most frequently used are found in the Constitution, *Unigenitus*, of Clement XI, and in the Bull, *Auctorem fidei*, of Pius VI. We shall explain the significance of only the major censures and such censures as pose some special difficulty.

1. *Heresy*. A proposition is said to be heretical which is definitely and directly opposed, either in contradictory or contrary fashion, to a dogma in the strict sense. A doctrine is said to be “notoriously” heretical if from the very terms in which it is couched it obviously contradicts a dogma which has been solemnly defined.

Akin to “heresy” are the following censures:

a. *Close to heresy*. This means a proposition which is directly opposed to a doctrine which is close to faith.

b. *Smacking of heresy*. This means a proposition which offers serious grounds for fearing a heresy may be hidden within it. If the grounds for fearing heresy are reasonable indeed, but not so serious, the proposition is said to be “*suspected*” of heresy. Some propositions in themselves smack of heresy. For example: “It is ridiculous to carry the Eucharist about through the public streets”; others smack of heresy only because of the circumstantial background of the people uttering them, or the eras in which they appear. For example, “faith justifies” in the mouth of a Lutheran, or, “Christ is less than the Father” in the mouth of an Arian; or “Christ is a paragon of behaviour” or, “a model of humanity,” in the mouth of a liberal Protestant. You will find other examples in Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, nos. 1522, 1528.

2. *Erroneous*. A proposition is described as erroneous if it is directly opposed to a truth which is absolutely certain, and at least inextricably bound up with revealed doctrine. I say: “*at least* inextricably bound up with revealed doctrine,” because the censure of “error” is also applied to a proposition opposed to a doctrine that is not only certain but also held by most theologians to be revealed. For a doctrine of this sort will frequently be “close to faith” and hence it follows that every proposition which is “close to heresy” is also “erroneous,” but not vice versa. In stating this we are following the opinion of Cardinal Franzelin; for theologians disagree somewhat in pinpointing the specific notion of “error”.

3. *Rash* means a proposition which, without any sufficient grounds, departs from a theological teaching which is truly common in the Church, or which opposes practices or institutions which have been approved by the Church. Examples of this censure are found in Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, nos. 1540, 1531, 1544. The characteristic note of “rashness” is found in this, that serious authority in matters of faith and morals is brushed aside as of little account.—These three censures, *heretical*, *erroneous*, and *rash* are the main censures.

4. *False*. The censure of falseness is divergently explained by different authors. Some say: “falsity” should not be taken as a specific censure but rather as a generic qualification belonging to every injurious proposition in its own fashion. Others consider it a specific censure which is akin to the censure of “error”; for, they say, a proposition is designated as false which is contrary to a truth or a fact which is bound up with revelation as a necessary presupposition.

5. *Bad sounding* means a proposition which expresses a meaning that is in harmony with the faith, but expresses it in incongruous terms. Obviously, in this type of censure much depends upon the native characteristics of various languages. So, for example, the following sounds bad to Latins, but not to the Greeks:

"the Father is the *cause* of the Son"; likewise it would have a bad ring to a Dutch ear to describe the Blessed Virgin as: "the *divine* Mother" (i.e., a goddess) instead of "the Mother of God."

6. *Captious* is the censure given to a proposition which expresses a perverted meaning in well-sounding terms. See, for example, Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, no. 1368.

7. *Offensive to pious ears* is the censure given to a proposition which offends the reverence due to holy things by its manner of utterance. As, for example, this prayer: "St. Mary Magdalen, prostitute, pray for us." The term "pious ears," referred to, do not mean exclusively elderly ladies in a sodality, but well instructed Catholics anywhere who would be justifiably offended by an irreverent treatment of holy things.

A knowledge of the propositions on which the ecclesiastical magisterium has inflicted some censure is very useful to the theologian. From them he learns not only what to avoid, but also what he ought to hold; for the manifestation of an error by its very nature lays open the opposite truth. However, to have an intelligent\* understanding of what precisely the Church means to reject by her censure and precisely what doctrine should as a consequence be retained as sound, we add these further *precisions*:

I. One must weigh the question of whether the censure has been inflicted because of the very meaning of the proposition, or only because of its manner of utterance, or because of the implied intention of the author. It is easy to see that if a proposition has been condemned simply because of its manner of utterance, one cannot therefrom infer the falsehood of the proposition itself, nor come to any conclusion about the truth of an opinion which is contradictorily opposed to it.

