

The Binding Force of Non-Infallible Decrees

We think it should be said bluntly that on this subject Father Roberts and those who have taken the same view as he have gone far astray and for no very good reason. There is no need to create a mystery out of an idea which is perfectly commonplace and may be found in any standard work of Catholic theology and repeatedly stated by the Holy See. In addition to her infallible Magisterium, the Church has the right to command the assent of every Catholic to her authoritative teaching even when it is expressed in a non-infallible form. A mind must be far from the spirit of the Church to object, as Father Roberts does, that a non-infallible decree may be erroneous and that one cannot therefore be justified in assenting to it. Countless reasons, natural and supernatural, conspire to assure us that even the non-infallible judgements of the Holy See will *not* be erroneous; but even if a theoretical possibility of error remained, it would surely be far less likely for the pronouncements of Christ's Vicar (direct or indirect) to go astray than for our own fallible opinions to be more reliable than the judgements of the highest authority on earth, or for the consensus of godless scientists to prove itself more worthy of credence than him to whom Christ has said: "He who hears you, hears Me." (Luke 10:16)

In our 1986 study on this topic we emphasised this point by extensive quotation from an article on the subject by Canon George D. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., which appeared in the *Clergy Review* for April 1935. Though not equal in authority to the celebrated studies of Cardinal Franzelin and Professor Choupin on this topic, this article is more accessible than they to the non-specialist and is written in our vernacular; it makes available to the English-speaking lay-theologian in an easily digestible form the teaching of greater authorities. In the hope that this present study (which supersedes all that we have written on the topic in the past) may come to be considered as definitive on the topic among faithful Catholics interested in it, we venture to think it worthwhile to include at this point the entire text of the article as it appeared and to invite the reader to study it attentively. Its few pages will repay careful reading, being applicable not only to the Galileo debate but to many topics of no less importance in our days, and we hope that the reader will be sufficiently enlightened by it to enable us to rejoin him later and make more explicit its application to the case we have been considering.

"Must I Believe It?"

The doctrinal power of the Catholic Church is apt to provoke two contrary reactions in those who are outside the fold. Some it attracts, others it repels. The earnest seeker after truth, the man who seriously wants an answer to the riddle of his life and purpose, and is either mentally dazed by the contradictory solutions offered or else baffled by the bland scepticism which so often greets his anxious questionings, may perhaps turn with relief to a Church which teaches with authority, there to find rest from his intellectual wanderings. On the other hand, there is the seeker whose enjoyment, one is inclined to suspect, lies chiefly in the pursuit of truth and who cares little whether he ever tracks it down. To think things out for himself or, like the Athenians, to be telling or hearing some new thing is the very breath of his intellectual life, and to him any infallible pronouncement is anathema. A definitive statement of truth is not for him a happy end to a weary search; it is a barrier which closes an avenue to his adventurous quest. An infallible teacher is not a welcome guide who leads him home; he is a monster who would deprive him of the freedom which is his right.

To these two opposite attitudes on the part of the seeker there correspond two different methods on the part of the apologist. For the apologist is in some respects like a salesman: he likes to give the inquirer what he wants, and he puts in the forefront the wares which are most likely to attract. To the non-Catholic who is weary of doubt and uncertainty he holds out the alluring prospect of a Teacher who will lead him to the goal which he is restlessly seeking, who with infallible authority will give him the final answer to any problem that may perplex him. To the non-Catholic who is jealous of his intellectual freedom he says: Do not imagine that by submitting to the Church you will be forfeiting your freedom of thought. The matters upon which the Church teaches with infallible authority are relatively few; with regard to the rest you are free to believe as you like.

Admittedly these are bald statements which no apologist of repute would permit himself to make without considerable qualifications. Nevertheless they will serve by their very baldness to illustrate two very different standpoints from which even Catholics themselves may be inclined to view the teaching authority of the Church. It may be regarded as guidance or it may be regarded as thralldom; and according as guidance is desired or thralldom feared the sphere of obligation in the matter of belief will be extended or restricted. There are those

who would have the Pope pronounce authoritatively on the rights or wrongs of every war, on vivisection and performing animals, on evolution and psycho-analysis, and are somewhat aggrieved because he defines a dogma so rarely. But there are also those who seem almost to dread the pronouncements of authority, who "hope that the Church will not commit herself" on this subject or that, who before accepting any doctrine ask whether the Pope has defined it or, if he has defined it, whether it was by an infallible and irrevocable utterance. Either attitude has its dangers, either attitude mistakes the function of the divinely-appointed Teacher. It may even be debated which excess is more greatly to be deplored. However that may be, the title of this article should be taken as indicating that the writer has in view the over-cautious believer, whose unfounded fears he hopes to allay, reserving for another occasion - or leaving to another hand - the task of restraining his over-ardent brother. In considering, therefore, the general principles which should guide Catholics in their attitude towards doctrinal authority we shall have in mind especially the Catholic who approaches every doctrine with the wary question: "Must I believe it?"

I.

Let us be clear about our terms, for the ground is littered with ambiguities. When the Catholic inquires concerning his obligation to believe he understands by belief, not a mere opinion, but an act of the mind whereby he adheres definitely to a religious doctrine without any doubt, without any suspension of assent. When he says that he believes a thing he means that he holds it as certain, the motive or ground of his certainty being the authority of the Church which teaches him that this is so. And this rough-and-ready conception of belief, or "faith," may be considered for practical purposes and in the majority of cases to suffice. But in the delicate matter of defining the Catholic's obligation a greater degree of accuracy is reasonably demanded. It is not exact to say that the ground of belief is always the authority of the Church. Ultimately in a divinely revealed religion that ground is the authority of God Himself, on whose veracity and omniscience the believer relies whenever he makes an act of faith. Absolutely speaking an act of divine faith is possible without the intervention of the Church. It is sufficient to have discovered, from whatever source, that a truth has been revealed by God for the acceptance of mankind, in order to incur the obligation of believing it by an act of divine faith, technically so called because its motive is the authority of God Himself.

However, "that we may be able to satisfy the obligation of embracing the true faith and of constantly persevering therein, God has instituted the Church through His only-begotten Son, and has bestowed on it manifest marks of that institution, that it may be recognised by all men as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word."¹⁶ Accordingly the main truths of divine revelation are proposed explicitly by the divinely instituted Church for the belief of the faithful, and in accepting such truths the believer adds to his faith in God's word an act of homage to the Church as the authentic and infallible exponent of revelation. The doctrines of faith thus proposed by the Church are called dogmas, the act by which the faithful accept them is called Catholic faith, or divine-Catholic faith, and the act by which they reject them - should they unhappily do so - is called heresy.

But there are other truths in the Catholic religion which are not formally revealed by God but which nevertheless are so connected with revealed truth that their denial would lead to the rejection of God's word, and concerning these the Church, the guardian as well as the teacher of the revealed word, exercises an infallible teaching authority. "Dogmatic facts,"^{*17} theological conclusions, doctrines - whether of faith or morals - involved in the legislation of the Church, in the condemnation of books or persons, in the canonisation of saints, in the approbation of religious orders - all these are matters coming within the infallible competence of the Church, all these are things which every Catholic is bound to believe when the Church pronounces upon them in the exercise of her supreme and infallible teaching office. He accepts them not by divine-Catholic faith, for God has not revealed them, but by ecclesiastical faith, by an assent which is based upon the infallible authority of the divinely appointed Church. Theologians, however, point out that even ecclesiastical faith is at least mediately divine, since it is God who has revealed that His Church is to be believed: "He that heareth you heareth me."

Already it is apparent that the question: "Must I believe it?" is equivocal. It may mean: "Is this a dogma of faith which I must believe under pain of heresy?" or it may mean: "Is it a doctrine which I must believe by ecclesiastical faith, under pain of being branded as 'temerarious' or 'proximate to heresy'?" But in either case the answer is: "You must believe it." The only difference lies between the precise motive of assent in either

¹⁶ * Vatican Council, *De fide catholica*, cap. iii.

¹⁷ * E.g.: that a certain book contains errors in matters of faith; that a particular Council is oecumenical, etc.

case, or the precise censure which may attach to disbelief. The question thus resolves itself into an investigation whether the doctrine under discussion belongs to either of these categories. And here again there is the possibility of undue restriction.

The Vatican Council has defined that "all those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgement or by her ordinary and universal teaching, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed."¹⁸ What is liable to be overlooked is the ordinary and universal teaching of the Church. It is by no means uncommon to find the option, if not expressed at least entertained, that no doctrine is to be regarded as a dogma of faith unless it has been solemnly defined by an oecumenical Council or by the Sovereign Pontiff himself. This is by no means necessary. It is sufficient that the Church teaches it by her ordinary *magisterium*, exercised through the Pastors of the faithful, the Bishops whose *unanimous* teaching throughout the Catholic world, whether conveyed expressly through pastoral letters, catechisms issued by episcopal authority, provincial synods, or implicitly through prayers and religious practices allowed or encouraged, or through the teaching of approved theologians, is no less infallible than a solemn definition issued by a Pope or a general Council. If, then, a doctrine appears in these organs of divine Tradition as belonging directly or indirectly to the *depositum fidei* committed by Christ to His Church, it is to be believed by Catholics with divine-Catholic or ecclesiastical faith, even though it may never have formed the subject of a solemn definition in an oecumenical Council or of an *ex cathedra* pronouncement by the Sovereign Pontiff.¹⁹

But, satisfied that the doctrine has been authoritatively and infallibly proposed for belief by the Church, our questioner still waits to be informed whether it is a doctrine which has been formally revealed by God and is therefore to be believed under pain of heresy, or whether it is one of those matters which belong only indirectly to the *depositum fidei* and therefore to be believed by ecclesiastical faith. In the majority of cases this is not difficult to decide: dogmatic facts, canonizations, legislation - these evidently are not revealed by God and belong to the secondary object of the infallible *magisterium*. But the line of demarcation between dogmas and theological conclusions is not always so clear. There are some doctrines concerning which it may be doubted whether they are formally revealed by God or whether they are merely conclusions which are deduced from revealed truth, and it is part of the theologian's congenial task to endeavour to determine this. The doctrine of the Assumption is a case in point. But so far as Catholics generally are concerned it is not a matter of great importance, for if the Church - as we are supposing - teaches such doctrines in the exercise of her infallible office the faithful are bound *sub gravi* to believe them; in practice it is a question of determining whether he who denies them is very near to heresy or whether he has actually fallen into it. In either case he has committed a grave sin against faith.

