

## First Prologue<sup>1</sup>

Following the footsteps of men who should be revered,<sup>2</sup> I have created or taken on two *dramatis personae*, Student and Master, between whom the following dialogue would take place, using in the person of Student many words that would seem to imply that Student belonged to a party altogether opposed to me and would certainly never dare to have dealings with me — thinking and desiring thus to hide from all men (except two) my authorship of this work. But contrary to my expectation and intention, the opposite happened, I do not know through whom. For as soon as the first part of this work was put into circulation, it was clear to many people that I had written it.

However, I have not for this reason abandoned the procedure and way of speaking I had begun but have continued it and propose to continue it right to the end.<sup>3</sup> For this reason no one should attribute to me any opinion in any way discussed or reported here, unless he knows it is something I have written or said as an assertion or opinion elsewhere or in other works. For here I say nothing in my own person but in that of others. I intend, however, if the Lord grants it, to explain what I think about all these matters in some other work.<sup>4</sup>

## Second Prologue

### Chapter 1

[**Master:**] You are curious about everything and do not stop pestering me. Though you know I am not a little wearied by the many treatises I have laboriously produced, still you insistently demand the making of an unusual work. You shamelessly ask that I compose for you some kind of “summa” about the controversy now taking place among Christians over Catholic faith and many related matters, and you boldly intend to impose on me, as you say, a way of proceeding and speaking. Having often experienced your importunity I will try to comply with your wish — not because you are my friend, but because you are shameless! So make clear what sort of work you want and how you want it made.

### Chapter 2

---

1. The first prologue may not be authentic. See above, p.14.5.

2. Augustine, Gregory, Anselm and others had written dialogues.

3. \*Recitative

4. Works in which Ockham speaks about these matters in his own person include: CB, CE, CI, Brev., EFM, IPP. For Latin text and (in some cases) English translations see these items in “Publications referred to”, below p.270. \*Where does he deal with heresy and heretics?\*

**Student:** I am very glad you are acceding to my requests, for I strongly believe that the work we are going to make will give opportunity for discovering many truths very useful to all Christendom. I want it divided into three parts, the first of which I want to be called, “On heretics”, the second, “On the teachings of John XXII”, and the third “On the actions of those disputing about orthodox faith”. I consider that the whole work should be called “The Dialogue”, for I want it to consist of question and answer: I want to question you, and you will answer me. Let my person be denoted by the name, Student, and yours by the name, Master. Under that name take on the role of reporter. Do not relate one opinion only but, when it seems appropriate to you, several judgments about the same question.

But would you please not indicate to me what you in your wisdom think? For though certainly I do not want you not to mention your own opinion also when you come to discuss different and conflicting assertions, would you nevertheless not make clear which opinion is yours? I am persuaded to ask this for two reasons. First, because I have such a high opinion of your teaching that I would be compelled to make my own understanding captive to an opinion if I altogether knew that you asserted it.<sup>5</sup> About the matters I now want to investigate, however, I do not want to be moved by your authority, I want to experience the impact on me of the arguments and texts that you, and my own reflection, bring forward.

The second is that — since love, hate, pride, anger, envy and some other passions of the mind impede, indeed pervert, human judgment in the search for truth — if you are willing to hide your own opinion and also your name, your friends will not embrace this work more than they should, nor your enemies despise it more than they should, but both parties, attending not to who was the author of an opinion but to what is said, will see what is written with more honest eyes and more sincerely set about hunting out the truth.

For the same reason too would you not reveal in this work what you think about the lord highest pontiff and his teaching, and his rivals? To hide this better, when you speak about these persons would you suppress the names of their offices and refer to them by the first letter of their proper name. Take care, therefore, to call the lord pope [John XXII] Lord “J”, the lord of the Bavarians [Ludwig] Lord “L”, brother Michael, General of the Friars Minor, Brother “M”, and Guiral Ot, Brother “G”.<sup>6</sup>

---

5. The dialogue is of course fiction. \*\*\*

6. In fact John is always referred to by name\*

I earnestly request this work from you in particular, not only because I regard you as learned beyond others, but also because I see that you are especially occupied with matters relating to this controversy. For you try to collect all the pamphlets and books by the opponents of our lord highest pontiff, and you so busy yourself with them incessantly that sometimes I have occasion to suspect that some doubt arises in your own heart about the highest pontiff and his teaching; yet because you hide nothing of this from me, whom you know to be a most sincere and zealous supporter of the same lord highest pontiff and a keen abominator of his opponents and their accomplices, you give me reason to think that you are collecting the works of his enemies in order to disprove them all when the time is right. Nevertheless, for the above reasons do not open your mind to me before this work is finished. Do not think that you will incur any blame for this, because, as you well know, it is sometimes permitted, for a reason, to be silent about the truth.

Would you therefore hurry up and begin the first tractate, “On heretics”? Divide it into seven books.

Let the first investigate to whom, namely theologians or canonists, it chiefly belongs to define which assertions should be regarded as Catholic and which heretical and who should be regarded as heretics and who as Catholics.

Let the second ask which assertions should be considered heretical and which Catholic.

Let the third chiefly consider which of those who err should be counted as heretics,

the fourth how anyone should be convicted of pertinacity and heretical wickedness, and

the fifth who can be stained with heretical wickedness.<sup>7</sup>

Let the sixth deal with the punishment of heretics, and especially of the pope if he becomes a heretic.

Let the seventh treat of believers, favourers, defenders and harbourers of heretics.

### Chapter 3

---

7. The present volume contains a translation of books 1-5. For an analytic summary of the argument, with links to Latin and English facing text, see <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/1d1-5Analysis.html>.

**Master:** You desire, I see, that from the wording of what is to be said no one should be able to gather which party of those disagreeing about the Catholic faith I regard as the more correct. I will take care to observe this, satisfying this wish of yours and the other things you earnestly request. Moreover, since you ask that this work be made by question and answer, and question goes before answer, it will be for you to begin. So ask what you please.

## Book 1

### Chapter 1

**Student:** Since my investigation into very many matters is prompted by the dissension I see in Christendom about heretical and Catholic assertions, and also about heretical and orthodox persons, I have considered that it should first be asked: To whom does it chiefly belong, to theologians or to canonists, to define which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical?<sup>8</sup>

#### **Is it for canonists, or for theologians, to decide what is heresy?**

**Master:** The answer to your question is that the word “define” has several meanings, two of which seem relevant to the point at issue. For one can define something by the authority of an office, and to define this way which assertion should be considered heretical and which Catholic pertains to the highest pontiff and a general council. In another way, one can define by means of teaching, in the way masters in the schools define and determine. Taking the word “define” in this way, the learned answer the question in various ways.

**Student:** At present I am taking the word “define” the second way. Taking it that way, I want to hear the different opinions and the arguments for them.

**Master:** It is the opinion of some that it belongs chiefly to canonists to judge which assertion is Catholic, which heretical. It seems possible to be moved to this opinion by three arguments, the first of which is this. To discern which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical, pertains chiefly to the science which principally treats of the approval of Catholic truths and the disapproval of condemned heresies. This is the science of the canonists and not theology. Therefore, etc.

A second argument is this. To define which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical, belongs to the science more trusted in matters of belief. But in matters of faith the science of the canonists should be believed more than theology, because the Church, which produces the science of the canonists, should be believed more than the gospel, as Augustine attests. He seems to assert that the authority of the Church is greater than that of the gospel, since he says, “I would not believe the gospel unless the authority of the Church

---

8. See Scott, Theologians vs Canonists on Heresy, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/fmIntro1d1.html>

had compelled it.”<sup>9</sup> To define which assertion should be considered Catholic and which heretical, therefore, pertains more to the science of the canonists than to theology.

A third argument is this. To determine which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical, pertains chiefly to the science whose author has the task of appointing the creed of the faith and duly distinguishing the articles of faith. But this pertains to the highest pontiff, who is the author of the science of the canonists. It pertains to the science of the canonists, therefore, and consequently more principally to canonists than to theologians, to define which assertion should be regarded as Catholic, which heretical.

## Chapter 2

Others, however, hold without doubt that it pertains chiefly to theologians to decide, not by way of an authoritative decision but by way of teaching, which assertion should be considered Catholic and which heretical, and that this does not pertain to canonists except in so far as their science is known to borrow some things relating to faith from theology. They try to confirm their assertion with arguments.

The first is this. To decide by way of teaching which assertion should be regarded as Catholic, which heretical, pertains chiefly to those who treat of the science on account of which alone an assertion is said to be Catholic or heretical. But it is on account of theology alone that an assertion should be called Catholic or heretical, for only an assertion consonant with theology is truly Catholic, and only one which is known to be opposed to theology should be considered heretical. For if some assertion were found to be opposed to any decrees of the highest pontiffs or also of general councils, or also to laws of the emperors, if it were not in conflict with theology, even if it could be considered false, erroneous or wicked, it should nevertheless not be counted as a heresy. It pertains therefore chiefly to those who treat of theology to decide by way of teaching which assertion should be considered as Catholic, which heretical.

A second argument is this. To define by way of teaching which assertion is to be regarded as Catholic, which as heretical, pertains chiefly to those who treat of the science in which the rule of orthodox faith is handed down explicitly and completely. But this is theology, not the science of the canonists. For many things pertaining to our faith not mentioned in the science of the canonists are found explicitly in theology, but nothing pertaining to the rule of faith can be

---

9. *Liber contra epistolam Manichei*, PL. vol. 52, col. 176

found in the science of the canonists except what they receive from theology. Therefore such a decision is known to pertain chiefly to theologians, and it does not pertain to canonists except in so far as they are known to borrow some theological material from theologians.

A third argument is this. Judgment of assertions known to be investigated by both a superior and an inferior science belongs more principally to the superior science. But certain Catholic and heretical assertions are in some way investigated by theology, which is the superior, and the science of the canonists, which is the inferior. It pertains more principally to theology, therefore, to judge about Catholic and heretical assertions, and consequently it pertains more principally to theologians to decide by way of teaching which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical.

A fourth argument is this. To judge which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical, pertains more principally to those who treat of the science that approves the larger number of Catholic assertions thoroughly treated explicitly under their own form, not to the science in which few Catholic truths are explicitly approved. This is theology, not the science of the canonists, because few Catholic truths are thoroughly treated under their own form in the science of the canonists. Therefore such a decision is known to pertain more principally to theologians.

A fifth argument is this. To decide which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical, pertains most principally to those who study the science by which, before the science of canonists existed, Catholic and faithful men approved Catholic assertions and condemned heresies. But this is theology, for before the canons were produced the apostles and other disciples of Christ, as true theologians, approved, preached, and in private and public taught Catholic truths and refuted, rejected and condemned heretical teachings and their authors. And so, as we read in Titus 3[:10], blessed Paul taught that a heretic should be avoided after a first and second admonition. He also asserts clearly in 1 Timothy 4[:3] that the teaching of those “forbidding to marry, to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful” belongs to the spirit “of error” and the teaching “of demons” and, consequently, to heretical wickedness. Therefore such a decision pertains chiefly to theology and, consequently, to theologians.

A sixth argument is this. To decide by way of teaching which assertion should be considered Catholic and which heretical pertains chiefly to those who treat of the science to which every other science yields in matters of faith. This is the

science of divine Scripture, which is called theology, as is clearly gathered from the whole of Decretals dist. 9, and particularly c. *Noli* [c.3], c. *Negare* [c.4], c. *Ego solis* [c.5], c. *Quis nesciat* [c.8], c. *Noli* [c.9] and c. *Neque* [c.10].<sup>10</sup> Therefore it is to theologians that such a decision chiefly pertains.

A seventh argument is this. This way of deciding pertains chiefly to those who treat of the science of which the direct author is God, from whom comes all our faith. That science is theology, because the writers of divine Scripture wrote absolutely nothing out of their human wit but only out of divine inspiration, as blessed Peter attests when he says in 2 Peter 1[:21], “The holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost”. That is why (as is clear in the same place) blessed Peter teaches that the prophecy of divine Scripture, by which he means the whole of sacred Scripture, should not be interpreted by human wit. He says, “Scripture prophecy is not made by private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man.” Therefore that oft-mentioned way of deciding pertains chiefly to theologians.

An eighth argument is this. That oft-mentioned way of deciding pertains chiefly to those who treat of the science to which nothing is permitted to be added or removed. This is theology, since Moses, speaking in the person of God, says in Deuteronomy 4[:2], “You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it.” Solomon agrees with this in Proverbs 30[:6]. Speaking about the word of God he says, “Add not anything to his words, lest thou be reprov'd and found a liar.” Hence the Holy Spirit through blessed John the evangelist makes a terrible threat against those who add anything to or take anything from divine Scripture when he says in the last chapter of Revelations [22:18-9], “If any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book.” From all these [texts] we clearly gather that nothing should be added to sacred Scripture nor anything removed from it. To decide by way of teaching, therefore, which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical, chiefly pertains to theologians, who treat of divine Scripture.

So I have set out the opposing assertions on your question and I have touched on quite strong arguments in support of both positions. Now, therefore, consider which seems to you the more probable.

---

10. For these see Gratian, *The Treatise on Laws*, pp.29-32, 40, 53.



### Chapter 3

**Student:** Though the arguments you adduced for the second assertion have given me occasion to make many inquiries, I confess it seems to me to be consonant with the truth, though I do not know how to satisfy myself with respect to the arguments for the first assertion. I ask, therefore, that you reply to them.

**Master:** You seem to contradict yourself, for in the beginning [p.2.12] you asked me not to indicate what I thought about your questions, but now you ask me to reply to some arguments. From this it can be conjectured that, to this extent, you want me to open what I hold in my heart.

**Student:** Whatever my request may imply by the force of my words, I was in no way wanting you to make known what you have in your own mind; I meant to ask you to report the replies of others, or what can be thought by others, not at all expressing whether you think their thoughts should be considered reasonable or unreasonable.

**Master:** Because I understand your meaning, I will do what you urge me to do. First of all, however, I want you to know that I know of some theologians who in their hearts very much look down on canonists of modern times as being unintelligent, presumptuous, rash, misleading, deceivers, scoffers and ignorant, believing that they do not know the meaning of the sacred canons. They are moved to this view by the following argument. Those who wrote the sacred canons were men very learned in rational science, moral science and theology, and they would not in any way have written canons of such sure and profound truth just naturally without the above-mentioned sciences. Since modern canonists are ignorant of those sciences, therefore, though they can retain the memory of the sacred canons, yet they cannot arrive at their meaning.

**Student:** I do not regard the canonists of our time as deserving contempt, though perhaps it does pertain more to theologians than to canonists to know the meaning of the sacred canons, especially of those that are taken from theology or from natural reason and are not purely positive.<sup>11</sup> But I ask you not to delay over this here, because perhaps I will have a question about this matter later. Would you therefore move on to the arguments mentioned?

**Master:** Because I have promised in this work not to follow my own direction but your wish, I will begin to investigate those arguments. Some theologians reply to the first [p.5.21] that it is to theology, and not to the science of the

---

11. \*purely positive

canonists, that it chiefly pertains to treat of the approval of Catholic truths and the disapproval of condemned heresies. They argue that to assert a truth is to approve it. For whoever asserts that some statement is true approves of the statement as true. The assertion of a truth, therefore, is the approval of it. But the approval of a truth is the disapproval of the opposing falsity, because whoever approves a truth does, as a consequence, disapprove of the opposing falsity (just as whoever commands one of [a pair of] contraries, as a consequence prohibits the other, as the gloss on §1 of the *Decretum* notes). By implication, therefore, the assertion of Catholic truths is the disapproval of all opposing heresies. Since Catholic truths are chiefly asserted by theology, it follows therefore that the approval of Catholic truths and the condemnation of heresies pertains principally to theology.

**Student:** That answer seems to me probable. But I would like to know why they say that approval and condemnation of this kind pertain “chiefly” to theology, by which they seem to imply that they may not pertain only to it.

**Master:** Their answer to your question is that the science of the canonists includes the *Decretum* and *Decretals*<sup>12</sup> and other statutes and letters of the highest pontiffs (even if they have not been inserted in the above books), and in those books and in some statutes and letters of the highest pontiffs some Catholic truths are asserted and some heresies disapproved of; though both the truths and the heresies are few in comparison with those that are found in theology. It therefore pertains not only to theology but also to the science of the canonists to approve some Catholic truths and to disapprove of some heresies, though few. It pertains to theology, however, to approve *all* Catholic truths and to disapprove of all heresies. Therefore although such approval and disapproval pertain chiefly to theology, they do nevertheless pertain secondarily to the science of the canonists.

They bring forward another argument too, saying that in approving Catholic truths and disapproving heresies theology receives or borrows nothing at all from the science of the canonists, whereas in approving Catholic truths and disapproving heresies the science of the canonists borrows everything from theology. Therefore these are known to pertain chiefly and universally to theology, but to the science of the canonists in some way secondarily and in particular cases.

---

12. See CIC\*\* Say something about civil law\*

## Chapter 4

**Student:** This answer seems likely to me. Therefore investigate the second argument.

**Master:** The answer to the second argument [p.5.26] is that in respect of matters of faith theology is more deserving of belief than any other science, and that we must not believe any of the writers of other sciences as we do the writers of sacred theology.

St. Augustine's text — which, as many say, is often brought forward by many against blessed Augustine's meaning — is very badly applied. To understand this they say that it should be known that the word "church" means different things in different contexts. Sometimes it is taken for a physical place set aside for the divine services, sometimes for some particular body of clerics, sometimes for the whole body of all clerics, sometimes for some particular gathering of the clergy and people, sometimes for the whole gathering of believers living together in this mortal life, and sometimes the word "church" includes not only the whole gathering of living Catholics but also the faithful dead.

It is in this last way that blessed Augustine takes "church" in his book against the Manichees, reported in dist. 11, c. *Palam* [c.9]. He says: "It is well known that in a doubtful matter the authority of the Catholic Church avails for faith and certainty, an authority confirmed through the series of bishops succeeding each other from those most solidly-established sees of the apostles right up till today, and through the agreement of so many peoples." Here "the Catholic Church" refers to the bishops and peoples succeeding each other from the time of the apostles right up till today. This is how Augustine takes the word "Church" when he asserts that he would not believe the gospel unless the authority of the Church forced him to do so. For, as has been \*proved, "Church" in that sense includes the writers of the gospel and all the apostles. It therefore cannot be inferred from the text of Augustine properly interpreted that the Roman pontiff, the maker of the canons, should be believed more than the gospel, and consequently it cannot be proved by it that more trust should be given to the sacred canons than to the holy gospel. Nevertheless they do grant that the Church which is the multitude of all Catholics who have existed from the times of the prophets and the apostles up till now is worthy of greater belief than the gospel — not because there should be any doubt at all about the gospel, but because the whole is greater than any of its parts. The Church which is of greater authority than the gospel is therefore the Church of which the author of the gospel is known to be part, and it is no wonder if the authority of the whole

is greater than that of a part. Therefore the authority of the whole gathering, including the evangelists and all other orthodox [believers] right up to these times, is greater than that of one member, or even many members, of that gathering.

That the maker of the canons is not of greater authority than the gospel, however, but of much less, the makers of the canons themselves clearly attest. For Pope Urban says (25, q. 1, c. *Sunt quidam* [c.6]), “It should indeed be especially known that he”, i.e. the Roman pontiff, “can establish new laws where the evangelists have not said anything. But where the Lord or his apostles and the holy fathers who followed them have clearly and judicially decided something, there the Roman pontiff cannot give a new law, but rather should confirm, at the cost of life and blood, what has already been decided. For if he were to strive to destroy what the apostles and prophets taught — may it never happen — he would be convicted not of passing judgment but rather of erring.” We clearly gather from these words that the maker of the canons is of much less authority than the sacred gospel. He cannot establish any new law against it but is obliged to defend it even at the cost of life and blood; if he were to presume to give a new law against it, he should be convicted of error by Catholics.

Pope Fabian agrees with this. He says (11, q. 3, c. *Qui omnipotentem* [c.95]), “He who fears God almighty does not agree in any way to do anything against the gospel of Christ, or against the apostles, the prophets or the determinations of the holy fathers.” These words clearly establish that if the maker of the canons fears the Almighty, he presumes to establish nothing which is against the gospel, and thus he is known not to be of greater but of less authority than the gospel.

This is even clearer and more certain from many chapters inserted in the Decretum, as in dist. 9, c. *Noli* [c.3], c. *Ego solis* [c.5], c. *Quis nesciat* [c.8], c. *Noli* [c.9] and c. *Neque* [c.10], dist. 11, c. *Consuetudinem* [c.6], dist. 14, c. *Sicut* [c.2], and 11, q. 3, c. *Si is qui preest* [c.101]. Very many other texts, which it would take a long time to recite, plainly assert the same thing, and for the same reasons say that the whole multitude of Christians now living in this mortal life is not of greater authority than the holy gospel, because the multitude of those living ought to defend the gospel at the cost of life and blood.

## Chapter 5

**Student:** It seems to me that you have reported a reasonable answer to the second argument, and now I ask you to tell me how the third is answered.

**Master:** Some people answer the third argument [p.6.4] by saying that the highest pontiff ought to have knowledge of sacred letters, and also ought to be expert on the sacred canons, and therefore it pertains to him especially, with the advice and agreement of a general council, to appoint a creed and rightly to distinguish the articles of faith. But in appointing a creed and distinguishing the articles of faith, and, by the same argument, in deciding authoritatively which assertion should be regarded as Catholic and which as heretical, he should rely chiefly on theology; secondarily, however, he can base himself on the sacred canons. And it can be concluded from that argument, therefore, that it pertains chiefly to theologians to decide by teaching (not imposing a law on others) which assertion should be counted as Catholic and which heretical.

**Student:** I think that any intelligent reader of what you have written will hold for certain that it is not for canonists to judge of many assertions whether they should be considered Catholic or heretical, and that when canonists do make such a decision they must have recourse to theology if they want a thorough solution, especially since no assertion should be considered truly Catholic or heretical except because it agrees or conflicts with theology. I do not think, therefore, that any learned person should in any way opine that the oft-mentioned decision pertains chiefly to canonists who are not theologians.

## Chapter 6

**Master:** You are very ignorant! I know canonists who presume to scoff at theologians who try to investigate about many assertions whether they should be counted among the heresies, saying that such an investigation is known to pertain to canonists and not theologians.

**Student:** I am absolutely astonished at what you say, because such a statement seems to have no probability. But tell me whether those who assert such a thing give any reason.

**Master:** I have heard that their only reason is that when theologians or others are accused of heresy, or try to accuse others, they do not know how to compose or prepare the writs of accusation, reply, appeal, and the like, but must have recourse to canonists. They say, therefore, that it pertains to canonists and not to theologians to determine which assertion should be considered Catholic, which heretical.

**Student:** That argument seems to me too frivolous to need an answer. For it is one thing to determine which assertion should be thought of as Catholic or which heretical, and it is another to know the formulae for law suits, the way of

proceeding against heretics in court, and also the way of defending in court those accused of heresy. The first is known to pertain to theologians, the second to lawyers. Just as it is one thing to know true money from forgeries, gold from brass, healthy horses from sick ones, strong and skilfully made arms from others, and — if someone wanted to accuse someone in court in any of those matters and the accused wanted to defend himself — it is another thing to know how the writs of accusation, reply, appeal, and the like suitable for use in court should be prepared and composed: the first is known to pertain to moneyers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and armourers, but there is indeed no doubt that the second pertains to lawyers. By that argument, therefore, it would be possible to prove that it would pertain to lawyers to determine what is true gold and what false, which garments have been skilfully made and which otherwise, which buildings are useful to anyone and which not useful, and, in short, it would be chiefly up to lawyers to determine, in connection with all manufactured and natural objects that humans use, \*what kind of thing they were according to their nature or to art, since it is possible to litigate in court about all these things. In such a case litigants need to have recourse to lawyers for writs of accusation, reply, appeal, and the like, but it is certain that expert lawyers often do not know how to judge of the least things whether they are such as they should be according to their nature or the art by which they are made. However, they do know how to prepare writs for recovering or defending such things in court and about other formalities of acting and defending before a judge.

**Master:** So I have briefly investigated your first question in the form you predetermined for me. Now put another question, or let me rest.

### Chapter 7

**Student:** Because some canonists, you say, think it pertains chiefly to them to distinguish between a Catholic and an heretical assertion, yet — since they seem to me to be putting their scythe into someone else's harvest<sup>13</sup> if they presume to attempt this without theology, since without theology they would not be able to understand the chapters on heresy in the decretals — please tell me, departing a little from our original plan, what the learned think about understanding the materials found in the decretals: that is, to whom does it belong more principally and more profoundly to know their meaning?

---

13. Cf. Deuteronomy 23:25

### Who best understands the content of canon law?

**Master:** Opposing opinions are found about your question. For canonists seem to think that they not only have better memory of the things inserted in the books of canon law, but also that they understand them more clearly and deeply, and that it pertains chiefly to them to judge, at least by way of teaching, what their meaning is. In favour of this opinion it seems they may be moved by the following argument. According to the maxim of the wise man, “Everyone judges well those things which he knows, and of these he is a good judge”.<sup>14</sup> But canonists know better than others the contents of their books. It pertains chiefly to them, therefore, to judge their meaning.

Again, another argument can be brought forward for that opinion. Knowledge of a matter pertains to no one more than to the experts on the science that considers it. Knowledge of what is handed on in the canon law pertains to no one, therefore, more than to experts on canon law, and these are the canonists. Therefore it pertains chiefly to them to determine its meaning.

#### Chapter 8

**Master:** But this opinion does not please others. For they admit that it pertains to canonists to have a greater memory of many things found in their books; however theologians, if they are excellent, ought to have both a more tenacious memory and a deeper understanding of many things; those skilled in secular laws understand some things more deeply and entrust them to a not inferior memory; some things, however, those gifted in natural reason, learned in moral philosophy and not ignorant of rational science both understand more fully and are known to imprint not less on their memory. Canonists, in fact, understand nothing more deeply, even if sometimes on account of a greater memory of many things they can more readily explain what the meaning of something is, a meaning at which others would arrive more slowly, though more deeply, with great labour and study. If, however, some canonists were fully instructed in rational science, moral philosophy, civil law, and theology, it would most principally pertain to them both to retain in a more tenacious memory what is found in their books and to judge its meaning more readily and excellently.

To make this clear they say that it should be noted that the books of the canonists are simply collections of texts from the Bible and the books<sup>15</sup> of holy theologians and from some imperial laws and the statutes and decisions or

14. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.4, 1094b 33.

15. *originalia*, i.e. the books as they wrote them. See Mary and Richard Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*, p.250.

determinations of councils and highest pontiffs. In these [decisions of councils and popes] some purely theological matters are explained and declared, such as those by which heresies are condemned and Catholic truths approved, as is clear in *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica*, c. 1 [X 1.1.1] and c. *Damnatus* [X 1.1.2], in *Extra, De hereticis*, c. *Cum Christus* [X 5.7.7], and in many other chapters inserted in the Decretals; they also include certain purely moral matters that cannot be set aside for any reason, as is clear in innumerable chapters of the *Decretum* and Decretals; and they command or forbid certain things that are purely positive, dependent on human will, which can, for necessity and utility, reasonably be varied or wholly repealed, as is clear in *Extra, De consanguinitate et affinitate*, c. *Non debet* [X 4.14.8] and in dist. 14, c. *Sicut quedam* [c.2].

From these points they say that concerning theological matters found in the canon law books, theologians, if they are excellent, surpass canonists both in memory and in understanding (though sometimes a theologian need not remember the words themselves in which a purely theological opinion is explained in a chapter containing the Church's determination). With respect to imperial laws found in the canon law books (as is clear in 2, q. 6, c. *Propter superfluum* [c.22] and in many other of the following chapters and in many places elsewhere), canonists are not to be preferred to those skilled in the civil law, either with respect to memory or with respect to understanding. With respect to purely moral matters that cannot be changed for any reason, if they are universal, canonists cannot in any way surpass either in memory or in understanding those gifted in natural reason, instructed in moral philosophy and excellent in rational science; if they are particular but not dispensable, canonists can have a greater memory and can even judge their meaning more readily, but it pertains to others to determine their meaning more deeply, though more slowly and with greater effort, because through deeper principles. Matters that are purely positive and can be changed for a reason,<sup>16</sup> however, canonists retain with a better memory, but they cannot judge them more deeply.

## Chapter 9

**Student:** I willingly give heed, in part, to that second opinion, because it seems completely reasonable with respect to what it says about theological matters, imperial laws, and universal purely moral matters. But with respect to moral matters that are particular and purely positive handed down only in the books of the canonists, it seems improbable. For no one can judge, I do not say more deeply, but in any way, things he does not know. Since these things do not

---

16. On variation in human positive law compare Thomas Aquinas, ST 1-2 q. 97.



pertain to the knowledge of those who treat of other sciences, it therefore does not in any way pertain to those people to judge them. Nevertheless I would like to know if any plausible arguments can be thought of for that assertion.

**Master:** Some try to prove that assertion by argument and by example; by argument as follows. Concerning things taught in an inferior science subordinate to it, a superior science can judge more certainly and deeply than the inferior science can. But with respect to many moral particulars that can admit change the science of the canonists is an inferior science subordinate to theology, and with respect to many it is subordinate to moral philosophy, just as particulars are subordinate to universals. About such matters, therefore, theology and moral philosophy can judge more certainly than the canonists' science can.

Second as follows. Of particular \*possible acts that can be changed,<sup>17</sup> that science can judge most certainly contrary to which nothing can be ordained or decreed in a particular case, and through which anything decreed unjustly ought to be wholly condemned. With respect to particular possible acts that can be changed that are found in the canon law, both theology and true moral philosophy are known to be [sciences] of this kind. Of those matters, therefore, either theology or true moral philosophy has the power to judge most certainly. The major premise seems to be clearly evident; the minor premise is proved by the following argument. An ecclesiastical statute is not of greater dignity or firmness than an ecclesiastical custom. But every custom gives way both to the truth of divine Scripture and to natural law (which is found not only “in the law and in the gospel”<sup>18</sup> but also in true moral philosophy), if it is found to be opposed to it, and, as a consequence, if any custom is contrary to theology or to true moral philosophy, it should be wholly condemned. If any ecclesiastical statute, therefore, has been proved to be opposed to either of those sciences it should be condemned. It is inferred from this that theology and true moral philosophy have the power to judge all matters of this kind most certainly.

This argument is confirmed by a text of blessed Cyprian, who says (dist. 8, c. *Consuetudo* [c.8]), “A custom that had crept up on certain people should not prevent the truth from prevailing and triumphing. For a custom without truth is the persistence of an error.” From this text and others in the same distinction — namely, c. *Veritate* [c.4], c. *Si consuetudinem* [c.5], c. *Qui contempta veritate*

17. This presumably means the “matters that are purely positive and can be changed for a reason” mentioned near the end of the previous chapter, or “moral particulars that can admit change” mentioned in the previous argument. That is, it is positive law that can be changed. For example, the law may be that traffic should drive on the left, or that it should drive on the right.

18. Gratian, dictum ante dist. 1, c. 1, *Treatise on Laws*, p. 3. \*reference to Natural Law

[c.6], c. *Frustra* [c.7] and c. *Si solus* [c. 9]<sup>19</sup> — we gather that every custom opposed to the truth, wherever truth be found, whether in theology or in moral philosophy, should be completely set aside.

It follows from this that every ecclesiastical statute should be rejected and condemned if it is in conflict with truth. Hence Gratian says (dist. 8, § *Dignitate*), “But natural law is superior in dignity to custom and statute alike. For anything which has either been accepted as custom or is contained in writing should be considered void and useless if it is opposed to natural law.” And he says in dist. 9 § 1, “It is quite clear, therefore, that custom is subordinated to natural law”; and “that a statute should give way before natural law is proved by many texts.” And in the last paragraph [of dist. 9] he says, “Since in natural law, therefore, nothing is commanded except what God wants done, and nothing forbidden except what God prohibits, and since there is nothing in canonical Scripture except what is found in the divine laws, and divine laws are consistent with nature, it is clear that whatever proves contrary to the divine will or to canonical Scripture is also opposed to natural law. So natural law must be preferred to anything considered subordinate to divine will, canonical Scripture or divine laws.”<sup>20</sup> From this we learn clearly, it seems to them, that anything in canon law found by either of those sciences to be contrary to theology or to natural law — which is contained not only in theology but also in moral philosophy (since natural law “began with the first rational creature”, dist. 6 § *His ita respondetur*<sup>21</sup>) — should be wholly condemned. Therefore each of those sciences has the power to judge such matters most certainly, and the experts on these sciences would have the power to judge such matters more certainly than canonists, in that they are known to use principles that are more certain, worthier, prior and more universal.

Secondly (principally [cf. p.17.4]), they try to make their assertion known by an example, recounting that when a commentator on the books of blessed Dionysius, having been accused in connection with many articles by his enemies, who had corrupted the pope and cardinals with their gifts, was forced to reply in consistory, he, as a pure philosopher and theologian completely ignorant of the law, asked the pope for an attorney. The pope replied to him, “Let us not shame you, who are regarded as more learned than all the other clerics in the world, by having another speak for you. You may speak for yourself.” When he perceived this malice, having accepted a copy of the

19. *Treatise on Laws*, pp.26-28.\*delete references to translations\*

20. *Treatise on Laws*, pp. 25, 28,32.

21. *Treatise on Laws*, p. 21.

objections and received a recess of three days for deliberation, on the fourth day he answered through theology and natural reason all the charges [drawn from] many civil and canon laws brought against him on which his adversaries had, unsolvably as they thought, based their accusation, so clearly assigning them meaning in his favour that all the laws that had been alleged against him were, in the judgment of all who understood, plainly conclusive in his favour. Whence, it is reported, the cardinals opposed to him afterwards accused his enemies, saying, “You said that this bishop does not know the civil and canon laws. He knows the principles, roots and causes of all the civil and canon laws.” From this they conclude that this theologian, who was also a great philosopher, judged more certainly, clearly and deeply about the meaning of the laws, of which he had had absolutely no memory before, than those ignorant of theology and natural reason who had, however, been nourished in those laws from their infancy.<sup>22</sup>

### Chapter 10

**Student:** I now perceive that assertions that seem at first sight to be false should not be completely despised. For at first I thought that the assertion [p.15.17] for which you strongly argued was completely irrational, yet now it does not seem to me to lack all plausibility. Tell me, therefore, how its defenders reply to the argument against it which I touched on.