The censure, *not safe*, even though it begets a large presumption that the proposition under scrutiny is false does not guarantee that point necessarily.

II. When a proposition has been censured because of its very meaning, the teaching which is *contradictorily* opposed to it should be accepted as the true and sound (or, at least, as "safe" teaching).

I say: *contradictorily* opposed. Since two *contrary* propositions can be simultaneously false, the condemnation of one of them does not allow us to infer the truth of the other. Furthermore:

a. One must accurately determine the exact meaning which has been condemned in the proposition. For this it is often necessary to consult the very documents which contain and can clarify the meaning of the condemned propositions. See, for example, Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, nos. 1762 and 1780.

Especially one must notice whether the condemned proposition is condemned in absolute or only in



qualified fashion. See, for example, Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, nos. 1093 and 1096 giving the following condemned propositions of Cornelius Jansen: 1093 states: “In the state of fallen nature *no one ever* resists interior grace”; condemnation: “declared and condemned as heretical.” 1096 states: “It is Semi-Pelagian to say that Christ died or shed his blood for all men whatsoever.” Condemnation: “Declared and condemned as false, rash, scandalous, and *understood in the sense* that Christ died for the predestined alone, wicked, blasphemous, insulting, derogatory to divine piety, and heretical.”

b. In *complex* propositions, one must see whether they have been censured in a complex sense or in a distributive sense. To determine this point, in addition to consulting the documents containing the condemnation, one must sometimes also look to the analogy of faith. See, for example, Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, nos. 1184, 1186, and 1763.

As has been seen above, the Church in her official teaching makes use of both positive and negative teaching; affirming what is to be held and rejecting what is to be denied by the faithful in matters of faith and morals. The notes used by the Church are official or authoritative qualifications. They may be infallible or fallible judgments depending upon the intention of the Church’s official magisterium. We now wish to consider briefly what were described above as “merely doctrinal” or “private notes and censures.” Theologians wishing to expound the Church’s official teaching and also theological theories, naturally wish to do so in as scientific a way as possible. It has been customary, therefore, for theological manuals to formulate precise “theses” or to sum up doctrine in exact and succinct propositions, somewhat the way geometrical theorems are enunciated, and then to go on to explain and prove the contents of the propositions by adducing proofs from the official magisterium, from Scripture, Tradition, and reason. So, we may read in a theological manual a proposition like: “There are seven and only seven sacraments of the New Law,” or “The Son proceeds from the Father by way of intellectual generation.”

These succinct propositions have the advantage of laying before the theological tyro the heart of the matter to be discussed; they sum up much in a few technically exact phrases that destroy all ambiguity, prevent muddled apprehension and so make for easy memory retention. Appended to such propositions or theses, the theologians usually add, wherever possible, a theological note or “label” to indicate to the student the theological “value” or degree of certitude which attaches to the given proposition. It will be labeled as “of faith,” or “proximate to faith,” or “theologically certain,” or, negatively, as “erroneous,” “heretical,” “rash,” etc.

What is the value of these labels? Only a few general points need be made here. First, these labels are, by the very source from which they stem, normally fallible. Theologians do not possess an official magisterium, either infallible or fallible—that office pertains to the pope and bishops. The only

exception to this generic principle is the case in which the theologians are morally unanimous (as explained above, see no. 207a) in holding a doctrine to be of faith or morals—in which case they are said to be infallible because their morally unanimous consent throughout long ages and all around the world can only be explained on the basis that their teaching reflects the teaching of the universal Church on this or that point of doctrine. Secondly, if a theologian labels a proposition with a note which the Church herself has already given—a judicial, infallible note—to a specific teaching, the note is infallible because it is simply a presentation in a manual of the Church’s own note. In all other cases than those just mentioned, the theological note is taken to be a fallible judgment. It has of course a real authority to it as being the judgment of a theological expert the same as the judgment of any expert in his own field.