II.

It is time now to turn our attention more particularly to the first word in our question, and to bring our inquiry to bear precisely upon the moral obligation of the Catholic in the matter of belief. For the Catholic not only believes, he *must* believe. To the question: "Why do you believe?" I may answer by indicating the motive or ground of my assent. But to the question: "Why must you believe?" I can only answer by pointing to the authority which imposes the obligation.

It is important, I think, to distinguish two aspects of teaching authority. It may be regarded as an authority *in dicendo* or an authority *in jubendo*, that is, as an authority which commands intellectual assent or as a power which demands obedience; and the two aspects are by no means inseparable. I can imagine an authority which constitutes a sufficient motive to command assent, without however being able to impose belief as a moral obligation. A professor learned in some subject upon which I am ignorant (let me confess - astronomy) - may tell me wonderful things about the stars. He may be to my knowledge the leading authority - virtually infallible - on his own subject; but I am not bound to believe him. I may be foolish, I may be sceptical; but the professor

¹⁸ * *Loc.cit.*

¹⁹ * Thus various events in the life of Christ (e.g., the raising of Lazarus from the dead) are certainly revealed by God and, though never defined solemnly, are taught by the ordinary and universal *magisterium*. Many theological conclusions concerning Christ (with regard to His knowledge, His sanctifying grace) are universally taught by theologians as proximate to faith, though they may never have been defined either by the Pope or by a general Council. It may be remarked, however, that in common practice a person is not regarded as a *heretic* unless he has denied a revealed truth which has been solemnly defined. (Vacant: *Etudes théologiques sur les Constitutions du Concile* [t.II, pp.117 sq.).

does not possess that authority over me which makes it my bounden duty to accept his word. On the other hand the school-boy who dissents, even internally, from what his teacher tells him, is insufferably conceited, and if he disagrees openly he is insubordinate and deserves to be punished. By virtue of his position as authoritative teacher the schoolmaster has a right to demand the obedient assent of his pupils; not merely because he is likely to know more about the subject than those over whom he is set - he may be incompetent - but because he is deputed by a legitimate authority to teach them.

However, let us not exaggerate. *Ad impossibile nemo tenetur*. The human mind cannot accept statements which are absurd, nor can it be obliged to do so. A statement can be accepted by the mind only on condition that it is credible: that it involves no evident contradiction, and that the person who vouches for its truth is known to possess the knowledge and veracity which make it worthy of credence; and in the absence of such conditions the obligation of acceptance ceases. On the other hand, where a legitimately constituted teaching authority exists their absence will not lightly be presumed. On the contrary, obedience to authority (considered as authority *in jubendo*) will predispose to the assumption that they are present.

Turning now to the Church, and with this distinction still in mind, we are confronted by an institution to which Christ, the Word Incarnate, has entrusted the office of teaching all men: "Going therefore teach ye all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Herein lies the source of the obligation to believe what the Church teaches. The Church possesses the divine commission to teach, and hence there arises in the faithful a moral obligation to believe, which is founded ultimately, not upon the infallibility of the Church, but upon God's sovereign right to the submission and intellectual allegiance (*rationabile obsequium*) of His creatures: "He that believeth...shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned." It is the God-given right of the Church to teach, and therefore it is the bounden duty of the faithful to believe.

But belief, however obligatory, is possible only on condition that the teaching proposed is guaranteed as credible. And therefore Christ added to His commission to teach the promise of the divine assistance: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." This divine assistance implies that, at any rate within a certain sphere, the Church teaches infallibly; and consequently, at least within those limits, the credibility of her teaching is beyond question. When the Church teaches infallibly the faithful know that what she teaches belongs, either directly or indirectly, to the *depositum fidei* committed to her by Christ; and their faith thus becomes grounded, immediately or mediately, upon the divine authority. But the infallibility of the Church does not, precisely as such, render belief obligatory. It renders her teaching divinely credible. What makes belief obligatory is her divine commission to teach.

The importance of this distinction becomes apparent when we consider that the Church does not always teach infallibly, even on those matters which are within the sphere of her infallible competence. That the *charisma* is limited in its exercise as well as in its sphere may be gathered from the words of the Vatican Council, which defines that the Roman Pontiff*²⁰ enjoys infallibility "when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when, exercising his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, according to his supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church." Hence infallibility is exercised only when the supreme teaching authority, in the use of its full prerogatives, determines in an irrevocable manner*²¹ a doctrine on faith or morals to be held, either by divine Catholic faith or by ecclesiastical faith,*²² by all the faithful. If, therefore, at any time a pronouncement is issued by the *Ecclesia docens* which is shown not to be an exercise of the supreme authority in all its fulness, or is not addressed to the whole Church as binding on all the faithful, or is not intended to determine a doctrine in an irrevocable manner, then such pronouncement is not infallible.

To formulate and to discuss the criteria by which an infallible utterance may be diagnosed as such is another task for the theologian, and in any case is beyond the scope of this paper. For our purpose it is sufficient to register the fact that much of the authoritative teaching of the Church, whether in the form of Papal

²⁰ * What is said of the Pope alone is true also of the *corpus episcoporum*, for the Council states that _the Roman Pontiff enjoys that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed.'

²¹ * *_Definit.*'

²² * The word "*tenendam*" was used instead of "*credendam*" in order not to restrict infallibility to the definition of dogmas (Acta Conc. Vat., Coll. Lac., t.VII, ed. 1704 seq.).

encyclicals, decisions, condemnations, replies from Roman Congregations - such as the Holy office - or from the Biblical Commission, is not an exercise of the infallible *magisterium*. And here once again our cautious believer raises his voice: "Must I believe it?"

III

The answer is implicit in the principles already established. We have seen that the source of the obligation to believe is not the infallibility of the Church but her divine commission to teach. Therefore, whether her teaching is guaranteed by infallibility or not, the Church is always the divinely appointed teacher and guardian of revealed truth, and consequently the supreme authority of the Church, even when it does not intervene to make an infallible and definitive decision on matters of faith or morals, has the right, in virtue of the divine commission, to command the obedient assent of the faithful. In the absence of infallibility the assent thus demanded cannot be that of faith, whether Catholic or ecclesiastical; it will be an assent of a lower order proportioned to its ground or motive. But whatever name be given to it - for the present we may call it belief - it is obligatory; obligatory not because the teaching is infallible - it is not - but because it is the teaching of the divinely appointed Church. It is the duty of the Church, as Franzelin has pointed out,^{*23} not only to teach revealed doctrine but also to protect it, and therefore the Holy See "may prescribe as to be followed or proscribe as to be avoided theological opinions or opinions connected with theology, not only with the intention of infallibly deciding the truth by a definitive pronouncement, but also - without any such intention - merely for the purpose of safeguarding the *security* of Catholic doctrine." If it is the duty of the Church, even though non-infallibly, to "prescribe or proscribe" doctrines to this end, then it is evidently also the duty of the faithful to accept them or reject them accordingly.

Nor is this obligation of submission to the non-infallible utterances of authority satisfied by the so-called *silentium obsequiosum*. The security of Catholic doctrine, which is the purpose of these decisions, would not be safeguarded if the faithful were free to withhold their assent. It is not enough that they should listen in respectful silence, refraining from open opposition. They are bound in conscience to submit to them,^{*24} and conscientious submission to a doctrinal decree does not mean only to abstain from publicly rejecting it; it means the submission of one's own judgment to the more competent judgment of authority.

But, as we have already remarked, *ad impossibile nemo tenetur*, and without an intellectual motive of some sort no intellectual assent, however obligatory, is possible. On what intellectual ground, therefore, do the faithful base the assent which they are obliged to render to these non-infallible decisions of authority? On what Cardinal Franzelin^{*25} somewhat cumbrously but accurately describes as *auctoritas universalis providentiae ecclesiasticae*. The faithful rightly consider that, even where there is no exercise of the infallible *magisterium*, divine Providence has a special care for the Church of Christ; that therefore the Sovereign Pontiff in view of his sacred office is endowed by God with the graces necessary for the proper fulfilment of it; that therefore his doctrinal utterances, even when not guaranteed by infallibility, enjoy the highest competence; that in a proportionate degree this is true also of the Roman Congregations and of the Biblical Commission, composed of men of great learning and experience, who are fully alive to the needs and doctrinal tendencies of the day, and who, in view of the care and the (proverbial) caution with which they carry out the duties committed to them by the Sovereign Pontiff, inspire full confidence in the wisdom and prudence of their decisions. Based as it is upon these considerations of a religious order, the assent in question is called a "religious assent."

But these decisions are not infallible, and therefore religious assent lacks that perfect certainty which belongs to divine Catholic faith and ecclesiastical faith. On the other hand belief in the Providence which governs the Church in all its activities, and especially in all the manifestations of the supreme ecclesiastical authority, forbids us to doubt or to suspend assent. The Catholic will not allow his thought to wander into channels where he is assured by authority that danger threatens his faith; he will - indeed he must - suffer it to be guided by what he is bound to regard as the competent custodian of revealed truth. In the cases which we are now contemplating, he is not told how to adhere with the fulness of certainty to a doctrine which is divinely guaranteed by infallibility; but he is told that this particular proposition may be maintained with perfect safety,

²³ * *De Scriptura et Traditione* (1870), p.116.