**Master:** They strongly disdain that argument [p.16.35], saying that it is advanced by people who do not know the nature, origin and order of the sciences. For they say that just as someone judges best mechanical and other [works] which nevertheless he does not know how to make — as for instance many who do not know how to paint, write, or construct arms, ships, and other works made by artisans, are known to judge them better than the artisans themselves — so the superior sciences, treating of the causes and principles of matters considered in inferior sciences, can judge those matters, if they are put to them, more surely and clearly than the inferior sciences themselves. Thus also those who have perfect knowledge of the subalternating science that understands the principles of a subalternated science judge more certainly about the conclusions, and even the principles, of that subalternate science than does someone who has knowledge only of the subalternate science. Thus theologians and true philosophers will be able to judge more profoundly and surely,

---

22. The story is probably about Grosseteste at the court of Pope Innocent IV. See Luscombe, “William of Ockham and the Michaelists on Robert Grosseteste and Denis the Areopagite”.

although often with greater effort, about propositions which are handed down in canon law.

**Student:** I see that my argument is conclusive only for a science which is not subalternate or subordinated to another. For, as I see clearly, concerning a science ruled by another, superior, science (as with bridle-making in respect of horsemanship, and [sciences] subordinate to an architectonic [science], mentioned in the books of Ethics and Politics), and a science whose principles are transmitted in a superior science, it does not seem plausible.<sup>23</sup> And therefore concerning theology and the science of the canonists [my argument] is known to lack colour, because the science of the canonists receives its principles from theology, as Innocent III attests in *Extra, De accusationibus, c. Qualiter and quando* [X 5.1.24], where he clearly asserts that “canonical ordinances sprang at a later date from the texts of the New and Old Testaments”. Therefore, though I could ask many [questions] about these matters, yet because canonists, being ignorant of the terms of other sciences, would not understand them, I want you in this work to avoid as much as you can terms which are proper to sciences other than theology and the science of the canonists, so that canonists may understand everything. Let what has been said about this matter suffice, therefore. I do not care for you to reply to the arguments [p.15.5] for the first opinion because they now seem to me very weak, and it is clear enough from the above how they can be answered.

**Master:** I consider that if you were to investigate the above material quite carefully you could easily be favourably disposed to many assertions which you once regarded as completely false. So if anything concerning the above matters still vexes your mind, put it forward if you wish to.

### Chapter 11

**Student:** If I put to you everything about these matters that I am turning over in my mind, and you answered it all in the same way as you have begun, we would produce a very large book. So putting those things aside I come to another associated question. I have often heard that someone’s assertion is Catholic but he himself is not Catholic, and sometimes someone’s assertion is shown to be

---

23. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.1, 1094 a10 and *Politics*, III.11, 1282 a5-6, 17-24; see also *Posterior Analytics*, I.13, 78 b35-79 a13 and *Physics* II.2, 194 a7-12, 33-194 b8. According to Aristotle the user of the product judges the work of the artisan, the horseman judges the work of the bridle maker: in practical matters the end provides the criterion of the means. Of speculative sciences, some are subalternate to others, e.g. astronomy, optics, harmonics and mechanics are subalternated to geometry. For Ockham’s views on subalternation see Ockham SL III.ii.21 pp. 539-42 and Livesey, “William of Ockham, Subalternate Sciences and Aristotle’s theory of metabasis”.

heretical and yet he himself is not counted as a heretic. From this it seems that it could be for some to judge which assertion is Catholic and which heretical and for others to determine who should be considered a heretic and who a Catholic. So I ask whether it pertains to theologians or to canonists to distinguish between the heretics and the orthodox.

**Is it for canonists, or for theologians, to decide who is a heretic, who Catholic?**

**Master:** Some canonists seem to think that it pertains chiefly to them to judge between heretics and Catholics. In favour of that opinion it can be argued as follows. To distinguish heretics, and consequently to judge between Catholics and heretics, pertains more principally to those who reflect on heretics more thoroughly and more purposefully. Such are the canonists. Thus quite a long special title on heretics has been inserted in the book of Decretals,<sup>24</sup> and there is treatment, often copious, of heretics in the Decretum.<sup>25</sup> Heretics are seldom mentioned, however, in theology. Thus the word “heretic” is found in only one place in the Bible, namely in Titus 3[:10]. It pertains chiefly to canonists, therefore, to separate heretics from the orthodox.

But others regard the above opinion as completely false, saying that it pertains chiefly to theologians to judge who should be regarded as a heretic and who as a Catholic, but that it is for canonists to show how someone should be punished according to canon law after he has become a heretic. Similarly, although a secular judge does not know how to convict someone as a heretic, yet after someone has been abandoned to him by the Church as a heretic, he knows what punishment should be inflicted on him according to civil law. Therefore, if someone has been accused before an ecclesiastical judge as a heretic, the judge must first consult theologians about how to convict such a person and then ought to subject him through the canons to an appropriate punishment. And they show that theologians chiefly distinguish between heretics and the orthodox, saying that no one should be considered a heretic unless he adheres to a heresy with pertinacious vehemence, but it pertains chiefly to theologians to determine not only what assertion should be numbered among the heresies but also what adherence should be considered pertinacious. Therefore, etc.

**Chapter 12**

**Student:** Although it seems probable to me that it pertains chiefly to theologians to judge which assertion should be considered Catholic and which

24. X.5.7; CIC vol. 2 col. 1669ff.

25. E.g. C.24 q.1 CIC vol. 1 col.1827ff.

heretical, yet I still do not know whether it pertains chiefly to them to decide who clings to heretical wickedness pertinaciously and who not pertinaciously. And therefore I do not know whether it chiefly pertains to them to distinguish between heretics and the orthodox, because without pertinacity an error does not make the errant<sup>26</sup> a heretic. So would you like to discuss this?

**Master:** Some canonists seem to disagree with theologians about this, saying that it pertains chiefly to canonists to judge who should be regarded as pertinacious. In maintaining this they seem able to be moved by the arguments below, the first of which is as follows. No one erring against Catholic faith should be judged pertinacious unless he defends his error after being corrected by his prelate. To those, therefore, to whom it pertains to examine how errants should be corrected by their prelates it chiefly pertains to determine who should be judged pertinacious. But canonists chiefly treat of how errants should be corrected by their prelates, because it is up to them to know when and how prelates should proceed against those who err, something that does not pertain to theologians. For it is canonists, not theologians, who know about accusations and denunciations of heretical wickedness and inquisitions into it, and also about citations, interrogations and examinations of heretics and about the other matters that pertain to the order of legal proceedings to be observed concerning those who err. Therefore it chiefly pertains to canonists to know who should be judged pertinacious and a heretic.

A second argument is this. Pertinacity is a certain contumacy, as is implied by Gregory (dist. 15, c. *Non licuit* [wrong reference]) and blessed Augustine (24, q. 3, c. *Qui in ecclesia* [c.31]). It is canonists, however, who chiefly treat of contumacy, since contumacy involves not coming, or not restoring, or not replying (or replying obscurely), or withdrawing, or not showing,<sup>27</sup> all of which presuppose citation for someone to be regarded as contumacious. Citations and matters known to pertain to the order of legal proceedings are considered not by theologians, however, but by canonists. Therefore it pertains to them chiefly to know who should be judged pertinacious and a heretic.

A third argument is this. If punishment of some crime pertains to someone, then to that person pertains knowledge of that crime, because an unknown crime should not be punished. But how someone should be punished for pertinacity is chiefly a matter for canonists. Therefore it pertains chiefly to them to know who should be judged as pertinacious.

26. "Errant", a person who is in error.

27. Cf. X 2.14.2 s.v. *contumaciter* vol.2 col.649. \*

### Chapter 13

**Student:** Relate the opposing assertion with its arguments.

**Master:** Others say that it pertains chiefly to theologians to know who should be considered pertinacious. Their first reason is the following. It pertains chiefly to theologians to treat of crimes directly committed against God because, since theology has God as its principal subject, it has the function of reflecting on crimes committed against him. The pertinacity of heretical wickedness, however, is committed directly against God. Therefore it pertains chiefly to theologians to investigate pertinacity.

A second reason is as follows. “The science of [each of two] contraries is the same”, for “the same [straight edge] is the judge of itself and of the oblique”.<sup>28</sup> Now faith and heretical wickedness are contraries. But it pertains chiefly to theologians to reflect on faith. Therefore it pertains to them to reflect on heretical wickedness, and consequently on pertinacity, without which heretical wickedness is not found.

A third reason is this. When a superior and an inferior science reflect on the same thing, knowledge of that thing pertains more principally to the superior science than to the inferior, because the superior knows through superior causes and prior principles. But both theology and the science of the jurists reflect on the pertinacity of heresy, theology as superior science and the science of the canonists as inferior science; therefore it more principally pertains to theology to consider pertinacity. It seems that the major premise is certain; the minor is shown. For it is known, and they grant, that the science of the canonists reflects on pertinacity. But that theology reflects on the same subject is quite clear, since the Apostle teaches in Titus 3[:10] that a heretic should be avoided, and in the gospel Truth himself rebukes the pertinacity of the Jews who refuse to believe in Christ.

**Student:** In the whole of the gospels there is no mention of pertinacity. So how do they say that Christ rebuked the pertinacity of the Jews in the gospel?

**Master:** They reply to this that although in the gospel no mention is made of this word “pertinacity” or of “pertinacious”, yet Christ often spoke about the thing they signify.

**Student:** Where?

---

28. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1046 b7-12, *De Anima* 411 a5. See 1 Dial. 7.48.

**Master:** At John 15[:22] where he says about the Jews, “If I had not come and had not spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” Here Christ makes it clear that the Jews were pertinacious in their error because they refused to believe him. For that reason he adds below [v.24], “If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin. But now they have seen, and have hated both me and my father.” He shows here that they are pertinacious because they refused to believe in his works. He indicates the evil and pertinacity of the Jews clearly when in Matthew 11[:21-24] he reprimands the cities which refused to believe in him.

#### Chapter 14

**Student:** As far as I understand so far, the second assertion pleases me more. Indicate, therefore, how they try to reply to the opposing arguments.

**Master:** Some reply to the first [p.22.9] by saying that although in general it is chiefly theologians who ought to know who should be judged pertinacious, yet in some circumstances canonists reflect more purposefully on some particular way of convicting an errant of pertinacity (though, also, if doubt and disagreement about this way were to arise among canonists it would pertain to theologians, by applying theological and universal [principles] to these particulars, to judge more profoundly and surely, although perhaps after a drawn-out and long investigation and deliberation). Thus they say that there are many ways of arriving at knowledge of the pertinacity of someone erring against the faith, some of which have regard to the order of legal proceedings, (for instance, if an errant called to trial refuses to come, if he comes but refuses to reply, if he wickedly tries to evade the trial and examination), and canonists deal more explicitly than theologians with such ways of convicting heretics with respect to many circumstances pertaining to the order of legal proceedings. Yet in general and with respect to many other ways of convicting of pertinacity it pertains more to theologians to deal with pertinacity.

**Student:** Can anyone be convicted of pertinacity except in court?

**Master:** No one is convicted by the authority of office except in court, or without the authority of a judge; nevertheless, someone is convicted outside a court in so far as his evil, through evidence of the reality, comes so much to the knowledge of others that it is permissible without \*temerity to regard him as a pertinacious heretic.

**Student:** Speak to the form of that first argument.



**Master:** To the form it is said that when it is taken [as a premise] that no one erring against the faith should be judged as pertinacious except someone who defends his error though corrected by his prelate, this is manifestly false, because there are other ways outside any court of detecting an errant in obvious pertinacity. For theologians, not canonists, would detect as obviously pertinacious anyone who swore to defend forever some heresy not mentioned in the decretals or in the whole science of the canonists but only in theology.

To the second argument [p.22.22] it is said that all contumacy is pertinacity, but not all pertinacity should be regarded as contumacy in the strict sense. And therefore even if it were canonists who chiefly reflect on contumacy, it does not follow that they should chiefly investigate pertinacity, because often a superior science deals with universals and an inferior one with particulars. Gregory and Augustine do not say that all pertinacity is contumacy, although they hold that often heretics should be judicially condemned for contumacy.

They reply to the third argument [p.22.31] that if punishment of a crime pertains to someone, then some knowledge of that crime, at least general and confused knowledge or knowledge obtained from someone else, pertains to that person; but it is not necessary that a scientific investigation or a subtle and profound cognizance of the crime pertain chiefly to that person. The ultimate punishment of a heretic who refuses to retreat from his error after he has been handed over to a secular court pertains to a secular judge, and yet it does not pertain chiefly to a secular judge to know in depth who should be regarded as a heretic. Secular judges also ought to punish with an appropriate penalty those who forge money and artisans who make products contrary to their art, and yet moneyers and artisans detect more acutely than judges the falsity of money and other products. So though canonists reflect on how those pertinacious in error against the faith must be justly punished, theologians do nevertheless much more surely detect errants in pertinacity, just as those who hang thieves know better than judges how thieves ought to be hanged, yet know less the seriousness of theft.

## Chapter 15

**Student:** Say briefly what things, according to those who assert [this position], canonists do have the power to investigate about heretics.

### What *do* canonists know about heretics?

**Master:** They say that canonists have the power to discuss not only with what penalty according to canon law heretics should be punished, but also how judicial proceedings should be taken against them — that is, how writs of

accusation and other writs should be composed, how witnesses should be produced, and other things that pertain to the order of legal proceedings. Also, because of the many heresies found condemned in their books they can determine about many people whether they should be judged to be heretical, although about this matter theologians can judge more profoundly. For although heretics are rarely found mentioned in the Bible under that name, commentators on the holy Bible, following the principles handed down in sacred Scripture, do nevertheless often produce large tractates about heretics, on how anyone should be recognised as a heretic, many things from which are inserted in the books of the canonists. Apart from these and the determinations of the Church based on divine Scripture, almost everything else about heretics found in their books makes clear not who should be considered a heretic but how judicial proceedings should be conducted against heretics and what punishment should be inflicted. This is quite clear in the section *De hereticis* in the book of decretals [X 5.7]. However, because these things are positive particulars and depend on human invention they are not matters of reflection for theologians, who do not reflect mainly on such things. Nevertheless, where the wisdom of canonists is inadequate, it pertains to theologians to judge by universal rules whether the ecclesiastical laws about punishing heretics in certain ways and about the way of proceeding against them are contrary to the divine Scriptures, because if such laws were opposed to sacred Scripture they should not in any way be tolerated.<sup>29</sup>

---

29. What emerges from Book 1 seems to be this. Canon law is made by Church authorities. They must respect the Gospel and natural law. Canon law is therefore “subalternated” to Theology and Moral Philosophy (pp.7.7, 17.5, 19.27, 23.16). A heresy is an error in theology. To define which propositions are heresies and which persons are heretics, to define pertinacity and to recognise which persons are pertinacious in heresy, and to understand deeply and evaluate the rules and procedures for convicting and punishing heretics, is primarily the business of theologians and moral philosophers.

## Book 2

### Chapter 1

**Student:** What you have recited about the things I asked about is enough for me at present, and so I hasten on to other matters that I have more at heart. For I want to ask many things about heresies; but because sometimes knowledge of one of [two] contraries is known to provide knowledge of the other, I want to know first which truths should be considered Catholic.

#### Which truths are Catholic truths?

**Master:** It seems your question supposes one thing and seeks to know another. For it seems to suppose that not all truths should be regarded as Catholic, which blessed Augustine expressly lays down in his *Enchiridion*. It seeks to know, however, which are the truths that should be considered Catholic.

**Student:** Let us, with blessed Augustine, firmly hold what the question supposes, and tell me one opinion, or more, about what I seek to know.

#### First opinion: Catholic truth is found in the Bible alone

**Master:** About this there are different and opposing opinions. One is that the only truths that should be regarded as Catholic and as requiring belief of necessity for salvation are those asserted explicitly or implicitly in the canon of the Bible.<sup>30</sup> So if some truths are not contained in the Bible in that exact form but can be inferred by necessary and formal inference just from what the Bible contains, they should be counted as Catholic — just as the truth, “Christ is true God and true man”, is not found in this sequence of words anywhere in divine Scripture, yet because it is concluded by necessary and formal inference from things that are contained in sacred Scripture it must be considered Catholic and must be believed of necessity for salvation. But all other truths that are not inserted in the Bible and cannot be inferred from its contents by a formal and necessary consequence, even if they are asserted in the writings of the saints or in the definitions of the highest pontiffs or even if they are held by all the faithful, should not be regarded as Catholic, and it is not necessary for salvation firmly to cling to them through faith or because of them to take reason and the human spirit captive [2 Corinthians 10:5].

They try to confirm their opinion with texts and arguments. The first text is from the Proverbs of Solomon 30[:5-6] which says, “Every word of God is pure; He

---

30. This is the opinion of Marsilius of Padua. See 3.1 Dial. 3.1 (<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/t31d3.html#zp1>), and OP vol.8 p.361.

is a shield to those who hope in him. Add not anything to his words, lest thou be reproved and found a liar.” We gather from these words that nothing at all should be added, as being necessary to believe, to the divine words found in divine Scripture. Moses also seems to attest to this in Deuteronomy 4 and blessed John in the last chapter of Revelation, whose words were adduced above in book 1 chapter 2 [p.8.18]. By these we are given to understand that, just as nothing at all should be removed from sacred Scripture, so nothing at all should be added to it as necessary for salvation.

They also try to demonstrate this opinion by texts of blessed Augustine. For in a certain letter to Jerome,<sup>31</sup> also quoted in the decretals, dist. 9, c. *Ego* [c. 5], Augustine says, “I have learnt to offer only to writings now called canonical this fear and honour, that I dare believe that in writing them none of their authors has erred; and if I encounter anything in them that seems contrary to the truth, I do not doubt that it is because the codex is faulty, or the translator has not understood the text, or I do not understand. I read other [writers], however, in such a way that, however outstanding they are in sanctity or learning, I do not think something true just because they have believed it to be so, but because they have been able to persuade me by other authors or by canonical or probable arguments that it is not inconsistent with the truth.” We gather from these words that it is necessary to offer the most certain trust only to canonical books contained in the Bible and that it is not necessary to salvation to cling firmly to the assertions of others.

Again, Augustine seems clearly to believe this in his book, *De unico baptismo*,<sup>32</sup> as recorded in the same dist. 9, c. *Quis nesciat* [c. 8]. For he says, “Who does not know that holy canonical Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testament, is contained within its own fixed limits and that it is so much preferred to all the later letters of bishops that there can be no doubt or dispute at all about whether whatever is established to have been written in it is true or right? [Who does not know] that the letters of bishops written, or to be written, after the canon was confirmed, if something in them has perhaps deviated from the truth, may be

31. Letter 82, i.3, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102082.htm> \*

32. Book 2 c.3, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14082.htm> But who can fail to be aware that the sacred canon of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, is confined within its own limits, and that it stands so absolutely in a superior position to all later letters of the bishops, that about it we can hold no manner of doubt or disputation whether what is confessedly contained in it is right and true; but that all the letters of bishops which have been written, or are being written, since the closing of the canon, are liable to be refuted if there be anything contained in them which strays from the truth, either by the discourse of some one who happens to be wiser in the matter than themselves, or by the weightier authority and more learned experience of other bishops, by the authority of Councils;

reproved by the perhaps wiser discourse of someone more expert in the matter and by the weightier authority and more learned wisdom of other bishops and by councils?" From these words we gather that only about Scripture in the New and Old Testament is it impermissible to doubt whether whatever is established to have been written in them is true or right. Therefore concerning all the writings published since the confirmation of the canon, of general councils, of other expositors of divine Scripture, and also of Roman pontiffs, and of historians, it is not impermissible to doubt and discuss whether things established to have been written in them deviate from the truth, until they are shown to be in accord with the sacred Scripture of the New and Old Testament.

Again, in a letter to Vincent<sup>33</sup> cited in the same distinction, c. *Noli* [D.9 c.9], speaking about writings later than the New and Old Testament, Augustine says, "This sort of writings should be distinguished from the authority of the canon; for we do not read them as though the evidence put forward from them is such that it is not permissible to think the contrary, if perhaps they suggest something other than what truth requires." From this we gather that it is permissible to disagree with every sort of writing after the canon of the Bible.

Augustine seems to agree with this in his letter to Fortunatus<sup>34</sup> (same distinction, c. *Neque* [D.9 c.10]): "And we should not consider the disputations," i.e. expositions, according to the gloss, "of any men, even if they are Catholic and approved, as being canonical writings, as if we were not permitted, saving the honour that is owed those men, to condemn and reject anything in their writings, if perhaps we find that they have thought otherwise than truth holds, as understood with divine assistance either by others or by ourselves." From these [words] we conclude that no one is bound to assent firmly to anyone's assertions that are not found in the canonical Scriptures.

Again, concerning truths that Augustine taught, that no one is bound to accept them as necessary for salvation unless they are found in the canonical

33. Letter 93, x.35, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102093.htm> this class of writings must be, so far as authority is concerned, distinguished from the canon of Scripture. For they are not read by us as if a testimony brought forward from them was such that it would be unlawful to hold any different opinion, for it may be that the opinions which they held were different from those to which truth demands our assent.

34. Letter 148, iv.15, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102148.htm> For the reasonings of any men whatsoever, even though they be Catholics, and of high reputation, are not to be treated by us in the same way as the canonical Scriptures are treated. We are at liberty, without doing any violence to the respect which these men deserve, to condemn and reject anything in their writings, if perchance we shall find that they have entertained opinions differing from that which others or we ourselves have, by the divine help, discovered to be the truth. I deal thus with the writings of others, and I wish my intelligent readers to deal thus with mine.

Scriptures, they show through Augustine himself. For in his book *On the Trinity*,<sup>35</sup> as reported in dist. 9, c. *Noli* [c. 3], he says, “Do not be submissive to my writings as to the canonical Scriptures; but what you did not believe, believe without hesitation when you meet with it in the Scriptures; in my writings, however, do not hold firmly to what you did not consider certain, unless you realise that it is certain.” And in book 2 of his letter to Vincent Victor,<sup>36</sup> as found in the same distinction c. *Negare* [D.9 c.4], he says, “I cannot and ought not deny that there are many things in many works of mine, as in the works of the greater ones<sup>37</sup> themselves, which can be censured with just judgment and without temerity.” We conclude from these that it is not necessary to adhere unhesitatingly to the writings of blessed Augustine. By the same argument therefore [we need not adhere unhesitatingly] to the writings of any others who are not found among the writers of the Bible.

They try to show the above opinion by arguments too, of which the first is this. No Catholic truth is found outside that writing in which every truth useful for salvation is contained and every falsity inimical to salvation is condemned; but according to Augustine,<sup>38</sup> in divine Scripture whatever is useful is found and whatever is harmful is condemned; therefore no Catholic truth is found outside sacred Scripture.

A second argument is this. The New Testament together with the Old is not less sufficient for the Christian faithful than was the Old Testament alone for the Hebrews; but the whole faith to which the Hebrews were bound was expressed in the Old Testament; therefore also the whole faith to which Christians are bound out of necessity for salvation is contained in the New Testament together with the Old. Therefore a Christian is not bound out of necessity for salvation to believe anything which is not contained in the Bible and not inferrable as a necessary and clear consequence solely from things contained in the Bible.

---

35. *On the Trinity*, III, preface i.2 <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130103.htm> Do not be willing to yield to my writings as to the canonical Scriptures; but in these, when you have discovered even what you did not previously believe, believe it unhesitatingly; while in those, unless you have understood with certainty what you did not before hold as certain, be unwilling to hold it fast:

36. *On the Soul and its Origin*, IV 1, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/15084.htm> For I must not deny that both in my conduct and in my writings there are many points which may be censured by a sound judge without temerity.

37. \*Text should read *moribus* \* *Maiores*, the greater ones, seems here to mean the authoritative church writers of earlier times. Elsewhere it seems to mean the higher clergy. It could also mean “elders” or “ancestors” (cf. classical *mos maiorum*).

38. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 2.42.63, CCSL vol.32 p76; or PL vol.34 col.65. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/12022.htm> For whatever man may have learned from other sources, if it is hurtful, it is there condemned; if it is useful, it is therein contained.

Third as follows. Whatever is condemned as easily as approved does not pertain to Catholic faith and, even if it is true, should not be counted among Catholic truths; but according to blessed Jerome, speaking about the divine Scriptures, what does not have authority from those Scriptures is condemned as easily as approved;<sup>39</sup> therefore no truth that does not have authority from the divine Scriptures should be counted among Catholic truths.

## Chapter 2

But others do not agree with that opinion, saying that there are many Catholic truths and some truths smacking<sup>40</sup> of Catholic faith which are not found explicitly in the divine Scriptures and cannot be inferred solely from what is contained in them, in which undoubting faith, explicit or implicit, is nevertheless necessary for salvation.

### Second opinion: some Catholic truths are not in the Bible

To make this clear they say that it ought to be known that (besides truths about which it is permissible to hold opinions one way or the other) the truths that every Catholic is bound to hold explicitly or implicitly with sure belief can be found in a threefold diversity.

[1] Some, on which our salvation principally depends, concern God and Christ in his humanity, such as that there is one God and three persons, that Christ is true God and true man, [that] he suffered, died, and also arose from the dead.

[2] There are other truths on which human salvation does not in this way principally depend, but we must hold them with sure faith because by the revelation or approval of God, from whom no Catholic ought to dissent, they came to the knowledge of orthodox persons, who passed them down to later believers. There are very many truths of this kind contained within the established canon, in which there are also many truths found about creatures, and even about unbelieving people, which are known to pertain in some way, not directly but indirectly, to the salvation of human kind, such as that Pharaoh, the Medes, the Canaanites and very many other unbelievers occupied many lands and afflicted the children of Israel in many ways.

[3] Some truths of this kind are also preserved outside the canon and yet have become known to Catholics by divine revelation or approval through the mediation of the apostles, because while he was living with the apostles in mortal flesh Christ taught them many things and did many things in their

39. Jerome, *Commentariorum in evangelium Matthaei*, IV.23 vers.35, CCSL vol.77, p.220; or PL vol.26 col.173B.40. *Sapere*, to taste of, to smack.

presence which are, however, not found in the Bible. By the revelation also of the Holy Spirit, who according to Christ's promise was going to teach them all truth, the apostles learnt many things not found in the sacred writings and afterwards taught them to Catholics.

They say that all the above truths, and truths that can be inferred from them by necessary inference (having necessity at every time), should be held to be Catholic.

[4] Now in addition to the above truths they say that there are certain other truths which cannot be inferred solely from what is contained in divine Scripture and from the truths which have come to us through the apostles, yet clearly follow from the above truths, or from one of them, together with certain other truths of fact that cannot be denied. And they try to cite an example of such truths, saying that the following is such a truth: the "rules" established by the holy fathers, that is Basil, Benedict, Augustine, and Francis, are licit, meritorious, and perfect, because, though that truth cannot be inferred solely from what is contained in holy Scripture and from the truths which the universal Church received from the apostles (since those saints and their deeds and the rules instituted by them are not mentioned among those truths), yet that truth [that their rules are licit] is evidently inferred from the divine Scriptures together with the deeds and acts of the aforesaid saints, deeds and acts in which trust can be established adequately for a reasonable Christian. The following are also truths of this kind: the faith which Augustine held should be regarded as Catholic; the Athanasian creed is Catholic and faithful; the four holy general councils properly celebrated defined Catholic truth; and many [truths] of this kind which cannot be inferred solely from what is contained in divine Scripture and from apostolic teaching (since Augustine and Athanasius did not exist at that time and those councils had not been celebrated), yet they can be clearly inferred from things contained in them with other truths. They say that there are very many such truths, some of which have been inserted into authentic teachings, while some are not found in writings. They do not say that those truths are Catholic, taking the word "Catholic" strictly, but they say that they smack of Catholic truth, because, that is, they are inferred from Catholic truth, taking "Catholic truth" strictly, and other truths. And therefore they say that they can be called Catholic truths taking "Catholic truths" in a broad sense. And they believe that those truths which they say smack of Catholic truth should be held, at least implicitly, by every believer.



[5] There are still other truths which they say consist only in fact. Truths about the deeds of the Church and of the saints, which are found in accounts of deeds, in chronicles, and in histories worthy of trust, are of this kind, and they say that these too should not be rejected by the faithful.

From all of this they conclude that there are many Catholic truths which are not explicitly contained in sacred Scripture and cannot be inferred solely from what is contained in it. There are also many other truths [besides Catholic truths] that we must hold with sure belief.

### Chapter 3

**Student:** You have described that second opinion in enough detail, but I would like to know whether any texts or arguments can be brought forward for it, to prove, that is, that it is necessary for salvation to adhere with sure belief to some truths which are not found in sacred writings and cannot be inferred by necessary argument solely from what is contained in them. However, I do not want you to investigate whether such truths should be regarded as strictly speaking Catholic.

**Master:** The assertion about which you are asking seems provable by many texts and arguments. Innocent III seems to attest to it (*Extra, De celebratione missarum, c. Cum Marthae* [X 3.41.6]): “We find many things omitted by the evangelists both about the words and the deeds of the Lord which, as we read, the apostles either supplied in words or expressed in their deeds.... Therefore we believe that the form of words, as it is found in the canon [of the mass], was received by the apostles from Christ and by their successors from them.” We gather from these words that although the form of consecrating the sacrament of the eucharist is not found in itself and whole in divine Scripture, yet it should be believed that Christ handed down that form.

Augustine in the passage quoted above [p.11.18] also seems expressly to believe this, since he says [D.11 c.9], “It is well known that in a doubtful matter the authority of the Catholic Church avails for faith and certainty, an authority confirmed through the series of bishops succeeding each other from those most solidly-established sees of the apostles right up till today, and through the agreement of so many peoples.”<sup>41</sup> We are given to understand by these words, it

---

41. Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XI.2, CSEL 25/1 p.315; or PL vol.42 col.246.  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140611.htm> In this respect the testimony of the Catholic Church is conspicuous, as supported by a succession of bishops from the original seats of the apostles up to the present time, and by the consent of so many nations.

seems, that the authority of the Church is sufficient for the establishment of faith without divine Scripture.

Again, Pope Agatho says (dist. 19, c. *Sic omnes* [c.2]): “All the laws of the Apostolic See should be accepted as being confirmed by the divine voice of Peter himself.” We are given to understand by these words that all the laws of the Apostolic See have the same authority as the writings of blessed Peter, which are considered to be among the divine Scriptures. Therefore faith should be shown to them equally. But many truths are found among the laws of the Apostolic See which have not been inserted in the divine Scriptures. Therefore we should adhere firmly to many other truths.

Again, Pope Nicholas says (dist. 22, c. 1), “But whoever tries to remove the Roman church’s privilege, conferred by that highest head of all the churches, undoubtedly falls into heresy.... This person should be called a heretic.” We are given to understand by this that anyone who does not want to be regarded as a heretic should believe necessarily that the Roman church received from Christ primacy over all others. Yet no mention is made of this in divine Scripture. Some truths should be believed, therefore, even though they cannot be inferred from the sacred Scriptures.

In support of that assertion they adduce arguments, of which the first, a *reductio* to an unsuitability, is this. If Christians were bound to offer undoubting faith only to the divine Scriptures and to things that can be inferred solely from what is contained in them, it would follow that it would be permissible to deny that the apostles were the authors of the [Apostles’] creed, that blessed Peter was Roman pontiff, that blessed Peter’s see was transferred from Antioch to Rome,<sup>42</sup> and that the Roman pontiffs succeeded Peter, since we read nothing about these in the divine Scriptures. Yet the universal Church has held, preached, and taught these truths up to this time, and consequently the universal Church would have erred — something every Catholic ought to regard as unsuitable.

A second argument is this. Catholics are no less bound to assent with undoubting belief to the determinations and definitions of Roman pontiffs, when they define nothing against orthodox faith, than they are bound to obey their statutes when they command nothing against God’s will. But it is necessary to obey with all humility and reverence all the statutes of Roman pontiffs, when they command nothing against God’s will, as is clearly established by the sacred

---

42. According to C.24 q.1 c.15, *Rogamus*, CIC vol.1 col. 1835, Peter was first bishop of Antioch, then transferred to Rome. Parvis, “When Did Peter Become Bishop of Antioch?” The “see” (*sedes*, seat) is the district a bishop rules.

canons, as we find in dist. 12, c. 1 and c. *Praeceptis* [c.2] and in many chapters elsewhere in the decretals. Therefore it is necessary to adhere most surely to the determinations and definitions of the Roman pontiffs, when it is certain that they are defining nothing against Catholic faith. But the Roman pontiffs determine that many truths should be firmly held that cannot be proved from the confirmed canon alone. Out of necessity for salvation, therefore, one must offer undoubting faith to some truths that cannot be proved solely from the divine Scriptures.

**Student:** I would like to know whether those who assert this cite any example of a truth that should be firmly held that is not found in the divine Scriptures and cannot be clearly proved from those Scriptures alone.

**Master:** I have already shown you many of their examples, namely that the apostles were the authors of the creed, that blessed Peter was bishop of Rome, that blessed Peter's see was transferred from Antioch to Rome, and that the bishops of Rome succeeded blessed Peter. They give another example, concerning the primacy of the Roman church,<sup>43</sup> of which no mention is made in divine Scripture. Although sacred Scripture speaks expressly about the primacy of blessed Peter, it is not found in Scripture that blessed Peter ruled the Roman church, and so nothing can be shown about the primacy of the Roman church from Scripture alone. Yet we ought to hold firmly that the Roman church has primacy over all other churches.

**Student:** Pass over the primacy of the Roman church, because I will later put to you some questions about that. But tell me if those who make this assertion base themselves on any other argument.

**Master:** They try to fortify themselves with still other arguments. Their third argument is this. The teaching of the apostles should not be held in less reverence and honour than their canons and statutes; but the canons and statutes of the apostles, whether those they collected in their writings or those they only orally ordered to be observed, should be firmly observed; therefore all the truths the apostles taught in writing or orally should be considered absolutely true. However, the apostles taught very many things which they did not leave in their writings; therefore some truths not found in the canonical Scriptures should be considered absolutely true, and consequently one must agree with these and adhere most surely to them.

---

43. "Primacy", the status of being first; here, the authority of Peter over other believers, and the authority of the Roman church over other churches.

A fourth argument is this. The universal Church cannot err, as the Truth himself attests when he says to the apostles in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” He also prayed for Peter that his faith would never fail [Luke 22:32]. Indeed anyone who was to say that the universal Church errs would violently strike against the article of faith, “[I believe in...] the Holy Catholic Church”. But the universal Church preaches many truths that are not found in the divine Scriptures and cannot be inferred from them alone, as is clear from the earlier examples. Therefore such truths should be firmly believed.

A fifth argument is this. Writings composed by the highest pontiffs and holy doctors in support of sound doctrine are not of less authority than chronicles and histories (by unbelievers or believers) that exist outside sacred Scripture; but anyone who rejected all chronicles and histories outside the Bible or said that they should not be approved would be considered completely foolish, for then one could reject and deny everything narrated about highest pontiffs, emperors, kings, kingdoms, and anything else not found in the Bible — which should be considered unsuitable. So much the more, therefore, should we adhere firmly to the writings composed by highest pontiffs and saints in support of sound doctrine; however, many truths not found in the Bible are inserted in their writings; therefore, such truths should also be firmly believed.