Again, it should be noted in general that there is no perfect *uniformity* among theological authors in the usage of various labels. They may express the same theological judgment with a slightly variant turn of phrase. So, one author may simply dub a proposition as: “of faith,” whereas another may spell it out precisely as: “of divine and Catholic faith”; one may simply list a proposition as “certain” where another uses the more precise terms, “theologically certain” or “certain by authority.” There is room for some confusion in this, though none for dismay. One should not be surprised that the science of theology, like every other science, tends to grow ever more exact as it reaches maturity. Its methodology while remaining substantially the same tends to become more or less precise in accord with the seriousness or lack of it with which theology is pursued in different eras. Consequently, one cannot expect more ancient theologians to have at their disposal technical vocabulary which was invented only at a later era. Their judgments and their reasonings are more important to us than their critical apparatus. Consequently in inspecting the theological labels given to various propositions by different authors it is often necessary to know the way a particular author is accustomed to use his labels. Without pretending that the preceding schema is necessarily the best delineation of these labels, or one that ought to be adopted, we do prefer it as one that is fairly commonly employed by many modern authors and useful to that extent.

DIVINE FAITH THEOLOGICAL LABELS			
Theological label	Requisites	Assent deserved	Opposite Censure
I. Of Faith "Divine & Catholic F." "Dogma of F." "of defined F."	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{ A truth } \textit{revealed} \text{ by} \\ \text{God} \\ 2. \text{ Proposed by the} \\ \text{Church } \textit{as revealed.} \end{array} \right.$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Act of divine} \\ \text{and Catholic} \\ \text{Faith} \end{array} \right.$	HERESY
II. Of Divine Faith	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{ A truth } \textit{revealed} \text{ by} \\ \text{God} \\ 2. \text{ Not yet proposed,} \\ \text{or not clearly pro-} \\ \text{posed by the} \\ \text{Church} \end{array} \right.$	Act of divine faith	Error in di- vine faith
III. Proximate to F.	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Intimately bound up} \\ \text{with revealed doctrine,} \\ \text{if not actually revealed.} \end{array} \right.$	Assent of Certitude	Proximate to heresy
IV. Of Ecclesiastical Faith	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{ Infallibly proposed} \\ \text{by the Church } \textit{as} \\ \textit{true} \end{array} \right.$	Assent of Certitude	Error in Ec- clesiastical Faith
V. Theologically Certain	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{A conclusion strictly} \\ \text{deduced from one re-} \\ \text{vealed premise and one} \\ \text{rational premise} \end{array} \right.$	Assent of Certitude	Error
VI. Catholic Teaching*	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Taught everywhere} \\ \text{throughout the Catho-} \\ \text{lic world, but not nec-} \\ \text{essarily infallibly.} \end{array} \right.$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{At minimum:} \\ \text{Assent of re-} \\ \text{ligious obe-} \\ \text{dience} \end{array} \right.$	Rash
VII. Safe Teaching	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Does not contradict any} \\ \text{known truth} \end{array} \right.$	Opinionative assent	Unsafe

\* The label "Catholic Teaching" is an elastic one. It may be used to cover a variety of assents all the way from "religious obedience," to an "assent of faith." It is often used by theologians when they are unable or unwilling to make a more precise judgment of the matter. Thus the label "Catholic teaching" can be used to describe the contents of an encyclical, viewed as a whole without descending to particular propositions enunciated within the encyclical.

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\*Quilliet, in his article on doctrinal censures (DTC, vol. 2, part 2, no. VII, cols. 2101-2103) gives the following wise advice about not misusing censured propositions in theological work: "To interpret a theological censure correctly, to gain an exact appreciation of its value, and to make an irreproachable and adequate use of it, it is important before all else to determine precisely its character and its particular bearing. . . . Once that has been done, the value of the censure can be measured according to its character and according to the authority which inflicted it. For the censures passed by the supreme authority, it is useful to remember here that to discover the exact thought and teaching of the Church, it does not always suffice to take the contradictory of condemned propositions. Among the censures we have seen, there is one which presents an undeniable character of relativity: I mean those propositions which are condemned because of their form or their bad effects. Without doubt one must always scrupulously admit and hold that such propositions are condemned and forbidden. At the same time it is necessary to be careful not to draw exaggerated conclusions, precipitous or false conclusions, as if one had only to reverse the condemnations and one would have the truth with certainty. We must not forget in such cases that the elision of an unfortunate or wrong-sounding term can render orthodox a bad-sounding proposition. Again, a change in circumstances can modify to the point of making disappear the injurious character of this or that assertion."