²⁴ * Letter of Pius IX to the Archbishop of Munich, 1861; cf. Denzinger, 1684.

²⁵ * *Loc. cit.*

while its contradictory is fraught with danger to the faith; that in the circumstances and in the present state of our knowledge this or that interpretation of Scripture may not safely be forsaken; that a particular philosophical tenet may lead to serious errors in a matter of faith. And the Catholic must shun the danger of which he is authoritatively warned by bowing to the judgment of authority. He must not doubt, he must assent.

Logically implied in these precautionary decisions is a truth of the speculative order, whether ethical or dogmatic. But upon that speculative truth as such the decree does not pronounce; it envisages merely the question of security.*²⁶ Thus, for example, the answer of the Holy Office to the question about craniotomy*²⁷ is based upon a moral principle which is a part of Catholic ethical doctrine. But the Congregation did not define that principle as a truth, although it is a truth. It merely stated that it is unsafe to teach that such an operation is licit; that Catholic ethical doctrine would be endangered by such teaching. Therefore the Catholic is bound to reject the suggestion that the operation may be permissible; he must believe that it is not allowed. Otherwise he would put himself in the danger of denying an ethical doctrine of the Catholic Church. On June 5th, 1918, the Holy Office in reply to a question decreed: "non posse tuto doceri...certam non posse dici sententiam quae statuit animam Christi nihil ignoravisse."*²⁸ Implied in this decision is the (speculative) truth that in Christ there was no ignorance. But the Holy Office did not define that truth. It merely stated that it is unsafe to cast any doubt upon the opinion that the soul of Christ was free from ignorance. Therefore the Catholic must hold it as certain that Christ was ignorant of nothing; otherwise he would endanger the integrity of Catholic doctrine.

But in the absence of infallibility there is the possibility of error, and hence the stickler for philosophical accuracy may refuse to religiously assent the attribute of certainty. Without quoting the homily on certainty which the judge reads to the jury at the beginning of his summing-up, we may none the less recall it to memory, and add to it the consideration that in the case before us the presumption in favour of truth, resting as it does upon the *auctoritas universalis providentiae ecclesiasticae*, renders the possibility of error so remote as to engender a high degree of what is known as "moral certainty." The generality of the faithful are not troubled by difficulties in these matters, and no fear of error assails them. The learned, however, are not always so fortunate; their studies may tempt them sometimes to question the non-infallible decisions of authority. Obedience to that authority, while it does not forbid the private and respectful submission of such difficulties for official consideration, none the less demands that all Catholics, learned and unlearned alike, yield their judgment to the guidance of those whom Providence has set to guard the deposit of faith.*²⁹

To sum up, Catholics are bound to believe what the Church teaches. To refuse the assent of divine-Catholic faith to a dogma is to be a heretic; to refuse the assent of ecclesiastical faith to a doctrine which the Church teaches as belonging indirectly to the deposit of faith is to be more or less near to heresy; to refuse internal religious assent to the non-infallible doctrinal decisions of the Holy See is to fail in that submission which Catholics are strictly bound to render to the teaching authority of the Church.

Are there, then, no fields of thought in which the Catholic may wander fancy-free? There are indeed; and they are the happy hunting-ground of the theologian. But he speculates more freely when he is free from the danger of error. His investigations are more fruitful, pursued within the limits of God's truth. There he is free, with the freedom with which Christ has made him free.

(Canon George D. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.)

²⁶ * Hence it may be understood why such decrees are not of themselves irreformable. It may happen, for example, that the rejection of the authenticity of a Scriptural passage is unsafe at a particular time, but becomes safe at another in consequence of progress in Biblical studies.

²⁷ * Denzinger, 1889.

²⁸ * Denzinger, 2184.

²⁹ * On the subject of religious assent see especially L. Choupin: *Valeur des Décisions doctrinales et disciplinaires du Saint-Siège* (Beauchesne, 1913), pp. 82 ff.

The Exact Theological Qualification of Heliocentrism In the Past and the Present

The reader of Canon Smith's article will find it easy, we think, to concur in our conclusion that the decrees against heliocentrism, though not infallible, were authoritative instructions addressed by the Holy See to the faithful on matters of doctrine, commanding their assent and protected by a special ecclesiastical providence sufficient to justify all in granting them that assent. And this understanding neatly disposes of most of the objections made by those who hold the condemnation to have been infallible, while avoiding the trap of too liberal an interpretation of the decrees as though Catholics were left free to continue to believe in heliocentrism notwithstanding them. Thus the decrees of the Sacred Congregation of the Index in 1616, 1664 and 1665 are assimilated to more recent Index legislation and the widely promulgated sentence condemning Galileo emanating from the Holy Office in 1633 is assimilated to other doctrinal instructions emanating from that source in accordance with the repeated insistence of the popes that Congregational decrees touching doctrine are owed interior and exterior submission by all Catholics (see Denzinger 1684, 1712, 2008, 2113).

But two difficulties remain outstanding which those who reject our thesis will be prompt to draw our attention to: (i) the repeated use of the term "heresy" to designate heliocentrism whereas non-infallible decrees emanating from the Roman Congregations are not sufficiently authoritative to make a proposition heretical, and (ii) the subsequent U-turn on the part of the Holy See by which implicit permission was given for Catholics to believe in heliocentrism notwithstanding the previous condemnations.

The first of these difficulties has been at the root of much of the scandal caused by the Galileo affair, but we think it is more apparent than real. Those who are not accustomed to the modalities of theology and the nice distinctions involved in the theological qualification of doctrines in their different degrees of orthodoxy or heterodoxy may indeed feel uncomfortable with the explanation we offer, but we venture to think that the more any reader is familiar with the fine details of this branch of theology, the more he will be at ease with it: it is as follows. (i) the theologian-qualifiers designated heliocentrism as *heretical* in 1616 on the grounds of its manifest opposition to numerous texts of Holy Scripture all of which the Church infallibly proposes *in globo* as divinely revealed; (ii) the theologian-qualifiers did not hold that the Church had specifically proposed these passages as being geocentric in meaning; (iii) the qualification *heretical* was thus broader than current theological usage would permit, but not inaccurate according to contemporary understanding nor substantially different from our present understanding granted that Holy Scripture *does* in fact undeniably present the universe as geocentric and the sun as being in motion around the earth; (iv) the infallible proposal by the Church on which the qualification *heretical* was based was thus not a specific pronouncement on this topic but the general infallible proposal of the whole of the contents of the Bible by the Church which *eo ipso* obliges all Catholics to accept whatever the Bible explicitly teaches, whether directly theological in content or not, as all theologians have always accepted; (v) the decrees which were based on, and lent their authority to, this qualification of heliocentrism as heretical, not being infallible, created a situation in which Catholics were bound by an authoritative but non-infallible teaching to consider heliocentrism as heretical because of its opposition to the Bible and to reject it; (vi) thus a Catholic who rejected heliocentrism in obedience to these declarations, but at the same time denied that heliocentrism was in fact in conflict with the Scriptures or heretical, would have been acting without due submission to the theological qualification applied by the decrees, but would not have been thought by anyone to be himself guilty of heresy.

It follows from this explanation that anyone who obstinately adhered to heliocentrism after the condemnation of 1616, or at least after that of 1633 which was diffused more widely and in a more formal way by the Holy See throughout the world, would have been liable, indeed, to condemnation as a heretic for denying what the Holy See had judged to be contrary to Holy Scripture. And this was thoroughly appropriate because anyone who denies the contents of Scripture is indeed guilty of a heretical denial of their Divine inspiration and consequent inerrancy. But any such condemnation (and in practice that of Galileo as *vehemently suspect* of having consented to the heliocentric heresy was the only one to the best of our knowledge) would have had no pretence at being infallible since it would have related only to a given individual. There is therefore not the slightest contradiction between this fact and our conclusion that geocentrism has never been, properly speaking, a dogma. The proposition that heliocentrism is contrary to Holy Scripture is the central theological truth intimated to the faithful by the Holy See in the whole Galileo affair, but so far is it from bearing the characteristics of a dogma to be believed with Divine and Catholic faith, that we do not think it falls into any of the six doctrinal categories we quoted in Chapter 6 from Father Cartechini concerning which the Church's

pronouncements are, or at least may be, infallible. Father Cartechini lists a number of other theological qualifications in his study on the subject and he informs us that the content of the doctrinal decrees of the Roman Congregations is properly qualified as *safe* (*securum* or *tutum*) noting that one who opposes such teaching would be guilty of a grave sin of *disobedience* to the ecclesiastical teaching authority and that the offending proposition would be properly termed *temerarious*.

So in our evaluation the proposition that heliocentrism is contrary to Scripture should properly be qualified as *safe doctrine* and the denial thereof as *temerarious*, between 1616 (or at least 1633) and 1757 when the Holy See for the first time indicated that it no longer insisted on the observance of prior decrees on this topic. Since this proposition was *safe*, it follows that the Church acted safely and securely in her readiness to condemn proponents of heliocentrism as heretics, but it does *not* follow that heliocentrism's heretical character was, or was believed to be, a dogmatic truth.

Father Roberts and his like would of course snort at the idea of Catholics being commanded to reject a proposition as heretical which the Church had not reprobated by an infallible judgement, but we have every reason to distrust his standard of judgement for it was that which led him to refuse to submit to the Church's declaration of papal infallibility in 1870. Once he had taken the position that papal infallibility was not acceptable, it is not surprising that he should have done all in his power to argue that the decrees against Galileo (in his day, all but universally held to have been erroneous) ought to have been considered infallible as this would show that papal infallibility could indeed not be true. But we are safer in following the Church's evaluation of her own infallibility than that of her enemies and of traitors from her ranks.

And in fact it should be understood that there are many topics on which the Church's mission obliges her to instruct us, but concerning which she is simply not equipped to pronounce by a directly infallible decision since Sacred Tradition has not transmitted to her any datum which would serve as foundation for such pronouncements.