**Student:** The arguments and texts you have brought forward for the second opinion seem strong to me. And though I do not want you to make clear throughout this work what your own opinion is when you record contrary and opposed matters [above, p.2.12], yet there is one thing in general that I want to know, namely whether, when you try to support with arguments and texts the assertion that is your own, you think that all the texts and arguments you bring forward prove your conclusion demonstratively.

**Master:** For the opinion that I regard as true I bring forward reasons that are sometimes demonstrative, sometimes only probable, sometimes indeed only plausible, in order to exercise, test or try others.

#### **Chapter 4**

**Student:** That way pleases me greatly, because through it I may often put the knowledge of the haughty to the test. Next, since I sought to know which truths one must firmly assent to — about which you have reported different opinions, the first of which implies that the firmest faith should be offered only to the writers of the Bible, and the second, which pleases me more, should allow that

others should also be believed — I therefore now ask what writers besides the Bible writers should be believed.

**According to the second opinion, what authorities should be believed besides the Bible?**

**Master:** Different people answer your question in different ways. Some say that it is necessary to believe all general councils and all highest pontiffs in the things they define as to be believed, and all the saints who wrote on sacred Scripture, even if they cannot demonstrate what they say by sacred Scripture. This seems to be supported by what we read in dist. 15, c. 1, where we clearly find that general councils should be accepted, and c. *Sicut* [c.2] and c. *Sancta Romana* [c.3]. There is [material] on accepting the assertions of highest pontiffs in dist. 19, c. *Si Romanorum* [c.1] and in many other chapters. There is [material] about the teachings of saints in dist. 15, c. *Sancta* [c.3].

But others do not entirely agree with the above assertion. They say that although assertions of general councils should always be adhered to, and although Catholics must agree with many decrees or decretals and definitions of Roman pontiffs and many works of learned saints for the reason that it is certain that everything found in them does accord with Catholic truth, yet it is not necessary to accept that something is in harmony with the truth just because Roman pontiffs or saints teach that it should be believed.

**Student:** I intend to investigate later some matters pertaining to general councils and highest pontiffs, and so would you not say anything about them here. But I ask you to disclose what those who assert the above think about the saints.

**According to the second opinion, it is not always necessary to believe what is said by saints**

**Master:** They affirm two conclusions about the saints. The first is that it is not necessary for all the faithful to approve something as being in harmony with the truth just because a saint is of the opinion that it should be believed. The second is that not all the judgments found in the works of the saints now published throughout the Church should be adhered to firmly.

The first conclusion is proved from texts of St. Augustine included in dist. 9,<sup>44</sup> c. *Noli* [c.3] et c. *Negare* [c.4] and c. *Ego* [c.5] and c. *Quis nesciat* [c.8] and c. *Noli* [c.9] and c. *Neque* [c.10]. Augustine clearly affirms in these that some

---

44. See above, p.28.9, and Gratian, *The Treatise on Laws*, p.29ff.

things inserted in the works of the saints and in his own works may be condemned by the faithful by just judgment without any temerity.

They also try to show this by argument. It is not necessary to think that something is true for the reason that it is believed by people *who can err*. For it is not necessary, because of the opinion alone of people who can approve of the false as true, to approve something as true just because such people think it so. But saints, remaining saints, can err even against Catholic truth. Therefore it is not necessary because the saints think that something is true to think that it is true. The major premise is clear; the minor is proved by example and by argument: by the example, I say, of blessed Augustine who, being a saint, wrote and taught many things against Catholic truth, which he also later retracted. It is also proved by argument. For an error which is not joined to pertinacity does not prevent sanctity, and it is possible for someone to err against Catholic truth without pertinacity [p.21ff]. It is not unsuitable to affirm, therefore, that saints, remaining saints, can err against Catholic truth; and so it is not necessary to adhere firmly to everything that the saints say.

The second conclusion they maintain is that not even all the judgments found in the works of the saints now published throughout the Church should be adhered to firmly, which they try to prove as follows. No one ought to assent to contraries, but in their works now published throughout the Church saints are found contrary to one other, even in matters known to pertain to apostolic faith and teaching. For as we find in dist. 26 [c.1., c.2] Jerome and Augustine proffered opposing judgments about blessed Paul's teaching that a bishop must be the husband of one wife, i.e. not of many. Hence the gloss on c. 1 of that distinction [s.v. *post baptismum*] says, "Jerome thought wrongly here and so Augustine corrects him in the next chapter."

As is clear in their letters<sup>45</sup> and is recorded in the gloss on Galatians 2, those saints also had opposing opinions about the reproof in which blessed Paul says that blessed Peter was reprehensible.

Also, blessed Cyprian thought differently from blessed Augustine about the baptism of heretics, and so blessed Augustine contradicted St. Cyprian. Speaking about St. Cyprian and others he says (*De consecratione*, dist. 4, c. *Quomodo* [c.41]): "It has seemed even to some distinguished men, priests of Christ, among whom blessed Cyprian is especially prominent, that Christian baptism cannot exist among heretics and schismatics only for the reason that they did not distinguish a sacrament from its effect or use, and because they

45. Galatians 2:11. Augustine Letters 28, 40, 82 <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102.htm>

did not find among heretics its effect and use in freeing from sin and rectifying the heart, they thought that the sacrament itself was also not there.” This is the opinion of blessed Cyprian about the sacraments of heretics, the opposite of which Augustine asserts in that place.

Clearly therefore saints propound opposing dogmas about the sacraments of the Church. Hence we read in dist. 32, § *Verum*, “It should indeed be known that the canons of the apostles, whose authority is recognised entire by the eastern church and in part by the Roman church, and the notable martyr Cyprian and 80 bishops with him, call baptism by heretics the bath of the devil. But Stephen and Cornelius, martyrs and bishops of Rome, and the venerable Augustine in his book *On Baptism*, vehemently contradict Cyprian and those bishops on that account, asserting that a baptism carried out or celebrated according to ecclesiastical custom, whether by a heretic or a schismatic, is valid.” We gather from these [words] that Cyprian and Augustine handed down opposing opinions about the sacraments of the Church, and these [opinions] are indeed found in their writings, as is quite clear from the above and from the chapter from Cyprian (1, q. 1, c. *Si quis* [c.70]). It is not the case, therefore, that a Catholic ought to adhere to all the assertions found in the works of the saints.

**Student:** You have proved so clearly of books by saints that they do not have to be approved in their entirety that I cannot disagree. It seems to follow from this that no authority remains in them because, as with [legal] instruments so also with writings, any found partly false is wholly rejected, or at least rendered suspect. And hence Augustine asserts about the sacred Scriptures (dist. 9, c. *Si ad scripturas* [c.7]), that if even well-meaning falsehoods [*officiosa mendacia*] be allowed into them no authority will remain in them.<sup>46</sup> Tell me, therefore, how they reply to what we clearly read in dist. 15 [c.3 *Sancta Romana*]<sup>47</sup> about the approval of the works of saints, among which are certainly listed the works of Cyprian, Augustine and Jerome.

**Master:** They say that the Church has not approved all the works of the saints in respect of everything contained in them. It is certain that there are in the blessed Augustine’s books many things opposed to the truth, which also he himself later retracted, and so they are not approved. And as with blessed Augustine’s books, so it is also with the books of many other saints, that they are not approved in their totality. However, all the books of the saints mentioned in [*Sancta*

46. Augustine, *Epistola* 40 c.3. *Officiosa*: “Which contain piety, hurt no one, and benefit someone”, D.9 c.7, s.v. *officiosa*, vol.1 col. 37.

47. Which gives a list of approved works by Christian writers.

*Romana*] are approved in respect of everything that has not been corrected either by the author or by others.

**Student:** In that way it would be permissible to approve the books of any heretic, because it would be permissible to approve everything in their books in respect of everything that had not been corrected by Catholics. For it is permissible to approve every truth.

**Master:** They say that the books of heretics and the books of saints are not like cases, because in the books of heretics it is chiefly falsehoods that are investigated and asserted, and few truths are incorporated in them, but in the books of saints it is chiefly truths to which attention is paid and there are few things found that are opposed to the truth; and therefore because of a few not useful things such greatly useful things should not be rejected.

**Student:** Explain to me further whether they think that all truths found in the books of saints should be considered Catholic [p.27.10].

**Master:** They do not think that all the truths treated in the books of saints are Catholic. Hence they say that the saints handed down some things as Catholic, some things, however, as necessary but not pertaining to faith, and some things indeed as probable; and this last is clearly proved from the texts of Augustine which are included in dist. 9, that is c. *Noli* [c.3], c. *Negare* [c.4] and c. *Neque* [c.10]. Anselm is in accord with this when he says (book 1 of *Cur deus homo* [c.2]), “It is on this condition that I want everything I say to be received, that is, let anything I say which a greater authority does not confirm not be received as a certainty, even if I seem to prove it by reason, except in the sense that that it seems this way to me for the time, until God in some way gives me a better revelation.” We gather from these words that Anselm was intending to say some things as probable only.

## Chapter 5

**Student:** What you have said has given me a good opportunity to think about these things; however, I do not intend to ask more questions now. But would you please indicate, without any proof, how many kinds of truth, according to the opinion of these people, it is necessary for Catholic Christians to assent to.

### **According to the second opinion, there are five kinds of truth Catholics must accept**

**Master:** They hold that there are five kinds of truth from which Christians are not permitted to dissent in any way. The first kind is of those that are handed



down in sacred Scripture or can be inferred from them by necessary argument. The second kind is of those which have come to us from the apostles through the report of their successors or through the writings of the faithful, even if they are not included in the sacred Scriptures and cannot be inferred from the Scriptures alone by necessary argument. The third kind is of those we find in trustworthy chronicles or histories or reports of the faithful. The fourth kind is of those that can be clearly inferred from truths of the first and second kinds alone, or from them, or one or other of them, together with truths of the third kind. The fifth kind [cf. p.71.20] is of those which, in addition to the truths revealed to the apostles, God has revealed (or, also, inspired) to others or newly revealed (or, also, inspired), a revelation (or inspiration) which has come or, also, came, without doubt to the universal Church.<sup>48</sup>

**Student:** Although I did not intend to trouble you further about these matters, nevertheless — because you have omitted a kind of truth about which no Catholic doubts — explain why these people do not include, among the other truths, the truths found in the decretals and definitions of the Church.

**Master:** They do not make particular mention of those truths for this reason, that they think that when the Church proceeds correctly it does not determine or define a truth except on the basis of sacred Scripture, the traditions of the apostles, indubitable chronicles, histories or reports of the faithful, or things that follow from these or any of them, or divine revelation or inspiration manifested in the due way. And therefore all the truths the Church determines or defines are known to be included under some of the above five kinds.

**Student:** What you are reporting urges me, against my previous intention, to ask what those who affirm the above position think about the approval of the canon of the Bible, of other books composed later and all the other [writings] the Church is known to approve?

**Master:** They hold this as quite certain, that it is not in the power of the Church to approve or to reject anything at all as it pleases, but when the Church has approved anything correctly it has based itself on some of the above five kinds of truth. Hence also in the present case they do not make any real distinction, although there is a nominal distinction, between approval on the one hand or determination or definition on the other.

---

48. The syntax is puzzling. Perhaps the imperfect verbs should be future perfect. Perhaps Ockham means truths God revealed to some persons in the past, or will newly reveal to some persons in future, that have come or will come to the whole Church.

## Chapter 6

**Student:** I have sought to know some things about Catholic truths. But now let us pass on to the heresies opposed to them. First of all, however, I want to know if you have found a definition of heresy given by anyone.

### What is a heresy?

**Master:** Some people do define or describe heresy, saying that a heresy is a false doctrine contrary to orthodox faith. “False doctrine” is put in this description for the genus, because every heresy is a false doctrine but not every false doctrine should be regarded as a heresy. For Jerome clearly attests that every heresy is a false doctrine, saying (24, q. 3, c. *Inter heresim* [c.26]), “A heresy involves a wrong doctrine”; a wrong doctrine, however, is a false doctrine; therefore a heresy is a false doctrine. But not every false doctrine is a heresy. For according to Augustine in the *Enchiridion* [2.63], in many things to err is not a sin or a very small one; but heresy, like infidelity, is a very heavy sin; therefore not every error is a heresy; we conclude from this that not every false doctrine is a heresy, since every error should be considered a false doctrine. According to them, therefore, “false doctrine” is not unsuitably put in the description of heresy in place of a genus. “Contrary to orthodox faith” is put as a difference, for through this a heresy is suitably distinguished from other falsities which are not heresies, since other false doctrines are not contrary to orthodox faith and therefore are not called heresies.

## Chapter 7

**Student:** I am moved by the words you quoted from Jerome to ask whether, when he says, “A heresy involves a wrong doctrine”, blessed Jerome intended to give a definition or description of heresy.

**Master:** Those whose opinion of the preceding question I have reported say that taking “wrong” broadly, as every pernicious or harmful thing of any kind, Jerome did not intend there to define heresy, for there are many pernicious doctrines that should not be considered heresies. If “wrong” is taken more strictly, however, as that which is pernicious in religious teaching, just as according to blessed Augustine<sup>49</sup> one kind of falsehood is that which is found in religious teaching, so it can be granted that blessed Jerome intended to assign a description of heresy there, because in this way “wrong doctrine” is taken for false doctrine contrary to orthodox faith.

---

49. *De mendacio*, 14.25, CSEL vol.41 p.444; or PL vol. 40 col. 505..

## Chapter 8

**Student:** I would gladly know whether everyone agrees that heresy should be described in the above way.

### “New” heresies and “new” Catholic truths

**Master:** There are some people who do not think that heresy should be described in such a way. They seem to rely on the following argument. Many false doctrines contrary to orthodox faith newly become heresies although they do not newly begin to be false doctrines contrary to orthodox faith; they are therefore false doctrines contrary to orthodox faith before they should be regarded as heresies; from this we conclude evidently that not all false doctrines contrary to orthodox faith should be regarded as heresies. The antecedent seems evident, because many heresies are new although previously they were false doctrines contrary to orthodox faith. For Pope Urban says (24, q. 3, c. *Notandum* [c.37]), “St. Augustine, together with legates of the holy Roman church and his own holy bishops, excommunicated Pelagius and Celestine for introducing a new heresy into the holy Church of God.” We gather from these words that Pelagius and Celestine introduced into the Church an opinion that at that time was a new heresy, and yet that opinion was previously contrary to orthodox faith. Before that opinion or assertion was a heresy, therefore, it was a false doctrine contrary to orthodox faith, and so that description is not convertible with heresy. Hence Gratian says (24, q. 1, § 1), “Every heretic either follows a heresy already condemned or invents a new one.” And the gloss at that place says, “Say without distinction that, whether he follows an old one,” that is heresy, “or a new one, he is excommunicated, even if it is hidden.” The gloss also says, in the same place, “If I knew that my prelate was a heretic because he invented a new heresy, but he did not preach it, if he were to excommunicate me I would celebrate [mass] in secret.” We clearly see from these texts that there have been and can be new heresies, which, however, are not new falsities contrary to orthodox faith; and therefore not every falsity contrary to orthodox faith should be counted as a heresy.

## Chapter 9

**Student:** Notwithstanding these [objections] the above definition or description of heresy seems suitable to me. Would you deign to indicate, therefore, how the above objections are answered.

**Master:** Those who assign the above description [p.42.6] try to answer in two ways. First, they say that a heresy is said to be “new” not because in fact it

begins newly to be a heresy, but because it is newly asserted, according to the way of speaking by which any truths, even necessary truths, are said to be new not because they were not truths before but because they have been newly taught publicly. In that way also some errors are said to be new not because in fact they were not errors before but because they have been newly asserted. We clearly gather this way of speaking from the words of Pope Gelasius, for he says (24, q. 1, c. 1), “Achatius did not become the inventor of a new error but the imitator of an old one.” Pope Felix agrees with this when he says (24, q.1, c. *Achatius* 2 [c.3]), “Achatius was not the inventor of a new error, or of an error of his own.” By these words we are given to understand that if Achatius had been the first to affirm his error he would have been regarded as the inventor of a new error, and yet that error had been considered an error previously. For before they are affirmed by someone many errors are condemned by others who are not in error, and consequently they should be considered errors before they have an assertor or a defender; and yet according to one way of speaking, if someone were to begin to defend them they would be called new errors. In a similar way of speaking also certain Athenians said of blessed Paul, as we find in Acts 17[:18], “He seems to be a proclaimer of new demons”, calling them “new demons” not because they thought that they had not been demons before but because they thought that they were old demons newly preached by Paul. In this way some people say that certain heresies are called “new” because of a newness of assertion or defence, by which someone newly asserts or defends them, which however were previously to be regarded in fact as heresies.

[Second] they answer another way (without, they say, contradicting the above) that, as the gloss on *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica*, c. 1 [X 1.1.1] notes, faith is sometimes said to be “the credence by which we believe what we do not see”, and “in another way is said to be a collection of articles of faith” — though it may also be used in another six ways, as we find in the same place — so “error” as well as “heresy” can be used in two ways. In one way an error can be said to be the act or disposition by which someone errs; in another way the very object of such a disposition or act of erring is called an error. A heresy too can be taken in one way for the act or disposition of heresy; in another way it is said to be the object of such a disposition or act. If we take heresy and likewise error in the first way, there can be many new heresies and new errors which were not heresies or errors before. If we take heresy in the second way, heresies are not said to be new unless they have been newly affirmed, as was said in the earlier reply, and a similar thing can be said about many errors.

## Chapter 10

**Student:** It seems to me that the difficulty we have been discussing about new heresies is more verbal than real, so please do not dwell upon it any longer. But do not hide from me whether there is any other objection to the above description of heresy.

**Master:** That description seems to be disproved by the words of blessed Jerome in 24, q. 3, c. *Heresis* [c.27]. For he says, “Heresy is so called from the Greek for ‘choice’, namely that each person chooses for himself the teaching he prefers.” From these words we gather two things. The first is that because heresy comes from choice, no falsity should count as a heresy until someone chooses to opine, propound, or assert it. The second is that since not only unbelievers but also Catholics and believers choose the teaching they prefer, the assertions not only of unbelievers but also of Catholics and believers should be called heresies. And we conclude from both of these that the oft-cited description of heresy has been unsuitably assigned.

## Chapter 11

**Student:** That seems to me to be a strong objection, but would you not delay to explain how it is answered.

**Master:** They say that the words of the saints must be understood sensibly. Often their meaning must be gathered from various of their statements, and so they should not always be understood as the words sound on the surface. And therefore they say that although the above words from Jerome at first sight seem to suggest that before actual choice no falsity should be called a heresy, and that every teaching that someone prefers, whether true or false, can pertain to heresy, yet Jerome does not mean this. For in writing the above words in his commentary on the letter to the Galatians [rather, Titus], Jerome tries to mark out the difference between schism and heresy by saying, “I think that there is this difference between schism and heresy, that a heresy contains wrong teaching, a schism after episcopal estrangement likewise separates one from the Church ... But there is no schism unless one invents some heresy for oneself, so that he seems to have withdrawn rightly from the Church.”<sup>50</sup> From these words we gather that according to blessed Jerome heresy never exists without wrong teaching contrary to the teaching of the Church. Therefore when he says, “Heresy is so called from the Greek for choice” etc., Jerome’s words should be understood not of the choice of any teaching at all but of false teaching contrary

50. Jerome, *In epistolam beati Pauli ad Titum*, 3, 10-11, CCSL vol.77C, p.70; or PL vol. 26, col. 597-598.

to the teaching of the Church, and they should not be understood of an actual but rather of a potential choice by which someone can choose a false teaching he thinks is better contrary to the teaching of the Church.

### Chapter 12

**Student:** I see that, understood this way, Jerome's words do not conflict with the above description of heresy. It seems to follow from this that all assertions in any way opposed to sacred Scripture should count as heresies, but I do not know whether all Christians think and affirm this. Do not conceal it, therefore, if some people do not think this.

**Master:** There were the Manichees who did not accept the Old Testament. Some heretics also have rejected many things in the New Testament.

**Student:** Those about whom you are now speaking were heretics condemned by the Church and I do not care to hear about them. But I would willingly learn whether there are any Catholics, or any people not condemned by the Church, who do not regard as heretical all assertions that are in any way opposed to sacred Scripture.

**Master:** Some moderns say that many assertions really opposed to divine Scripture should nevertheless not count as heresies because they have not been condemned by the Church, just as many truths in harmony with divine Scripture should nevertheless not count as Catholic truths because they have not been defined or determined by the Church: but after assertions contrary to divine Scripture have been condemned by the highest pontiff they must be held to be heresies, and after truths in harmony with divine Scripture have been defined or determined by the highest pontiff they must be considered Catholic. For this reason they say that the pope can make a new article of faith and, by the same argument, the pope can bring it about that an assertion that was not previously heretical begins to be heretical after his condemnation.<sup>51</sup>

### Can the pope make a new article of faith?

**Student:** This opinion seems completely contrary to many earlier assertions which seemed probable to me. Make clear, therefore, if it tries to base itself on arguments or authorities.

---

51. Michael of Cesena attributed this opinion to one of the John XXII's canonists, Jesselinus de Cassagnes. John XXII himself rejected it. See Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, pp.194-5.

**Master:** Those who hold it base themselves, as I hear, on two [examples], first on Alexander III's chapter *Cum Christus* in *Extra, De haereticis* [X 5.7.7], where, they say, he made a new article [of faith], namely that Christ is God and man, because before Alexander's time it was permissible, they say, not to believe that Christ was God and man. Secondly, they base themselves on Lord John's constitution *Cum inter nonnullos*, in which it is defined that "henceforth" it is heretical to say that Christ and his apostles did not have anything either individually or in common, and consequently it was not heretical before. It follows from these that the pope can make new articles of faith and can bring it about that assertions which were not heretical newly begin to be heretical.

**Student:** I ask you not to investigate here the example you brought forward from the constitution of the most holy father and lord, Pope John XXII, because as I have said I will later on raise some questions for you about all of the holy father's teaching. But if you have thought of some arguments for the aforesaid opinion put them forward.

**Master:** That opinion can be supported in other ways, first as follows. A person is to be condemned as a heretic for asserting a heresy. But there have been many false assertions the affirmers of which were not to be condemned as heretics before [those assertions] were condemned by the Church; after those assertions were condemned by the Church, however, their affirmers were to be condemned as heretics. Therefore such assertions before condemnation by the Church were not to be counted as heresies, but after their condemnation were to be regarded as heresies; and, consequently, the same assertion that at first is not a heresy is counted as a heresy because of its condemnation by the Church. By the same argument, therefore, the same assertion which at first is not Catholic, later becomes Catholic through the approval of the Church. Approval or condemnation of this kind, however, pertains to the highest pontiff; therefore the highest pontiff can make a Catholic assertion of one that is not Catholic, and can make an heretical assertion of one that is not heretical; and therefore he can make a new article of faith.

The major premise of this argument is manifest; the minor is proved by clear examples. For the Greeks, who deny that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, were not regarded as heretics before the condemnation of their assertion, yet after its condemnation they were regarded as heretics. Those too who affirm Joachim's opinion, which was condemned by a general council, were judged to be heretics after its condemnation, yet Abbot Joachim himself, though he maintained the same assertion before its condemnation, was not a heretic, as we

find in *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica*, c. *Damnamus* [X 1.1.2]. Similarly those who, after Alexander III's constitution, *Extra, De hereticis*, c. *Cum Christus* [X 5.7.7], held that Christ is not anything as a man were to be adjudged heretics, as the gloss notes at that place [s.v. *sub anathemate*], but before that they were not considered heretics. It is clear, therefore, with regard to some assertions that their affirmers should not be regarded as heretics before the condemnation [of the assertions], yet after their condemnation they are regarded as heretics.

Secondly as follows. Someone who can define by authority which assertion should be considered Catholic and which heretical can make Catholic an assertion which is not Catholic, and heretical an assertion which is not heretical, because otherwise his definition would seem to have no more effect than the definition or determination of a teacher who declares and proves by authorities or arguments which assertion should in fact be considered Catholic and which heretical. But it pertains to the highest pontiff to define, not only by way of teaching or doctrine but also by authority, which assertion should be considered Catholic or which heretical. Therefore the highest pontiff can make Catholic an assertion that is not Catholic and heretical an assertion that is not heretical.

### Chapter 13

**Student:** Those two arguments seem plausible, yet the conclusion is difficult for me to hold. If some people affirm the opposite, therefore, would you please explain.

**Master:** Some say that, just as with respect to those things that pertain to our faith and do not depend on human will, the highest pontiff can not, nor can even the whole Church of God, make true an assertion that is not true, nor false an assertion that is not false, so he cannot make Catholic an assertion that is not Catholic, nor heretical an assertion that is not heretical; and therefore he cannot make a new article of faith nor in any way make a heresy of what is not a heresy. Because just as, without any approval by the Church, Catholic truths are immutable and immutably true by the very nature of things, so they should be considered immutably Catholic; and similarly, just as heresies are false without any condemnation by the Church, so they should be regarded as heresies without any condemnation by the Church.

**Student:** That opinion attracts me more, and so if it can be confirmed by arguments do not hesitate to bring them forward.



**Master:** That opinion is shown by a few arguments of which the first is this. If a truth is Catholic, either it is to be called Catholic [1] because it has been revealed by God, or [2] because it is contained in the divine Scriptures, or [3] because it has been accepted by the universal Church, or [4] because it follows from things, or some things, that have been divinely revealed and found in the divine Scriptures and accepted by the universal Church, or [5] because it has been approved by the highest pontiff.

Now if [1] some truth is Catholic because it has been revealed by God, and divine revelation does not depend on the approval of the highest pontiff nor on the approval of the whole Church, therefore the approval of the highest pontiff contributes nothing to the fact that such a truth is truly Catholic.

If the second [2] is granted, namely that some truth is Catholic because it is inserted in the divine Scriptures, and it is certain that the insertion of such a truth in the divine Scriptures does not depend on any approval by the Church or by the pope, therefore this truth should count as Catholic truth without any such approval.

If the third [3] is granted, namely that some truth is Catholic because it has been accepted by the universal Church, it should be asked why the universal Church receives such a truth: Either [3.1] because it is divinely revealed to it (or, also, inspired in it), and then it is truly Catholic without such acceptance by the Church because it is divinely revealed (or, also, inspired). Or the universal Church accepts it [3.2] because it finds it in the divine Scriptures, and then again it should be judged as Catholic without any such acceptance; or the universal Church accepts it [3.3] because it knows it by experience or natural reason — which cannot be said about many Catholic truths — and then also in making some truth Catholic the Church would be relying on reason or experience: which cannot be said, for it would follow that the universal Church could add every geometrical truth and everything else proved demonstratively by any science to the list of Catholic truths, from which it would follow that the universal Church could count as heresies all false assertions contrary to such naturally known truths and could condemn as a heretic everyone who affirms any false assertion contrary to any naturally known truth, which should be regarded as unsuitable. Or the universal Church accepts such a truth [3.4] because it pleases, which cannot be said because then the universal Church would rely only on human will in accepting some truth and making it Catholic, and so our faith would rest on human will; but since the Apostle affirms in 1 Corinthians 2[:5] that our faith should not rest on human wisdom, much more

should it not rest on human will. The universal Church accepts no truth as Catholic, therefore, unless it is revealed divinely or is found in the sacred writings. Such a truth, however, would be truly Catholic even if there were no Church.

If the fourth [4] is granted, namely that some truth is Catholic because it follows from things, or some things, that have been divinely revealed and inserted in the divine Scriptures and accepted by the universal Church, it is also clear that it is not more possible to infer it from them because of the Church's approval. It would not be made Catholic because of such approval, therefore, but it was Catholic before that.

If the fifth [5] is granted, namely that some truth is Catholic because it has been approved by the highest pontiff, then it should be asked whether in approving the truth the highest pontiff relies on divine revelation, or on the sacred Scriptures, or on the teaching of the universal Church, and whichever of these is granted it follows that the highest pontiff does not make such a truth Catholic by his approval but determines and defines that such a truth was and is Catholic. Or in approving some truth the highest pontiff relies on his own prudence or will, and if this is said it follows that the truth should not be accepted as Catholic because of this approval by the highest pontiff, because [1 Cor. 2:5] our faith cannot rest on the wisdom or will of a man.

It is clear therefore that no truth is Catholic unless it has been divinely revealed or has been inserted in the divine Scriptures or has become known to the universal Church as a certainty, or because it is inferred by necessary argument from one or any of those or from all of them together. None of these, however, is known to depend on the approval of the highest pontiff or, also, of the Church. Therefore no truth can be made Catholic through such approval, but such approval defines that the truth has been and is Catholic. And so the highest pontiff does not cause any assertion to be Catholic or heretical, but by his approval he determines and defines that the truths he approves are and have been Catholic, and by his condemnation he determines and defines that the assertions he condemns are and have been heretical. And so he does not make a new article of faith but newly defines that some article pertains and has pertained to Catholic truth; and so even if such a truth is newly defined as Catholic, it was nevertheless Catholic before.

A second argument is this. If some truth is Catholic only because it has been approved by the Roman pontiff, it is Catholic either because it has been approved by the Roman pontiff whether *explicitly or implicitly*, or it is Catholic

only because it has been approved by the Roman pontiff explicitly. If the first is granted, it follows that the Roman pontiff cannot make a new article of faith from any truth that was necessary before, because the Roman pontiffs have already approved, explicitly or implicitly, all truths divinely revealed, inserted in the sacred Scriptures, accepted by the universal Church or following from one or some of those, because they have approved the whole faith of the Church and consequently have approved everything that follows (because just as “anyone who says one thing says everything that follows from it”, so anyone who approves one thing approves everything that follows from it). If the second is granted, however, namely that some truth is said to be Catholic only because it has been approved by a Roman pontiff explicitly, such truths as “Christ raised the dead”, “Christ was God and man”, “God foreknows everything” and the like were not to be regarded as Catholic unless they were explicitly approved by a Roman pontiff, and it seems that this should be considered unsuitable.

And so it is shown by these arguments that the highest pontiff cannot make a new article of faith and cannot make Catholic a truth that is not Catholic. They conclude from this that a Roman pontiff cannot make heretical an assertion that is not heretical, because an heretical assertion contradicts a Catholic assertion, and vice versa, because just as if one contradictory is true the other is false, and vice versa, so if one contradictory is Catholic the other is heretical. But just as it has been proved that a Roman pontiff cannot make Catholic a truth that is not Catholic, nor can he, therefore, make heretical an assertion that is not heretical.

A third argument is this. If an assertion is reckoned among the heresies only because it has been condemned by a Roman pontiff or by the universal Church, this is because it has been condemned either implicitly or explicitly, or only because it has been condemned explicitly. If the first is granted it follows that every assertion which can permissibly be condemned is a heresy now, because every such [assertion] has already been condemned implicitly or explicitly by the Church and by the Roman pontiffs, who by approving the whole of faith have condemned every contrary falsity. If the second is granted, namely that any assertion is heretical only because it has been explicitly condemned, then the assertion, “Christ is not a man”, was not heretical before it was condemned by the Church, which they regard as clearly unsuitable.

A fourth reason, which seems demonstrative to them, is this. Every assertion is truly a heresy if a pertinacious defender of it is truly a heretic; but all pertinacious defenders of assertions which can rightly and legitimately be condemned by the Church as heresies are truly heretics, even if their assertions

have not in fact been condemned explicitly and in that exact form by the Church; before such a condemnation, therefore, such assertions are truly to be reckoned among the heresies. The major premise is manifest, because no one is a heretic except on account of a heresy to which he adheres. The minor premise is proved by texts from blessed Augustine, who manifestly affirms, in 24, q. 3, c. *Dixit apostolus* [c.29] and c. *Qui in ecclesia* [c.31], that those who hold a “false and perverse” opinion and who hold something “unwholesome and evil” and refuse to be corrected are heretics; but any assertion that can rightly be condemned by the Church is false, perverse, unwholesome and evil; every pertinacious defender of such an assertion, therefore, even if it has not in fact been explicitly condemned by the Church, is truly a heretic. They conclude from this that the Church cannot make heretical an assertion that is not heretical, but, by condemning a heresy, the Church determines and defines that it has been and is heretical.

#### Chapter 14

**Student:** Those last arguments seem strong to me, and yet the arguments for the first opinion seem difficult, so tell how they are answered.

**Master:** To the first argument [p.47.16] assertors of the second opinion answer that, just as someone who is a heretic often should not be judged as a heretic because he is only a secret heretic, so often someone is a heretic because he clings pertinaciously to a heresy and yet, because it is not explicitly certain that his assertion is and was heretical, he should not be condemned as a heretic until the Church knows explicitly that his assertion is and was heretical. After it has become known to the Church by careful reflection, however, that his assertion is heretical, if he is found pertinacious he should be condemned as a heretic.

**Student:** That answer seems clear to me, except that I am uncertain of which church they are speaking of.

**Master:** They are speaking of the Church which is a general council or a pope, because for condemning someone in this case it is not enough if anyone except a general council or pope comes to know that the assertion was and is heretical.

**Student:** Tell me how they reply to the examples of the Greeks and Joachim and those who have said that Christ is nothing as a man.

**Master:** They say that those assertions were heretical before, and those who affirmed them pertinaciously were also heretics, but because earlier the Church did not know that their assertions were heretical they should not have been condemned as heretics; but afterwards they should have been.

**Student:** I understand their answer to that argument. Would you tell me therefore how they answer the second [p.48.9].

**Master:** They answer that though it pertains to the highest pontiff to define not only by teaching but also by authority which assertion should be considered Catholic and which heretical, yet he cannot make Catholic a truth that is not Catholic nor is he able to make heretical an assertion that is not heretical. Nevertheless, despite this, his definition has more effect than the determination of a doctor, because after a doctor's determination as much as before, someone may opine the opposite and maintain it publicly as an opinion; this is not permitted, however, after a determination by the highest pontiff. The pope's definition has another effect also, because after a correct definition by the highest pontiff any bishop or inquisitor into heretical wickedness may proceed in accordance with canon laws against those holding the opposite of what the highest pontiff has rightly defined, unless such people offer to prove that the highest pontiff has made an erroneous definition, in which case recourse should be had to a general council. After a doctor's determination, however, bishops and inquisitors into heretical wickedness are not permitted to proceed against those holding the contrary more than they were before.

### Chapter 15

**Student:** Although you have recounted some things at which I wonder — and I will therefore question you about them later — the main conclusion of this second opinion does nevertheless seem probable to me, and I wonder that anyone holds that the pope can make a new article of faith. But indicate to me how reply is made to the chapter *Cum Christus* in *Extra, De hereticis* [X 5.7.7].