The following works are useful, and fairly modern, studies of “theological notes” and censures: Quilliet, *Censures Doctrinales*, in DTC, vol. 2, sect. II, cols. 2101-2113; Cartechini, *De valore notarum theologicarum* (Rome, 1951); Salaverri, *Sacrae theologiae summa*, vol. I (Madrid, 1952) pp. 781-796; Healy, “Theological Qualifications and the Assent of Faith,” found in CTSA (New York, 1954); Kaiser, *Sacred Doctrine* (Westminster, Md., 1958) pp. 311-319. » ~ Translated and Revised by John J. Castellet, S.S., S.T.D., S.S.L., and William R. Murphy, S.S., S.T.D, *Nihil Obstat* by C. Harry Dukehart, S.S. *Censor Deputatus*, *Imprimatur* by John F. Dearden, D.D. Archbishop of Detroit. The Newman Press • Westminster, Maryland, 1961.

Rev. T. Lincoln Bouscaren, S.J., LL.B., S.T.D., and Rev. Adam C. Ellis, S.J., M.A., J.C.D., *Canon Law, A Text and Commentary* (Second Revised Edition, 1953), Chapter XXI, pp. 741-743:

« **The Power to Teach.** Our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted the deposit of faith to the Church, that under the constant guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit, she might sacredly guard and faithfully explain this divine revelation. The Church has therefore the right and the duty, independently of any civil power, to teach all nations the full evangelical doctrine; and all men are bound by the law of God to learn this doctrine properly and to embrace the true Church of God (**c. 1322**).

This power of teaching pertains in a general way to *jurisdiction* or government; it is acquired in the same way, that is, by canonical mission (cf. cc. 109, 1328); it may be withdrawn in the same way; and it binds the free will of men by precept just as do other exercises of lawful jurisdiction. Yet it is not strictly jurisdiction in the evangelization of infidels, for it is certain that the Church claims no jurisdiction over the unbaptized. She has a mission and obligation to teach them, and they have an obligation to examine and accept her doctrine.

The Church *guards* and *explains* this deposit of faith. She does not add to it, for it was completed and closed with the death of the last Apostle, St. John. To *guard* means to keep and defend; in doing this the Church must sometimes declare truths which are not contained in revelation but which are necessary to keep revealed truth. To *explain* means to make clear what is obscure. The so-called development of doctrine through dogmatic definitions may be compared to the sharpening of the focus on a film which is projected on a screen. The details which become discernible with a clear focus are not new; they were all in the original picture, but they are now brought out more clearly.

**Definitions of Doctrine.** All those truths must be believed *fide divina et catholica*, which are contained in the written word of God or in tradition and which the Church proposes for acceptance as revealed by God, either by solemn definition or through her ordinary and universal teaching. To pronounce a solemn definition is the part of an Ecumenical Council or of the Roman Pontiff speaking

*ex cathedra*. No doctrine is to be considered as dogmatically defined unless this is evidently proved (**c. 1323**).

A doctrine is *de fide divina et catholica* only when it has been *infallibly declared by the Church to be revealed by God*. Hence this term does not apply to doctrines which one knows to have been revealed by God, but which have not been declared by the Church to have been so revealed (*de fide divina*); nor to those which the Church has infallibly declared, but which she does not present formally as having been revealed (*de fide ecclesiastica*); nor to those which the Church teaches without exercising her infallible authority upon them. If a doctrine is not *de fide divina et catholica*, a person is not a heretic for denying or doubting it, though such denial or doubt may be a grave sin (cf. c. 1325, § 2).