The second objection is of greater interest since even the appearance of a U-turn on a doctrinal topic is, we believe, unique in the history of the Church. But on the interpretation of the facts we have offered hitherto, there is no great mystery therein either. It may be frankly admitted that after the publication of Newton's writings most scientists came to consider the evidence in favour of heliocentrism to be overwhelming. It had certainly not been so in Galileo's day, but the great difference made by Newton was the presentation of a system explaining the *causes* of the real or supposed movements of the heavenly bodies in terms of fixed laws which not only squared with appearances, but also seemed eminently credible and seemed to lend themselves perfectly to heliocentrism but to be totally incompatible with geocentrism.*³⁰ The anti-heliocentric Scriptural passages could be reinterpreted only with the greatest difficulty, but Scripture notoriously contains some passages difficult to understand or to reconcile with what seems to be established conclusions of natural disciplines and theologians would certainly have been prepared to countenance a far-from-literal interpretation of these passages if science had established convincing evidence in favour of heliocentrism *before* the condemnations of 1616 and 1633. Neither condemnation had been infallible. In view of these facts the Holy See found itself faced with a dilemma: which would be the greater scandal - to maintain and renew its condemnation of heliocentrism, thereby becoming the laughing stock of the scientific world and tempting many Catholic astronomers and scientists to rebellion and distrust of the Church in other matters, or tactfully to drop the matter, silently tolerating the heliocentric *status quo* which was creating itself?

If Providence had raised up Catholic scientists able convincingly to confute the pro-heliocentric evidence, no doubt the existing condemnations would have been maintained in force and vigorously applied, for no Catholic need then have felt intellectually embarrassed at standing his ground. With hindsight we may certainly hold that the least scandal would have been caused by renewing the condemnations even more emphatically and declaring formally in an encyclical the definite opposition detected to exist between Holy Scripture and heliocentrism and the consequent fact that any evidence apparently favouring heliocentrism must either be ill-founded or susceptible of another interpretation. But, as we know, at least two popes took the

³⁰ * We now know that this impression was more apparent than real, the scientific "consensus" being created more by what rumour alleged that Newton had shown rather than what his writings actually contained; and in any event our knowledge of the gravitational attraction apparently exercised by distant rotating masses permits geocentrism to be easily reconciled with what is valid in Newton while recent experimental observations during eclipse conditions have falsified no small part of Newton's ideas in any event; but in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the scientific consensus, for good or for ill, existed and appeared to be based on very solid reasons quite unknown at the time of Galileo.

opposite view - Pope Benedict XIV and Pope Pius VII - and it is reasonable for us to sympathise with their predicament and not judge them harshly from the advantage we have in the 1990s when geocentrism is once more, if not intellectually *respectable* in scientific circles, at least able to hold its own without difficulty in debate against all comers.

Are we saying that the popes were prepared to sacrifice their duty of defending the veracity of the divinely-inspired Scriptures to the need for Catholics to be well-viewed in the eyes of the world? We think that that would be an unduly severe view of what took place. The popes may well themselves have been uncertain as to where the truth lay in view of the new scientific evidence and the non-infallible status of the condemnations. Though learned scientists and astronomers continued well into the nineteenth century to be sceptical of heliocentrism,^{*31} their numbers were few indeed and it would have taken a very cool nerve on the part of the Holy See to stand its ground with such scant scientific defence.

But we hear a chorus of expostulation from our readers: surely, surely, we hear you say, you have told us that the non-infallible condemnations of heliocentrism created an obligation of assent in conscience on the part of all Catholics and were protected by a special ecclesiastical providence from leading the faithful astray. How, then, could the popes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have failed to have a perfect trust in what had been decreed by their predecessors in the seventeenth century? This inquiry invites us to enter into what must be our last theological excursus in this study: an analysis of a special case discussed by some theologians, namely the case in which scholarship unknown to the Holy See at the time it pronounced its non-infallible judgements appears to dutiful Catholic *savants* to make it no longer intellectually tenable to hold what the Holy See has pronounced on a particular topic. Can such a case legitimately exist, and is the Church prepared to recognize, in any such case, the entitlement of a learned Catholic to withhold assent from non-infallible decrees because of some special and exceptional reason?

³¹ * Including, for example, the celebrated German scholar Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859). See also *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, vol.6, col. 1079, para. 5.

Can It Ever Be Lawful to Suspend Interior Assent to the Doctrinal Content
of Congregational Decrees?

It is a fact that some theologians of high authority recognize that in exceptional cases a given individual is not always bound to *internal* assent to non-infallible decrees concerning doctrine. Others seem not to recognize this; at least we have been unable to find any mention of it in Cardinal Franzelin's very authoritative *De Divina Traditione et Scriptura* (Rome, 2nd edition, 1875). And the Holy See has nowhere recognized it and seems in practice to speak as though it were not so. On the other hand it is understandable that there should be a reluctance to recognize what could only be an extremely exceptional case in order to avoid encouraging every Tom, Dick or Harry to think himself sufficiently erudite and his circumstances sufficiently exceptional that he may dissent from what the Holy See tells him he must accept.

"It is not therefore necessary to assent [to non-infallible doctrinal precepts] in such a way as to judge their teaching to be infallibly true or false, but rather in such a way as to judge that the doctrine contained in the judgement in question is safe, either as such, or in the existing circumstances, and that it must be held by us from a motive of obedience.

"But if exceedingly grave reasons should appear to some learned man, he could then suspend assent without temerity and without sin pending recourse to the judgement of the Roman Pontiff.

"Meanwhile, however, *external* obedience is necessary for him too, for the avoidance of scandal." (Father Cartechini, op.cit., p.115-6)

The distinction made by Father Cartechini seems to us to find some support in the *Motu proprio* of St. Pius X concerning the authority of the judgements of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (18th November 1907 - Denzinger 2113). While insisting that all are obliged in conscience by the duty of obedience to submit to the judgements of the Pontifical Biblical Commission in the same way as all other doctrinal decrees of the Sacred Congregations approved by the pope, the *motu proprio* declares that grave sin of disobedience and temerity is necessarily committed by anyone who should oppose such judgements *in words or writing* - an observation which pointedly refrains from condemning one who observes a respectful silence but for a special reason on grounds of expert knowledge and consideration of the case considers himself unable in conscience to accept the judgement in question as true.

While it is evident that this principle could lend itself to great abuse if widely published among layfolk unable to judge reliably whether they have indeed sufficient grounds for withholding assent (very unlikely unless they are *extremely* learned) and perhaps unable even to distinguish whether the decree they hesitate to accept may *not*, in fact, be infallible either in itself or on account of the fact that the doctrine it contains may have been repeatedly taught by the Ordinary Magisterium in other ways also; nonetheless the principle does not seem unreasonable in itself. What must always be remembered is that the decrees we are discussing fall into a special category which may be considered a halfway house between doctrinal teaching of the Magisterium, on the one hand, and disciplinary precepts on the other. Everyone knows that the doctrinal teaching of the Magisterium must be simply believed as true for Christ has guaranteed it to be true; and everyone knows that disciplinary precepts of the Holy See must simply be obeyed, for disobedience to God's vicar is invariably disobedience to God Himself except in the rare case of a private command of the pope requiring commission of an immoral act, as probably took place in the famous dispute between Bishop Robert Grosseteste and Pope Innocent IV in the thirteenth century. But pronouncements on doctrine emanating from the Roman Congregations with the approval of the pope are classified by Father Cartechini as "doctrinal precepts", in other words as having the same subject matter as formal teaching, but as sharing the motive and nature of our submission to them with *disciplinary* decrees. Or, as Canon Smith explains, we may say that such decrees oblige us to assent to their contents, but on grounds of obedience and submission, rather than directly of faith; and for this reason one who rejects such decrees is guilty of disobedience and insubordination directly and only indirectly of sin against faith in so far as he jeopardises his orthodoxy by trusting his private judgement more than the non-infallible judgement of the Holy See.

This understanding permits a useful analogy, similar to the one already quoted in Canon Smith's article, with the attitude of a small child to instruction received from his father. A child who dissented from his

father's explanation of the conditions necessary for the successful growing of tomatoes or claimed to know better than his father how an internal combustion engine functions would be guilty of insubordination and rightly reprimanded. Should he plead, in his defence, that his father is not infallible he would be promptly cut short by the observation that his father is manifestly far more competent than a small child in such matters and is, in any event, the divinely appointed authority in the family from whom children are to learn according to the order established by God.

So far, so good. But the same analogy necessitates recognition that rare exceptions may occur. Even a child of eight or nine years (and the greatest theologians of the Church are in their relations to the Holy See, with its collective and inherited wisdom and its supernatural enlightenment and protection, no more than as eight- or nine-year-olds to their father) may on one occasion in a million, be right where his father is wrong, and be sufficiently certain of his facts to know that this is so. And in such a case the child's position must be, when possible, to represent modestly his reasons for hesitation to his parents, but in any event not to dissent outwardly from his father's judgement until such time as his father should admit his mistake. And that is precisely the attitude which theologians like Father Cartechini permit in very rare and exceptional cases, to the learned expert *vis à vis* of a doctrinal precept of the Holy See.