**Master:** I want you to know that that argument [p.47.2] is brought forward by certain canonists, by whom some theologians are scandalised when they see them intervene in difficult theological questions, putting forward something of their own wit, going beyond the words of theologians that they find in their own writings [p.15.32]. Because they are not learned in theology, they should therefore not expound the theological authorities they find in their own books beyond the grammatical sense, and they should not infer from them any conclusions unless they follow so clearly that any unlearned person using his reason can see them, because since they often do not have a true understanding of theological texts, they will easily fall into errors if they wish to infer other conclusions from them. This can be easily observed in the canonists who wished to infer from the above chapter of Alexander III, *Cum Christus*, that the pope can make a new article of faith. For they believed that it can be concluded from

that chapter that before [Alexander's] constitution it was permissible to say that Christ is not God and man, whereas he does not say this, and he does not in that place restrain [anyone] from saying that Christ is not God and man. Rather he restrains [anyone] from saying that "Christ is nothing as a man", and he gives as his reason that Christ is true God and true man.<sup>52</sup> The assertions, "Christ is true God and true man" and "Christ is something as a man", are distinct, though one follows from the other.

**Student:** I see clearly that the aforesaid canonists wrongly adduced the said chapter *Cum Christus* to prove that before the time of Alexander it was permissible to say that Christ is not God and man. But it seems that they have adduced it correctly to prove that a pope can make a new article of faith, because before the time of Alexander III it was not an article of faith that Christ is something as a man, indeed it was permissible to hold the opposite. But Alexander made it an article of faith and made it not permissible to say the opposite. Therefore he made a new article of faith.

**Master:** Those who affirm the second opinion [p.48.24] answer your objection by saying that "article of faith" taken strictly is a Catholic truth inserted into the authentic creed in that exact form, and we are not now speaking about an article of faith in that sense. Otherwise "article of faith" can be taken broadly for any Catholic truth, and the present discussion is about an article of faith in that sense. And in this sense a pope cannot make a new article of faith, and Alexander did not make such a new article of faith, because he did not make a new Catholic truth; but he brought it about that neither as assertion nor as opinion would it be permissible to say the contrary of something that was already a Catholic truth, and that those saying the contrary would be subjected to a sentence of excommunication. And so before Alexander III it was truly a Catholic truth that Christ as a man is something, but before his time it was not known to the Church that it was Catholic. For from what is in the divine Scriptures many truths follow which nevertheless are hidden from the Church, and so they are Catholic, though the Church has not yet investigated whether they smack of Catholic truth.

## Chapter 16

**Student:** Because the definition of heresy about which you have spoken much seems reasonable to me, and yet I do not understand from it whether heresy is a

---

52. *Cum Christus* reads: "...let no one dare say that Christ is not anything as man; because just as Christ is true God, so he is true man..."

most specific species or has within it several species, would you not delay explaining what the learned think about this.

### **Are there several kinds of heresies?**

**Master:** On the distinction of species there are several opinions. Some say that the same thing cannot be put under different species, some say the opposite.

**Student:** Do not involve yourself in such difficulties, for they pertain to the philosophical sciences, the particular difficulties of which you should avoid as much as you can. But tell me now what is held about heresies, whether all are comprehended under the one mode or name or species, or under several.

**Master:** I note your intention and so, in accordance with your thinking, I want to report the opposing opinions for you. If you remember [p.27.16], I reported opinions about Catholic truths, that some say that only those truths should be regarded as Catholic that are found explicitly or implicitly in the divine Scriptures, while others [p.31.8] assert that besides these some other truths should be reckoned among Catholic truths. In line with these opinions there are also opposing opinions about heresies. For some teach that there are only three species of heresy or three modes of different heresies on account of which alone someone should be punished. [1] The first species or mode of heresy is of those that are not only in some way opposed to truths found in divine Scripture in their own form, but even contradict them using the same terms. The following are of this kind, “The word did not become flesh”, “God did not create heaven and earth in the beginning”, “Christ was not taken up into heaven”, and the like. [2] There are other heresies which in a way clear to anyone with understanding, even to the unlearned, oppose and conflict with things found in the divine Scriptures. The following are of this kind, “Christ was not born for our salvation”, “There is no life of beatitude”, and others like this. [3] There are other heresies which oppose sacred letters, not clearly to everyone, but only to the learned and wise who are erudite in the divine Scriptures, after long and subtle investigation. The following are of this kind, “Christ is nothing as a man”, “There are two persons in Christ”, and many like this.

There are others, however, who affirm the above modes of heresy but say that besides the heresies already mentioned there are others [cf. p.41.5], namely [4] those opposed in whatever way to apostolic teaching, teaching which has come to us not in apostolic writings but by the narration of the faithful succeeding them or by writings of the faithful. [5] Also if some errors conflict

with some truth revealed to the Church after apostolic times, they should all be reckoned among the heresies.

### Chapter 17

**Student:** That second opinion seems to me more in accord with the truth, but tell me whether those who affirm it include under those modes of heresy all the pestiferous errors which no believing Christian is permitted to affirm.

**Master:** They say that besides the afore-mentioned heresies there are some other errors that are deadly but nevertheless should not strictly be called heresies. They say that errors of this kind are those which are known to be opposed to ecclesiastical chronicles and histories worthy of trust and to approved accounts of achievements of faithful people. There are still other errors that are shown to be incompatible with Catholic truths in conjunction with ecclesiastical chronicles or histories worthy of trust and accounts of achievements that cannot reasonably be denied. The following are of this kind, “The rules of the religious [orders] are not Catholic”, “The faith of blessed Augustine was not true or faithful”, and the like; and although taking the word “heresy” strictly they do not think that those errors should be counted among the heresies, they say nevertheless that they “smack of” manifest heresy, which is precisely to say that heresies properly so called do follow from them and [i.e. together with] other truths that cannot be denied. And therefore they say that those errors can broadly be called heresies.

**Student:** Enumerate the general modes of pestiferous errors which, according to that second opinion, no Catholic believer is permitted to defend pertinaciously.

#### Five kinds of pestiferous errors

**Master:** There are five of these general modes, some of which contain several particular modes within them [cf.40.31]. The first consists of errors that conflict with things contained solely in divine Scripture, and this contains several particular modes, as is clear from what has been said above; and all those errors should be called heresies. The second consists of errors that conflict in some way with apostolic teaching outside the apostles’ writings, and this also contains several modes. The third consists of errors in some way opposed to things revealed or inspired to the Church after the apostles. The fourth consists of errors contrary to Church-approved chronicles, histories and biographies. The fifth consists of errors that are shown to be incompatible with divine Scripture, or with the teaching of the apostles outside their writings, or with things inspired or revealed to the Church and [i.e. together with] other truths which cannot be



denied, even if by the form of the propositions they do not seem incompatible with things solely contained in divine Scripture and apostolic teaching and things revealed and inspired to the Church; and these errors can properly be said to smack of manifest heresy, though they should not be called heresies in the strict sense.

Such [an example of the fifth mode] is this error, “The chastity of monks does not excel conjugal chastity”. For in the form of its proposition it does not conflict with anything contained in divine Scripture or in apostolic teaching (if there were not then monks such as there are now); nor also does it conflict, it seems, with anything revealed or inspired to the Church. Yet it is known to be incompatible with things contained in divine Scripture together with the following truth, which can by no evasion be denied, “Monks vow and observe perpetual continence for the God’s sake”. And therefore that error, though it does not seem that it should be called a heresy taking the word strictly, nevertheless smacks of manifest heresy, because from it and a certain clear truth manifest heresy does follow.

### Chapter 18

**Student:** I now observe how useful it was to ask which truths should be adjudged Catholic [p.27.5], because from the explanation of that question it can be clear to anyone with understanding which errors should be regarded as heresies. It seems also to follow from what has been investigated about Catholic truths that every heresy has been condemned, because if every Catholic truth has been approved by the Church it seems that every heresy has been condemned by the Church, since every heresy is opposed to some Catholic truth. When one of [two] contraries is approved, however, it is certain that the other is rejected and condemned. Therefore do not conceal [from me] whether any learned men hold that every heresy has been condemned.

#### Has every heresy been condemned already?

**Master:** Many hold and try to prove that every heresy has been condemned. For the general council celebrated under Innocent III, about which we read in *Extra, De hereticis, c. Excommunicamus* [X 5.7.13], seems to think this. For it says, “We excommunicate and anathematise every heresy that raises itself against this holy, Catholic and orthodox faith which we expounded above.” It is clearly established from these words that every heresy has been excommunicated and anathematised, and as a consequence every heresy has been condemned.

**Student:** It does not seem from this text that every heresy has been condemned, but only that every heresy raising itself against the faith that the general council expounded earlier in the chapter *Firmiter* [X 1.1.1] found in *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica* has been condemned.

**Master:** They prove that every heresy has simply been condemned by the chapter *Excommunicamus* from the fact that every heresy raising itself against the faith expounded in the chapter *Firmiter* has been condemned. For in that chapter *Firmiter* the whole of Catholic faith is approved. Therefore every heresy is simply rejected and condemned by the chapter *Excommunicamus*, which condemns every heresy that raises itself against the faith expounded and approved in the chapter *Firmiter*. That the chapter *Firmiter* approves simply the whole of Catholic faith is expressly clear, since asserting and approving it says: “This holy Trinity, individual according to a common essence and distinct according to their personal properties, has bestowed its salvific teaching on the human race through Moses, the holy prophets and others of its servants, according to the very well ordered arrangement of time. And at length the only begotten son of God, Jesus Christ — made flesh by the whole Trinity in common, conceived of Mary, ever virgin, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, having become true man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh, one person with two natures — very clearly demonstrated the way to life.” We are given to understand by these words that the aforesaid council clearly approves the whole teaching of Christ and his servants who handed on Catholic truths to the human race. Therefore also simply every heresy is condemned by the chapter *Excommunicamus*, and the gloss on 24, q. 1, § 1 notes this clearly when it says, “Every heresy has been condemned and every heretic, however hidden he may be, has been excommunicated.”

### Chapter 19

**Student:** It is clearly shown that every heresy has been condemned, yet I wonder about this, because I have often heard the learned distinguish between those who fall into a heresy already condemned and those who fall into a heresy not condemned. And thus Gratian seems to approve this distinction, saying (24, q. 1, § 1), “Every heretic either follows an already condemned heresy or invents a new one.” He follows up the first part of this distinction at once, while he follows up the second part in 24, q. 1, § *Si autem*: “However, if someone invents a new heresy out of his own heart”, etc. Tell me, therefore, do those who make that assertion [p.57.27] simply deny that distinction?

**Master:** They do not wholly deny that distinction but grant it with a distinction, saying that some heresies have been condemned explicitly but some only implicitly. And therefore they grant the said distinction in the following sense: some heresies have been condemned explicitly and some have not been condemned explicitly.

### **Condemnation may be explicit or implicit**

**Student:** Which heresies do they call explicitly condemned?

**Master:** They lay down four modes of explicitly condemned heresies. The first is of those condemned by a particular condemnation making particular mention of those heresies in that exact form. The heresies of Arius, Nestorius, Macedonius, Eutyches and Dioscorus have been condemned in that mode, as we clearly find in dist. 15, c. 1, and c. *Sicut sancti* [c.2] and c. *Sancta Romana* [c.3]. Also condemned in this way are Joachim's error (*Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica*, c. *Damnamus* [X 1.1.2]) and the error of those who say that Christ is nothing as a man (*Extra, De hereticis*, c. *Cum Christus* [X 5.7.7]).

The second mode of explicitly condemned heresies is of those the contradictories of which have been approved in that exact form, because with the explicit approval of one contradictory the other is understood to have been explicitly condemned. Of this mode are all heresies which contradict the Catholic truths approved as Catholic in the creeds, in general councils and in decrees and decretal letters of the highest pontiffs. Whence the heresy, "God is not the maker of all things visible and invisible", is an explicitly condemned heresy because [the proposition] that God is "the maker of all things visible and invisible" is explicitly approved through [the article of] the creed, "I believe in one God".<sup>53</sup>

The third [mode] consists of those the contradictories of which are contained in that exact form in some volume, book or tractate particularly approved as Catholic. And in that way all heresies the contradictories of which are contained in that very form in the confirmed canon of the Bible should be considered explicitly condemned heresies because, by the very fact that the canon of the Bible is explicitly approved, all the truths inserted in it are explicitly approved, and, consequently, their contradictories are explicitly rejected and condemned.<sup>54</sup>

53. The Nicene creed: "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible."

54. The difference between the second and third modes seems to be this: In the former, some particular statement has been explicitly approved, in the latter, the whole volume containing the statement has been approved.

The fourth [mode] consists of those from which some heresy included under any of the first three modes follows in a way clear to everyone having the use of reason, even laymen.

**Student:** Against some of the above I could raise many doubts, but perhaps they would not be much to the point, because words are a matter of choice, and so they can call heresies explicitly condemned strictly and broadly just as they please, as long as this is not found to be explicitly contrary to any authorities. Tell me therefore which heresies they say have been condemned only implicitly.

**Master:** They say that those heresies have been condemned implicitly and not explicitly of which it is clear only by subtle reflection to learned men erudite in sacred letters how they are opposed to Catholic truth contained in the sacred Scriptures or the express teaching of the universal Church, and that they imply some heresy condemned explicitly in one of the above modes.<sup>55</sup> Such (before it was condemned explicitly) was the heresy of the Greeks when they said that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son. Many heresies we find in the decretals were once also of this kind, which were afterwards condemned explicitly. The heresies of some modern doctors are of this kind. For it is well known that modern theologians hold opposing opinions about divine matters, which they believe to be based on the divine Scripture. One or other of these is really opposed to divine Scripture, as those holding the opposite do indeed maintain — hence each tries to disprove the other through divine Scripture, as is quite clear in their writings. Thus in fact one or other of them has been implicitly condemned, since the opposing truth has been implicitly approved, since the teaching of the Church from which it follows has been approved.

#### Chapter 20

**Student:** Whether they are deviating from the appropriate way of speaking or not, I see that there is a clear distinction between heresies they say have been condemned explicitly and those they say have been condemned only implicitly. But I do not know what use they<sup>56</sup> assign to that distinction, and I would like to know.

#### Who has the authority to condemn heresies?

**Master:** They think that this distinction is very necessary to bishops and inquisitors into heretical wickedness, to know against which of those accused of

---

<sup>55</sup> A convoluted sentence. If it takes subtle reflection by learned men to reveal conflict with Church teaching or some heretical implication, the proposition is condemned only implicitly.<sup>56</sup> Those who hold that every heresy has been condemned already, p.57.27.

heresy they ought to proceed and against which they do not have the power to proceed. For they [i.e. bishops and inquisitors] can legitimately judge all those pertinaciously maintaining a heresy explicitly condemned in any of the above ways, but they cannot judge those maintaining heresies condemned only implicitly, nor judge of such heresies. They can discuss them and inquire into them by investigation, but they cannot pronounce a definitive sentence about them; rather, anyone affirming or defending a heresy of this kind should be kept for examination by the highest pontiff or a general council.

**Student:** If they [those who hold this opinion] can confirm their opinion with an authority or an argument, do not be slow to show me.

**Master:** They can base themselves on one argument, which is the following. To condemn as a heretic someone who asserts an implicitly condemned heresy, if it has not yet become clear to the Church whether it should be regarded as a heresy, pertains only to the person to whom it pertains to condemn such heresies solemnly; this seems true especially when learned Catholics erudite in the sacred page disagree about whether the assertion should be considered heretical. But the solemn and explicit condemnation of an assertion which in fact is heretical, yet about which opposing opinions are found among the learned as to whether it is heretical, pertains only to the highest pontiff and a general council and the universal Church. Therefore it pertains to no one inferior to the highest pontiff nor to any college inferior to a general council to condemn as a heretic one who asserts a heresy of this kind.

The major premise of this argument seems certain, because one who pronounces judicially that someone is a heretic can solemnly pronounce that the assertion on account of which he judges him to be a heretic should be reckoned among the heresies.

They show the minor premise by an authority and by an argument. Firstly, by the authority of Pope Innocent who says (24, q. 1, c. *Quotiens* [c.12]), “As often as an argument about faith is ventilated, I think that all our brothers and fellow bishops should refer [it] to no one but Peter, that is to the authority of his name and honour.” By these words we are given to understand that a question of faith should not be referred to anyone less than the highest pontiff. Hence the gloss at that place [s.v. *fidei*] says, “It is one thing to determine a question raised about faith, which is not permitted to anyone except the Roman see, as is said here. It is another to ventilate it without determining it, which patriarchs can do.” And later the gloss [s.v. *nisi ad Petrum*] raises an objection and says, “This seems to be against *Extra, De hereticis, c. Ad abolendam*. For it is implied there that

those whom bishops have said should be avoided, should be avoided as heretics.” And in reply it says, “But say that that [*Ad abolendam*] should be understood of when they are talking about something certain to be a heresy, but this [*Quotiens*] where there is a doubt.”

The gloss on dist. 80, c. 2 on the words *in fide* seems to agree with these, saying “‘in faith’, that is faithfully”: “See below, 24, q. 1, c. *Quotiens*, where it is said that a question of faith should be referred only to Peter. But explain here, ‘in faith, that is faithfully’. Or they can discuss the case but not proceed to judgment. Or distinguish the doubters: for if they are laymen, it seems that bishops can make a determination (*Extra, De hereticis, c. Ad abolendam*); if they are clerics, the pope (the same title, c. *Cum Christus*).” We gather from these [words] that no one less than the highest pontiff can determine a question raised about the faith, especially when learned men are in doubt and offer opposing opinions.

Innocent III seems to think this too in *Extra, De baptismo et eius effectu, c. Maiores* [X 3.42.3]. For he says, “Anyone who notes that Peter replied to the Lord when he asked who the disciples said he was, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God”, understands that the Church’s greater causes, especially those touching on the articles of faith, should be referred to Peter’s see.” These words clearly establish a question of faith should be referred to the see of blessed Peter. And so no gathering less than a general council, and no bishop less than the pope, can condemn any heresy about which there is doubt whether it is a heresy, and cannot, consequently, condemn as a heretic anyone affirming such a heresy. For it would seem completely irrational that a bishop or inquisitor into heretical wickedness, who is often ignorant of the sacred page, could condemn as heretical the opinions of doctors of theology.

## Chapter 21

### Some problematic cases

**Student:** Although that opinion [p.61.4] seems to have been proved strongly, yet I am turning over in my mind some pressing objections against it. The first concerns the University of Paris which excommunicated and condemned as erroneous many opinions, even opinions of Thomas Aquinas while he was still alive.<sup>57</sup> The second concerns two archbishops of Canterbury, the first a doctor of theology belonging to the Order of Preachers and later a cardinal [Robert Kilwardby], the second, also a doctor of theology, belonging to the Order of

57. See E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 417.

Friars Minor [John Pecham], who excommunicated and condemned many of Thomas's opinions.<sup>58</sup> The third concerns the Order of Friars Minor, which condemned the teaching of brother Peter John [Olivi].<sup>59</sup> And so it seems that it pertains both to a gathering inferior to a general council and to other persons inferior to the highest pontiff to condemn errors put forward as opinions by theologians. Make clear, therefore, how these objections are answered.

**Master:** The first objection, about the University of Paris, is answered in many ways. One is that the University condemned many assertions rashly,<sup>60</sup> that is, by condemning truths. For in no way can the truth be solemnly condemned without rashness; for though anyone can without culpable rashness offer an opinion opposed to truth and can doubt a truth, yet a truth is never solemnly and publicly condemned without culpable rashness. Therefore since, in the judgment of many, very many truths are contained among the articles condemned at Paris, it follows that the University condemned many assertions rashly. Of that opinion have been and are all those outside the University of Paris who have held and hold the opinions condemned at Paris. Also of the same judgment are all those who, since the revocation of the aforesaid sentence in respect of Thomas's opinions,<sup>61</sup> now publicly or secretly maintain and approve at Paris those same opinions of his that were earlier condemned.

**Student:** I am surprised to hear that before the revocation of that sentence of Paris some people had maintained the assertions condemned at Paris, unless perhaps in their ignorance they did not know the assertions had been condemned there.

**Master:** I want you to know that many people knowingly taught, secretly and publicly, a number of assertions condemned at Paris. I know as a certainty that a certain doctor of the Order of Preachers had publicly taught an assertion condemned at Paris before the above-mentioned revocation, and when he made the objection against himself that the assertion he maintained had been

58. Gilson, pp. 406, 359

59. See David Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty*, p. 88ff and pp. 109 and 125. See also Leo Amorós, "Series condemnationum et processuum contra doctrinam et sequaces Petri Ioannis Olivi" - a document that may have been composed by Bonagratia of Bergamo, written post 1328. On p. 509 it mentions a chapter at Marseilles, called by Michael of Cesena in 1319, which examined and condemned the errors of Peter John Olivi and passed sentence of excommunication against every brother who knowingly held and used his books.

60. Ockham often says that some assertion is made "rashly" (*temerarie*), meaning that it is not properly supported by evidence. Rash assertion is wrong; it is not the same as heresy, but it can be an instance of pertinacity, p.156.12.

61. On the 1325 revocation of the condemnation insofar as it might touch opinions of Thomas Aquinas see CUP vol.2 p.280-2.

excommunicated at Paris, he replied that the said excommunication had not crossed the sea. Master Godfrey of Fontaines seems to have been of that opinion too, teaching and leaving it in his writings that the condemned articles should have been corrected.

## Chapter 22

**Student:** The words you report compel me to ask you incidentally whether, if some truths together with those affirming them were excommunicated at Paris, those maintaining those truths at Paris fell under a sentence of excommunication, since a sentence imposed for a wrong reason does not seem to entangle anyone.

**Master:** Some people think that if some Catholic assertions were excommunicated by the said sentence of excommunication, it could in fact in no way have bound anyone holding the condemned truth, nor should such a person have regarded himself as bound, although others who believe that the said sentence was not wrong should have avoided him as an excommunicate.

They try to prove this assertion by three arguments of which this is the first. According to Innocent III (*Extra, De sententia excommunicationis, c. Per tuas* [X 5.39.40]), a sentence of excommunication that contains an intolerable error is not binding; but to excommunicate a Catholic assertion is an intolerable error; therefore such a sentence binds no one.

The second argument is this. No one can be forced to do evil; to deny a Catholic assertion, however, is of itself evil; therefore no one can be forced to do this by any sentence, and consequently a sentence forcing someone to do this is null. But a sentence of excommunication by which a Catholic truth is excommunicated forces the denial of a Catholic truth, so far as the form of the sentence goes; therefore such a sentence is null and consequently binds no one.

The third argument is this. The sentence of a heretic binds no one (24, q. 1, c. *Audivimus* [c.4]); but if the said sentence of excommunication extended to Catholic truths, those imposing that sentence were heretics because, if “one who doubts in a matter of faith is an unbeliever” [X 5.7.1], much more should whoever judicially condemns a Catholic truth be considered a heretic; if those imposing the said sentence were heretics, however, it did not bind anyone at all.

## Chapter 23

**Student:** Whether those who unknowingly excommunicate a Catholic assertion should be considered heretics I will carefully consider later, so would you return



to the argument and tell me another answer to the above objection about the University of Paris.

**Master:** Some say that the University excommunicated many assertions rashly, not because they think that those assertions do smack of Catholic truth but because it is not clear how they are opposed to orthodox faith. Others say that the excommunication should have been considered rash because those who pronounced it usurped without just cause a power they did not have, and therefore the sentence was afterwards justly revoked. There is yet a fourth answer, that the bishop of Paris rightly imposed that sentence by the authority of the Apostolic See; to condemn a Catholic assertion by the authority of the Apostolic See, however, can licitly pertain to someone inferior to the highest pontiff.

**Student:** If both someone condemning solemnly a Catholic assertion and someone revoking a right and just condemnation of heretical wickedness should be judged heretical (and I will propose some questions to you about this later), it seems it must necessarily be granted that either those who imposed the sentence of excommunication against the opinions of Thomas or those who revoked it later should be reckoned among the heretics.

**Master:** To some it seems that the sentencers, to others the revokers, are be regarded as heretics, but it cannot be known who is speaking more truly unless it is first known whether the assertions condemned and later revoked<sup>62</sup> should be considered heretical or Catholic.

#### Chapter 24

**Student:** Do not involve yourself any further with that objection now, but tell me how the second objection [p.62.33] is answered.

**Master:** That objection comprises two [parts], of which the first concerns the first archbishop, who was of the Order of Preachers, the second concerns the second archbishop, who was of the Order of Minorites. About the first, different people speak in different ways. Some say that his condemnation was rash, in that he condemned what they say are truths. And thus another archbishop<sup>63</sup> censured him sharply for that condemnation, writing a letter to him in which he clearly affirmed that he had condemned truths. Yet many people who think that he rashly condemned many truths do not assert that he was a heretic because,

---

62. The condemnations, not the assertions, were revoked. 63. Peter of Conflans. His letter does not survive. For Kilwardby's reply to Peter's letter see F. Ehrle, "Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts", pp.603-35, at pp.614-32.

they say, he did not condemn any Catholic truth but many philosophical truths. For they affirm that in that condemnation he rashly involved himself with grammatical, logical and purely philosophical assertions.

**Student:** Whether or not he should have been regarded as a heretic because of that condemnation could not be known without discussing the assertions he condemned, and I do not intend to do that now. But if he did condemn some purely philosophical assertion as heretical, would he have been a heretic?

**Master:** Some people say Yes, because someone who affirms pertinaciously that something is of the substance of the faith when it does not pertain to the faith should be judged a heretic.

**Student:** I will investigate this later, and so return to the main argument and say whether anyone else besides the archbishop you spoke about [i.e. Peter of Conflans] considered that the aforesaid condemnation was rash.

**Master:** Many others reckoned that it was rash. For many doctors and students at Paris publicly held the assertions condemned by the said archbishop [i.e. Kilwardby]. For among things he condemned Thomas's opinion concerning the unity of form in a man, and yet you know that many people in Paris publicly hold, defend, and teach it; and so it is with many others.

**Student:** Tell me another answer to the second objection.

**Master:** Others say that the said archbishop condemned those articles rashly, not because among them some truths were condemned, but because he usurped to himself a power to condemn that he did not have.

**Student:** In censuring his condemnation they seem to be relying on the first basis [p.61.11] only, namely that no one inferior to the highest pontiff has the power to condemn any assertion as heretical.

**Master:** It is not as you say, because they do not rely on that basis only, but they also affirm that purely philosophical assertions not pertaining to theology should not be solemnly condemned or forbidden by anyone, because in such matters anyone ought to be free to say freely what pleases him; and therefore because this archbishop condemned and forbade grammatical, logical and purely philosophical opinions his sentence should be regarded as rash.

**Student:** I do not want to inquire now whether anyone is permitted to condemn such assertions, but indicate if any other reply is made to this objection.

**Master:** Some people say that any bishop has the power to condemn heresies from the fact that it is clearly known to him that they are opposed to orthodox faith.

**Student:** They deny what you proved before [p.61.11], that is, that only the Apostolic See can determine a question raised about faith. Therefore I do not care for you to speak further about that archbishop, but set out what is said about the other one [i.e. John Pecham].

**Master:** Some people think that he condemned Thomas's opinions rashly because they contain the truth, some, however, because it did not pertain to him to condemn any opinion at all. But some say that he condemned them rightly because those opinions are opposed to orthodox faith, in that the whole opinion about the unity of form in a man is clearly opposed to the teaching of the Church, which teaches that Christ's body was the same alive and dead, and any bishop has the power to condemn assertions opposed to the teaching of the Church.

### Chapter 25

**Student:** Tell me how reply is made to the third objection, about the Order of Minorites which condemned the teaching of Peter John [p.63.2].

**Master:** There are many answers to this. To make this clear you should know that different people think differently about Peter John's teaching. Some think that all his teaching is Catholic. Some think that nothing is found in it which smacks of manifest heresy, but it contains much that is false and fantastic, especially when he predicts future events. Others reckon that it contains manifest heresies.

The first and second groups hold that the Order of Minorites condemned the teaching rashly. Indeed some of them think that the condemners fell into heretical wickedness, because to condemn a Catholic truth judicially makes the condemner a pertinacious heretic. The third group is diversified, for though some of them regard Peter John's teaching as heretical, yet they assert that the aforesaid Order condemned it rashly, usurping a power it did not have. Others say the condemners did not proceed rashly, because they proceeded with the authority of the pope; for they say that Nicholas IV ordered that doctrine to be condemned. A third group says of the chapter at Marseilles in particular that it did not condemn that teaching rashly because it condemned — or rather declared or pronounced condemned — only things that had been condemned

previously by a general council or by some Roman pontiff, or were clearly in contradiction with divine Scripture.

**Student:** That last opinion pleases me more, especially because it did not charge the Order with usurping power it did not have, and because it [this opinion] is not known to be opposed to the condemnation by the most holy father, the lord Pope John XXII. Therefore try to support it as well as you can.

**Master:** I could not make that opinion clear unless I had the condemned articles, the acts of the above Order and also the teaching of Peter from which the said articles have been taken. You know, however, that I have none of those, and perhaps the members of the Order would refuse to share them with me.

## Chapter 26

**Student:** Because you cannot make that last opinion clear let us defer its clarification until another time, if it happens that you can get those things from the Order. And tell me whether anyone holds that someone inferior to the highest pontiff can forbid some assertions and order them not to be held, even if he cannot condemn them.

**Master:** There are some who think that, though no gathering less than a general council nor anyone inferior to the highest pontiff can licitly excommunicate or condemn as heretical any assertion that has not been explicitly condemned, yet other gatherings and prelates inferior to the pope are permitted for a reasonable cause to forbid erroneous assertions and to order that they not be defended publicly. And therefore they say that if the University of Paris and the two archbishops of Canterbury had forbidden Thomas's opinions for a reasonable cause, only ordering that no one was to defend or teach them publicly at Paris, and had not proceeded to a sentence of excommunication and condemnation of those opinions, they would have done nothing rash.

**Student:** What can be a reasonable cause for ordering that some opinions not be held publicly?

**Master:** They say that any opinions, even sometimes true ones, can be reasonably forbidden for the purpose of avoiding scandal, schism and other evils and dangers.

**Student:** Was there ever any scandal about Thomas's opinions?

**Master:** I have often heard it said by many Englishmen that when conclusions which follow from Thomas's opinion about the unity of form were explained, there was endless scandal among the English people.

**Student:** What were those conclusions following from that opinion about the unity of form<sup>64</sup> which expressly scandalised the people?

**Master:** According to them, they are the following. That Christ's body was not numerically the same alive and dead; that the body that lay in Christ's tomb over the three days was never Christ's body when he was alive; that the bodies and relics that are venerated by believers as the bodies and relics of saints were never the bodies and parts of the saints when they were alive; that dead bodies were never the bodies of people alive; that dead flesh was never living.

**Student:** You have sufficiently exemplified the conclusions which follow from that opinion about the unity of substantial form, and so, returning to our plan, set out the arguments for the above assertion, if there are any.

**Master:** They prove their assertion by the following argument. Everything that can licitly be omitted by subjects can for a reasonable cause be forbidden by prelates and by those having jurisdiction over subjects; for a superior can and should make provision for everyone's benefit in all matters and prevent dangers, and their subjects ought to obey them in permitted and honest matters of this kind, as we gather from the sacred canons, 11, q. 3, c. *Si autem* [c.11], c. *Si quis* [c.13] and c. *Absit* [c.14]. But there are some opinions which it is permissible, indeed sometimes it is necessary and expedient, not to defend or teach; therefore it can also be forbidden for a reasonable cause by prelates and colleges having jurisdiction.

**Student:** According to this argument prelates would sometimes be permitted to forbid truths, for it is sometimes expedient to be silent about the truth.<sup>65</sup>

**Master:** According to them no one is permitted to forbid the truth to everyone and for all time, but it is permissible to order some people for some time not to presume to teach some truths. Thus the Apostle said [1 Timothy 2:12], "I suffer not a woman to teach", and in the gospel [Matthew 7:6] the Lord said, "Give not that which is holy to dogs, and do not cast your pearls before swine." We gather from these words that it is not expedient for everyone at all times to preach, teach or defend the truth.

**Student:** It seems from this that no one is permitted to forbid to everyone for all time opinions or assertions that he cannot condemn, although he can licitly forbid them to some people for some time.

---

64. Thomas Aquinas, ST 1 q.76 a.4. On the controversy about whether a human being has one substantial form or more than one see Gilson *History*, pp.416-420.

65. Cf. p.3.13.

**Master:** They grant this conclusion, and therefore it is significant that they say that inferiors are permitted to prohibit some assertions “for a reasonable cause”, implying by this that when the cause ceases the prohibition ceases.

### Chapter 27

**Student:** Although many doubts about the foregoing occur to me, nevertheless I will put them aside and return to the main argument. It seems probable to me that no one inferior to the pope can explicitly excommunicate or condemn as heretical any assertion not explicitly condemned [p.61.2], but I still do not know on what basis a pope or a general council should rely when explicitly condemning some assertion as heretical. Would you therefore not delay telling me what the learned think about this.

#### On what basis can a doctrine be condemned as heresy?

**Master:** I will recite opposing opinions about your question. Some say that the pope has so much authority that he can condemn any assertion as heretical as he pleases. They seem to be imitators of the followers of Pope Sergius, the persecutor of Pope Formosus. As I have read in a certain book written in a very old script, they wanted to exalt the pope so much that they asserted that a pope cannot be damned but would be saved whatever he did. Thus they say that whenever a pope defines that something should be held, all Catholics must believe and hold it. Hence the gloss on dist. 19, c. *Si Romanorum* [c.1, s.v. *reprobantur*] says, “What a pope approves or disapproves, we ought to approve or disapprove.”

**Student:** That assertion suggests that the pope cannot be a heretic, a matter about which I will have a particular question later. Would you therefore pass over this now and set out the opposing assertion, as you promised.

**Master:** Others assert clearly that if a pope and a general council, and, also, the universal Church, rightly condemn some assertion as heretical strictly speaking, in connection with that heretical assertion they should rely and clearly base themselves on one or more of three foundations.

The first is sacred Scripture, and the earliest general councils relied on this foundation in condemning the heresies of Arius, Macedonius, Nestorius, Eutyches and Dioscorus. For just as some of those councils based themselves on the authority of divine Scripture in producing the creeds, as Isidore attests when he says (dist. 15, c. 1), “The holy fathers coming together at the council of Nicea

from all the lands on earth handed on the second creed (after the apostles)<sup>66</sup> in accordance with evangelical and apostolic faith”, so also in condemning heresies they laid down sacred literature as their foundation. So too, in condemning the assertion that Christ is nothing as a man, Alexander III based himself on a truth taken from divine Scripture, “Christ is true God and true man”. So too, when refuting heresies holy doctors tried to convict them through the sacred Scriptures, as is clearly found from their books. Hence, as we find in 24, q. 3, c. *Quidam autem* [c.39], Isidore too clearly censured many heresies through sacred Scripture.