**Conformity to the Mind of the Church.** It is not enough to avoid heresy, but one must also carefully shun all errors which more or less approach it; hence all must observe the constitutions and decrees by which the Holy See has proscribed and forbidden opinions of that sort (**c. 1324**). Such are all doctrinal decrees of the Holy See, even though they be not infallibly proposed, and even though they come from the Sacred Congregations with the approval of the Holy Father, or from the Biblical Commission.[1] Examples: the Decree of the Holy Office condemning Theosophy;[2] the replies of the Biblical Commission condemning false interpretations of biblical texts.[3] Such decrees do not receive the assent of faith; they are not *de fide catholica*. But they merit genuine internal intellectual assent and loyal obedience.[4]

[Notes: 1. Cf. Pius X, *Motu proprio*, 18 Nov., 1907; *Fontes*, n. 681, Vol. III, p. 724.

2. Holy Office, 18 July, 1919; *AAS*, 11-317; *Digest*, I, p. 620.

3. Bibl. Com., 1 July, 1933: *AAS*, 25-344; *Digest*, I, p. 618.

4. Cf. Choupin, *Valeur des décisions doctrinales et disciplinaires du S. Siège.*] »

Rev. Antoine Maurel, S.J., The Church and the Sovereign Pontiff, An Analytical Catechism, Chapter XVII, Article I:

« Q. What are the methods employed by the Church to condemn propositions deserving censure?

A. The first method consists in proscribing in general, or in globo, the condemnable propositions, without annexing to each its censure or particular qualification; it is in this way that the errors of Wickliffe and John Huss were condemned by Martin V, at the Council of Constance; those of Luther by Leo X; those of Baius by St. Pius V, Gregory XIII, etc. The second method consists in proscribing the condemnable propositions, by affixing to each of them a note, or censure, or proper qualification; it is thus the five famous propositions, extracted from the book of Cornelius Jansenius, entitled the Augustinus, were condemned by Pope St. Innocent X. The first proposition, previously condemned

by the Council of Trent, was declared temerarious, impious, blasphemous branded with anathema, and heretical; the second was noted with heresy, etc.

Q. What are the qualifications, or principal notes, used by the Holy See in the condemnation of propositions contrary to Catholic doctrine?

A. They are the following: heretical, next to heresy, suspected of heresy, erroneous, next to error, savouring of error, false, blasphemous, impious, dangerous, scandalous, temerarious, schismatical, seditious, captious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, etc. All propositions contradictory of truths defined by the Church as articles of faith, are heretical. For example; this proposition: “The Pope has only a primacy of honour and not of jurisdiction in the whole Church” is an heretical proposition. They are schismatical if they tend to turn away the Faithful from the entire submission which they owe to our Holy Father the Pope and to Bishops. A proposition is erroneous when it is contrary to a dogmatic truth founded on the teaching of all orthodox doctors, or on the universal practice of the Faithful, which, however, the Church does not set forth as an article of faith. A proposition is false, if it denies a certain (sure) fact. It is blasphemous, if it contains words injurious to God and His attributes, to the Blessed Virgin, the Saints, etc. It is impious, if it tends to depreciate the worship which we owe to God, or to weaken in souls the sentiment of piety. It is dangerous, pernicious, when it tends to destroy in us the love of virtue, the horror of vice, respect for the authority of pastors, etc.

Q. Is the teaching of the Holy See, regarding condemned propositions, infallible?

A. Without doubt; because the Pontiff, seated in this immortal See, cannot be deceived when he teaches and decides *ex cathedra*, or in his quality of Head, of Pastor, and universal Doctor. “What the Pope says, in this capacity, for the whole Church and to the whole Church,” writes St. Francis of Sales, “cannot be false. And, in truth, if the confirmator inclines and wavers, who will confirm him?†

Whatever the Church binds on earth, is bound; whatever she remits, is remitted; whatever she decides is ratified in heaven.” These are the words of the great Archbishop of Cambrai. If the Church could deceive in the condemnation of the propositions which she proscribes, would she then be the mistress and guardian of the faith? No; she would betray it. Would she still be the conservatrix of morals? No, she would be the corrupter of morals; for, in that supposition, she could oblige us to believe as true that which would be false, and to practise as good that which would be immoral.