Now we must emphasise that we are not offering this in any sense as an excuse for Galileo in his failure to respect the orders of the Holy See communicated to him in 1616 by renouncing heliocentrism and never again speaking or writing a word in its favour. Galileo made not the slightest attempt, whether in 1616 or in 1633, to claim that he had overwhelming reason for thinking that the non-infallible decree might not be right and for internal suspension of assent; he made not the slightest attempt to persuade the pope of his evidence. On the contrary he readily declared, in 1616, that he rejected heliocentrism from his heart, and in 1633 he insisted (in the face of overwhelming evidence) that he had always internally respected this. And indeed almost all Catholic writers on the Galileo affair, even if they themselves are heliocentrists,*³² agree that Galileo had no overwhelming evidence in favour of heliocentrism at all and in fact that his arguments were exceedingly weak, the chief of them being universally recognised for hundreds of years to have been not merely weak but wholly invalid and even fatuous.*³³

The reason we refer to this principle is to explain how it was possible for Pope Benedict XIV to re-open a subject which had been definitively closed by his predecessor and re-evaluate the evidence, in the light of the writings of Newton and others, rather than rejecting it *a priori* as worthless in view of its opposition to what the Holy See had already determined in the matter. And this we think is easily achieved, not only for those who accept the exceptional lawfulness of suspending assent in this way, but even for those who recognise, what we think is inevitably so: namely that the lawfulness of suspending assent in such cases is at least *theologically probable*.

³² * Writing subsequently to the liberalising legislation of Popes Benedict XIV and Pius VII.

³³ * We refer, of course, to his argument based on the movement of the tides in which he contrived wholly to overlook the fact that the tidal to-and-fro occurs not once but twice in the space of every twenty-four hours!

The Correct Catholic Attitude to Heliocentrism Today

We have shown that the Church has implicitly withdrawn her condemnation of heliocentrism, so that Catholics are not directly guilty of heterodoxy or disobedience if they hold that the earth revolves around the sun. But we do not think it follows from this that a good Catholic will regard the matter as theologically indifferent and one on which he is perfectly free to follow his opinion taking account only of scientific evidence and considerations of the natural order as though there were no theological or supernatural principles involved.*³⁴

There are three reasons for this view, which we shall now explain:

00000001. We have shown that doctrinal decrees emanating from the Sacred Congregations with the approval of the pope, though not infallibly *true*, are held by the Church to be infallibly *safe* and supremely *credible*. Otherwise, in requiring Catholics to believe their contents, the Church would be demanding assent of the intellect without proffering proportionate motive for granting such assent and therefore demanding the impossible - a notion which is quite incompatible with her essential mark of holiness.

Now it is argued by Father Roberts in his study to which we have repeatedly referred that if heliocentrism be true, the repeated condemnations of it by the Holy See were neither safe nor credible; and that if the Holy See can repeatedly insist that Catholics espouse an unsafe doctrine on insufficient grounds on one topic, one cannot have the slightest assurance that she may not have been guilty of the same mis-guidance on countless other topics.

It follows that one cannot embrace heliocentrism without effectively undermining the entire authority of the Church in her non-infallible doctrinal precepts and without departing, at least implicitly, from a theologically certain truth: viz. the safety and credibility of *all* such decrees. We have not the faintest idea how Catholic heliocentrists can reasonably defend themselves against this accusation of temerity.

2. While it is not intrinsically unorthodox to hold, as some theologians have done, that in a very rare and exceptional case a doctrinal precept of the Holy See may be inaccurate and need subsequent revision, a loyal Catholic can only be *exceedingly reluctant* to admit that this has occurred in any concrete case. His reluctance is based on his pious respect for the Holy See and docility to all its decisions and his faith in the protection accorded by the Holy Ghost to *all* the acts of the Church. And he would be especially reluctant to admit error on the part of the Holy See in the case of Galileo both because of the gravity of the censure originally applied to heliocentrism and because everyone knows perfectly well that the Galileo affair is the only serious example proffered of a case in which error on the part of the Holy See in non-infallible doctrinal decisions is thought by some to have been established, and even admitted. The recognition of this view inevitably weakens faith and starkly opposes the filial attitude every good Catholic nurtures towards the Holy See.

We respectfully submit that, this being so, heliocentrism cannot properly be accepted unless its acceptance is genuinely *necessary*, i.e. unless it is a demonstrated truth of natural science. And while many Catholics of unquestioned loyalty mistakenly believed this to be so until recent times, we do not see how it is possible, when in possession of the evidence, to continue to take this view.

3. Even abstracting entirely from the interventions of the Holy See on this topic there remains a theological principle which in our view makes geocentrism obligatory. We refer to the principle of scriptural interpretation that the proper, or literal, meaning of any text is to be preferred to a metaphorical or symbolic interpretation whenever this is possible.

"Next comes the duty to determine whether the words in a given passage should be taken in their proper, or, on the contrary, in their metaphorical acceptance. For this purpose, two general rules should be borne in mind: (1) the words of Holy Writ must be taken in their proper sense, unless it be necessary to have recourse to their metaphorical meaning, and this becomes necessary only when the

³⁴ * Still less, of course, does it follow that Catholics are or ever have been obliged or encouraged by the Church to *favour* heliocentrism! The Church ceased to condemn heliocentric writings, but she never gave them the least positive encouragement, nor has she ever in any way discouraged the traditional doctrine of geocentrism. The most one may say is that the Holy See has decided, with every mark of reluctance, to *tolerate* heliocentrism.

proper acceptation would yield a sense evidently incorrect, or manifestly opposed to the authority of tradition or to the decisions of the Church as already explained..." (Gigot, Father Francis E., S.S: *General Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scripture*, Benziger Brothers, New York, 1900, p.402)

On the basis of this principle an anti-heliocentric argument was formulated by the Jesuit theologian and astronomer Father Ricciolo in the sixteenth century which he states as follows:

"Every proposition affirmed by a canonical writer found in Holy Scripture is to be taken in its literal sense whenever in such a sense there is no contradiction with:

"(a) other propositions of the same Holy Scripture which are equally or more sure,

"(b) or with the definition of the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church,

"(c) or with a proposition which is certain and evident by natural light.

"But the propositions of Holy Scripture in which the movements of the sun and the stability of the earth are affirmed are asserted by a canonical writer and do not contradict any other kinds of proposition mentioned in the major premise; therefore they must be taken in their literal and proper sense." (*Novum Almagestum*, vol.1, part 2, p.444)

Once again we are left with the conclusion that heliocentrism must be rejected unless it is "a proposition which is certain and evident by natural light." We respectfully submit that it is no such thing and that those who continue to think it is are only demonstrating their ignorance after the recent example of Mr. Hutton Gibson of Australia who in his *The War Is Now* has chosen to wheel out the antiquated and exploded pro-heliocentric arguments of his distant childhood rather than inform himself objectively of the present state of scientific evidence and take comfort from the vindication of the Holy See effected in recent years.*³⁵

³⁵ * Another example of such misinformed prejudice is furnished by a young American Catholic who undertook an animated correspondence with us which, when he discovered our geocentric convictions, he broke off as abruptly (and in fact downright rudely) as if it had been *geocentrism*, rather than *heliocentrism*, which the Vicar of Christ had branded as contrary to the word of God!

Retractions

We wish to take this opportunity to correct some details in previous Britons Catholic Library publications on the heliocentrism versus geocentrism controversy which we now regret. These are as follows:

00000001. The present, detailed study of the theological status of heliocentrism serves substantially to corroborate the findings of our 1986 study *Galileo's Theory is Heretical* published as an appendix to N.M. Gwynne's earlier paper *Galileo Versus the Geocentric Theory of the Universe* and also published as a supplement to Britons Catholic Library *Letter No.4*, volume 4, part 3. For in our 1986 study we already established the essential point that heliocentrism has been declared heretical, in the sense of being contrary to the Holy Scriptures, by a non-infallible decree which, however, created an obligation of internal assent on the part of all Catholics.

Where we went astray was in writing as though these decrees were still in full force and without giving adequate weight to the decisions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century whereby the Holy See extended toleration to the heliocentric hypothesis, albeit without explicitly rescinding its earlier condemnations. The chief effect of this is that in our present study we are forced to state with much greater moderation the extent to which Catholics may properly represent it as obligatory *today* to reject heliocentrism.

The 1986 study would also have been improved if we had drawn attention to the fact that at present date theologians do not use the term "heretical" to refer to doctrines which explicitly contradict the definitely correct meaning of Holy Scripture unless that meaning has been infallibly proposed by the Church independently of her general proposal of the *entire* contents of Holy Scripture as divinely inspired.

2. What requires more radical correction is the second appendix of N.M.G.'s study *Galileo Versus the Geocentric Theory of the Universe*, entitled *The Retrial of Galileo*. In the ten pages comprised by this appendix, along with a great deal of useful information, N.M.G. follows Walter van der Kamp in his criticisms of certain papal decisions and writings bearing directly or indirectly upon the pretensions of modern science to have refuted the literal or proper sense of numerous Biblical texts.

The thesis advanced is that Pope Benedict XIV and Pope Pius VII,^{*36} by their conceding toleration to heliocentrism, opened the floodgates for all that has occurred since, leading to the position in the 1950s in which many Catholics believed heliocentrism, evolution, Einsteinian relativity and every anti-Catholic aberration which the Masonic scientific establishment claims to have proved, and thought their position orthodox and compatible with Holy Scripture on the grounds that Scripture does not intend to teach science and followed the conceptions popularly believed at the time its respective books were written without regard for their literal accuracy.

And Pope Leo XIII is singled out as particularly culpable for giving further momentum to this diabolical anti-Catholic and anti-Scriptural tide by his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* wherein he refers to the fact that the inspired writers of Holy Writ sometimes adapted their phraseology in matters of natural science to that of their hearers or readers, speaking in accordance with appearances rather than objective reality.

We wish to withdraw every criticism of the Holy See contained in this appendix and in future editions we intend to suppress it entirely, both because it is not the part of a loyal Catholic to criticise papal decisions when there is any question of a favourable interpretation of them,^{*37} but also because we think that criticism is misplaced.

We have done our best in this present study to present the decisions of Pope Benedict XIV and Pope Pius VIII sympathetically (while of course everyone admits that there is no *obligation* on Catholics to consider them to have been the most brilliant decisions that could have been taken in the circumstances). As for the

³⁶ * Van der Kamp mistakenly refers to Pope Leo XII in this context, but it is evident from the dates that he means to refer to his successor, Pius VII.