The second foundation is apostolic teaching that has reached us not by being included in the apostolic writings but by the account of believers who were successors to the apostles or in trustworthy writings. As we clearly gather from his chapter inserted in dist. 22 [c.1], Pope Nicholas relies on this foundation when he determines that it should be considered heretical to say that the Roman church is not the head of all churches. Since, however, no mention is found of this in the sacred Scriptures, but the apostles handed it on and taught it to believers, this teaching has reached us in the account of the believers who followed them and in the writings of the holy fathers. The arguments and texts which I brought forward above [p.33.17] when I was investigating your question, “Which truths should be regarded as Catholic?” tell in favour of this.

The third foundation is a new divine revelation or inspiration. For if some eternal truth about things that pertain to salvation were newly revealed to the Church it would be approved as Catholic, and the Church, and also the pope, could condemn as heretical every falsity opposed to it. And although they do not know of any example [that shows] that in condemning some heresy the Church has ever based itself on such a revelation or inspiration, yet they say that this is not impossible because God could, if he pleased, newly reveal (or, also, inspire) many Catholic truths.

**Student:** What if a pope or a general council says that some truth had been revealed to it (or, also, inspired in it) by God? Are other believers bound to believe?

**Master:** They say that they should not be believed without a manifest miracle, because it is not enough simply to assert that a truth has been revealed to them (or, also, inspired in them), but they must confirm a revelation or inspiration of this kind by the clear working of a miracle.

---

66. The gloss, s.v. *apostolos*, explains: “For the Apostles made the first creed”.

**Student:** What would they say if all Christians without exception were firmly to accept some truth as Catholic which nevertheless they could not show from the divine Scriptures or from any earlier teaching of the Church?

**Master:** They say that such a truth should be accepted as Catholic, because such a harmonious agreement of all Christians without exception in such an assertion could not happen without a miracle. For since all believers most firmly hold, in accordance with the Saviour's promise in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], "I am with you always, to the end of the age", that the universal Church will never err, it is certain that the universal Church will never adhere firmly to an assertion that does not derive from earlier teaching of the Church without special divine inspiration. And so, if it does ever adhere to such a truth, it will adhere miraculously, and therefore it should then be believed that a miracle has happened.

**Student:** What do they think if all Christians except a few, or one, were newly to adhere to an assertion of this kind that could not be proved from the previous teaching of the Church?

**Master:** They say that if only one person were to dissent, such a truth should not be accepted, because the whole faith of the Church can abide in one single person, as in the time of Christ's death the whole Catholic faith endured in the blessed virgin alone, and it should not be believed that at any time after the times of the apostles some people were more accepted by God than the apostles were before the death of Christ. If therefore after his crucifixion Christ permitted all the apostles to turn aside from the Catholic faith and the blessed virgin alone to endure firmly in the faith, it is rash to assert that never before the end of the world would God permit the whole multitude of Christians except one to withdraw from orthodox faith.

**Student:** I do not know how to disprove these things, but it seems that for all Catholics to be bound to adhere firmly to some newly revealed truth it is not enough to confirm it with the working of a miracle, since miracles are performed by the wicked and by unbelievers — as we gather, so it seems, from the words of the gospel of Matthew, 7[:22-3] when Christ says, "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and cast out demons in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name?' And then I will profess unto them, 'I never knew you.'", that is, I never approved you. The gloss on *Extra, De hereticis, c. Cum ex iniuncto* [X 5.7.12, s.v. *miraculi*] also agrees with this, saying, "Sometimes miracles are performed by the wicked."



**Master:** They reply to that objection, saying that although miracles may be performed by the wicked, yet a genuine miracle is never performed to confirm a falsity asserted by the wicked; and therefore when they teach some error a genuine miracle is never performed to confirm it, but if they preach the truth they sometimes perform miracles to confirm this truth even if they are evil. So although the traitor Judas was evil he nevertheless performed miracles because he taught the truth. Therefore when a true miracle is performed to confirm some assertion, it should be held without doubt that such an assertion should be considered the truth, whether those to whom it was revealed should be reckoned among the good or among the evil.

**Student:** That reply is plausible. Let what you have said about that second opinion [p.70.26] be enough, therefore; but do not postpone making known to me if you know that others say something else.

**Master:** Some think that both a general council and, also, a pope should base themselves on sacred Scripture alone when condemning some assertion as heretical because only truths contained in sacred Scripture and those which follow from them should be considered Catholic. The preceding treatment [p.27.16ff] can inform you about this opinion.

### Chapter 28

**Student:** I perceive sufficiently from what you have said how that opinion can be supported and also how it can be disproved, so I turn to another question. For I still do not know whether, in order for Catholics to have to consider some assertion as explicitly condemned, it is necessary in the condemnation to add “as heretical” or “opposed to Catholic truth” or some equivalent modification, specification or determination, by uttering a sentence like the following, or something equivalent, “We condemn such an assertion as heretical or as inimical to Catholic truth.” Tell me therefore one or more opinions about this.

**Master:** This is answered in two ways. Some say that for a rejected assertion to be considered an explicitly condemned heresy, such a determination, modification or specification should be put in the sentence, because they say that an assertion that has not been condemned “as heretical” should not be considered heretical. Others say that for an assertion to be considered heretical it is enough [1] that the false assertion itself be rejected, or its opposing truth explicitly approved, without such a determination in words, and [2] that this approval or rejection be based on Catholic truth. So when Alexander III rejected and forbade anyone to say that Christ is not something as a man, he based his

rejection on this Catholic truth, that Christ is true God and true man. And therefore he wanted the said assertion to be considered heretical, although in his prohibition he did not vocally express a determination such as, “We condemn it as heretical”.

This is also proved by argument. For an explicitly approved truth based on Catholic truth should be considered Catholic; its opposing falsehood therefore should be judged heretical. But whether a truth be approved or its opposing falsehood condemned, the truth is always approved because the rejection of one of [a pair] of contradictories involves the approval of the other, and vice versa; therefore an assertion of a kind that is opposed to a truth based on Catholic faith should be considered heretical and should be regarded as explicitly condemned.

### Chapter 29

**Student:** There is something further I will ask about the condemnation of heresies. For it is clear to me that every error opposed to and inconsistent with divine Scripture in any way at all, whether openly or secretly, belongs in the number of the heresies. It is certain however that theologians offer opposed opinions about matters that pertain to sacred Scripture, and they try to support all their opinions with divine Scripture and labour to reject opposed opinions through the same sacred Scripture. Some of these opposed opinions, therefore, belong in the number of the heresies. Does a pope sin culpably, therefore, by neglecting to condemn such heresies?

#### **Is a pope to blame if he does not condemn the heresies of well-intentioned theologians?**

**Master:** Some say that the pope does not sin at all in allowing theologians to hold as their opinion assertions of this kind which are in fact heretical, which seems provable by the following argument. It is not a sin to allow what is permissible since sometimes what is *im*permissible is allowed without sin; but it is permissible to hold as an opinion errors of this kind that have not been condemned explicitly, because such an opinion does not make the one who holds it a heretic provided he is prepared to be corrected; the pope is without sin, therefore, in allowing theologians to hold as their opinion errors of this kind which are in fact heresies.

Others think that many highest pontiffs have sinned culpably in allowing heresies of this kind to be held even as an opinion, which they prove this first as follows. Not only heretics but also heresies should be rooted out of the Church, as the general council quoted in *Extra, De hereticis, c. Excommunicamus* [X

5.7.14] attests; it judges that bishops who have been negligent or remiss about purging their dioceses of the leaven of heretical wickedness should be deposed. If therefore the person to whom it belongs because of the office with which he is charged to root out heresies has been negligent or remiss, he cannot be excused from culpable negligence or laxness. But it pertains to the highest pontiff to purge the whole Church of heresies, not only those already explicitly condemned but also any others at all; those who have supported the holding or teaching of such heresies, therefore, have sinned culpably.

**Student:** It does not seem that the pope is bound to purge the Church of new heresies that have not been condemned explicitly, but it is enough for him to purge it or keep it purged of every heretical wickedness already condemned explicitly.

**Master:** They reject this, saying that a pope who neglects to oppose and condemn heresies which newly rise up is not imitating the apostles and holy fathers, who very swiftly condemned heresies as they came forth. But the Roman pontiff must cleave to their footsteps if he wants to join them in the heavenly homeland. Highest pontiffs who have neglected to condemn heresies of this kind, therefore, have sinned.

**Student:** The apostles and holy fathers condemned heresies because they found the assertors of such heresies to be pertinacious. Therefore, since theologians have not been pertinacious assertors of heresies they think are not opposed to Catholic truth, heresies they have taught only as an opinion should not be condemned by Roman pontiffs.

**Master:** They try to attack that excuse for the Roman pontiffs in two ways. Firstly, because the latter have not known whether theologians would cling pertinaciously to their heretical opinions, because they have not inquired about this at all; they have been negligent or remiss, therefore, in not resisting danger to the Church by inquiring into the truth. The second is as follows. A greater danger should be resisted more strongly, diligently and swiftly. But a greater danger threatens the Christian religion from heresies publicly held as opinion and taught as doctrine than from burdensome and evil customs, because, even if those teaching their opinions as doctrine were not to adhere to them pertinaciously, it should nevertheless be feared that simple students, hearing such assertions taught by great doctors and argued for strongly and not condemned by Catholics, might be induced by the plausibility of arguments they do not know how to refute to a pertinacious adherence to those heresies, and [it should therefore be feared] that pestiferous errors might begin to be venerated

and defended pertinaciously as Catholic truths. But burdensome and evil customs should be very quickly repressed lest “they be adopted by the impious as a right and privilege”, as Pope Nicholas affirms (dist. 8, c. *Mala* [c.3]). Therefore much more should heresies, however they germinate, be completely rooted out and condemned, lest they be approved as Catholic truths by those who are simple and liable to be misled.

**Student:** That last argument is plausible, but the first seems to lack all plausibility. Because according to the sacred canons an inquisition should not be made into anyone unless he has first been accused, as we find in *Extra, De accusationibus*, c. *Qualiter et quando* [X 5.1.24] and in many other places; but theologians have not been accused of heresies; therefore, highest pontiffs should not have made an inquiry into them.

**Master:** They say that this excuse is not sufficient, because although the theologians have not been accused of being heretics, yet they were accused of teaching heresies. And thus many theologians now think that other theologians teach heresies as doctrine, even if they would not want to affirm that they should be reckoned among heretics. For many also think, and perhaps assert, that all Thomas’s opinions formerly condemned at Paris should be judged heretical. Some also believe that all his opinions that the archbishops of Canterbury condemned should be reckoned heresies. For some most firmly believe that to say that the will can will nothing against the actual judgment of reason smacks of manifest heresy, because, they say, this doctrine takes away all merit and demerit.<sup>67</sup> Some also believe that to say that in man there is only one substantial form [p.69.1] conflicts with orthodox truth. Some also think that many of Scotus’s opinions should be reckoned among the heresies. For they think that to say that the wisdom of God may in some way be distinguished in reality from the essence of God contradicts the divine simplicity and, consequently, conflicts with Catholic truth. They think the same about minor unity, and the priorities that Scotus posits in God, and about practically innumerable other opinions he holds. Many think the same about many of Giles’s opinions. It is notorious, therefore, that theologians are known to teach heresies as doctrine, though they are not regarded as heretics. Because of this reputation, therefore, highest pontiffs ought to have been moved to have had an inquiry made.

**Student:** Perhaps such a reputation had not reached the highest pontiffs.

---

67. See Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.226ff.

**Master:** They say that this lacks all probability, because it is not at all plausible that the condemnations of the opinions of Thomas and of others, which were often solemnly and publicly pronounced at Paris and in England, had been unknown to the highest pontiffs, especially since some members of the Order of Preachers appealed to the Roman curia against the condemnation published in England by the archbishop of Canterbury of some of Thomas's opinions and for that reason had gone to Rome. Therefore they say that even if the report that those opiners were heretics did not reach the Roman pontiffs, still they knew that those opinions had been condemned in Paris and in England. Therefore they ought to have proceeded to the making of an inquisition, on the example of the holy fathers who made an expert inquisition into Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Nestorius and many others and their teachings before they were convicted as pertinacious defenders of heresies, and on the example too of Innocent III who, as we find in *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica, c. Damnamus* [X 1.1.2], proceeded to the making of an inquisition and a condemnation (though Joachim was never a pertinacious defender of his error, and though the most fully qualified doctor of that time, Richard of St. Victor, adhered, but not pertinaciously, to the same error).

### Chapter 30

**Student:** Those examples greatly distress my mind and so I want to know whether some people try to excuse the said highest pontiffs in some other way.

**Master:** Some excuse them by their simplicity and ignorance of the Scriptures, saying that since the time of Innocent III there have been no highest pontiffs who excelled in knowledge of sacred letters, and so they have not wanted to involve themselves in perplexing and difficult questions but have left such matters to be discussed by theologians, contenting themselves with those matters that are known to have been explicitly approved. About new opinions, however, following blessed Jerome's advice,<sup>68</sup> they have preferred to doubt piously rather than define something rashly.

**Student:** That opinion seems to agree with those who say that it pertains chiefly to theologians and not to canonists to judge between heretical and Catholic assertions [p.6.12]. For there have been many highest pontiffs after the times of Innocent III who have been very learned in canon law, although they have not been outstanding in theology; therefore, if it were chiefly to pertain to canonists to judge between Catholic and heretical truths, they could not be excused in the

---

68. Rather Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, PL 198, col.1643.

that way for not condemning heresies taught among theologians as doctrine. But could they have been excused if they had been masters in theology?

**Master:** They say Yes, because there are many people, they affirm, who have the name of doctor in theology who have been raised to the position of master through human favours, undue patronage and devilish ambitions, who are wholly ignorant of sacred letters.

### **Chapter 31**

**Student:** Even if the highest pontiffs did not have excellent knowledge of sacred Scripture, it nevertheless does not seem that they should in any way be excused because of this, since they could have consulted the learned and the experts. Someone who has access to experts cannot be excused through ignorance. Such ignorance of divine Scripture does not excuse them, therefore, unless perhaps it is said that because they had not been trained in theology and philosophy before they had been raised to the papacy they could not, even with the instruction of experts, achieve an understanding of such subtle theological difficulties. But this also does not seem adequate, because even if they had not been able to understand instruction about these things, they should nevertheless have believed the instruction of others, it seems, and consequently they should have proceeded in accordance with the instruction of experts to condemn the heresies even if they did not understand them. Would you therefore make clear what people hold about this last issue — that is, whether a highest pontiff ignorant of the sacred Scriptures should on the advice of experts condemn some heresy that has been promulgated even if he cannot see how it is opposed to Catholic truth?

### **Should the pope follow expert advice in condemning a doctrine as heresy?**

**Master:** Some say that in this case a highest pontiff should believe those learned in sacred Scripture and in accordance with their advice proceed to the condemnation of a heresy, even if he does not see how the heresy that has been taught as doctrine is opposed to the truth. Others, however, argue openly that by whomever and however often it is said to a pope that some assertion should be considered heretical, he should in no way proceed to a solemn condemnation of it unless he himself clearly sees — whether through divine inspiration, his own meditation, the reading of books, the instruction of others or in some other way — that the assertion conflicts with orthodox truth. They also say that if everyone gathered together in a general council except the pope were to assert that such

an assertion is heretical he should not solemnly condemn it, however much they all insist, unless they confirm their opinion with a miracle or bring him by their instruction to understand how it conflicts with Catholic truth; but he would be bound to wait until it became clearly known to him either by divine revelation, by the working of a miracle directed to the disproving of that heresy, by his own meditation, by someone else's instruction or by some other means, that such an assertion is opposed to Catholic truth.

**Student:** I wonder how they presume to teach as doctrine that one mortal man, however great the dignity he is endowed with, ought to cling to his own fantasy rather than to all the holy and learned men called together to a general council.

**Master:** You do not understand that opinion, it seems to me. For they do not say that a pope ought to cling to his own fantasy, but they say that because of the words of men he should not condemn any assertion against or beyond his own conscience.

**Student:** It seems that in this case a pope is bound to fashion his own conscience according to the conscience of so many great men.

**Master:** They say that in those matters that concern the faith the pope should not rely on the consciences of men but only on divine authority.

### Chapter 32

**Student:** I am beginning to give more attention to that opinion. Would you therefore try to support it with authorities or arguments?

**Master:** Many arguments fortified by authorities can be brought forward to support that opinion. The first is this. All the people except the pope who are gathered together in a general council are not of greater authority than Christ, nor should all of them be believed more than Christ. But if Christ had come and preached an unheard of Catholic truth and had not performed any miracle to confirm his teaching, the Jews would not have sinned even if they had not believed his preaching. Therefore, much more, the pope can, without sin, not adhere to the opinion of everyone else in a general council, if no miracle is done by them to confirm their opinion and they do not make him understand how their opinion is based on Catholic truth; and consequently he is not bound to follow them in that opinion. The major premise of this argument is obvious to any Catholic. The minor premise is proved by the authority of Christ himself, who, speaking of the Jews, says, as we read in John 15[:24], "If I had not done among them works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin," that is, in not believing me; "But now they have both seen" the obvious miracles that

I performed, “and hated both me and my father.” We gather from these words that if Christ had not performed miracles, the Jews would not have had sin in not believing.

**Student:** If that argument were conclusive it would follow that one would not have to put faith in the whole universal Church. Indeed anyone could without sin deny an assertion the universal Church has hitherto preached if he did not see how it was in harmony with divine Scripture, since the whole gathering of any mortals at all is not of such great authority as is Christ alone, and so if Christ was not to be believed without a miracle nor should the whole Church be believed unless its teaching is confirmed by an obvious miracle.

**Master:** Those who hold the above opinion would say to your objection that to adhere to a unanimous opinion of the universal Church when that opinion is not confirmed by some miracle is to place one’s chief faith in Christ, whose teaching has been confirmed by innumerable miracles. For we find expressly that Christ promised that his faith would last till the end of the age. It follows from this that the universal Church will never err against Catholic truth. Therefore if the universal Church unanimously teaches that something should be held as Catholic, this should be held firmly because of Christ’s authority and not chiefly because of the Church’s authority (although it should in some way also be held because of the Church’s authority), in so far as it is held with firm faith that Christ taught that the Church would never fall away from the Catholic faith.

**Student:** Here I could ask many things about the Church that cannot err and about a general council, but I have considered that all those things should be postponed to another time. Would you return to the main plan, therefore, and complete the arguments on which the above opinion [p.78.30] can base itself?

**Master:** A second argument for that opinion is this. Anyone who solemnly condemns some assertion, not because of some miracle or the authority of divine Scripture or some other authority that he sees but at the insistence of men, seems to base that condemnation on the wisdom, will or insistence of men; the condemnation of heretical wickedness, however, and the approval of Catholic truth, ought to rest on the same foundation; therefore it is licit for the pope in approving some Catholic truth to base himself on the wisdom, will or insistence of men — which is clearly opposed to apostolic teaching. For in 1 Corinthians 2[:4-5] the Apostle says, “My preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”<sup>69</sup> These

---

69. Cf. pp.49.36, 50.19.



words clearly establish that the faith of the pope should not take its stand on the wisdom of men and, consequently, even more not on the will or insistence of men. Therefore, neither should the approval of Catholic truth be based on the wisdom of men, nor on their will or insistence. And by the same argument the condemnation of heretical wickedness ought not be based on any of those things. For the pope to condemn heretical falsity in a proper way, therefore, either he should be led to this by an obvious miracle or he must know clearly how such a falsity is opposed to Catholic truth, so that he does not establish his faith on the wisdom or will of men.

A third argument is this. No assertion should be approved as Catholic or condemned as heretical on account of people who can err against the faith. But all masters in theology and also all others except the pope gathered in a general council can err against the faith, because neither masters in theology nor all others except the pope gathered in a general council make up that whole Church for which Christ prayed that its faith would not fail (though if they are Catholics they are part of that Church, just as any Christian is part of that Church). The pope should not, therefore, approve any assertion as Catholic or condemn it as heretical because of all these, unless it is clearly shown to him by the working of a miracle or by the testimony of Catholic truth that they are not deviating from the truth.

A fourth argument is this. A pope should not solemnly condemn any assertion as heretical unless he knows demonstratively or believes most firmly that it is heretical. Anyone who knows demonstratively that some assertion is heretical, however, relies on reason, but anyone who believes relies on authority. In condemning some assertion as heretical, therefore, the pope relies either on reason or on authority. But a pope who does not see how an assertion to be condemned is opposed to orthodox faith cannot rely on reason, as is clear to anyone with understanding. Therefore it is necessary for him to rely on authority. He relies, therefore, either on divine or on human authority; not on divine authority because he does not see how such an assertion is opposed to divine authority. Therefore if the pope were to condemn some assertion as heretical in the aforesaid way he would be relying on human authority. But human authority should not be relied on in matters of faith, because our faith is above human understanding. Therefore in matters of this kind we should not adhere to human understanding.

A fifth argument is this. All others except the pope gathered in a general council are not of greater authority than were the apostles and, under the old law,

Moses; but, so that their teaching would be rendered credible, the apostles and Moses confirmed it with miracles or authentic testimonies already accepted by their hearers, and the people would not have believed them otherwise. Therefore the pope is not bound to show faith in those who do not make him sure about their opinion either with a miracle or with the testimony of a Catholic truth known to him. If all the others in a general council, therefore, were not to show to the pope either with a miracle or with Catholic authority that an assertion should be condemned as heretical, the pope ought not to condemn it as heretical. The major premise of this argument seems obvious. The minor premise is shown clearly by the example of blessed Paul, who confirmed his teaching with both miracles and testimonies from the Scriptures. Whence he says in Romans 15[:18-9], "For I dare not speak of any of those things which Christ worketh not by me, for the obedience of the gentiles, by word and deed, by the virtue of signs and wonders." We gather from these words that blessed Paul confirmed his teaching with signs and wonders. That he also brought forward testimonies from the Scriptures is clear from Romans 9, 10 and 11, 1 Corinthians 2 and 3, Hebrews 1, 2 and 3 and many other places in his letters. That all the apostles also confirmed their preaching with miracles Mark attests in the last chapter of his gospel [16:20] saying, "But they going forth preached everywhere, the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed." As is clear from Acts 1, blessed Peter also confirmed his teaching before the Jews through texts of the Scriptures that they accepted. The Lord also said to Moses, as we read in Exodus 4[:9], "But if they will not even believe these two signs nor hear thy voice, take of the river water and pour it out upon the dry land, and whatsoever thou drawest out of the river shall be turned into blood." It is quite clear from these and very many others that those through whom God taught people Catholic truth either brought forward testimonies from the Scriptures to confirm their teaching or demonstrated its truth by the working of a miracle, and otherwise the people were not compelled to believe them.

**Student:** That reply seems to prove only that the pope is not bound to follow others in condemning a heresy when they do not perform a miracle or bring forward Scripture in their support. But if they prove that the assertion they are seeking to have condemned is heretical, it seems that the pope ought to condemn it, and he cannot be excused in any way by the fact that he does not understand. For in this way many heretics could be excused who cannot see how their heresies are opposed to orthodox faith.

**Master:** Others reply to this that if the pope were to refuse with pertinacious ill will to agree with the instruction of Catholics who clearly prove through

Scripture that some assertion is opposed to Catholic truth, that is, because he was clinging irrevocably to some error, he should be judged a heretic or a supporter of heretical wickedness. But if he were not to agree out of simplicity alone, because he was not capable of [understanding] the instruction by which the assertion is shown to be heretical, he should not be judged reprehensible unless he were to refuse to be instructed about the truth.

**Student:** I will investigate later who should be considered a heretic. Would you therefore bring forward other arguments for the main proposition, if you have thought of any?

**Master:** A sixth argument for the above opinion is this. A highest pontiff should not understand any less the sentence or definition by which he condemns heretical wickedness than a judge should understand the sentence by which he condemns someone for any kind of crime; but it is not enough for a judge condemning anyone of a crime to believe his counsellors; rather he should see and contemplate for himself how his opinion preserves justice and equity. Therefore, likewise, in condemning heretical wickedness a pope should not merely believe others, but he must also understand how the assertion to be condemned is opposed to Catholic truth. The major premise is obvious, because greater caution should be employed in greater causes. The minor premise is proved, because if a judge were not obliged to understand the sentence which he pronounces, wisdom would not be required in one judging, but it would be enough to be of good faith and follow wise advisers. But this is against what the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 6[:5], "Is it so that there is not among you any wise man able to judge between his brethren?" We are given to understand by these words that only one who is wise should judge between brethren. And so anyone who judges should have at least enough skill in judging to understand the sentence he pronounces. For otherwise any simple and stupid person could be a judge.

A seventh argument is this. Anyone who can contradict those gathered together at a general council is not bound to agree with their opinion; but one man, even someone inferior to the pope, can contradict everyone else gathered in a general council; therefore he is not bound to agree with their opinion. Therefore much more should a pope not follow them, if he saw that the opinion of everyone else in a general council was wrong or was not to understand that it is Catholic and sound. The major premise is obvious. The minor premise is shown by the example of Paphnutius, who contradicted the others at the synod of Nicea and drew them to his side, as we find in dist. 31, c. *Nicena synodus* [c.12]. The gloss

here on the word *sententiam* says, “Therefore one man can contradict the whole collectivity if he has a reasonable cause.... For one person can draw others to his side.” Therefore one man can contradict all the others in a general council and draw them to his side. A pope should not follow all the others, therefore, unless he knows that they have not strayed from justice and truth. They conclude from the above that if the pope should not follow all the others gathered in a general council in condemning some assertion as heretical unless he sees how the said assertion is opposed to Catholic truth, much more should he not, if he knows that some theologians regard some assertion as Catholic, condemn such an assertion as heretical because of the instruction or insistence of all the others unless he knows clearly how it is opposed to orthodox faith.

**Student:** The above arguments seem difficult to refute, but I do not want them to be investigated any further now; after you have completed the whole of this present work, and I have thought about it most studiously, I want to go over again with you these arguments and everything else and investigate carefully your thinking on all these matters. But tell me whether they think that it is permissible for the pope to forbid some assertion about which he is not certain whether it should be considered Catholic or heretical and to order that it not be publicly taught as doctrine.

**Master:** They say that in a particular case, if a great scandal had arisen from the teaching of some assertion as doctrine or if it were feared that a large number of people would cling to it pertinaciously, it would be permissible for the pope to order such assertion to cease until it became known whether it should be reckoned as truth or heresy.

### Chapter 33

**Student:** You have reported many views about the condemnation of heresies. Now I ask that you would see fit to say some things about the condemnation of other errors. For I want to know whether the learned think that it is permissible for the pope to condemn other errors besides heresies.

#### Condemnation of errors that are not heresies

**Master:** Other errors are of three kinds. Some are not against faith and good morals and holding them does not endanger the soul. Such are errors in purely philosophical matters and also some errors about some divine sayings concerning which it cannot be discovered what should be held without doubt. Augustine speaks about such matters in his *Enchiridion*, saying, “It is no sin, or the slightest sin, to err in matters that make no difference to taking hold of

God's kingdom." Anselm also refers to things of this kind when he says in chapter 18 of book 1 of *Cur deus homo*, "... in those matters about which different things can be thought without danger, like the matter we are now considering. For if we do not know whether more men are to be chosen than there are lost angels, I do not think there is any danger to the soul whether or not we think the one of these rather than the other. If, I say, we have expounded divine sayings in matters of this kind in such a way that they seem to favour various opinions, and it is nowhere found that it is determined what should be held indubitably, I do not think this should be censured." According to many people it is not permissible for the pope to condemn such errors because in condemning them he would entangle souls by obliging believers to believe things that are perhaps against their conscience or to deny what it causes no danger to hold or to deny.

Other errors are opposed to what is found in accounts of the deeds of the faithful, in chronicles, or in histories worthy of trust. Some people say about these that the pope can condemn them, not as heretical but as dangerous and pernicious to the Church. For believers could incur the greatest damage and dangers both corporal and spiritual if anyone at all were permitted to deny whatever is contained in accounts of deeds, histories and chronicles. Since a pope is obliged to prevent damage and dangers to the faithful, he can therefore condemn such errors and subject those erring to the appropriate punishment.

There are other errors of which we spoke above [p.56.33], from which together with other truths which cannot be denied it is possible to infer some heretical wickedness. These are properly said to smack of manifest heresy and can be broadly called heresies. And it is licit for the pope to condemn such errors, not as heretical strictly speaking but as smacking of manifest heresy. If someone were to say, therefore, that the chastity vowed by nuns is not more noble than conjugal chastity, the pope ought to condemn both the person asserting this pertinaciously and the assertion. Certain errors denying that the preaching friars and the friars minor can hear confessions have been condemned in this way. The highest pontiffs Alexander IV and Innocent IV solemnly condemned in this way certain Parisian masters and their errors against the state and life of [the Orders of] preachers and minorites.

### Chapter 34

**Student:** These things seem probable to me. But does it seem to some that it is licit for someone else inferior to the pope to condemn errors of this kind?

**Master:** There are some people who say that this is not licit for anyone inferior to the pope because, since it is not licit for them to condemn heresies, which are opposed to and harm the Christian religion more than any other errors, much more is it not licit for them to condemn other errors. And this argument seems to be confirmed. For a greater danger should be resisted more strongly; but heresies are more dangerous to the Christian faith than are other errors; whoever is not permitted to condemn heresies, therefore, should not involve himself in other errors.

Others say, however, that it is licit for inferior prelates to condemn errors of this kind. For this assertion they argue as follows. What has been licit for inferior prelates at any time and has not been revoked by the highest pontiff or by a general council is still licit for them; but it was once licit for other prelates to condemn errors of this kind, and this has not been revoked; therefore, etc. The major premise is clear; the minor premise is proved. For it is licit for anyone who is permitted to approve some truths to reject opposing false assertions. But it has sometimes been licit for inferior prelates to approve a truth asserting that some person is holy, and worthy of veneration as being holy by the faithful, because it has been licit for them to add new saints to the catalogue of saints. Therefore it has been licit for them to reject and solemnly to condemn the false assertion that such people were not saints and should not be venerated by the faithful. It is, therefore, still licit for them to condemn some errors.

**Student:** That argument does not seem to be conclusive against them, because it proves only that it was at some time licit for them to condemn the error that says that such a person is not a saint. But it is not now licit for them to condemn such an error, just as it is not now licit for them to add anyone to the catalogue of saints.

**Master:** You do not fully understand their argument. For they do not intend to prove that it would *now* be licit for those inferior to the pope to condemn someone asserting, or his assertion, that someone on behalf of whom God is said to perform miracles is not a saint. Rather they intend to argue that for the reason for which it *was* licit for them to condemn such an error it was also licit for them to condemn other errors from which, with the addition of other obvious truths, a manifest heresy can be inferred; their power over other errors, however, has not been revoked. Therefore they can still condemn other errors, although they cannot now condemn anyone asserting that someone for whom they say miracles have been performed is not a saint.

**Student:** I understand the said argument more, so explain how it answers the argument of the others.

**Master:** It is said that although they cannot condemn heresies, they can nevertheless condemn many other errors more minor than heresies, because inferiors to whom greater affairs are known to be forbidden can undertake lesser ones, since, as we gather from the divine law in Deuteronomy 1, it is necessary to refer greater affairs to greater authorities. Yet it should not be said that prelates are not bound to resist heresies, but they should not resist them by condemning them, but by referring them to the highest pontiff or to a general council.<sup>70</sup>

---

70. What emerges from Book 2 seems to be this. Catholics must believe more than the Bible. (The Church cannot fall into heresy (Matthew 28:20), and the Church teaches as Catholic truth some things not found in the Bible.) There are five kinds of Catholic truths altogether (p.40), and correspondingly five kinds of “deadly errors” (p.56). Decisions of popes and councils when rightly made are based on truths of the five kinds. A pope can not make new articles of faith, because Catholic faith does not depend on human wisdom or will but only by divine revelation (1 Cor. 2:4-5). The saints are sometimes wrong, as is proved by the fact that they sometimes contradict one another; their writings are approved by the Church in respect of everything which is not corrected by the author or by others.

Heresy is any false doctrine contrary to Catholic truth. Every possible heresy has been condemned already, if only implicitly. Only a pope or a council can define truths and condemn heresies explicitly, so as to authorise other Church authorities to take action against them. (The pope or lower authorities can, however, sometimes temporarily forbid the public defence of certain opinions even though they may not be heretical.)

Theologians in universities may teach heresies. Sometimes universities or bishops have issued condemnations (though lower authorities do not have that power); sometimes the popes have not done so. Their excuse may be that popes who are not theologians may not be able to determine difficult questions. “Better pious doubt than rash definition”. A pope should not condemn a doctrine unless he clearly sees for himself that it is heretical (p.78). In questions of faith the pope should not rely on the consciences of men but only on divine authority (1 Cor. 2:4-5).





### **Book 3**

#### **Chapter 1**

**Student:** Concerning Catholic truths the above investigation is enough. Now I will try to investigate some points concerning Catholics and heretics. And first I ask, who should be regarded as a Catholic?

#### **Who should be regarded as a Catholic?**

**Master:** He should be considered a Catholic who observes the Catholic faith whole and inviolate.

**Student:** How can a simple layman observe the whole faith when he has never thought of many things that belong to the Catholic faith? Such a layman therefore cannot be a Catholic, if every Catholic holds the whole Catholic faith.

**Master:** Theologians answer that to observe or hold the whole faith is possible by believing faithfully and without any doubt, explicitly *or implicitly*, all things that pertain to the orthodox faith.

**Student:** What is it to believe something implicitly?

**Master:** It is answered that to believe implicitly is to assent firmly to some universal [statement] from which many things follow and not adhere pertinaciously to anything contrary. And therefore whoever firmly holds that everything handed down in divine Scripture and the teaching of the universal Church is true and sound and does not adhere pertinaciously to any assertion contrary to orthodox truth holds the Catholic faith inviolate and whole and should be considered a Catholic.

**Student:** It seems that for someone to be regarded as a Catholic it is enough to believe that all things the universal Church hands down are true, and thus it is superfluous to add that he should not adhere pertinaciously to anything contrary.

**Master:** Some of the learned say that it is not enough to believe that all things that the universal Church hands down are true, unless together with this nothing contrary is adhered to pertinaciously in particular. For many heretics have been condemned by general councils who firmly held that all things handed down in sacred Scripture are true; however, because they adhered pertinaciously to some assertion that was in fact contrary to an assertion of divine Scripture (although they did not see this), they were judged to be not Catholics but heretics.