†Controversies, Disc. x. »

Cardinal Joseph Hergenröther, Catholic Church and Christian State, Volume I, Essay V, Part I, §§ 1-3: « § 1. Our opponents are quite wrong in supposing that all the propositions contained in the Syllabus are condemned as false and heretical, and that therefore *all* the propositions contradictory to these are so many articles of faith. On reading the whole eighty propositions, very little impartiality would

suffice to discover great differences between them. The Pope has *nowhere* declared all these eighty propositions to be heretical, and only the *contradictory* of an heretical proposition can be considered as dogma. Each separate proposition is not described as heretical nor qualified in any other way; they are only condemned collectively as *false and perverse opinions*.

Propositions may be distinguished as heretical, erroneous, rash, impious, scandalous, dangerous, &c. In ecclesiastical judgments either each individual proposition is qualified, as, for instance, in the Bull of Pius VI., 'Auctorem fidei,' August 28, 1794, or a set of propositions are rejected as a whole, without a determinate theological censure being applied to each separate proposition, as in the Bull 'Unigenitus' of Clement XI., September 8, 1713. Now and then only a minimum of the deserved censure will be expressed in the wording; for example, Alexander VII. condemned many tenets in 1665 and 1666 as 'at least scandalous.' A Pope or a Council can even deliver a dogmatic judgment in different ways, either simply rejecting what is evil, or also determining the degree of the evil, which may be very different, for this reason amongst others, that an error may be either directly or only indirectly opposed to faith.

§ 2. The propositions which are contained in the Syllabus are, then, condemned in the mass (in globo); nothing further is determined than that these propositions must not be held or maintained. The faithful have to submit to the decision of the Church as it is given to them. It has not been decided that the propositions as a body are heretical, but only that they must be rejected; not that they all militate directly against faith and morals, but only that collectively they endanger them. None of the propositions cited in the Syllabus are entirely free from theological censure; each one is censured in one way or another, but certainly not each one in the same way. The Encyclical of December 8, 1864, and the Syllabus appended to it lay down no rules of faith in a strict sense, but they are certainly dogmatic decisions as well as the above-mentioned Bull of Clement XI. Otherwise the decision of the Council of Constance against the doctrines of Wicliffe and Huss would not be dogmatic; neither the Bull of Leo X. against Luther, nor that of Pius V. against Baius, or that of Innocent XI. against Michael Molinos, or of Innocent XII. against the twenty-three propositions from Fénélon's book (Maxims of the Saints). All these decrees and constitutions condemn propositions in a mass (in globo), and yet to Catholics they are all dogmatic. Martin V., after the publication of the Bull in which he approved of the Council of Constance, desired that any one suspected of heresy should be asked, among other things, whether he believed in the truth of the decision of the holy Council of Constance concerning the forty-five propositions of Wicliffe and the thirty propositions of Huss, by which these sets of forty-five and thirty propositions were declared not to be Catholic, some of them notoriously heretical, some false, some insolent and seditious, and some offensive to pious ears.

This condemnation of propositions in globo is rightly and wisely done, in order to prevent any of them being defended or held, although they do not all deserve the same censure. A considerate doctor wisely forbids his patient to partake of the dishes spread out on a richly-supplied table, because all are hurtful to him; although he does not pronounce in what way each one would hurt him, and which would hurt more and which less. Some consider that these condemnations in a mass are a novelty in Church discipline. Even were it so, this would be no reason for Catholics not to respect them. But in fact they are no novelty. When the writings of Arius (especially his *Thalia*) were condemned by the Council of Nice, everything therein contained was not considered in the same light. When the works of Origen were condemned by Theophilus, Epiphanius, and Pope Anastasius, everything that Origen had written was not equally disapproved. At the condemnation of the Three Chapters, in the fifth Ecumenical Council, the whole contents of the letter of Ibas to Maris the Persian, the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and those of Theodoret against Cyril were not considered deserving, in all their parts, of the same censure. In the Sixth Council the letters of Honorius to Sergius and of Pyrrhus of Constantinople to Pope John IV. were condemned. Who can believe that *everything* found in these could be *proscribed* in equal measure? If that had been the case, articles of faith, theological and perfectly correct propositions, must have been likewise condemned. . . . When the Church censures a doctrine without stating the kind of censure, we are bound to consider it worthy of censure, but not necessarily of the highest degree of censure.