³⁷ * More especially encyclicals and other doctrinal pronouncements which call for docility and submission rather than critical evaluation.

encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, we think it better to say simply that certain passages in it lend themselves to abuse by modernists who purport to infer from them that modern astronomy, evolutionary theory or other spurious findings of pseudo-science are not necessarily incompatible with the revealed word of God. But we no longer think them *intrinsically* objectionable as what the pope says is certainly true and soundly based on St. Augustine and St. Thomas. It is indeed the case, for example, that in Genesis 1:16 it is stated that "God made two great lights: a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night" and that this passage inevitably involved an adaptation to ordinary human parlance and subjective appearances rather than objective reality since the moon, of course, possesses no inherent luminosity and, unlike the sun, merely *appears* to be a source of light by reflecting towards us, according to its phases, the light of the sun during the hours when the sun is hidden from our eyes.

And in this evaluation of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, we feel perfectly safe since it is substantially that given by Pope Benedict XV in his own encyclical on Scripture: *Spiritus Sanctus Paraclitus* in which he devotes several pages to correction of the liberal interpretations of his predecessor's words and points out that the interpretations are incompatible with other parts of the same encyclical; he insists on the correct interpretation which gives no right whatsoever to either scientists or historians to call for a "re-interpretation" of Scripture in the sense of their purported discoveries when it is quite patent that Scripture is in fact incompatible with them.

Appendix I

The 1633 Condemnation and Abjuration of Galileo

Whereas you, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, Florentine, aged seventy years, were in the year 1615 denounced to this Holy Office for holding as true the false doctrine taught by some that the Sun is the centre of the world and immovable and that the Earth moves, and also with a diurnal motion; for having disciples to whom you taught the same doctrine; for holding correspondence with certain mathematicians of Germany concerning the same; for having printed certain letters, entitled "On the Sunspots", wherein you developed the same doctrine as true; and for replying to the objections from the Holy Scriptures, which from time to time were urged against it, by glossing the said Scriptures according to your own meaning: and whereas there was thereupon produced the copy of a document in the form of a letter, purporting to be written by you to one formerly your disciple, and in this divers propositions are set forth, following the position of Copernicus, which are contrary to the true sense and authority of Holy Scriptures:

The Sacred Tribunal being therefore of intention to proceed against the disorder and mischief thence resulting, which went on increasing to the prejudice of the Sacred Faith, by command of His Highness and of the Most Eminent Lords Cardinals of this supreme and universal Inquisition, the two propositions of the stability of the Sun and the motion of the Earth were by the theological Qualifiers qualified as follows:

The proposition that the Sun is the centre of the world and does not move from its place is absurd and false philosophically and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to the Holy Scripture.

The proposition that the Earth is not the centre of the world and immovable but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is equally absurd and false philosophically and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith.

But whereas it was desired at that time to deal leniently with you, it was decreed at the Sacred Congregation held before His Holiness on 25 February 1616, that his Eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine should order you to abandon altogether the said false doctrine and, in the event of your refusal, that an injunction should be imposed upon you by the Commissary of the Holy Office to give up the said doctrine and not teach it to others, not to defend it, nor even discuss it; and failing your acquiescence in this injunction, that you should be imprisoned. And in execution of this decree, on the following day, at the Palace, and in the presence of his Eminence, the said Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, after being gently admonished by the said Lord Cardinal, the command was enjoined upon you by the Father Commissary of the Holy Office of that time, before a notary and witnesses, that you were altogether to abandon the said false opinion and not in future to hold or defend or teach it in any way whatsoever, neither verbally nor in writing; and, upon your promising to obey, you were dismissed.

And in order that a doctrine so pernicious might be wholly rooted out and not insinuate itself further to the grave prejudice of Catholic truth, a decree was issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Index prohibiting the books which treat of this doctrine and declaring the doctrine itself to be false and wholly contrary to the sacred and divine Scripture.

And whereas a book appeared here recently, printed last year at Florence, the title of which shows that you were the author, this title being: "Dialogue of Galileo Galilei on the Great World Systems": and whereas the Sacred Congregation was afterwards informed that, through the publication of the said book the false opinion of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the Sun was daily gaining ground, the said book was taken into careful consideration, and in it there was discovered a patent violation of the aforesaid injunction that had been imposed upon you, for in this book you have defended the said opinion previously condemned and to your face declared to be so, although in the said book you strive by various devices to produce the impression that you leave it undecided, and in express terms as probable: which, however, is a most grievous error, as an opinion can in no wise be probable which has been declared and defined to be contrary to divine Scripture.

Therefore by our order you were cited before this Holy Office, when, being examined upon your oath, you acknowledged the book to have been written and published by you. You confessed that you began to write the said book about ten or twelve years ago, after the command had been imposed upon you as above; that you requested license to print it without, however, intimating to those who granted you this licence that you had been commanded not to hold, defend, or teach the doctrine in question in any way whatever.

You likewise confessed that the writing of the said book is in many places drawn up in such a form that the reader might fancy that the arguments brought forward on the false side are calculated by their cogency to compel conviction rather than to be easy of refutation, excusing yourself for having fallen into an error, as you alleged, so foreign to your intention, by the fact that you had written in dialogue and by the natural complacency that every man feels in regard to his own subtleties and in showing himself more clever than the generality of men in devising, even on behalf of false propositions, ingenious and plausible arguments.

And a suitable term having been assigned to you to prepare your defense, you produced a certificate in the handwriting of his Eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, procured by you, as you asserted, in order to defend yourself against the calumnies of your enemies, who charged that you had abjured and had been punished by the Holy Office, in which certificate it is declared that you had not abjured and had not been punished but only that the declaration made by His Holiness and published by the Sacred Congregation of the Index had been announced to you, wherein it is declared that the doctrine of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the Sun is contrary to the Holy Scriptures and therefore cannot be defended or held. And, as in this certificate there is no mention of the two articles of the injunction, namely, the order not "to teach" and "in any way", you represented that we ought to believe that in the course of fourteen or sixteen years you had lost all memory of them and that this was why you said nothing of the injunction when you requested permission to print your book. And all this you urged not by way of excuse for your error but that it might be set down to a vainglorious ambition rather than to malice. But this certificate produced to you in your defence had only aggravated your delinquency, since, although it is there stated that said opinion is contrary to Holy Scripture, you have nevertheless dared to discuss and defend it and to argue its probability; nor does the licence artfully and cunningly extorted by you avail you anything, since you did not notify the command imposed upon you.

And whereas it appeared to us that you had not stated the full truth with regard to your intention, we thought it necessary to subject you to a rigorous examination at which (without prejudice, however, to the matters confessed by you and set forth as above with regard to your said intention) you answered like a good Catholic. Therefore, having seen and maturely considered the merits of this your case, together with your confessions and excuses above mentioned, and all that ought justly to be seen and considered, we have arrived at the underwritten final sentence against you:

Invoking, therefore, the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most glorious Mother, ever Virgin Mary, by this our final sentence, which sitting in judgment, with the counsel and advice of the Reverend Masters of sacred theology and Doctors of both Laws, our assessors, we deliver in these writings, in the cause and causes at present before us between the Magnificent Carlo Sinceri, Doctor of both Laws, Proctor Fiscal of this Holy Office, of the one part, and you Galileo Galilei, the defendant, here present, examined, tried, and confessed as shown above, of the other part -

We say, pronounce, sentence and declare that you, the said Galileo, by reason of the matters adduced in trial, and by you confessed as above, have rendered yourself in the judgment of the Holy Office vehemently suspect of heresy, namely, of having believed and held the doctrine - which is false and contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures - that the sun is the centre of the world and does not move from east to west and that the Earth moves and is not the centre of the world; and that an opinion may be held and defended as probable after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to the Holy Scripture; and that consequently you have incurred all the censures and penalties imposed and promulgated in the sacred canons and other constitutions, general and particular, against such delinquents. From which we are content that you be absolved, provided that, first, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, you abjure, curse, and detest before us the aforesaid errors and heresies and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church in the form to be prescribed by us for you.

And, in order that this your grave and pernicious error and transgression may not remain altogether unpunished and that you may be more cautious in the future and an example to others that they may abstain from similar delinquencies, we ordain that the book of the "Dialogue of Galileo Galilei" be prohibited by public edict.

We condemn you to the formal prison of the Holy Office during our pleasure, and by way of salutary penance we enjoin that for three years to come you repeat once a week the seven penitential Psalms. Reserving to ourselves liberty to moderate, commute, or take off, in whole or in part, the aforesaid penalties and penance.

And so we say, pronounce, declare, ordain, and reserve in this and in any other better way and form which we can and may rightfully employ.

I, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, Florentine, aged seventy years, arraigned personally before this tribunal and kneeling before you, Most Eminent and Reverend Lord Cardinals Inquisitors-General against heretical pravity throughout the entire Christian commonwealth having before my eyes and touching with my hands the Holy Gospels, swear that I have always believed, do believe, and by God's holy will in the future believe all that is held, preached, and taught by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. But, whereas - after an injunction has been judicially intimated to me by this Holy Office to the effect that I must altogether abandon the false opinion that the Sun is the centre of the world and moves and that I must not hold, defend, or teach in any way whatsoever, verbally or in writing, the said false doctrines, and after it had been notified to me that the said doctrine was contrary to Holy Scripture - I wrote and printed a book in which I discuss this new doctrine already condemned and adduce arguments of great cogency in its favour without presenting any solution of these, I have been pronounced by the Holy Office to be vehemently suspected of heresy, that is to say, of having held and believed that the Sun is the centre of the world and immovable and that the Earth is not the centre and moves:

Therefore, desiring to remove from the minds of your Eminences, and of all faithful Christians, this vehement suspicion justly conceived against me, with sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I abjure, curse and detest the aforesaid errors and heresies and generally every other error, heresy, and sect whatsoever contrary to Holy Church, and I swear that in future I will never again say or assert, verbally or in writing, anything that might furnish occasion for a similar suspicion regarding me; but should I know any heretic or person suspected of heresy, I will denounce him to the Holy Office or to the Inquisitor or Ordinary of the place where I may be. Further, I swear and promise to fulfil and observe in their integrity all penances that have been, or that shall be, imposed upon me by the Holy Office. And, in the event of my contravening (which God forbid!) any of these my promises and oaths, I submit myself to all the pains and penalties imposed and promulgated in the sacred canons and other constitutions, general and particular, against such delinquents. So help me God and these his Holy Gospels, which I touch with my hands.