**Student:** It seems to me not possible to know perfectly who is to be regarded as a Catholic unless one knows who is to be judged a heretic,<sup>71</sup> and therefore I will turn to the inquiry concerning heretics. But say first how it is explained that someone can believe that all things that divine Scripture contains, or the [doctrine of the] universal Church, are true, and yet adhere pertinaciously to some assertion opposed to some truth contained in sacred Scripture or in the teaching of the universal Church.

**Master:** This is explained as follows. Just as it is possible to know something in a universal [statement] and not know it in particular (according to the opinion of the wise man)<sup>72</sup>, which is simply to know the universal proposition and not know one of its singulars (for example, I can know that every man is rational, not knowing the singular, “This is rational”, when some man is pointed out whom I see from a distance and do not know whether he is a man or a brute animal), so it is possible to know some universal and think that one of its singulars is false (for example, I can know that every man is capable of laughter, and yet, when some man is pointed out whom I see from a distance and think to be an ass or some other animal, as often happens, I can believe that he is not capable of laughter, because I think that he is not a man) — so it is possible for someone to believe the universal statement, “All things contained in divine Scripture are Catholic and true”, and yet believe it to be false that “Blessed Andrew was an apostle of Christ”, because he does not know that the truth “Blessed Andrew was an apostle of Christ” is contained in or can be inferred from divine Scripture. Assuming that this is so, if for some reason he adheres pertinaciously to the statement that “Blessed Andrew was not an apostle of Christ”, he must be judged not a Catholic but a heretic, however firmly he may hold the universal statement, “All things that divine Scripture teaches are Catholic and true”.

## Chapter 2

**Student:** Now more than ever I consider that to know who should be considered a Catholic one must know who should be counted among the heretics, and therefore I wish to examine some points concerning heretics. But lest I be deceived through equivocation, say first if the word heretic has one meaning or several.

---

71. Cf. p.27.5.

72. Aristotle, *Anal. Post.* A.13 79 a4-6.

### Who should be regarded as a heretic?

**Master:** Several meanings of this word heretic are assigned. In one way every excommunicate is called a heretic. Thus in 4, q. 1, c. 2, Pope Nicholas says: “‘And we call heretics’, they say, ‘both those who have formerly been expelled by the Church, and also those who after this have been anathematized by us’”. And in the same chapter the gloss comments: “Note that every excommunicate is called a heretic”. And the gloss notes the same on 24, q. 1, § *Quia vero*.

In a second way a pervertor of the sacraments is called a heretic. And thus a simoniac is called a heretic. Thus Gregory says (1, q. 1, c. *Quisquis* [c.5]), “Anyone who is ordained through money is promoted to this, that he may become a heretic”.

In a third way, whoever doubts or thinks that the Christian faith is false or an invention is called a heretic. And in this way all Jews, Saracens and pagans are to be counted as heretics. Hence the gloss says, 24, q. 3, § *Quia vero*, “Sometimes anyone who does not hold the articles of faith is, in a broad sense, called a heretic”. And according to this the Jew and the Gentile are heretics, and according to this not every heretic has been excommunicated. In this way also those doubtful in faith are heretics, because they are unbelievers, as we read in *Extra, De haeretics*, c. 1. Thus also those who are at first Catholics and afterwards think that the Christian faith is false are heretics, and thus those who apostatize from the faith by mouth and mind are to be considered heretics. (But if anyone apostatized only by mouth, he would not be a heretic before God, though the Church would have to regard him as a heretic unless it were certain that he apostatized from fear of death.)

In a fourth way, every Christian, or one who thinks or thought himself to be a Christian, who errs pertinaciously against Catholic truth is said to be a heretic.

**Student:** Why is it said “who thinks or thought himself” to have been a Christian?

**Master:** It is said on account of those who are baptized outside the Church’s form, who are not Christians but thought or think themselves Christians; and yet they are heretics otherwise than Jews or pagans are, and should be punished in another way.

**Student:** Say if this word “heretic” has other meanings.

**Master:** In a fifth way everyone who adheres pertinaciously to an error that smacks of heretical wickedness is called a heretic.

### Chapter 3

**Student:** I see clearly several meanings of this word heretic, but in some of them it is seldom used, though heretics are often mentioned. Say, therefore, if you have heard or seen a description of this word heretic in the meaning in which it is more commonly used.

**Master:** Perhaps you mean to speak of the heretic who is excommunicate, and, if he has been lawfully convicted and has not corrected himself according to the Church's form, should be handed over to a secular court.

**Student:** Describe him, if you can.

#### Definition (description) of a heretic

**Master:** Some describe [the heretic] saying this: A heretic is someone seriously baptized, or behaving as someone baptized, who pertinaciously doubts or errs against Catholic truth.

**Student:** Clarify the elements [of this description], and explain which persons they intend to include and which to exclude.

**Master:** By the first element, when they say "seriously baptized", they exclude those baptized in jest, who are considered as not baptized. And they include by the same element not only Christians baptized by Catholics, but also those baptized by heretics in the Church's form, and outside the Church's form (who in no way receive the sacrament of baptism in respect of either grace or character).<sup>73</sup> By the same element they exclude Jews, Saracens and pagans, who have never been baptized and have not behaved as baptized persons, who should not at all be punished by the penalty of the heretics of whom you were speaking.

And by the second element, when it is said "behaving as someone baptized", they include those who think or pretend that they have been baptized and live among Christians as if baptized. If these withdraw from the faith they should be punished as if they had truly been baptized.

By the third element, when it is said, "who errs or doubts pertinaciously against Catholic truth", are excluded all those who either doubt or err against the faith from simplicity or ignorance alone, without any pertinacity. For such persons should not be considered heretics, but should be diligently informed about the faith, and if afterwards they doubt or err pertinaciously they should be judged to be heretics.

---

73. A person purportedly baptised by a heretic who does not use the proper form of baptism does not receive baptism, but nevertheless can become a heretic. See the first objection of the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

**Student:** So as to understand better the material about heretics I will object against the above description in many ways. For the first element, which is put in place of a genus, when it is said “seriously baptized”, does not seem suitably laid down. For many are seriously baptized outside the Church’s form, who, however much they may err pertinaciously, should not be judged heretics as we are now speaking of heretics. Because we are speaking now only about heretics who belong to the forum of the Church and are to be judged by the Church. But those who are outside the Church and never were of the Church and never were Christians should not be judged by the Church, as the Apostle testifies. In 1 Corinthians 5, he says, “For what business is it of mine to judge those outside?” But those baptized outside the Church’s form have always been outside and never have been Christians. Therefore they should not be judged by the Church and consequently should not be regarded as heretics.

**Master:** Your objection is based on an equivocation, for people are said to be “outside” in various ways. For some are outside because they have never been baptized, by either true or false baptism, and have not in any way behaved as baptized persons, and the Apostle means these. However much they err pertinaciously against Catholic truth, they are not to be punished by the Church, as baptized heretics are.

Others are outside who never received true baptism; however, they have received false baptism, or have behaved as baptized persons; and these, like those who have been within, are subject to the jurisdiction of the Church.

Others are outside who have at some time been inside but are separated from the Church by the Church’s censure; and nevertheless sometimes they remain within. And in this way all excommunicates are said to be outside. Thus Jerome (24, q. 3, c. *Si quis* [c.4]) says: “It happens sometimes that he who is sent outside is inside, and he is outside who seems to be retained within”. Those also, however much they are outside, are not at all exempt from the Church’s jurisdiction.

**Student:** That objection seems probably answered, but still another occurs to me. For people who are [baptized while] insane, asleep, and altogether contradicting it, even if they are baptized, if they afterwards err pertinaciously or remain in pertinacious error, do not seem to be regarded as heretics, because they will not belong to ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

**Master:** Those who describe the heretic in the above way say that if people thus baptized persist in contradiction, they are understood not to be baptized by either true or false baptism. Certainly not by false; nor by true, because whoever is baptized by true baptism receives the character of the sacrament.

**Student:** What do they say about catechumens and those who express an intention to be baptised, if before they are baptized they fall into heretical wickedness or return to their previous religion?

**Master:** Some of them say that such people should be punished as heretics because they regarded themselves as Catholics, so if they afterwards err they should be regarded as heretics. Also, all adult catechumens, and those who say they intend to be baptized, act as persons baptized by the baptism of the spirit; therefore they are subject, as baptized people, to the judgment of the Church, and consequently, if they return to their vomit or fall into pertinacious error, they should be struck by the Church with due penalty. Others, however, say that before they are baptized such people do not belong to the jurisdiction of the Church; therefore they can, without fear of the Church's punishment, return to their previous religion and in other ways err pertinaciously.

### Chapter 5

**Student:** Though I could ask many questions about this matter, nevertheless, because few or no catechumens are now found, or unbaptised persons behaving as baptized, and I have wanted the present work to be made mainly to understand better the controversies ventilated among the Christians of our times, I turn to the last element of the description given above. It seems superfluous to put "pertinaciously", since every Christian should be added to the number of the heretics if he simply doubts or errs against Catholic truth.

#### Must a heretic be pertinacious?

This seems provable, first, by a text of Innocent III. Writing to the Count of Toulouse, he says (*Extra, De verborum significatione, c. Super quibusdam* [X 5.40.26]): "Your devotion has asked of us who are to be called manifest heretics. On this we have decided that you should be given the answer that those should be understood to be manifest heretics who publicly preach against the Catholic faith or profess or defend an error, or who have been convicted or have confessed before their prelates, or have been condemned judicially by them on a charge of heretical wickedness". In these words there is no mention of pertinacity. Anyone, therefore, who preaches publicly against the Catholic faith, even if he does not err pertinaciously, must be considered a heretic.

Pope Celestine, as Pope Nicholas reports, seems to think the same. He says (24, q. 1, c. *Ait Celestinus* [c.35]): “If anyone has been excommunicated or stripped of his office as bishop or cleric by Bishop Nestorius or by others who follow him, after they began to preach such things, it is manifest that this man remains and has remained in our communion, and we do not judge him to have been removed; because it was not possible for anyone to remove another by his sentence if he had already shown that he himself should be removed”. By these words we are given to understand that as soon as someone begins to preach against Catholic truth, he straightway loses the power to excommunicate others. From this it follows that such a person should be regarded as a heretic. And yet someone can preach things contrary to Catholic truth without pertinacity. Therefore for it to be the case that someone should be considered a heretic it is not required that he err or doubt pertinaciously.

Blessed Jerome also seems to testify to this. He says, writing to a pope (24, q. 1, *Hec est fides* [c.14]): “But if this confession of ours is approved by the judgment of your Apostleship, whoever wants to blame me will prove himself unskilled or malevolent or even not a Catholic but a heretic”. Here also there is no mention of pertinacity. Therefore it is superfluous to put “pertinaciously” in the above definition.

Also, no one except a heretic is entangled in the condemnation of heretics. But, on the testimony of Gelasius, 24, q. 1, c. 1, “Whoever falls into a heresy at any time condemned entangles himself in its condemnation”, where the pope does not distinguish between one who falls pertinaciously, or not pertinaciously, into a heresy at any time condemned, and, consequently, neither should we distinguish. Therefore, whoever falls, whether pertinaciously or not pertinaciously, into a heresy at any time condemned should be reckoned a heretic.

Gelasius also seems to assert this openly. He says (24, q. 1, c. *Maiores* [c.2]): “Once the author of any insanity, and likewise the error, has been condemned, they judged it to be enough that whoever should at any time share in this error would be bound by the original sentence of its condemnation”.

Pope Felix seems to agree with him. He says (24, q. 1, c. *Achatius 2* [c.3]): “It is therefore necessary that he fell into the sentence (if the scales are just) that the author of the error, together with his successors, had received by agreement of the synod”.

In these texts these supreme pontiffs do not distinguish between those who fall into heresy pertinaciously and not pertinaciously, and yet they say indefinitely and universally that the followers of heretics lie under a like sentence. Therefore “pertinaciously” is superfluous in the definition above.

Also, Jerome says, commenting upon the Epistle to the Galatians (included in 24, q. 3, c. *Haeresis* [c.27]): “Therefore, whoever understands Scripture otherwise than as the sense of the Holy Spirit demands (by whom it was written), though he does not withdraw from the Church, can nevertheless be called a heretic, and he is choosing from among works of the flesh those which are worse”. From these words it is clear that everyone, whether pertinaciously or not pertinaciously, understanding Scripture otherwise than as the sense of the Holy Spirit demands is a heretic. Therefore “pertinaciously” is unsuitably put in the above definition.

Also, Pope Stephen, not distinguishing between pertinacious and not pertinacious doubt, says indefinitely (*Extra, De hereticis*, c. 1 [X 5.7.1]): “One who is doubtful in faith is unfaithful”. Therefore everyone who doubts about the faith, whether pertinaciously or not pertinaciously, should be considered unfaithful and consequently a heretic. But it is a bigger thing to err than to doubt; therefore everyone who errs against the faith, whether pertinaciously or not pertinaciously, should be considered a heretic.

Also, Pope Nicholas says indefinitely (24, q. 1, c. *Aperte* [c.36]): “He who, preaching such things, was unsteady in the faith was not able to depose or remove anyone”. From these words we gather that everyone who is unsteady in faith is deprived of all ecclesiastical power. But this is only because he is a heretic. Therefore everyone who is unsteady or doubtful in faith, whether pertinaciously or not pertinaciously, should be considered a heretic. From this it follows that everyone who errs against the faith, even not pertinaciously, should be reckoned a heretic.

Gratian agrees with these words. He says (24, q. 1, § *His auctoritatibus*): “By these texts it is clearly shown that as soon as someone begins to teach something against the faith he cannot depose or condemn anyone”, and consequently such a person teaching against the faith, even if not convicted, should be regarded as a heretic.

Also, faith that is not firm is not true faith. Hence a general council says, as we read *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica*, c. 1 [X 1.1.1], “We firmly believe”, clearly suggesting that every Catholic should believe firmly. Hence



also in the Athanasian Creed it is contained: “This is the Catholic faith; unless each one believes it faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved”; faith should therefore be firm. But one who doubts in faith, even if not pertinaciously, does not have firm faith, but unfirm, as Bernard testifies. In [*De consideratione*], addressed to Pope Eugenius, Book 5, he says: “Faith, if it hesitates, is unfirm”. Therefore one who doubts about the faith does not have true faith, and consequently he should be reckoned not a Catholic but a heretic.

These are the objections that strike my mind against the above description of a heretic. However, because that description seems plausible, say how those who thus describe the heretic answer the above.

## Chapter 6

**Master:** If I explain to you how they try to prove that element, you would perhaps better understand their answers to the above.

**Student:** Explain.

### Proof that pertinacity is required

**Master:** They try to prove in many ways that pertinacity is necessary both in someone who doubts and in someone who errs, if he is to be judged a heretic. Firstly, on the basis of the text of Augustine<sup>74</sup> placed in 24, q. 3, c. *Dixit apostolus* [c.29]. He says: “Those who without any pertinacious vehemence defend their opinion, even if it is false and evil, especially if they have not conceived it by the boldness of their own presumption but have accepted it from their parents who have been led astray and fallen into error, and if, moreover, they seek the truth with careful diligence, ready to be corrected when they find it, should not be counted among the heretics.” We clearly gather from these words, they say, that someone can hold a false and evil opinion and not be counted among the heretics.

**Student:** It seems to me clearly proved that not everyone who doubts or errs against the faith should be regarded as a heretic, but it has not been proved that every heretic doubts or errs against the faith pertinaciously, and therefore they cannot prove the last element of the aforesaid definition by the above words of Augustine. Because every element of any description or definition suitably given should be predicated of the thing described taken universally. It is quite clear, however, that they do not prove from the words of blessed Augustine that every heretic doubts or errs against the faith pertinaciously. For according to

74. Augustine, *Letter 43*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102043.htm>

blessed Augustine four things are required if someone holding a false and evil opinion is not to be regarded as a heretic: first, that he not defend his false and evil opinion with pertinacious ill will; second, that he has not come upon such an opinion from the boldness of his own presumption but has received it from parents led astray and fallen into error; third, that he seek the truth with careful diligence; fourth, that he be ready to be corrected if he finds it.<sup>75</sup> Anyone in whom *any* of those four is lacking, therefore, should be counted among the heretics. Therefore, even if someone is not pertinacious, if however he has discovered some false and evil opinion from the boldness of his own presumption or does not seek the truth with careful diligence or is not ready to be corrected when he finds it, he should, according to Augustine's opinion, be counted among the heretics.

**Master:** It is easy to answer that objection. To make it clear they say that it should be known that there is a difference between doubting and erring pertinaciously, and defending an error pertinaciously, because many heretics doubt or err pertinaciously, in that inwardly in their own mind they persist pertinaciously in their doubt or error, yet do not defend their error or doubt pertinaciously or in any other way; indeed sometimes out of fear, ambition, greed or for some other reason they deny outwardly what they hold irrevocably in their mind. On the other hand many people defend or can defend outwardly and with pertinacious ill will a false and evil opinion to which nevertheless they do not cling in their heart, either pertinaciously or in any other way. For it is possible sometimes knowingly to defend a falsity, just as false and wicked advocates drawn by greed often knowingly defend false and unjust causes with the most pertinacious ill will. And so not everyone doubting or erring pertinaciously defends a false opinion with pertinacious ill will, nor vice versa.

**Student:** I think that what you have now made clear is probable, and so would you apply it to the present case. Let us stop speaking about doubting, however, but speak only about erring, because perhaps they say that what is said about erring should also be understood of doubting, since those doubting the faith, like those erring against it, are counted among the heretics, or are not excluded from the number of the heretics.

**Master:** As you please, I will mention only someone who errs [an "errant"], and I will make clear how those describing heresy in the above way answer your objection by means of the notable point just made, which you seem to approve.

---

75. Some of these are affirmative (seeking truth, being ready to be corrected), some negative (does not defend, is not presumptuous), and the conclusion (he is not a heretic) is negative.

And so they say that blessed Augustine enumerates four conditions required for someone holding a false and evil opinion against Catholic truth not to be counted by the Church as a heretic, meaning that anyone who fails to meet any of the aforesaid conditions should be judged by the Church to be a heretic, and also pertinacious, though they should not all be regarded as “pertinacious defenders” of heretical wickedness. The first is that someone erring in such a way does not defend his error with pertinacious ill will. For if he were to defend his error with pertinacious ill will, Catholics, who judge from externals and not from interior motions of the soul, ought to count him as a heretic, at least with a violent<sup>76</sup> presumption against which no proof to the contrary should be admitted. For granted that someone might knowingly and pertinaciously defend a heresy against his conscience, and so in truth might not be a heretic in the eyes of God (though this would be a most mortal sin), yet he could not prove this and therefore the Church would have to count him as a heretic.

**Student:** I understand more and more the difference between a pertinacious heretic and someone defending a heresy with pertinacious ill will. It seems that someone can even defend some heresy with pertinacious ill will although Catholics should not regard him as a heretic, as for example if someone were forced by unbelievers through fear of death to defend with pertinacious ill will their errors against believers he should not be judged a heretic, as blessed Marcellinus who committed a heretical act from fear of death was not judged a heretic [see below, p.174.35].

**Master:** They say that you do not understand well who should be regarded as defending an error with pertinacious ill will, because only someone who defends an error willingly and voluntarily, without fear of death, defends it with pertinacious ill will. And therefore as long as the person you cite as an example does not defend an error except from fear of death, he does not defend an error with pertinacious ill will.

**Student:** That does not seem well said. For a person is said to be pertinacious who is, as it were, “shamelessly tenacious” [p.115.13] and too persistent in his opinion. But someone who defends an error from fear of death is shamelessly tenacious and too persistent in his opinion, for otherwise he would not sin mortally in defending an error against his conscience. Such a person is a pertinacious defender of error, therefore, although he should not be judged a

---

76. A “violent” presumption (stronger than a “probable” presumption) may suffice for definitive judgment, even though it may be mistaken.

heretic on account of such a pertinacious defence if believers are certain that he is defending the error only in order to avoid death.

**Master:** You make a strong argument against them, and so perhaps they would say that such a person should be regarded as pertinacious. But it should nevertheless not be said that he was defending the error with pertinacious ill will, because "ill will" seems to signify a free will not forced by fear. And so such a person would be a pertinacious defender of heresy, but yet he would not be a heretic nor, because of the fear of death, would he also be defending a heresy with pertinacious ill will. In another way they would say that, like ill will, pertinacity too implies a free will unforced by any fear of death, and therefore such a person should also not be considered pertinacious.

**Student:** Would you now tell me what they think about the second point that Augustine puts.

**Master:** They say that according to Augustine those who discover a false opinion against the faith from the audacity of their own presumption should be judged as pertinacious and heretical, even if sometimes they do not defend such an opinion with pertinacious ill will. However, if they did not discover some heresy out of the audacity of their own presumption but out of simplicity or ignorance, and nothing else were to make their deed worse and they could not be convicted of anything else, they should not be judged pertinacious or heretical. However, how it can become known that someone has discovered or devised an error not out of the audacity of his presumption but out of simplicity or ignorance cannot be explained briefly.

**Student:** Later I will inquire into this carefully. Now, however, they seem to deviate from Augustine's intention. For in that clause Augustine joins two things together to exclude some errants from the number of the heretics, namely that they have not devised their false opinion out of the audacity of their own presumption, and that they have received it from parents led astray and fallen into error. Therefore whoever has not received his evil opinion from parents led astray and fallen into error should be judged a heretic, just as whoever has devised an evil opinion from the audacity of his own presumption should be regarded as a heretic, according to them. This conclusion is confirmed, because anyone who does not receive his evil opinion from another discovers it out of the audacity of his own presumption, because he has it either from himself or from another. But according to them, whoever discovered a heresy out of the audacity of his own presumption should be considered a heretic. Everyone erring against the faith, therefore, who has not received his error from someone

else should be counted among the heretics. And so it seems that Augustine proposes *five* [conditions] to exclude some errants from the number of the heretics.

**Master:** They say that Augustine joins those two things together not in the sense that the second of them, namely that they have received their evil opinion from parents led astray and fallen into error, is necessarily required for errants not to be considered among the number of the heretics; but he proposes the second because he wants to indicate a way of proving that some people did not devise their false opinion out of the audacity of their own presumption: because if they received their false opinion from their parents or from any one else at all, it is certain that they did not devise it out of the audacity of their own presumption. He also adds that second point because he wants to imply that those errants who have received their faith from their parents can excuse themselves in more ways than others can. And so Augustine does not propose five points there but four, through any one of which someone can be proved and convicted as a heretic; and [he proposes] that the four points opposed to them are required for anyone erring not to be counted among the heretics. When you say, however, that everyone who does not receive his evil opinion from someone else devises and discovers it out of the audacity of his own presumption, they reply that this is not true. For some people discover errors by themselves out of ignorance alone without the audacity of presumption; but because they are not pertinacious, they are not numbered among the heretics.

**Student:** Explain how they make clear the third point that Augustine proposes.

**Master:** According to them Augustine means that for someone erring against the faith not to be a heretic he is required to seek the truth with diligent care. But this should not be understood to require an errant to seek the truth with careful diligence all the time; but if he wants to be excluded from the number of the heretics, he must seek the truth with careful diligence when Catholics tell him under appropriate circumstances that he is erring against Catholic truth, and when there is no legitimate hindrance because of which he cannot and ought not at that time seek the truth. Otherwise there would be against him a violent presumption that he was adhering to his error not out of simplicity or ignorance but out of pertinacity.

**Student:** Tell me about [Augustine's] fourth [point].

**Master:** The fourth, which also suffices for an errant not to be added to the number of the heretics, is that he be ready to be corrected when he discovers the

truth, for one not ready to be corrected when he discovers the truth should be considered pertinacious and, consequently, a heretic.

**Student:** That fourth clause alone renders an errant pertinacious and a heretic. Therefore the earlier ones seem superfluous.

**Master:** Although according to them that last clause, and not the others, renders an errant pertinacious, yet from those others we have a violent presumption that an errant is adhering pertinaciously to his error, because from them we have a presumption, the opposite of which cannot be proved, that such an errant is not ready to be corrected and, consequently, should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic.<sup>77</sup>

### Chapter 7

**Student:** You have discussed in enough detail the words of blessed Augustine set out above to prove that no one erring against the faith is a heretic unless he clings pertinaciously to his error. Would you now adduce other proofs for the same conclusion, if you have thought of others?

**Master:** This same conclusion is proved by a text of Augustine<sup>78</sup> against the Manichees. He says (24, q. 3, c. *Qui in ecclesia Christi* [c.31]): “Those in the Church of Christ who think something unwholesome and perverse, and contumaciously resist if they are corrected to think something wholesome and sound, and refuse to correct their pestiferous and deadly teachings but persist in defending them, are heretics.” We are given to understand by these words that not all those in the Church of Christ who think something unwholesome and perverse should immediately be judged heretics, but, according to what Augustine implies in the above words, they should be convicted of pertinacity first.

**Student:** Augustine seems to imply in the above words that not all those in the Church of Christ who err pertinaciously should be held to be heretics, since he seems to imply that three things are required for those in the Church of Christ who are inspired by something unwholesome and perverse to be heretics. [1] The first is that when corrected that they might think something wholesome and sound, they resist contumaciously (for which alone, without anything else,

---

<sup>77</sup> To summarise this interpretation of Augustine’s text. Five things are mentioned: (1) pertinacious defence, (2a) bold presumption, (2b) acceptance from parents, (3) not seeking the truth with careful diligence, (4) not being ready to be corrected. Acceptance from parents, (2b), tells against (2a); (1), (2a) and (3) are evidence from which (4) may reasonably be inferred. Not being ready to be corrected is the vital point: it establishes a “violent presumption” that the person is a heretic.<sup>78</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XVIII.51, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120118.htm>

they should be regarded as pertinacious).<sup>79</sup> [2] The second is that they refuse to emend their errors. [3] The third is that they persist in defending those same errors. If those three are required, however, for someone to be a heretic, as Augustine seems to imply, and many people cling to their errors pertinaciously who nevertheless do not defend them — indeed sometimes they deny them — it follows that not all those pertinaciously clinging to their errors should be added to the number of the heretics.

**Master:** They say that you understand Augustine wrongly. For he does not mean that those three things are required for someone to be a heretic; rather he means that any one of them makes an errant heretical. The three are distinguished thus. The first is, as it were, general and the [other] two are, as it were, less general and in some way spell out the first. For that some resist contumaciously when they are corrected so as to think something right and sound can happen in two ways, either because they refuse to emend, i.e. to revoke [their error], or because they persist in defending it. And so any one of those three renders an errant heretical, and also pertinacious. Therefore everyone who is pertinacious should be considered a heretic.

### Chapter 8

**Student:** If there are still other authorities or arguments to prove that no errant should be considered a heretic unless he is pertinacious I will willingly listen to them.

**Master:** Some further arguments are brought forward, the first of which is this. Those who should not be rejected by Catholics should not be counted among the heretics. But errants who are not pertinacious should not be rejected by Catholics. Therefore, those who are not pertinacious should not be counted among the heretics. The major premise could be proved clearly by the sacred canons, because all heretics are bound by a sentence of excommunication [p.58.24]. The minor premise is also proved clearly, because errants who seek the truth should not be rejected by Catholics, as Pope Pelagius attests. Speaking about those fully persuaded in their own mind, and consequently about errants, he says (24, q. 1, c. *Schisma* [c.34]), “If they too, though fully persuaded in their own mind, were seeking the truth while yet placed in the maternal womb, it would not have been necessary for us to reject them.” We are given to understand by these words that even if errants are fully persuaded in their own mind, as long as they are seeking the truth and showing themselves willing to be

---

<sup>79</sup>. The parenthesis may be a reader’s comment, based on p.102.5 above. See Scott, signif.html, passage 12.

corrected if they discover the truth, they should not be rejected by Catholics. And consequently those who are not pertinacious should not be rejected by Catholics, because whoever is not pertinacious is seeking the truth where and when he ought to seek it; for otherwise he ought to be considered pertinacious.

A second argument is this. Whoever is ready to be corrected should not be considered a heretic. But whoever is not pertinacious is ready to be corrected. Therefore whoever is not pertinacious should not be considered a heretic. The minor premise is self-evident. The major premise is proved by the gloss on 24, q. 3, c. *Dixit apostolus* [c.29 s.v. *pertinaci*], which says, “Therefore even if someone holds things against the faith, he should not be held to be a heretic as long as he is ready to be corrected.” And the gloss on 24, q. 1, c. *A recta*<sup>80</sup> says, “Even if someone errs, he is not a heretic if he is prepared to be corrected.”

A third argument is this. Anyone who firmly believes that everything the universal Church teaches is Catholic, sound and true and who clings pertinaciously to no error should be regarded as Catholic, and consequently he should not be regarded as a heretic. But one who errs and is not pertinacious believes firmly that everything the universal Church teaches is Catholic, true and sound and he does not cling pertinaciously to any error. Therefore such a person should not be adjudged a heretic.

A fourth argument is this. There is no reason why one person erring against the faith but not pertinaciously should be a heretic more than any other, because like cases are judged alike. But many have erred against the faith who have nevertheless not been regarded as heretics because they did not err pertinaciously. Therefore neither should anyone erring against the faith be counted among the heretics if he is not pertinacious. The major premise is obvious; the minor is proved by many examples. For Augustine erred in many ways, which he later retracted, and by this clearly showed that he was not pertinacious; and therefore he was not adjudged heretical. The same is clear about Jerome and about blessed Cyprian, about whom it was clear that they were by no means pertinacious; and for this reason, though they erred they were not regarded as heretics.

## Chapter 9

**Student:** For the moment I do not want to hear more arguments to prove that only someone erring pertinaciously should be considered a heretic, because I

---

80. Actually c.14, *Haec est fides*, s.v. *emendari*, vol.1 col. 1836



will investigate with you all of these things again after this present work. And therefore make clear how the points I adduced to the contrary are answered.

### Reply to objections against including “pertinacious”

**Master:** The first text you brought forward [p.94.27] to the contrary is Innocent III, *Extra, De verborum significatione, c. Super quibusdam verbis* [col.923], where Innocent III enumerates six kinds of men whom he asserts to be manifest heretics, namely those preaching publicly against the faith, those professing an error, those defending an error, those convicted before prelates, those who have confessed before them, and those condemned for heretical wickedness by them. Innocent’s words ought to be understood soundly, however, because otherwise someone would easily slip into errors because of them.

And so it is necessary to make a distinction about [the first kind, viz.] those preaching publicly against the faith, because it can happen in four ways that someone preaches publicly against the faith. In one way, because he preaches publicly that the Christian faith is false, doubtful, groundless or uncertain. Such a person is undoubtedly a manifest heretic, because he cannot be without pertinacity, since, if he does not regard it as true, certain, and sound, he is not ready to be corrected by the Christian faith; therefore he should be considered pertinacious and a manifest heretic. In another way someone can preach publicly against the faith by preaching an error opposed to Christian faith and protesting that he will never desist from his assertion; and such a person is pertinacious because he is not ready to be corrected, and therefore he should be grouped with the heretics. Third, someone can preach publicly against the faith while protesting that he does not intend to rashly defend or hold anything against the faith. Because such a person shows that he is not pertinacious and that he does not err out of malice or pertinacity but because of simplicity and ignorance, he is not a manifest heretic, and he should not be regarded as a heretic only because of such public preaching. And it is for this reason that in these times (when very many people try out of hatred, rancour, envy and malice to defame those who are better and wiser than themselves by accusing them of heresy) teachers, preachers and writers make such protestations to show before everyone that they are not pertinacious.<sup>81</sup> Fourth, someone can preach publicly

81. \*See Brev. Prol.24-35, p.98; IPP Prol.57-70,p.281. In his pre-Avignon academic writings Ockham made such protestations: De quant. q.1, OTh vol. 10 p.5-6/36; De corp. Christi cap.1, OTh vol.10 p.90/122, cap.17, OTh vol.10 p.125/156; Expos.Phys. prologus §1, OPh vol. 4, p.3- 4/16.

\*“Whatever I shall say, under whatever form of words, that can in any way be brought against anything said in Sacred Scripture or the writings of the Saints, or against a determination or teaching of the Roman Church, or against the judgment of doctors approved by the Church, I shall say not asserting but precisely reciting in the person of those who also hold the opinion to be discussed,

against the faith simply, without any protestation that he does, or that he does not, intend rashly to defend or hold anything against the faith. Such a person should not be considered a manifest heretic, but he should be carefully examined to see whether he clings pertinaciously to the error he publicly preached. If he is found to be pertinacious he should be judged a heretic. Before his examination, however, he should be regarded as a Catholic, because everyone should be regarded as good before the opposite has been clearly proved, so when it is not possible to be certain about his mental clinging [to an error], such a preacher should be adjudged Catholic until the opposite be proved. For just as we should put the best interpretation on actions when there is doubt about the doer's intention (*Extra, De regulis iuris, c. Estote* [X 5.41.2]), so when we do not know with what intention someone preaches against the faith, that is, with the intention of clinging to it pertinaciously or with the intention of correcting himself if he has erred, we should interpret it in the best way, that is, by supposing that he is ready to be corrected when the truth is evident to him.

About the second kind of person, that is those professing an error, they say that they should be considered pertinacious, and therefore they are manifest heretics. For profession usually proceeds from a will that has been confirmed, and so those who profess an error opposed to Catholic truth should be regarded as confirmed in their error. Therefore they should be held to be pertinacious. And it follows from this that all those who swear that they will preserve some error opposed to Christian faith and who abjure any Catholic truth should be considered to be among the pertinacious and the manifest heretics. For like a profession, an oath and an abjuration suppose a confirmed will.

About the third kind of person, that is, those who defend an error, they make a distinction, saying that it is possible to defend an error in two ways: in one way,

---

whether that opinion is true or false, catholic or heretical or erroneous. Whence if I shall say such words as "I say" or "it is to be said" and the like, I wish them to be understood not in my own person but in the person of those who thus opine"; *De quant. q.1, OTh vol. 10 p.5-6/36*. "...not rashly approving but only reciting, for the sake of exercise and inquiry into truth, subjecting and laying myself open to the correction of whichever orthodox catholic experts it concerns"; *De corp. Christi cap.1, OTh vol.10 p.90/122*. "I will say nothing assertively except what the Roman Church holds and teaches, ready in all things to captivate my mind [2 Cor. 10:5] on account of the authority of the Church, and to believe and confess with the mouth the things the Roman Church explains or will explain. All the rest I will put forward reciting only, under whatever form of words I shall use, for exercise and to give material for thought"; *De corp. Christi cap.17, OTh vol.10 p.125/156*; Cf. *Expos.Phys. prologus §1, OPh vol. 4, p.3-4/16*. He often uses a short form of protestation: "the question can be answered, without prejudgment and rash assertion, in another way..."; *Ord.1 d.41 q.un., OTh vol.4 p. 605/628*.

without [making] a rash assertion, because it then seems to be so. And such defenders of error, whether verbally or in writing, are not manifest heretics, because they are prepared to be corrected when they discover the truth. In another way someone defends an error with a rash assertion, and such a person is pertinacious and a manifest heretic.