§ 3. It follows that we must not regard the contradictory of each separate proposition condemned by the Syllabus as a dogma of the Church. A dangerous or offensive proposition may be as dangerous or offensive, whether the predicate be denied or affirmed. A clear though coarse example will make this plain. When Fr. Abraham a Santa Clara said in a sermon, ‘Ladies who bare their necks *are not worthy* to be spat upon,’ he was called upon to retract, because it would apply to some of the persons at court. He is said to have replied by the contradictory proposition: ‘They *are worthy* to be spat upon.’ Whether the story be true or false, it is a good illustration of our meaning.

The proposition of Quesnell was dangerous and offensive when, treating excommunication as unjust and disobeying the teaching of the Church, he imagined it his duty to propagate his heresy (prop. 91-93), and accused the Church of ignorance and tyranny in matters of faith (prop. 94-95). But it is impossible to derive from his condemnation the doctrine, that fear of unjust excommunication must sometimes (or always) deter us from the fulfilment of our duty. The twenty-fourth proposition of the Syllabus contains two negative errors: 1. The Church has no right of coercion; 2. she has neither direct nor indirect temporal power. In rejecting this second proposition the doctrine cannot be deduced that the Church has a direct and also an indirect temporal power, but only it is false to say that the Church has no temporal power, whether direct or indirect. Again, Berchtold is altogether wrong in saying that



according to Pius IX. it is heresy to believe that the Popes have *ever* exceeded the limits of their power. That by no means follows from the twenty-third proposition of the Syllabus. This proposition can be subdivided into three or, if the Pope and the Council are to be divided, into six assertions: '1. The (*a*) Roman Popes and the (*b*) Ecumenical Councils have exceeded the limits of their power; 2. usurped the rights of princes; and 3. erred in the definitions of doctrines of faith and morals.'

The first and second propositions do not refer to a truth revealed by God, but only to historical matters of fact, principally of the Middle Ages; they cannot therefore be described as heretical propositions, but as insulting to the Church and the Holy See, as presumptuous and false; in so far as they imply that unjust interferences and usurpations were habitual, and not merely occasional and exceptional, they are certainly quite untrue. The condemnations of the assertions *2a* and *3a* in no way necessitate the supposition that in the exercise of their power Popes have remained free from all faults and mistakes, especially in administrative and private matters. The Brief 'Multiplies inter' of June 10, 1851, from which prop. 23 is taken, mentions the judgment of the Congregation of the Holy Office on the book of Vigil, but does not qualify each separate proposition contained in it. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction with regard to marriage, the right of confirming the election or nomination of bishops, the claim to the free intercourse of the Pope with the bishops and the faithful, were given by Vigil as examples of how Popes and General Councils exceeded the just limits of their authority, and he had spoken in so mischievous and frivolous a manner that this alone would have justified the censure of these propositions. As regards the third assertion, inasmuch as it denies the infallibility of General Councils it is plainly heretical; and inasmuch as it unceremoniously denies Papal Infallibility, it could, before July 18, 1870, have been declared approximate to heresy, and at all events presumptuous and insulting to the Holy See. Therefore the same condemnation would not at all have suited each point of the twenty third proposition, although each deserved one or other of the ecclesiastical censures.

There can be no question of calling the whole Syllabus dogma, in the sense that all these propositions are *heresies*. The learned opponents of the Vatican Council must know this very well, even though their theological acquirements be somewhat slender. Thus, for example, prop. 12 of the Syllabus, 'The decrees of the Apostolic See and of the Roman Congregations hinder the progress of science,' can be censured as false, presumptuous, scandalous, insulting to the Holy See and to the whole Church; but not as heretical, since it does not immediately or directly militate against revelation nor the truths defined by the Church, and the Pope has never defined it as heretical.

So also prop. 38, 'Many Roman Pontiffs have by their too arbitrary conduct contributed to the division of the Church into Eastern and Western,' is not heretical, but a false assertion, insulting to the Apostolic See. It is the same thing with Professor Nuytz's condemned assertion, that Boniface VIII.

had first pronounced that the vow of celibacy taken at ordination made marriage null. That is historically false; for the question had been settled long before by St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, and before these by the several Councils of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and earlier still by the legislation of the East. It is likewise incorrect that the doctrine by which the Pope is compared to a sovereign prince was first authorised in the Middle Ages. »