Appendix II

The Condemnation of Louvain Traditionalism*³⁸

Two accounts of what happened, the one in a measure supplementing the other, together with the authoritative documents cited, will be found in the first volume of the *Dublin Review* for 1868. From these it appears that, in June 1843, Professor Ubaghs, of the University of Louvain, received notice that the Congregation of the Index had decreed that his works on *Theodicea* and *Logic* contained errors he would be required to correct in a future edition. The points to which his attention was directed on this occasion were his deliverances touching the impossibility of demonstrating, in the proper sense of the term, external metaphysical truths in general, and God's existence in particular. The professor accordingly made some changes; but the Congregation was still dissatisfied with his language, and passed another decree to the effect that he had not made the corrections required. We gather from a later document (Cardinal Patrizi's letter of Oct. 11, 1864) that both these decrees were confirmed by Gregory XVI.

After this the contention between the supporters and opponents of the professor's opinions was allowed to go on for some years. But the publication, in 1859, of a work by Canon Lupus, entitled *Traditionalism and Rationalism Examined*, and the judgment of an eminent Roman theologian that no sound Catholic could hold the opinions on traditionalism taught at Louvain, drove four of the professors to send an exposition of their doctrine to Cardinal de Andrea, prefect of the Index, to be submitted to the Congregation. Instead, however, of doing so, the Cardinal contented himself with the judgment of certain theologians, and returned an answer on his own account, whereon he praised the professors for their submission to the Apostolic See, and declared that the doctrine referred to him "is among those that may be freely disputed on either side by Christian philosophers." But his letter, having no authority - for it did not even profess to be from the Congregation - only supplied fresh matter for contention.

In the following year, July 31, 1861, the Belgian Bishops wrote to the Rector of the University of Louvain, with a view to restore peace. The professors engaged to adhere to all the counsels and rules laid down for them. Then the Pope himself interposed with an Apostolical Letter, dated Dec. 19, 1861, in which he utterly disavowed Cardinal de Andrea's letter, as having no authority whatever. He declared that "the definitive examination and judgment of the doctrines in dispute appertained solely to the Apostolic See," "Quarum definitivum examen et iudicium ad hanc Apostolicam Sedem unice pertinent." That until the Holy See should definitively pronounce judgment on the matter, neither the advocates nor opponents of the opinions in debate were to say that what they taught was the one, true, and the only admissible doctrine on the subject: "Volumus atque mandamus, ut earumdem doctrinarum tum fautores tum oppugnatores, donec definitivum de ipsis doctrinis iudicium haec Sancta Sedes proferre existimaverit, se omnino absteineant sive docendo...sive factis sive consiliis, aliquam ex praedictis philosophicis ac theologicis doctrinis exhibere ac tueri, veluti unicum, veram et solam admittendam, ac veluti Catholicae Universitati propriam." Observe, the Pontiff here plainly asserts that no judgment but a judgement exclusively (*unice*) of the Holy See ought to be accepted as decisive on the points at issue. He implies, therefore, that the decrees he subsequently required the professors to accept as decisive, were to be recognised as expressive of the judgment exclusively (*unice*) of the Holy See.

The Pope then commissioned the Congregations of the Inquisition and Index to examine the whole matter; and on Oct. 11, 1864, Cardinal Patrizi wrote to the Belgian Bishops, announcing the result. The united Congregations resolved that Professor Ubaghs had not really corrected the errors censured in 1843 and 1844. They, therefore, commanded him to do so. They further said that they must not be understood to approve certain other opinions advocated in the more recent editions of the professor's works. His Holiness Pope Pius IX, it was added, has ratified and confirmed with his authority this their sentence.

Professor Ubaghs again set himself to prepare a fresh edition of his works, and in 1865 placed copies of it in the hands of the Roman authorities, intending to publish should his corrections be approved. But the judgment he elicited on this occasion was even more unfavourable to him than that of 1864. The Congregations ruled that the new edition still contained, in substance, the errors previously noted; and they added that they observed in the professor's works teachings very similar to some of the seven propositions condemned by the

³⁸ * "Traditionalism" as used by pre-Vatican II theologians denotes the condemned error of the school which attributed our knowledge of God's existence to tradition rather than natural reason. It has nothing to do with the anti-Vatican II movement of our days.

Holy Office in Sept. 1861; and other opinions were there to be found, at least incautiously expressed, concerning traducianism and the vital principle in man. The two Congregations, therefore, pronounced judgment, "That in the philosophical works hitherto published by G.C. Ubaghs, and especially in his *Logic* and *Theodicea*, doctrines or opinions are found that cannot be taught without danger," "quae absque periculo tradi non possunt;" and this judgment our Holy Lord Pope Pius IX, has ratified and confirmed by his supreme authority." "Quare Eminentissimi Cardinales in hanc devenere sententiam: - In libris philosophicis a G.C. Ubaghs hactenus in lucem editis, et praesertim *Logica* et *Theodicea* inveniri doctrinas seu opiniones, quae absque periculo tradi non possunt. Quam sententiam SSmus. D.N. Papa IX. ratam habuit et suprema sua auctoritate confirmavit." The decree was notified in a letter from Cardinal Patrizi dated March 2, 1866. The writer added:- There is no doubt that Professor Ubaghs, considering his great virtue, and the other professors of Louvain that hold the same opinions, will obey this decision. And the Archbishop is commanded, in the Pope's name, to take measures with his suffragans to give effect to the resolutions notified.

On the receipt of this decree the Belgian Bishops sent a letter, dated March 21, to the Rector and Professors of Louvain, to which they all replied, and gladly gave a declaration of "filial obedience, to be laid at the feet of his Holiness." Professor Ubaghs resigned his chair, and set himself to correct his works; and from this time his name is no more mentioned in connection with these transactions.

"But still," we read, "some difficulty arose with regard to the interpretation of the last decree. Some said that it was disciplinary, not doctrinal. We must not *teach* the condemned opinion" - such was their language - "but we may *preserve it in our heart*." Others considered that the exposition of doctrine drawn up by the four professors in 1860 was not touched by this decision. M. Laforêt deemed this last opinion probable and lawful, and so did Professor Beelen; and Professor Lefebvre wrote to the same effect to the Bishop of Namur, who, in conjunction with two other Bishops, sent the letter to the Holy See. The Cardinal of Malines also communicated to Cardinal Patrizi his knowledge of the doubts about the force of the decree. The latter, in his reply, requested the Archbishop to convene a meeting of the Bishops to take measures to secure a full, perfect, and absolute submission of those professors who adhered to the opinions censured, to the decision of the Holy See: "Fac igitur quaeso ut Episcopi suffraganei tui quam primum apud te convenient, hac de re agant et efficiant ut professores notatis opinionibus jam adhaerentes resolutioni S. Sedis plene, perfecte, absoluteque, se submittant."

In obedience to this letter the Bishops met at the end of July, and invited MM. Beelen and Lefebvre to express their sentiments. This they did at length, affirming at the same time that they most heartily embraced all the decisions of the Holy See, but that it was not evident to them, from the letters of March 2nd and June 3rd, that any decision had condemned the exposition of doctrine they had forwarded to Cardinal de Andrea. They then, at the request of the Bishops, drew up a carefully worded statement of their opinions to be submitted to Rome, ending with a request to be informed by the Apostolic See whether it had condemned such tenets theologically considered, and whether, therefore, they must be entirely rejected by every Catholic:-

"Pergratum nobis erit a Seda Apostolica edoceri, utrum ea, quae hic a nobis sunt exposita, ab ipsa theologicè fuerint damnata, ideoque a quovis catholico prorsus sint rejicienda."

In forwarding this to Rome, the Bishops added a letter of their own to the Pope, dated August 1st, 1866, giving an account of the doubts that prevailed touching the scope and force of the decrees, and they earnestly begged the Pontiff to say whether the doctrine of the professors was really reprobated in those decrees.

Cardinal Patrizi, on the 30th of the same month, replied in the Pope's name. He remarked that it was wonderful how such doubts could be entertained; that of course the exposition of February 1860 had been fully taken into account. "Assuredly," he said, "it is the duty of Catholics, and still more so of ecclesiastics, to subject themselves to the decrees of the Holy See, fully, perfectly, and absolutely, and to put away contentions that would interfere with the sincerity of their assent." "Porro viri catholici, multo vero magis ecclesiastici id muneris habent, ut decretis S. Sedis, plene, perfecte, absoluteque se subjiciant, e medio sublatis contentioneibus, quae sinceritati assensus officerent." "I write these things in the name of the Holy Father, that you may make them known to the Bishops your suffragans, and that both you and they may admonish in the Lord, and more and more exhort the above-named professors and those who think with them to acquiesce *ex animo*, as it becomes them, in the judgment of the Apostolic See," "ut sententiae Apostolicae Sedis ex animo, sicut eos decet, acquiescant."

On this the Bishops drew up the following formula of submission, to be signed by all the professors that had in any way committed themselves to the opinions noted:-

"In compliance with your orders I hasten to offer you this written testimony of my filial obedience, and I most humbly entreat you to lay it at the feet of our Most Holy Father Pope Pius IX. I fully, perfectly, and absolutely submit myself to the decisions of the Apostolic See issued on the 2nd of March and the 30th of August of this year, and I acquiesce in them *ex animo*. And, therefore, from my heart I reprobate and reject all doctrine opposed thereto, and in particular the exposition of doctrine that was subscribed to by four professors, and sent on the 1st of February 1860 to his Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, and other opinions touching the questions mooted at Louvain that the Apostolic See had reprobated."