About the fourth and fifth kinds, that is those who have been convicted of and have confessed to heretical wickedness before prelates, they make a distinction, because the wickedness can be reckoned either on the side of those who have been convicted or have confessed, or only on the side of the error concerning which they have been convicted or have confessed. If they have been convicted of or have confessed to heretical wickedness in the first way they are manifest heretics, because they have been convicted of or have confessed to pertinacity. However if the wickedness is only on the side of error, not on the side of those convicted or confessing, then they are not manifest heretics. For the errors that Augustine, Jerome and Cyprian maintained (touched on earlier [p.38.17]), for which they could have been convicted, were bad, yet they themselves were not bad. And therefore even if they had been convicted of or had confessed to those errors before prelates, they would not have been heretics.

About the sixth kind, that is those condemned without distinction for heretical wickedness, they say that they are manifest heretics if they have been rightly and justly condemned, because no one should be condemned by formal sentence for heretical wickedness unless the wickedness is found not only in the error but also in the errant. That wickedness in the errant, however, is pertinacity. And therefore only the pertinacious should be condemned for heretical wickedness.

**Student:** The above seem probable to me, but I wonder why Innocent did not make the above mentioned distinction.

**Master:** The reply is that it was for the sake of brevity that he did not make a distinction at this point, because it is perfectly clear from other sacred canons that it is appropriate to make these distinctions.

## Chapter 10

**Student:** Although we can gather from the above how those describing heresy in the oft-mentioned way reply to the many texts that I brought forward, nevertheless I want you to run through them separately.

**Master:** To the text from Pope Nicholas quoting the words of Celestine [p.95.1] they reply that those words should be understood of those preaching publicly and knowingly against determinations made by a general council, and also of

those publicly preaching those errors, rashly affirming the same errors, or protesting that they will never revoke them, or showing themselves pertinacious in any way at all.

Jerome's text [p.95.14], however, is brought forward for the opposite conclusion, because in the words adduced he seems to imply that someone rejecting the confession approved by the Apostolic [i.e. the pope] should not for this be regarded as a heretic, since he could be unskilled. And so if he speaks against the truth from lack of skill alone he should not be counted among the heretics.

Gelasius [p.95.20] too, they say, means someone who knowingly falls into a condemned heresy. For such a person should be adjudged a heretic. And when it is said, "Gelasius did not distinguish between falling into heresy pertinaciously and not pertinaciously, and so we should not distinguish either", they answer that when a pope or a canon does not distinguish *and no distinction can clearly be gathered from other canons or from sacred Scripture or from authentic sayings or from evident reason*, we should not distinguish. When a distinction can clearly be apprehended, however, from some or one of the above, we should indeed distinguish. It is so in the matter under discussion, because we gather very well from other sacred canons and from clear reason that there is an obvious distinction between falling into a condemned heresy pertinaciously and not pertinaciously.

They say too that in c. *Maiores* [24, q. 1, c.2] [p.95.28] Gelasius is speaking about someone knowingly participating in a condemned error, and also about someone pertinacious, whether he knows his error has been condemned or not.

To the text of Pope Felix [p.95.32] they reply that he is speaking about Achatius, who knowingly participated in a condemned misdeed; therefore he should have been adjudged pertinacious because he was not ready to be corrected by the teaching of the Church.

To the text of blessed Jerome, 24, q. 3, c. *Heresis*, [p.96.5], they reply that just as there is a twofold withdrawal from evil, viz. bodily and spiritual, as Augustine asserts (23, q. 4, c. 1), so withdrawal from the Church is twofold, that is bodily and spiritual. Bodily withdrawal can happen for many reasons, however. Someone can withdraw bodily from the Church and go bodily to the heretics because the Church does not agree with or rejects his teaching or opinion. And it is about this bodily withdrawal that we are now speaking, not about some other bodily withdrawal that could happen for a good reason.

Another withdrawal from the Church is spiritual, and that is twofold, namely open or hidden, in accordance with the fact there are two kinds of heretic, namely open or hidden. Similarly it is possible to understand Scripture otherwise than as the sense of the Holy Spirit demands in two ways, namely with pertinacious adherence or without it. Therefore if anyone who with pertinacious adherence understands Scripture otherwise than as the sense of the Holy Spirit demands, though he does not withdraw from the Church, either bodily (because of the fact that the Church does not agree with or rejects his perception), or spiritually in a manifest way (since he does not clearly show himself to be pertinacious), nevertheless he can be called a heretic; indeed he truly is a heretic because he has withdrawn spiritually from the Church even if in a hidden way.

Their answer to Pope Stephen's text [p.96.14] is that the person he calls doubtful in faith is someone who doubts that the Christian faith is true or sound, not someone who doubts some particular Catholic truth. Such a doubter in the faith, however, is pertinacious or is doubting pertinaciously, because he is not ready to be corrected by the Christian faith; for no one is ready to be corrected by teaching if he doubts that it is true, since no one wants to be corrected except by the truth. Whoever doubts some particular article, however, can be ready to be corrected by the Christian faith because [he can be ready to be corrected] by sacred Scripture, the whole of which he believes to be true, although he doubts some particular [article], not knowing that it is found in the sacred writings; and so he should not immediately be considered pertinacious. It is otherwise with someone who doubts in general or as a whole that the faith is true. It is about such a doubter in the faith that the glosses speak, one of which, on 24, q. 3, § *Quia vero*, says, "In one way a heretic is said to be anyone who is doubtful of the faith." The other [gloss], on 24, q. 3, c. *Aperte*, says, "Note that a heretic is one who is unsteady in faith.... For the word 'heretics' also covers those who deviate from the faith even by a slight argument." These texts all refer to those who doubt that the Christian faith is true.

**Student:** I wonder why someone who doubts the [whole] faith must be pertinacious more than someone who doubts some particular article, especially since it is just as possible to doubt without pertinacity a universal as a singular.

**Master:** They do not regard this as something to be wondered at. For just as there is an order among propositions, because one is prior and the other posterior, also one may be known through the other and often not the converse. And therefore it should not be presumed of someone who doubted a proposition

that is simply first in some system of ordering, which could in no way become known through another [proposition], that he would ever come to a knowledge of it, though if he were to doubt some posterior proposition it should be presumed that he could arrive at knowledge of it through prior propositions. Thus because the first thing a believer must believe is that the Christian faith is true, if anyone doubts this, nothing remains though which he can be recalled to firm belief, and so someone doubting in this way should be considered as pertinacious and not willing to be corrected. If he does not doubt that the Christian faith is true, however, even if he doubts some particular article, it should be presumed, unless the contrary is clearly apparent, that he will correct himself without delay if it is shown to him that the article he doubts does pertain to Catholic faith.

**Student:** What if no one can show him clearly that such an article pertains to Christian faith?

**Master:** They say that until it has been evidently shown to him that this article pertains to Catholic faith, it is enough for him to believe it implicitly, ready to believe explicitly when it is shown to him that it pertains to Christian faith.

**Student:** Go on to the other texts.

**Master:** To the chapter *Aperte* [p.96.21] they reply that it is speaking about a preacher wavering in the faith because he doubts that the Christian faith is true.

They reply in the same way to Gratian's words [p.96.29] , that he is speaking about someone preaching that the faith is false or uncertain or about someone pertinacious teaching things contrary to the faith. He is not speaking, however, about someone who teaches things opposed to orthodox faith out of simplicity or ignorance.

To the argument [p.96.34] by which it is implied [that faith ought to be firm] they say that faith in the universal [p.90.9] ought to be firm, so that the faithful person adheres to every Catholic truth "firmly", i.e. through firm faith, explicitly *or implicitly*; but he need not adhere firmly to each truth explicitly. The texts quoted from the general council and the Athanasian creed should be understood thus. But "one who doubts in faith", that is, doubts that the faith is true, "does not have firm faith" (thus Bernard speaks), and therefore "he should be reckoned not a Catholic but a heretic". However, someone who doubts some particular article does have a firm faith that the whole Christian faith is true and certain. He also has a firm implicit faith about the very article that he doubts.

And therefore he is Catholic, though about this article he does not have a firm explicit faith.

## Chapter 11

### Another objection to the proposed description of a heretic

**Student:** I want an answer to one further objection which seems to shatter the whole preceding description [p.92.11] of a heretic. Blessed Augustine defines a heretic in this way (24, q. 3, c. *Hereticus* [c.28]): “A heretic is someone who generates or follows false and new opinions for the sake of some temporal advantage, and especially for the sake of his own glory and dominance.” We gather from this definition that, even if they are pertinacious, those who only imitate old heresies should not be regarded as heretics. And so the earlier description of a heretic was not suitably assigned, because it applies to many people, namely those who only imitate old heresies, who should nevertheless not be judged as heretics according to Augustine’s definition, in that they neither generate nor follow new opinions.

Again, many who are baptised err pertinaciously only because of credulity or deception, not for the sake of any temporal advantage nor for the sake of vain glory or their own dominance, and consequently, according to Augustine’s definition, they should not be judged as heretics. And yet that oft-cited description applies to them. Therefore it is not a true description.

Again, someone certain about the faith who doubts nothing can, against his own conscience, generate and follow new and false opinions for the sake of some temporal advantage and especially for the sake of vain glory and his own dominance. Therefore someone who is certain about the faith and doubts nothing can be a heretic according to Augustine’s definition. A heretic is badly described, therefore, when it is asserted that every heretic doubts or errs pertinaciously against Catholic truth.

**Master:** They answer these by saying that Augustine did not intend to define a heretic in the above words, but intended to point out one way of recognising a heretic, i.e. that anyone who generates or follows false and new opinions for the sake of some temporal advantage, and especially for the sake of vain glory and his own dominance, is considered a heretic. Hence although in the proposition which Augustine puts, if it is understood universally [“Every heretic...”], the word “heretic” is verbally placed first before the copula, and from this someone may think that “heretic” is the subject, yet in truth, they say, “heretic” ought to

be the predicate and what follows the copula ought to be the subject.<sup>82</sup> And in that way, under a sound understanding, the following universal statement formed from Augustine's words should be granted, namely: "Anyone who generates or follows new and false opinions against the faith for the sake of some temporal advantage, and especially for the sake of vain glory and his own dominance, with the intention of defending them pertinaciously, should be regarded as a heretic" — though if he were to generate or follow heresies in that way against his conscience, not doubting in his heart anything pertaining to the faith, he would not be a heretic before God, who sees his heart, though he would sin most mortally in God's eyes.

**Student:** How should someone be regarded as a heretic if he is not a heretic in God's eyes?

**Master:** This is easily answered, because we have the power to judge only about externals, while hidden matters belong to divine judgment. And therefore such a person should be considered a heretic by us because of those things that appear to us externally even if he is not a heretic in God's eyes, just as we should often think many men to be good because there seems to us to be no evil in them who are nevertheless very evil in God's eyes.

**Student:** Run through the objections that I made.

**Master:** The reply to the first of them [p.111.9] is that those who pertinaciously imitate old heresies should be considered heretics, and therefore not only those who generate or follow new and false opinions for whatever reason are heretics, but also others. For anyone who would now defend Arius's heresy, condemned from of old, should be adjudged a heretic. And Augustine's words do not oppose this because, as has been said, he did not intend to assign in those words a definition or description of a heretic. Hence they say that many people are often misled by the propositions of saints and writers, thinking that they want to give definitions or descriptions of things or words when sometimes they only intend to affirm particular propositions as true.

The reply to the second [p.111.16] is that those who err pertinaciously only because of credulity or deception should be adjudged heretical, because not only those of whom Augustine speaks in those words should be considered heretics but also others.

---

82. The copula is "is". Augustine says "A heretic is one who generates...", but he meant: "One who generates... is a heretic." The logical point is that "every heretic is one who generates etc." is false if there is any heretic who does not generate etc., but "Everyone who generates etc. is a heretic" can be true even if some heretics do not generate etc.



To the third [p.111.21] they say that those who do not doubt in their heart and yet follow heretical assertions for the sake of some temporal advantage, or perhaps in order to avoid some temporal danger short of death (of whom they say there are many these days, and especially from the Order of Friars Minor, who follow new opinions about the poverty of Christ and the apostles, and also about the souls of the damned and of the saints, which in their hearts they think are heretical, which they nevertheless defend with pertinacious ill will)<sup>83</sup> are not in truth heretics, and yet they should be regarded as heretics by believers, who do not have the power to judge the hidden movements of the soul, and they should be smitten as heretics. And if they were to say afterwards that they had not held these heresies in their mind but had feigned to hold them to obtain some temporal advantage or to avoid some danger, no trust should be offered to them, but they should be repulsed from [giving] any assertion and testimony as being false and duplicitous.

**Student:** I will question you carefully elsewhere about those whom they adduce as an example, and I will strongly bring points forward to prove that the followers of Pope John XXII are not heretics or errants but believing Catholics.

**Master:** So do you want this to be the end of this work?<sup>84</sup>

---

83. \*See p.177.16, 187.11. 129.3, 177.22. Many members of the Franciscan Order sided with John XXII.

84. What emerges from Book 3 seems to be this. Heretics are persons who have been seriously baptized (or conduct themselves as such) who pertinaciously doubt or err against the Catholic faith. Catholics are those who believe every Catholic truth at least implicitly (e.g. by believing that everything the Catholic Church teaches is true) and do not pertinaciously hold anything inconsistent with Catholic faith. Pertinacity in error is sufficient to make someone a heretic. Many have been condemned as heretics who believed that the Catholic faith is true but held pertinaciously something they did not realise was actually inconsistent with Catholic faith. Pertinacity is also necessary. There have been saints (e.g. Augustine, Jerome, Cyprian) who have erred without being regarded as heretics because they were not pertinacious. Those who “seek truth with careful solicitude, ready to be corrected when they find it, are not to be counted among the heretics” (Augustine). Catholics who doubt or err but are ready to be corrected are not to be regarded as heretics; unless it is clear that they are not ready to be corrected it should be presumed that they are.



## Book 4

### Chapter 1

**Student:** I want to finish this third [book] here and to move on to the fourth. For I intend to ask how someone can be convicted of pertinacity. First of all, however, I want to know how “pertinacious” is defined by a definition expressing the meaning of the word. For I think that such a definition should resolve many difficulties, and that without knowing it we cannot know how someone ought to be convicted of pertinacity.

#### “Pertinacious” defined

**Master:** Some define “pertinacious” thus: A pertinacious [person] is someone who persists in what he ought to put aside. They explain that definition in two ways. Firstly, by a text of Isidore that says that “pertinacious” means, as it were, “shamelessly tenacious”; someone is shamelessly tenacious, however, if he holds onto what he should put aside; and a person is pertinacious, therefore, who holds onto and persists in what he should put aside. Secondly thus: perseverance and pertinacity are opposed and ought to have contrary definitions; but that person is said to be persevering who persists in something he should not put aside; a person is said to be pertinacious, therefore, who persists in something he should put aside.

**Student:** I am surprised that they want to prove the definition of pertinacious of the pertinacious person, since a definition cannot be proved of the thing defined.<sup>85</sup>

**Master:** They do not intend strictly speaking to prove of pertinacious the definition of pertinacious, but they want to explain it and by explanations to clarify in some way the definition of pertinacious.

**Student:** I do not want to get much involved with such difficulties now, but something else moves me against the aforesaid definition. Because according to it everyone erring is pertinacious. For everyone erring is in error for some time; but no one should ever be in error; on the contrary everyone erring should put aside his error. Everyone erring, therefore, is pertinacious.

**Master:** They say that you are misled by an ambiguity. For there is a duty of necessity and a duty of congruity. In the aforesaid definition “should” should be

85. “To prove P of S” means to prove that S is P. This proposition cannot be demonstrated if P is the definition of S. If “one who persists in something he should set aside” is the definition of “pertinacious person”, then “A pertinacious person is one who persists in something he should set aside” cannot be demonstrated. See Ockham, SL, 3.2 c.31 p.562/640.

taken as conveying a duty of necessity, so that it means this: a person is pertinacious who persists in something which he should of necessity put aside. Even if, therefore, everyone erring were bound, by the duty of congruity, to put aside every error — which is not true — yet it is not the case that every errant should of necessity for salvation put aside his error at every time.

**Student:** I see that they define “pertinacious” more widely than would be appropriate to one erring in faith. So make the aforesaid definition specific to one erring in faith.

**Master:** It is made specific thus. A person errs pertinaciously in faith who persists in a heresy which he should put aside of necessity for salvation.

**Student:** Make the same [definition] specific to one pertinaciously doubting the faith.

**Master:** It is made specific thus. A person pertinaciously doubts the faith who persists in doubt, which of necessity for salvation he should put aside, about matters of faith.

**Student:** According to the above remarks, all Jews and gentiles would be pertinacious, because they are all obliged to put aside his error.

**Master:** That is a difficulty which would require a long treatise because of those who have never been instructed in the true faith. Because they have not had any instruction, it is not a failing of theirs if they are such as they are. However, they say plainly of other gentiles and Jews that they ought to be reckoned among the number of the pertinacious.

## Chapter 2

**Student:** I do not want to discuss that difficulty with you at the moment, but I want to ask you about the main subject, namely, how someone can be convicted of pertinacity.

**Master:** Two kinds of pertinacity can be found in connection with matters of faith. One is mental, namely when someone pertinaciously clings in his heart to heretical wickedness or pertinaciously doubts Catholic truth. The other is exterior pertinacity, which consists in outward deed or word. We cannot convict anyone of the first form of pertinacity except by probable or violent presumption, because in such cases what is on the outside does not necessarily correspond to what is within; indeed, often one thing is held within and another counterfeited on the outside.

**Student:** Although my intention was to question you only about exterior pertinacity, yet as an exercise would you say something about interior and mental pertinacity. That is, who errs pertinaciously in the mind?

### **Mental pertinacity**

**Master:** Some people say that there are three ways someone can err pertinaciously in his mind. The first is if, notwithstanding the miracles that he has heard have been done to confirm the faith, someone thinks that the faith is false or uncertain. The second is if in general he believes that the whole faith is true yet adheres so strongly to some particular error, which he does not know explicitly pertains to the faith, that no matter how clearly it were shown to him that the error does pertain to the faith he would in no way put it aside but would sooner think that the faith is false. It is as if, when the faithful in the Old Testament were not bound to believe explicitly in the trinity of persons together with the unity of the deity, someone believing that the whole teaching of Moses and the faithful is true had thought in particular that three persons are not one God, and had clung so strongly to his error that he would have believed the teaching of Moses and the prophets to be false before he would have held that three persons are one God — this person, though he would have believed in general that the whole faith of Moses and the prophets is true, would have been pertinacious. Thirdly, someone can be mentally pertinacious in error if he clings to some error and neglects to seek the truth when and as he should, because such a person is not ready to be corrected, but persists in an error which he ought to put aside of necessity for salvation.

**Student:** There is a difference between negligence and pertinacity. That last-mentioned person is negligent; therefore he is not pertinacious.

**Master:** It is answered that though negligence and pertinacity are distinguished, nevertheless someone negligent is also pertinacious, and it is not unsuitable that some negligence is regarded as pertinacity.

**Student:** Can someone pertinaciously doubt the faith?

**Master:** It is said that someone can doubt the faith pertinaciously in as many ways as he can err pertinaciously against the faith.

**Student:** Can a distinction concerning the pertinacious person be made in another way, on account of interior pertinacity?

**Master:** A distinction is made concerning the pertinacious person in another way, at least as far as it concerns words, because just as, according to blessed

Augustine, one person is a heretic knowingly and another is a heretic unknowingly, so one person is knowingly pertinacious, namely anyone who thinks that the Christian faith is in some part false, and another is unknowingly pertinacious, namely anyone who believes in general that the whole Christian faith is true but clings pertinaciously to some particular error against the faith.

### **Is it possible to be pertinacious and a heretic knowingly?**

**Student:** How can someone be pertinacious knowingly? This seems to contain a contradiction, for if he is knowingly pertinacious, he knows that he is pertinacious; but this contains a contradiction, because anyone who errs thinks that what he errs about is true, since to err is to approve the false as true. Therefore no one knows that he errs. And thus no one is knowingly pertinacious, because no one knows that he is pertinacious in error.

**Master:** That phrase “knowingly pertinacious” should not be related to the pertinacity of the errant, to mean that someone knows that he errs pertinaciously. It should be related to the opposition between his pertinacity or error and the Christian faith, so that he is said to be knowingly pertinacious because he knows that the assertion about which he is in error is opposed to Christian faith. In the same way someone is said to be knowingly a heretic, not because he may know he is a heretic, but because he knows that his assertion is opposed to the Christian faith. Just as he is called knowingly a heretic, therefore, who knows that his assertion, which in truth is a heresy, is contrary to Christian faith, and he is called ignorantly or unknowingly a heretic who does not know that his assertion is opposed to Christian faith but thinks that it is consistent with Christian faith, so he is called knowingly pertinacious in heretical error who knows that an assertion he thinks is true is opposed to Christian faith, and he is called ignorantly or unknowingly pertinacious in heretical error who does not know that his assertion is opposed to Christian faith.

### **Chapter 3**

**Student:** Now I understand differently from before the distinction between a knowingly pertinacious and an unknowingly pertinacious person, and likewise [the distinction] between a knowingly heretical and an unknowingly heretical person. And therefore, though I thought before that no one was knowingly pertinacious or knowingly a heretic, now it seems to me that everyone pertinacious in error and every heretic is knowingly pertinacious and knowingly a heretic and absolutely no one is unknowingly so. This can be proved by the following argument. For someone to be Catholic and faithful implicit faith is

enough. This seems to be clear from the example of the centurion Cornelius, about whom we read in Acts 10. He was faithful before he had explicit faith concerning Christ because he was just and feared God and as a result had at least implicit faith. And thus implicit faith suffices for someone to be Catholic and faithful. But whoever is not knowingly pertinacious or knowingly a heretic in the way set out earlier has implicit faith, because, from the fact that he does not think that he is erring against the Christian faith, he believes that the whole Christian faith is true, even if he errs in some particular. Now anyone who believes that the whole Christian faith is true has implicit faith. Therefore he is Catholic and faithful, and consequently is neither pertinacious nor a heretic.

This argument is confirmed: Whoever believes that the whole Christian faith is true has faith in every truth pertaining to the Christian faith; and whoever has faith in every truth pertaining to the Christian faith is not a heretic and consequently is not pertinacious. But whoever is not knowingly pertinacious nor knowingly a heretic believes that the whole Christian faith is true; therefore he has faith in every truth pertaining to Christian faith, and consequently he is in no way a heretic or pertinacious.

**Master:** Those objections are brought forward mainly to prove that no one is unknowingly a heretic.

**Student:** That is so.

**Master:** Let us therefore put aside speaking about someone pertinacious and let it be enough to talk about the heretic.

**Student:** This is acceptable, because whoever can see how someone can be unknowingly a heretic will not doubt that someone can be unknowingly pertinacious.

**Master:** A distinction is made among those who are unknowingly heretics. For some are or can be unknowingly heretics because they knowingly and explicitly think that some assertions written in divine Scripture in those exact words do not pertain to Christian faith. The Manichees were like this; according to Isidore, as is reported in 24. q. 3. c. *Quidam autem* [c.39], they rejected the Old Testament and accepted the New only in part, and in this way thought that they were Catholic and faithful Christians; and they were unknowingly heretics, therefore, for the reason that they maintained that the assertions contained in the Old Testament do not pertain to Christian faith. But some are unknowingly heretics who do not doubt that any assertion pertaining to the Christian faith and found in divine Scripture in those exact words is true, because they accept the

whole of divine Scripture; but they do not believe, on the other hand, that some assertions that follow from them are true, because they do not think that they do follow from them, for the reason that they understand the divine Scriptures in a sense other than the Holy Spirit, by whom they were written, demands [cf. p.96.5]. Some people irrevocably believe, moreover, that assertions contrary [to Catholic faith] are true; they should be considered heretics, therefore, even though they believe in general that the whole Christian faith is true.

#### Chapter 4

**Student:** What is the value of this distinction?

**Master:** Some people think to prove demonstratively by this distinction that your objections are not conclusive.

**Student:** How?

**Master:** By the first part [of the distinction] they prove that some people can be heretics unknowingly, as follows. Anyone who believes in general that the whole Christian faith is true and yet believes that the Old Testament or the Gospel of Luke contains many errors, because he thinks that the Old Testament or the Gospel of Luke does not pertain to Christian faith, is properly a heretic, especially if he is pertinacious; for otherwise anyone could say without heretical wickedness that all the gospels do not pertain to Christian faith. But such a person is not knowingly a heretic, because he does not believe that he is opposed to the Christian faith in anything. Someone can be unknowingly a heretic, therefore, just as the Manichees were unknowingly heretics because they thought that they were truly Christians and considered that all other Christians who accepted the Old Testament were heretics erring against Christian faith.

**Student:** Tell me how reply is made to the objections touched on above [p.118.36].

**Master:** Those objections are based on the ambiguity of “implicit faith”. For there is a true implicit faith which excludes every pertinacious assertion of any heretical wickedness at all, and that implicit faith is sufficient for the one having it to be Catholic and faithful. There is another false implicit faith, by which, that is, it is believed to be true that “the Christian faith is true”, but another faith than that which is truly Christian is held to be Christian. The Manichees had such faith because they believed that the Christian faith is true, but they called Christian a faith that in truth is not Christian, indeed it is opposed to the Christian faith. And so it is with all who are unknowingly heretics, that although



they believe that it is true that the Christian faith or the faith of the universal Church is true, yet they regard as Christian a faith which in truth is not Christian, although they believe that it is Christian. And they are therefore heretics, although unknowingly so.

**Student:** Do some people who believe that the Christian faith is true have false faith?

**Master:** No one has false faith for the reason that he believes that the Christian faith is true; but anyone who believes that a particular faith is Christian which in truth is not Christian has false faith. Thus Arius did not have false faith because he believed that the Christian faith is true and that the Gospel contains the truth, but he had false faith in believing that the Son of God is not equal to the Father and that this pertains to Catholic faith.

**Student:** Those arguments are still not refuted, because they are based on the proposition that every true implicit faith suffices for one having it to be Catholic and faithful.

**Master:** A distinction is made about faith, because there is a certain infused faith which even baptised children are said to have; and about this [faith] the proposition which you assume could be granted; but no unknowing heretic has that faith. Another is acquired faith, which is a credence by which someone adheres without doubting to some assertion. And in this sense the proposition is false, because not every such true implicit faith is sufficient for the one having it to be Catholic and faithful. For although no one is unfaithful because of any true faith, yet someone having a true faith could be unfaithful because of some other false faith.

**Student:** Point out, with respect to that subject only, what is said to the proposition that anyone who believes that the whole Christian faith is true has faith in every truth pertaining to Christian faith.

**Master:** This is denied about the faith that makes someone Catholic, unless, while believing that the whole Christian faith is true, he considers no faith to be Christian except that alone which truly is Christian.

## Chapter 5

**Student:** Now that I have had a discussion with you about interior pertinacity, I want to ask some things about exterior pertinacity, namely, when should Catholics, because of some outward appearance, hold someone erring against the faith to be pertinacious, and how should anyone be convicted in court of

pertinacity? First of all, however, I want to know whether it can be established in one way only, or in several ways, that someone erring against the faith is pertinacious.

**Master:** Several ways are described by which Catholics can accept the violent presumption [p.99.9] of someone that he is pertinacious in error.

**Student:** Let us deal with one way first and later another.

### **Ways of establishing a presumption that a person is a heretic**

**Master:** The first way by which someone can be detected being pertinacious is if he shows by deed or by word that he does not firmly believe that the Christian faith is true and sound; for instance, if he says that the Christian faith is false or doubtful, or if he converts to some other sect, for example if he gets circumcised or worships Mahommed. For anyone may rightly judge of such a person that he pertinaciously errs or doubts against the faith and that he is knowingly a manifest heretic. And if he has been convicted or has confessed in court that he said or did such a thing, he is to be condemned as pertinacious and a heretic without further examination.

**Student:** Can there be a case in which such a person can be excused of heretical wickedness?

**Master:** Only one case of denying the faith is excepted, and that is if someone in fear of death has denied the faith by saying that the Christian faith is false or doubtful. There are, however, two exceptions with respect to an heretical act. The first is if someone has committed an heretical act out of fear of death, if, for example, someone has adored Mohammed to avoid death. In this way blessed Marcellinus is excused, because by sacrificing to idols he did not become a heretic, though he committed a mortal sin. The second exception is if someone is forced by absolute force to commit an heretical act; in that case he is excused even of all sin.

**Student:** I would like to know the reason why such a person should [not] be regarded at once as a heretic and pertinacious, since in this way someone drawn by ambition or greed can show<sup>86</sup> by word or deed that he does not firmly hold that the Christian faith is true, which however in his mind he holds to be true, just as anyone can pretend this out of fear of death.

---

86. An ambitious person can "show", i.e. pretend by words and deeds, that he does not firmly believe that Christianity is true, though he believes that it is true, just as anyone in fear of death can pretend that Christianity is false, though he believes that it is true. If fear of death excuses, why not ambition?

**Master:** The reason given is that when someone says or does something other than from fear of death it is more voluntary than when he says or does something persuaded by fear of death. Greed or ambition, therefore, does not, in licit judgment, excuse of pertinacity any man who shows by deed or word that he does not firmly hold the Christian faith. In the same way it is said that neither love nor hate, nor anything but fear of death, can excuse someone in this case of being regarded as a heretic, unless it be said that someone can be excused because of the inflicting of severe tortures or fear of them.

**Student:** Should the same thing said about everyone who is knowingly a heretic?

**Master:** These remarks should be understood of everyone who is knowingly a heretic.

### Chapter 6

**Student:** Let what was said above be enough about the first way. Describe now a second way by which someone can be convicted of pertinacity.

**Master:** Someone who says that some part of the New or Old Testament asserts something false, or should not be accepted by Catholics, should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic. It was for this reason that the Manichees, who rejected the Old Testament and accepted the New Testament only in part, were condemned as heretics.

**Student:** What if a layman who has never heard any mention of the book of Joshua (for example) were to say that the book of Joshua does not belong to the Old Testament. Should he be regarded as a heretic?

**Master:** There is a difference between saying that some writing does not belong to the Old or the New Testament and saying that some part of the New or the Old Testament should not be accepted.

In the first case, a layman or someone unlearned should not immediately be considered a heretic but should be carefully examined, and also instructed. If after appropriate teaching he does not correct himself he should be regarded as pertinacious. But if a learned person who knows what books the Church regards as integral to the New and Old Testament and yet, notwithstanding this, says that the book of Joshua, or some other, does not belong to the Old Testament, he should immediately be judged a heretic and pertinacious. He should not be waited on so that when corrected he might then correct himself, but he should be held at once to be incorrigible.

However, in the second case, namely someone who says that some part of the New or Old Testament should not be accepted or that it asserts something false, he should be judged immediately as pertinacious, whether he is learned or unlearned — unless perhaps he is so simple that he does not know what is meant by “New and Old Testament” and, led astray by others, says that the New or Old Testament or some part of it should not be accepted, even though he firmly believes that the whole faith of the Church should be accepted; for such a person should not be counted among the heretics but should be excused by simplicity and ignorance. It is about such simple people that Augustine speaks, (24. q. 3. c. *Hereticus* [c.28]), “He who believes men of this kind,” that is heretics, “has been deceived by some fancy of truth.” It does not seem, therefore, that he should be judged as pertinacious unless he believes that the faith of the Church is false or is convicted as pertinacious in another way.

### Chapter 7

**Student:** I do not want particularly to pursue that way of convicting of pertinacity, because I do not hear that those who are now engaged in controversy attribute any such thing to each other, nor anyone to another. You have, however, referred to one thing which I want explained, because it will be helpful perhaps for many [problems], in that it can be applied, it seems, to many kinds of heretics. For you said that if someone were to know what books the Church regards as integral to the New and Old Testament and yet, notwithstanding this, were to say that any one of them does not belong to the New or Old Testament, he should immediately be judged as pertinacious and a heretic and he should not be waited on [to see] whether, once corrected, he would be ready to correct himself but should be held at once to be incorrigible. For I wonder about this last point, how such a person should be regarded at once as incorrigible. For anyone who can be corrected is not incorrigible; but such a person can be corrected; he should not be regarded, therefore, as incorrigible.

**Master:** In the judgment of many people you have said truly that what you seek is helpful for many [problems], because some people try to prove a great deal by explaining it. And so it is said that just as “impenitent” is taken in two ways, in one way for someone who cannot do penance, in another way for someone who intends not to do penance, so “incorrigible” is said in two ways. In one way, [an incorrigible is] a person who cannot be corrected, and in this life no one is like that, especially if he is not insane; and in another way he is said to be incorrigible who intends not at all to correct himself, although he can be corrected, and everyone incorrigible in this way should be regarded as

pertinacious. Hence such an incorrigible person can be called pertinacious, contumacious, obstinate and hardened. It is not, therefore, as you take it, that someone who can be corrected is not incorrigible; rather there are many incorrigibles who intend not at all to correct themselves, who, however, can be corrected; and often the incorrigible are corrected, because no one who is incorrigible should be wholly despaired of in this life, just as no one who is impenitent should be despaired of as long as he is alive.

### Chapter 8

**Student:** Describe another way by which someone should be convicted of pertinacity.

**Master:** Some say that anyone who holds that the universal Church errs, or has erred since the Christian Church began to gather together, ought to be judged as pertinacious, even if he believes that the Christian faith handed down by Christ and the apostles contains no falsehood in any of its parts. For they say that such a person should not be examined whether he is ready to be corrected but, by the very fact that he says this, he should be regarded as pertinacious.

**Student:** Do all the learned think this way?

**Master:** Some hold the contrary, saying that out of simplicity and ignorance someone can say without pertinacity and heretical wickedness that the Church errs or has erred, and one who says this, therefore, should be examined carefully about whether he is ready to be corrected; and if he is indeed ready to be corrected, he should not be judged as pertinacious or a heretic; if he refuses to be corrected, however, he should be numbered among the pertinacious and the heretics.

### Chapter 9

**Student:** Because some people attribute to the most holy father lord pope John XXII that he has to say and assert<sup>87</sup> that the universal Church erred, about which I will sometime have a discussion with you, would you bring forward some arguments for the contrary assertions mentioned above?

**Master:** For the first assertion [p.125.11] it can be argued as follows. The Christian faith is the faith of the universal Church and no difference can be found between the Christian faith and the faith of the universal Church. Whoever says, therefore, that the universal Church errs or has erred is saying

---

87. To justify his rejection of what Ockham regards as established Church teaching on apostolic poverty, etc.

that the Christian faith is erroneous; whoever says that the Christian faith is erroneous, however, should be regarded immediately and without further examination as pertinacious and a heretic; whoever says that the universal Church errs or has erred, therefore, should be judged immediately and without any examination pertinacious and a heretic.