"Obsequens mandatis vestris hocce documentum filialis obedientiae vobis exhibere festino, humillime rogans, ut per manus vestras ad pedes SSmi Domini Pii P.P. IX. deponatur.

"Decisionibus S. Sedis Apostolicae diei 2 Martii et 30 Augusti hujus anni plene, perfecte, absoluteque me subjicio, et ex animo acquiesco. Ideoque ex corde reprobato et rejicio quamcunque doctrinam oppositam, nominatim expositionem doctrinae a quatuor professoribus subscriptam et die 1 Februarii anno 1860 ad Emum. Cardinalem Praefectum S. Congregationis Indicis transmissam, aliaque ad quaestionem Lovanii agitatam spectantia, quae Sedes Apostolica reprobavit.

"Profunda veneratione et omnimoda subjectione permaneo,

"Eminentissime Princeps, Illmi. et Rmi. Antistites.

"Humillimus et obedientissimus famulus.

"Lovanii, Dec. 1866."

Is not this as complete an act of submission as was ever exacted to any *ex cathedrâ* decision that was not a definition of faith? Compare it, e.g., with the submission certain professors were required to yield to Pope Gregory's Brief that condemned the errors of Hermes - a judgment undoubtedly *ex cathedrâ*. (See *Dublin Review*, January 1868, p. 288.)

If, as Cardinal Franzelin seems to teach,³⁹ the assent of *faith* is claimed in the case of every *ex cathedrâ* utterance, the Pope has long ago implicitly defined the doctrine of his infallibility in minor censures, and to deny that doctrine would unquestionably be against the faith, and constructive heresy. But this it confessedly is not. In the Bull "Apostolicae Sedis moderationi," teachers and defenders of propositions condemned by the Holy See, "sub excommunicationis poena latae sententiae," are placed in a separate class from offenders against the faith; and they incur excommunication less strictly reserved even than those who read, without license, a book condemned in an Apostolic Letter.

No one refused to sign the formula, and it looked as if traditionalism at Louvain had received its death-blow. For the circumstances under which it once more put forth a feeler, we must turn to the April number of the *Dublin Review* for 1871. The last chapter of this remarkable history is even more significant for my purpose than the preceding.

It appears that, though the Vatican Council condemned traditionalism in the "Dei Filius," it did not specially mention that modified form of it that had been advocated at Louvain. The omission was welcomed by some as an indication that the doctrines so heartily and thoroughly reprobated four years ago might once more be professed. Rome was sounded on the subject, and Cardinal Patrizi, at the command of Pius IX, sent the following response, dated August 7, 1870: "That by the said Synodal Constitution (the *Dei Filius*'), especially by the monitum at its conclusion, all the decrees of the two Congregations insisted on the matter, and especially the one contained in the letters I sent to the Belgian Bishops on March 2, 1866, have not only not been annulled nor weakened, but, on the contrary, have been strengthened by a new sanction." The monitum cited is this: "Since it is not sufficient to shun heretical pravity, unless those errors also be diligently avoided which more or less nearly approach it, we admonish all men of the further duty of observing those constitutions and decrees by which such erroneous opinions as are not here specifically enumerated have been proscribed and condemned by

³⁹ * *De Divina Traditione et Scriptura*, pp. 124, 130.

the Holy See."

The *Civilta* of March 18 (p.721) declares that the Pope's reply is more useful than any *treatise* "for the purpose of clearing up better a special point concerning the extension of the object and the Acts of the (Pope's) Apostolic Magisterium." And the *Dublin Review* adds: "The Holy Father's response declares in effect that the Congregational decrees of 1867, expressing as they did the Pope's confirmation, are to be accounted Pontifical ex cathedrâ Acts."

This much is clear: - According to the mind of Rome, expressed in the declarations and acts we have considered, judgments of the class in question are to be accounted, in a very proper sense, decrees of the Holy See; the doctrine they propound ought to be accepted by all Catholics with unreserved assent - "plene, perfecte, absoluteque;" and, lastly, according to the responses of Pius IX, they are decrees of the Holy See in the sense intended by the General Council.

(Extract from Fr. W.W. Roberts: *The Pontifical Decrees against the Doctrine of the Earth's Movement*, Parker and Co., Oxford and London, 1885, pp.5-12.)

Appendix III

The Church's Theological Notes or Qualifications

The following tabular presentation is borrowed, with slight adaptation, from a work of the highest weight and authority entitled (in translation) *On the Value of Theological Notes and the Criteria for Discerning Them* by **Father Sixtus Cartechini S.J.** (Rome, 1951), a work which was drafted for use by auditors of the Roman Congregations.

(a) Theological note:	Dogma.
Equivalent terms:	Dogma of faith; <i>de fide; de fide Catholica; de fide divina et Catholica.</i>
Explanation:	A truth proposed by the Church as revealed by God.
Examples:	The Immaculate Conception; all the contents of the Athanasian Creed.
Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	Heresy.
Effects of denial:	Mortal sin committed directly against the virtue of faith, and, if the heresy is outwardly professed, excommunication is automatically incurred and membership of the Church forfeited.
Remarks:	A dogma can be proposed either by a solemn definition of pope or council, or by the Ordinary Magisterium, as in the case of the Athanasian Creed, to which the Church has manifested her solemn commitment by its long-standing liturgical and practical use and commendation.
(b) Theological Note:	Doctrine of ecclesiastical faith.
Equivalent term:	<i>De fide ecclesiastica definita.</i>
Explanation:	A truth not directly revealed by God but closely connected with Divine revelation and infallibly proposed by the Magisterium.
Example:	The lawfulness of communion under one kind.
Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	Heresy against ecclesiastical faith.
Effects of denial:	Mortal sin directly against faith, and, if publicly professed, automatic excommunication and forfeiture of membership of Church.
Remarks:	It is a dogma that the Church's infallibility extends to truths in this sphere, so one who denies them denies implicitly a dogma of Divine faith.
(c) Theological Note:	Truth of Divine faith.
Equivalent term:	<i>De fide divina.</i>
Explanation:	A truth revealed by God but not certainly proposed as such by the Church.
Example:	Christ claimed from the beginning of His public life to be the Messias.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	Error (in faith).
Effects of denial:	Mortal sin directly against faith, but no loss of Church membership. May incur a canonical penalty.
(d) Theological Note:	Proximate to faith.
Explanation:	A doctrine all but unanimously held as revealed by God.
Example:	Christ possessed the Beatific Vision throughout his life on earth.
Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	Proximate to error.
Effects of denial:	Mortal sin indirectly against faith.
(e) Theological Note:	Theologically certain.
Equivalent term:	Dogmatic fact; theological conclusion.
Explanation:	A truth logically following from one proposition which is divinely revealed and another which is historically certain.
Example:	Legitimacy of Pope Pius XII..
Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	Error (in theology).
Effects of denial:	Mortal sin against faith.
(f) Theological Note:	Catholic doctrine.
Equivalent term:	Catholic teaching.
Explanation:	A truth authentically taught by the Ordinary Magisterium but not as revealed or intimately connected with revelation.
Example:	Invalidity of Anglican Orders; validity of Baptism conferred by heretics or Jews.
Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	Temerarious.
Effects of denial:	Mortal sin indirectly against faith.
Remarks:	The expression <i>Catholic doctrine</i> is sometimes applied to truths of a higher order also, but never of a lower one. In some cases the appropriate censure may be graver than "temerarious".
(g) Theological Note:	Certain.
Equivalent term:	Common; theologically certain.

Explanation: A truth unanimously held by all schools of theologians which is derived from revealed truth, but by more than one step of reasoning.

Example: The true and strict causality of the sacraments.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Temerarious.

Effects of denial: Usually, mortal sin of temerity.

Remarks: Proportionately grave reason can sometimes justify an individual who has carefully studied the evidence in dissenting from such a proposition; since it is not completely impossible for all the theological schools to err on such a matter, although it would be highly unusual and contrary to an extremely weighty presumption.

(h) Theological Note: Safe.

Explanation: Affirmed in doctrinal decrees of Roman Congregations.

Example: That Christ will not reign visibly on earth for a thousand years after Antichrist.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Unsafe/temerarious.

Effects of denial: Mortal sin of disobedience and perhaps imprudence.

Remarks: Exterior assent is absolutely required and interior assent is normally required, since, though not infallible, the Congregations possess true doctrinal authority and the protective guidance of the Holy Ghost.

(i) Theological Note: Very common/commoner.

Explanation: The most solidly founded or best attested theological opinion on a disputed subject.

Example: Antichrist will be of the tribe of Dan.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: None.

Effects of denial: None.

Remarks: Very common or commoner opinions can be mistaken and there is no obligation to follow them, though prudence inclines us to favour them as a general policy. It should be noted that an opinion which is "very common" is *less* well established than one which is "common" which implies moral unanimity of theological schools.

(j) Theological Note: Probable.

Explanation: A theological opinion which is well founded either on the grounds of its intrinsic coherence or the extrinsic weight of authority favouring it.

Example:	Judas received Holy Communion at the Last Supper. Judas did not receive Holy Communion at the Last Supper.
Censure attached to contradictory proposition:	None.
Effects of denial:	None.
Remarks:	The better founded of two conflicting opinions is referred to as <i>more</i> probable; but Catholics are free to prefer some other opinion for any good reason.

We emphasise that the foregoing table is rough and ready. The lesser theological censures have been differently used by different theologians,^{*40} and some questions of application, and even of theological distinctions, remain undetermined in their use.

⁴⁰ * See Father John Cahill O.P.: *The Development of the Theological Censures after the Council of Trent (1563-1709)*, Fribourg, Switzerland, 1955.