For the contrary assertion [p.125.18] it is argued as follows. Whoever says or holds some assertion the contrary of which he is not bound explicitly to believe should not be judged immediately as pertinacious or a heretic, because for whatever the reason why it is possible for someone to hold, without being judged pertinacious and a heretic, an heretical assertion the contrary of which he is not bound explicitly to believe, for the same reason he can also assert and hold any other heretical assertion the contrary of which he is not bound explicitly to believe without his being bound to be judged immediately pertinacious and a heretic. But not every Christian is bound explicitly to believe that the universal Church does not err and has not erred. Therefore, even if someone has said that the universal Church errs or has erred, he should not be judged immediately to be pertinacious and a heretic, but should be examined about whether he is ready to be corrected.

The major premise of this argument seems obvious. The minor is proved. Because no one is bound explicitly to believe a conclusion unless he is bound explicitly to believe the antecedent or the premises on the basis of which the conclusion is maintained. But that the universal Church does not err and has not erred is a conclusion that should be believed because Christ said, in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], "I am with you all days, even to the end of time", and because he prayed for Peter that his faith not fail [Lk 22:32]. But many are not bound explicitly to believe these words from which it is inferred that the universal Church has not erred and does not err, because many are unlearned and have never heard them. Therefore they are not bound explicitly to believe that the universal Church does not err and has not erred.

This argument is confirmed: If any Christian is bound explicitly to believe that the universal Church does not err and has not erred, he is bound to believe this either because it is asserted in divine Scripture, or because it pertains to the teaching of the universal Church, or because it is obviously inferred from the teaching of the universal Church or from divine Scripture, or because it has been explicitly approved by the universal Church, or because it has been published among all Christians as Catholic. Not for the first reason, because many things which not every Christian is bound explicitly to believe are asserted in the holy

Scriptures, nor for the second for the same reason, nor for the third or fourth for the same reason, nor for the fifth because this truth that the universal Church cannot err has not been published among all Christians, those who are simple and others. For there are many who have not heard anyone speak about it at all.

**Student:** If this argument were valid it would seem that publication among Christians would be of greater authority than divine Scripture, because all Christians would be bound as a result of such publication to assent explicitly to some truth to which nevertheless they would not be bound explicitly to cling because of divine Scripture.

**Master:** To this it is said that publication among all Christians is not of greater authority than divine Scripture, but it is known to more people than divine Scripture is. And all Christians are bound to believe explicitly a truth published among all Christians, even the simple, and are not all bound to believe explicitly all the truths contained in divine Scripture, not because the authority of such publication is greater than that of divine Scripture, but because such publication has by now come to the notice of more people. This is why everyone is bound explicitly to believe that the Christian faith is true, because that truth has been published among everyone, and so has [the truth that] the faith which Christ taught is true and sound.

**Student:** Describe an answer to the argument for the contrary assertion.

**Master:** An answer is that it is mistaken through the fallacy of “figure of speech”, because although the Christian faith and the faith of the universal Church, when the Church does not err, are the same, yet, they say, “universal Church” consignifies or signifies Christians in the nominative case, and “Christian faith” does not signify them in this way. And therefore, they say, that this [argument] does not follow: “Every Christian is bound to believe explicitly that the Christian faith is true; therefore, every Christian is bound to believe explicitly that the universal Church does not err and has not erred.”

**Student:** Do not expatiate on matters that pertain to rational science [i.e. logic], but say how the contrary argument is answered.

**Master:** To that argument it is said that sometimes one is more bound to believe explicitly a conclusion than the premises from which it is inferred, for the reason that the conclusion has been more widely published among Catholics than the premises. It is so about [the conclusion] “the universal Church does not err and has not erred”. For in those words, or equivalent, it has been published among all Catholics. For every Christian thinks that the universal Church is the

one that agrees with him in faith, and just as everyone believes explicitly that he holds the true faith and not a false faith, so everyone believes explicitly that the universal Church preserves the true and Catholic faith and not a false faith. Therefore, just as it has been published among all Christians that “the Christian faith is the true faith”, and everyone is therefore bound explicitly to believe this, so it has been published among all Christians that “the faith of the universal Church is the true faith”. Therefore every Christian is bound explicitly to believe this; and whoever denies it, therefore, should be regarded immediately and without further examination as pertinacious and a heretic.

#### **Chapter 10**

**Student:** They seem to distinguish between the universal Church and the multitude of Christians. Do they grant, therefore, that everyone is bound explicitly to believe that the multitude, or the greater part, of Christians does not err and has not erred in faith?

**Master:** The reply is that it is not necessary to believe, explicitly or implicitly, that the multitude, or the greater part, of Christians does not err and has not erred in faith, because the Catholic faith can be preserved in a few people; indeed some say that it could endure in one person alone, because through one person alone could be saved whatever Christ promised to the apostles about the Catholic faith’s lasting until the end of time.

#### **Chapter 11**

**Student:** Is there any other way by which someone can be convicted of pertinacity?

**Master:** A fourth way, according to some, by which someone is immediately judged to be pertinacious and a heretic is if a Christian capable of reason and with full understanding denies any Catholic assertion published as Catholic among all Catholics, including the faithful with whom he has been living, and is publicly preached by those who preach the word of God. It is, for instance, widely published among all Catholics that Christ was crucified, and a crucifix is shown in every church, and those who preach the word of God publicly announce and affirm this fact; and therefore if anyone brought up among Christians were to deny that Christ was crucified, he should be judged immediately to be pertinacious and a heretic. And the more he had lived among Christians, the more churches he had entered, the more he had heard the word of God preached, and the more learned he were to become in the sacred page and



the canon law, so much the more strongly should he be judged immediately to be pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** As you know, some people think that the most holy father the lord pope [John XXII] is a heretic because he denies that the souls of the wicked are in hell, that the souls of the saints in heaven see God and that the devils are even now being punished, which they say are Catholic truths published among all Catholics; so also they say that even though he has not published his words in a bull, he should be judged to be pertinacious and a heretic. Therefore I ask you to try to support with stronger arguments that way of convicting of pertinacity, so that I have material for considering how I can reply in defence of our lord the the highest pontiff to those and other [allegations].

**Master:** That someone denying some assertion published as Catholic among all Catholics should be reckoned immediately, without any other examination or discussion, among the pertinacious and the heretics is shown first of all as follows. Just as no one is permitted to be ignorant of things done publicly (as we clearly gather from the sacred canons, dist. 16. *Quod dicitis* [c.14, s.v. *regionibus*] and 12. q. 2. *Qui et [divinis et] humanis* [c.24 s.v. *ignorare*]) so no one is permitted to be ignorant of things that are widely published, affirmed and preached as Catholic. Whoever denies a Catholic assertion of which he is not permitted to be ignorant should be judged to be pertinacious and a heretic. Whoever denies a Catholic assertion that has been so widely published, i.e. among all Catholics, should therefore be immediately judged to be pertinacious and a heretic.

Second as follows. Someone denying a Catholic assertion can be excused of heretical wickedness only through simplicity or ignorance; but someone denying a Catholic assertion published among all Catholics cannot be excused by simplicity or ignorance. That he cannot [be excused] by simplicity is clear, because it was assumed that the one denying is capable of reason and has understanding; if he lacked the use of reason or were insane he would indeed be excused, but an understanding and capable person cannot be excused by simplicity. Nor can he be excused by ignorance, because ignorance of a divine law that has been made known among everyone does not excuse, just as ignorance of natural law does not excuse, as we read in 1. q. 4. § *Notandum*. If the assertion denied has been made known among all Catholics, therefore, the one denying it cannot be excused of pertinacity and heretical wickedness.

**Student:** What if, in truth, he were ignorant that such an assertion pertains to Catholic faith? Would he be excused by God, if he were to deny it without pertinacity?

**Master:** The reply is that he would be excused by God, and by the Church too if he could prove that he had not known that the assertion he denied was published among Catholics as Catholic. For example, if someone had been brought up from childhood always in one house among certain Christians and afterwards were to say out of ignorance that Christ had not been crucified and were not to cling to this pertinaciously, the Church ought not to regard him as pertinacious and a heretic if all those with whom he had lived were to present testimony that none of them had ever spoken to him about the crucifixion of Christ.

**Student:** Do not enlarge on cases like this, which perhaps have never occurred, but let us talk about Christians who generally live with Christians, go into churches and often hear people discussing matters which pertain to the Christian faith. Offer further proof, if you can, that if such people deny an assertion published among all Catholics as Catholic they should be judged immediately to be pertinacious and heretics.

**Master:** It is proved in a third way, as follows. Anyone who denies a Catholic assertion which he ought and is bound explicitly to believe should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic; every Christian is bound explicitly to believe every Catholic assertion published among all Catholics; whoever, therefore, denies such an assertion should be judged as pertinacious and a heretic.

The major premise is clear from the description of pertinacious, because a pertinacious person is someone who persists in what he ought to put aside [p.115.10]. Whoever denies a Catholic assertion he is bound explicitly to believe, however, is such a person, because from the fact that he is bound to believe it explicitly he is bound to put aside its denial; if he does deny it, therefore, he is pertinacious.

The minor premise is proved, because if anyone is bound to believe some Catholic assertion explicitly, he is so bound either [1] because such an assertion has been published among all Catholics as Catholic, or [2] because it is clearly shown to him by divine Scripture or by the teaching or determination of the universal Church that it should be considered Catholic. If the first [1] is granted, the point is established, because every Christian is bound to believe explicitly every Catholic assertion that he knows has been published as Catholic among all Catholics. If he says that he does not know [that it has been so published] he

must prove this, if he ought to be excused by the Church. The second [2] cannot be granted, because then no one would be bound explicitly to believe that Christ was born of a virgin or had been crucified or any other article of faith before it was proved to him from divine Scripture, and thus any layman could with impunity deny every article of faith until it was shown to him in the book that such an article is contained in the Bible.

This argument is confirmed: Anyone who denies that the Christian faith is true or that the sect of the Saracens is false and bad should be judged immediately to be pertinacious and a heretic; but this is so only because it is published among all Catholics as Catholic that the Christian faith is the true faith and that the faith of the Saracens a false faith. By the same argument, therefore, anyone who denies any assertion published among all Catholics as Catholic should be regarded immediately as pertinacious and a heretic, and he cannot be excused by the Church in any way unless he proves that he had not known that the assertion he denies was published in this way.

## Chapter 12

**Student:** Argue to the contrary.

**Master:** If it is not known of someone denying Catholic truth whether he is ready to be corrected by the rule of faith, that is, by sacred Scripture, he should not be judged to be pertinacious. This is quite clear from the text of Augustine cited above [p.97.18], quoted at 24. q. 3. *Dixit apostolus*. Hence the gloss on dist. 17, c. *Nec licuit* [c.4 s.v. *ad recipiendam*] says: “Someone is not said to be a heretic, just because he errs, if he is ready to be corrected.” But someone can deny an assertion published among Catholics as Catholic, although it may not be known whether he is ready to be corrected by the rule of faith, that is, by sacred Scripture. For someone can deny such an assertion and yet present himself as ready to be corrected if it is shown to him that that assertion is contained on the sacred page or in a determination of the Church. Such a person, therefore, should not be judged immediately to be pertinacious and a heretic, but should be examined about whether he is ready to be corrected.

**Student:** That argument seems strong and adequately excuses the lord pope [John XXII] even if he errs.

**Master:** Others regard that argument as a nullity, because it would follow from it, as was touched on above, that it would be permissible for any Christian to deny that Christ was a true man or that he was crucified. For according to that argument he could without pertinacity say, “I deny that Christ was crucified; I

am ready to be corrected, however, if it is shown to me from sacred Scripture or a determination of the Church that Christ was crucified.”

**Student:** Why cannot such a person be excused, since he is ready to be corrected?

**Master:** Many say that such a person should not be excused for this reason, that even if it were possible that such a person would be ready to be corrected, nevertheless, against such a person, however much he says he is ready to be corrected, there is so violent a presumption that he is pertinacious and not prepared to be corrected, because he is not ignorant that the assertion he denies has been so much publicly preached and asserted by the Church, that he should not be believed when he says he is ready to be corrected. For there are many people in whose words no trust should be placed. Hence Pope Stephen, as we find in *Extra, De hereticis*, c. 1, [X 5.7.1] says of someone like this who denies an assertion publicly preached as Catholic that “those who do not know the faith of truth should not be believed at all”. Such people should not be believed at all, whether they strive to testify against others or present testimony about themselves. Although they say that they are ready to be corrected, therefore, they should be regarded as pertinacious and heretics.

### Chapter 13

**Student:** If there is another way of convicting of pertinacity someone erring against the faith, I am ready to listen to it.

**Master:** Some say that a person should be judged immediately as pertinacious and a heretic if there is a violent presumption that he denies some assertion he knows is contained in divine Scripture or in a determination of the Church — if it can be proved, for example, that he has previously read and understood in divine Scripture or a determination of the Church the assertion he denies, or if it can be proved that previously he had purposefully taught or, even, affirmed publicly or secretly the assertion he denies. For if it is not probable that such a person has forgotten what he had previously learnt, there is a violent presumption that he knowingly denies Catholic truth, and consequently he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** Would you offer an example of that way [of convicting]?

**Master:** There are some who put forward an example concerning many moderns, namely of all those who at first taught that Christ and the apostles did not have ownership of anything, saying that this truth is clearly taken from divine Scripture and a determination of the Church, and later denied that same

truth, since it is not probable that they have forgotten divine Scripture and the determination of the Church. For that reason they say that those people should be considered pertinacious and heretics.

**Student:** That example touches on the teaching of the most holy father lord Pope John XXII, which I will carefully discuss with you on another occasion. Putting that example aside, therefore, prove, if you can, that those who deny a Catholic truth which they had previously considered Catholic should be considered pertinacious and heretics immediately and without further examination.

**Master:** This is proved first as follows. Whoever knowingly denies a Catholic truth should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic. But such a person does knowingly deny Catholic truth, for he cannot excuse himself by ignorance, since he has previously learnt that this truth pertains to Catholic faith and has not forgotten what he learnt. Since he denies a truth that he had previously learnt and held, therefore, he should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic.

[It is proved] second as follows. Every apostate from Catholic truth should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic, because he is an apostate from the faith, and an apostate from the faith is reckoned among the heretics. But anyone who denies a Catholic truth which he had previously regarded as Catholic is an apostate from Catholic truth, because he casts aside a Catholic truth. He should be reckoned, therefore, among the pertinacious and the heretics.

[It is proved] third as follows. A faithless Christian is reckoned among the pertinacious and the heretics; but a Christian who denies a Catholic truth that he had previously regarded as Catholic is faithless; he should therefore be judged pertinacious and a heretic. The major premise seems certain. The minor is proved. Whoever denies a Catholic truth which he previously knew to be Catholic is worse than a faithless person who has never known Catholic truth. Innocent III testifies to this when he says, as we find in *Extra, De apostatis, c. Quidam* [X 5.9.4], “It is a lesser evil not to know the way of the Lord than to turn back after it has been known.” Hence blessed Peter says in the second chapter of his second letter [2 Peter 2:21]: “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice than, after they have known it, to turn back.” Now Catholic truth is “the way of justice”, and so it is a greater evil to go back after having known Catholic truth than never to have known it. But this is a greater evil only by reason of worse faithlessness. Anyone who denies a Catholic truth that he previously knew to be Catholic, therefore, is faithless and consequently should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** Those arguments do not seem to be conclusive. First, because someone can deny a Catholic truth that he previously thought to be Catholic, although he did not know that it is Catholic; the foregoing arguments, however, seem to be valid about someone who denies a Catholic truth which he not only thought but also knew to be Catholic. Second, because such a person can be ready to be corrected, indeed he can present himself as ready to be corrected; although he errs, therefore, he should not be reckoned among the heretics.

**Master:** Those two objections both seem to be excluded by the same [consideration], namely that in this case such a person should not be believed, either [1] when he says that even though he previously thought the truth that he now denies is Catholic yet he did not know this, or [2] when he says that he is ready to be corrected. That he should not be believed [1] in the first statement is shown, because whoever contradicts himself should not be believed, at least with respect to the second thing he says. Innocent III testifies to this when he says, as we find in *Extra, De probationibus, c. Per tuas* [X 2.19.10], “That it would be quite intolerable according to lawful decrees that what someone has clearly proclaimed in his own voice, he can in the same case invalidate by his own testimony.” And the gloss, *Extra, De presumptionibus, c. Literas* [X 2.23.14, s.v. *purgavit*] says, “It is noteworthy that we should always stand by the first statement of someone if he later says the opposite, even in another court, above [*Extra*], *De testibus, Cum in tua*, and also outside court, above [*Extra*], *De probationibus, Per tuas*.” It is clear from these and very many others that what is said second by someone who contradicts himself should not be believed. But someone who denies a Catholic truth which he previously thought to be Catholic contradicts himself, because while he thought that the said truth is Catholic he said or implied by deed or word that he knew that that truth is Catholic. If he later says, therefore, that he did not know that the said truth is Catholic he should not be believed, and so he cannot be excused in this way but should now be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic.

That he should also not be believed [2] if he says that he is ready to be corrected is shown as follows. It should not be believed that an errant is ready to be corrected unless it is presumed that he departs from Catholic truth ignorantly; but this person is not presumed to depart from Catholic truth ignorantly, rather he should be presumed to have entirely abandoned the foundation because of which he clung to the earlier assertion. But the foundation because of which he clung to that assertion is either sacred Scripture or the teaching of the Church; it should be presumed, therefore, that he now regards sacred Scripture or the teaching of the Church as false. For example, those who at first thought, held

and taught, on the basis of the teaching passed down in the decretal of Nicholas III which begins *Exiit qui seminat* [X 5.12.3 lib vi], that Christ and the apostles renounced all ownership of temporal goods, and now hold the contrary assertion, regard the teaching handed down in the decretal *Exiit* as false. And if they were to say that they think that this teaching is true they should not be believed, because they would be proved to be contradicting themselves. It should be presumed, therefore, that anyone who denies a Catholic truth that he at first asserted to be Catholic now regards divine Scripture or the teaching of the Church as false. Such a person, however, should not be believed however much he says that he is ready to be corrected; and anyone who denies that a truth is Catholic that he at first held to be Catholic, therefore, also should not be believed even if he says that he is ready to be corrected; and consequently he should be counted among the pertinacious and the heretics. And so the earlier arguments stand untouched.

**Student:** Those things prove only that such a person is presumed to be pertinacious and a heretic; on account of a presumption, however, no one should be condemned or severely punished.

**Master:** A sentence, even a definitive sentence, is often pronounced solely on the basis of a violent presumption. And thus Solomon, as we read in 3 Kings 3[:16-27], gave a definitive sentence on the basis of a presumption alone when two women were arguing before him over a child. So some people say in the present case that, because of the violent presumption, anyone who denies a Catholic truth he had previously affirmed as Catholic should be condemned and punished as a heretic.

#### Chapter 14

**Student:** Go on to other ways of convicting errants of pertinacity and heretical wickedness.

**Master:** Another way of convicting of pertinacity is said to be when someone knowingly denies the teaching of the saints. For some people assert that such a person should be regarded immediately as pertinacious and a heretic, while others say that even if he refuses to be corrected such a person should not be judged as pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** This difficulty depends on the [question] we discussed above [p. 37.26], namely, whether it is necessary for salvation to hold to the assertions of the saints. I do not want you to follow that up here, therefore, but hurry on to another way of convicting someone of pertinacity.

**Chapter 15****Failure to accept lawful correction**

**Master:** A person is openly convicted of pertinacity who, having been legitimately corrected,<sup>88</sup> does not correct and amend himself by retracting his heresy. This is clearly gathered from the words of Augustine quoted above [p. 102.17] found in 24. q. 3. c. *Qui in ecclesia* [c.31]. That such a person should also be judged pertinacious is clearly proved. Because whoever is not ready to be corrected should be regarded as pertinacious; but whoever does not retract his heresy when legitimately corrected is not ready to be corrected; such a person should therefore be regarded as pertinacious.

**Student:** Because I have often heard about this way of convicting of pertinacity and the others are quite new to me, I want this way to be investigated more carefully. I ask you to discuss two [questions] about it, namely to whom does it belong to correct an errant? and what should the correction be like if it is to be regarded as sufficient and legitimate?

**Master:** We should see first about the correction and second about the corrector.

**Student:** Follow whichever order you wish.

**Master:** Regarding the correction, it is said that correction should be considered sufficient and legitimate only if it shows plainly to the errant that his assertion conflicts with Catholic truth in such a way that, in the judgment of those who understand, he cannot by any evasion deny that it has been sufficiently and plainly shown to him that his error is contrary to Catholic truth. For example, if from ignorance of the Gospel text someone ignorantly said (as they say someone in Avignon did publicly preach) that the soldiers broke Christ's legs, and the contrary were shown to him from the text of the Gospel of John 19[:32-3] (where we read, "The soldiers therefore came and they broke the legs of the first and then of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs"), that correction ought to be regarded as sufficient, because, in the judgment of anyone who understands, such a person could by no evasion deny that it had been clearly proved to him that his assertion conflicts with the gospel truth.

Also if someone out of ignorance were to teach as dogma that in Christ there were two persons as two substances and it were shown to him from the text of

---

88. "Legitimate" seems to mean: satisfying the requirement of the law.



the Synod of Ephesus that this is the heresy of Nestorius condemned by that synod, he could by no evasion deny that it had been plainly proved to him that his assertion has been condemned as a heresy and consequently is opposed to Catholic truth. Such correction, therefore, should be regarded as sufficient and legitimate.

Secondly we should see about the corrector, concerning whom the following distinction is made. Some people correct by rebuking and punishing with due penalty, others only by charitable warning and refutation of the error. To correct in the first way pertains to prelates and those having jurisdiction to correct those who err; in the second way it pertains to any Christian at all.

### Chapter 16

**Student:** From this I understand what, according to many, should be regarded as sufficient and legitimate correction, and I am considering the distinction concerning the corrector of one who errs. I would like to know whether all the learned believe that an errant who has been corrected by his prelate, or someone with jurisdiction over him, is bound to retract his error even if that person has not shown him clearly that his error conflicts with Catholic truth; that is, whether he ought to retract his error at the mere admonition or rebuke of his superior.

**Master:** On this question different people think differently. Some say that no one corrected by a prelate or someone with jurisdiction is bound to retract his error until it has been clearly shown to him in the way described that his error is contrary to the truth.

They prove this first as follows. Those who, in explaining divine Scripture, and consequently in passing on matters belonging to the orthodox faith, take precedence over prelates and persons having jurisdiction are not obliged, and ought not, if they have erred unknowingly, to retract their opinions as heretical even though in truth they are erroneous, even though they have been corrected by prelates or others, unless it is shown clearly to them that their opinions conflict with orthodox truth; for someone who has greater authority in some matter is certainly not subject in this matter to a lesser authority. Those who take precedence over prelates in explaining divine Scripture, therefore, are not subject to them in this. But in explaining divine Scripture, and consequently in passing on matters belonging to the orthodox faith, doctors and commentators on divine Scripture take precedence over prelates and those with jurisdiction. Therefore doctors are not bound to retract their opinions, even if they are

erroneous, if they are corrected by prelates, unless it is proved evidently to them that their opinions conflict with the truth.

The major premise is certain; the minor is proved in the first place on the authority of Gratian in the decretals, dist. 20, § 1. He says: “To impose an end to disputes is one thing, diligently to explain the sacred Scriptures is another.” And further on: “It is clear that even if commentators on the divine Scriptures surpass pontiffs in knowledge, nevertheless, because they have not attained their [the pontiffs’] high office, though they are put ahead of them in explaining the sacred Scriptures, they deserve second place after them in deciding cases.” These words clearly establish that in explaining the Scriptures doctors take precedence over pontiffs

This is also shown by an argument of Gratian that he puts in these words [D 20]: “So far as a person relies on the greater reason, the more authority his words seem to have. But many commentators, surpassing others in ampler knowledge, just as they do in fuller grace of the holy spirit, have adhered more strongly to reason. Accordingly it seems that the sayings of Augustine, Jerome and other commentators should be preferred to things laid down by some pontiffs.” These words show that in matters that pertain to the faith doctors should be preferred to pontiffs, and so, unless they have been legitimately corrected by them in the way explained above, doctors are not bound to retract their opinions if they are erroneous.

**Student:** That argument seems to fail in two ways. First because Gratian is speaking about doctors approved by the Church, such as Augustine, Jerome and others like them, not about modern doctors. Therefore, although those saints should be put ahead of bishops in explaining the Scriptures, modern doctors ought not take precedence over bishops and inquisitors into heretical wickedness.

Second it seems to fail because this [argument] does not follow: doctors ought not retract their opinions at the correction of someone with jurisdiction unless they have been legitimately corrected in the way described before; others, therefore, simple people, corrected by prelates ought not retract their errors unless they have been legitimately corrected in that way.

**Master:** It is easy to reply to those objections, as is clear from what has been said. Accordingly, to the first they say that Gratian is speaking not only of doctors approved by the Church but also of others, just as he is also speaking of other pontiffs besides those who lived in the times of the doctors now approved

by the Church. For he is comparing in general the status of doctors with the status of pontiffs. And, therefore, just as of old doctors were to take precedence over pontiffs in transmitting things belonging to the faith, so also now doctors are to take precedence over modern pontiffs, as long as the doctors have been raised to their teaching post by virtue of their excellent knowledge and praiseworthy life, not because of gifts and requests or human favours. And thus, to make their intention quite clear, they say that Gratian is not speaking of doctors as the term is understood these days, but is speaking of perceptive commentators on divine Scripture, whether they be called masters or students. For many who are called students should be preferred to masters in explaining divine Scripture and should also be preferred, therefore, to pontiffs in such matters. Accordingly, Gratian's argument applies to modern scholars as well as to past commentators on the Scriptures, because the learned in these times excel "by greater knowledge"; in matters of this kind, therefore, they are to be preferred to illiterate and simple bishops and inquisitors.

To your second objection they say that for whatever reason experts corrected by prelates or those having jurisdiction are not bound to retract their erroneous opinions unless legitimately corrected by them in the way described, so for the same reason neither are simple followers of the experts bound to retract in any way opinions they have received from more expert persons unless they have been legitimately corrected. From this it follows that other simple people are also not bound to retract their erroneous opinions unless they have been legitimately corrected, because all simple people seem to be assessed by the same law.

### **Chapter 17**

**Student:** If you have more arguments for the above conclusion, please bring them forward.

**Master:** The same conclusion is proved, second, as follows. Anyone who is not bound in matters of faith to demonstrate undoubting faith to another is not bound to retract an erroneous opinion on that other's mere assertion, warning or rebuke. For anyone who retracts an erroneous opinion ought to hold the contrary assertion with firm faith, and adhering firmly to catholic truth and dissenting from the contrary falsehood seem to be conceptually the same. But in matters of faith subjects are not bound to demonstrate undoubting trust in their prelates, both because then the faith of subjects would rest on the wisdom of men, and because prelates, from simplicity or ignorance and from pertinacity, can err against the faith. Subjects are not bound to retract their erroneous opinions,

therefore, merely on their [the prelates'] assertion, advice or rebuke. But if they are bound to retract them, the prelates must show them clearly by the rule of faith that their opinions conflict with orthodox faith.

Third, as follows. No one is bound to retract his erroneous opinion upon the correction of one who should be ready to satisfy someone asking for a reason for faith, unless that person has given a reason why such an opinion should be retracted as erroneous; for if someone were bound to retract his opinion as erroneous without a reason being given, the other would not be bound to give a reason why the opinion should be retracted. But prelates correcting their subjects for errors against faith ought to be ready to satisfy someone asking for a reason for faith, and consequently ought to be ready to satisfy someone asking for a reason for retracting things they say are opposed to the faith. Blessed Peter, writing individually to prelates in chapter 3 of his first letter [1 Peter 3:15], testifies to this when he says: "Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy everyone that asketh you a reason for the faith<sup>89</sup> that is in you." Subjects are not bound, therefore, to retract their erroneous opinions that are against Catholic truth because of any correction by prelates, unless the correction is legitimate in the way described above.

Fourth, as follows. In a case in which they would be permitted to appeal from a prelate's judgment, subjects are not bound to retract opinions they do not know to be erroneous at the prelate's correction, for someone who can licitly appeal from a judgment is not bound to obey that judgment. But appeal is permitted from a prelate correcting someone of error and not showing by the rule of faith that the error conflicts with truth. No one is bound because of such correction, therefore, to retract an opinion he does not know to be erroneous. The major premise is obvious. The minor is clearly proved by sacred canons. For Victor says (2, q. 6, c. *Si quis* 2 [c.7]): "If anyone thinks he has been oppressed by his own metropolitan, let him be judged by his patriarch or diocesan primate or by the See of the apostolic universal Church." We gather from these words that if someone thinks he has been unfairly convicted of an error by his prelate it is licit for him to appeal. This could also be proved copiously from many other sacred canons, but for the sake of brevity I pass on.

**Student:** By that argument it is proved that someone legitimately convicted of error is not bound to retract his error, because it is licit for him to appeal.

**Master:** The answer to this is that if someone legitimately convicted of an error by his prelate appeals obstructively or frivolously he ought to be punished by

<sup>89</sup> The Bible text has *spe*, hope.

the Church. He also sins before God, who sees how he appeals maliciously, since he has been legitimately corrected.

### Chapter 18

**Student:** An objection occurs to me that seems to strike against the whole preceding argument. When these people say that someone corrected legitimately by his prelate is bound to retract his error, and otherwise is not, one can ask of them whether the errant holds a heresy condemned explicitly or an error condemned only implicitly. If he holds a heresy condemned explicitly he is bound to retract it at once; otherwise his prelate could subject him to due punishment. If he holds a heresy condemned only implicitly, however, he is not bound to retract it on account of any correction by a prelate inferior to the highest pontiff.

**Master:** They answer that no one is bound to retract immediately an explicitly condemned heresy when he does not know that it has been explicitly condemned. But if it is shown to him that it has been explicitly condemned, he is bound to retract it immediately. Now when you say that a prelate can subject such an erring person to due punishment, this is true provided due order is observed. For example, let him first show the errant by the rule of faith that his error conflicts with Catholic truth; and if he does not then retract his error, let him [the prelate] strike him with the appropriate punishment.

### Chapter 19

**Student:** I wonder that they say that someone holding an explicitly condemned heresy does not have to retract that heresy at once even though he has been condemned by a prelate. This seems to be contrary to divine Scripture, sacred canons, the custom of the Church, and reason.

That it is contrary to divine Scripture is proved. For every heretic is bound to revoke his heresy; whoever holds an explicitly condemned heresy, however, is a heretic; therefore such a person is immediately bound of necessity for salvation to retract his heresy. The major premise is obvious, because whoever is not bound to retract his heresy is not bound to put it aside and consequently does not sin, at least not mortally, by clinging to such a heresy; from this it follows that he is not a heretic. The minor premise is proved, because anyone who holds an explicitly condemned heresy should more be regarded as a heretic than one who does not hold to Catholic teaching; but whoever does not hold to Catholic teaching is a heretic, because he should be avoided. Blessed John testifies to this, saying in his second letter (2 John 1: 10-11): "If any man come to you, and

bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him, 'God speed you.' For he that saith unto him, 'God speed you', shares in his wicked works." It is clear from these words that whoever does not hold to Catholic teaching should be avoided by the faithful. Someone who holds an explicitly condemned heresy, therefore, should be avoided. But no one should be avoided because of a heresy before he is a heretic. Whoever holds an explicitly condemned heresy, therefore, is a heretic.

Again, it is shown that the said assertion is opposed to the sacred canons. Pope Gelasius says (24, q. 1, c.1): "Whoever falls into a heresy that has once been condemned involves himself in its condemnation." We clearly gather from these words that anyone who has fallen into an explicitly condemned heresy is condemned. Gelasius also in 24, q. 1, c. *Maiores* [c.2] and Pope Felix 24, q. 1, c. *Achatius 2* [c.3] clearly assert this. But someone condemned because of heresy is a heretic. Therefore anyone who has fallen into an explicitly condemned heresy is a heretic. A heretic, however, is bound to retract his heresy immediately. Therefore someone holding an explicitly condemned heresy is bound to retract it immediately.

This is also made clear by the custom of the Church. For once anyone is convicted of holding an explicitly condemned heresy, inquisitors into heretical wickedness proceed against him immediately, as against a manifest heretic, and regard him as a heretic, even if he is ready to be corrected. If he is a heretic, however, he is bound to retract his heresy. Therefore, etc.

This is also proved by a reason. For if someone holding an explicitly condemned heresy is not bound to retract his heresy immediately, this is only because he is able to excuse himself through ignorance, by saying that he does not know that such an assertion is explicitly condemned. But such ignorance does not excuse him, because ignorance of the law does not excuse, as we find in 1, q. 4, § *Notandum*. Also because after a constitution of the Apostolic See has been published it is binding on everyone, and after two months no one can be excused through ignorance, as we find in the last chapter of *Extra, De constitutionibus* [X 1.2.13], and as the gloss on the chapter *Cognoscentes* of the same title [X 1.2.2 s.v. *ante prohibitionem*] explains; likewise, therefore, an explicit condemnation is binding on everyone, at least after two months. Also because no one can claim ignorance of things done publicly, as is clearly gathered from the sacred canons [p.129.15]. Therefore, since an explicit condemnation of any heresy is made publicly, no one holding an explicitly condemned heresy can excuse himself through ignorance, and consequently he

is bound to retract it immediately and can in no way be excused so as not to be considered a heretic.

These are the things that make me astonished that learned men say that someone can hold an explicitly condemned heresy although he is not a heretic, and that therefore he is not bound to retract that heresy immediately. Would you not delay to explain how they would reply?

### Chapter 20

**Master:** The aforesaid assertion was argued for in book 3 above [p.97.16], because it was proved there that not everyone erring against the faith should be regarded as a heretic. The arguments brought forward there conclude, moreover, that even someone holding an explicitly condemned heresy should not be judged a heretic immediately. It follows from this that he is not bound to retract his heresy immediately.

**Student:** If they rely on some particular argument to prove that someone holding an explicitly condemned heresy should not be counted among the heretics immediately, I would be pleased to hear it.

**Master:** One of their arguments is this. No one should be regarded as a heretic more because of a heresy explicitly condemned by the Church than because of a heresy the contradiction of which is found in the meaning and wording of divine Scripture, unless such a condemnation has been more widely published among Christians than the truth of divine Scripture. But there are many heresies explicitly condemned by general councils which have not been more widely published than divine Scripture. And someone should not always be immediately regarded as a heretic if he holds some heresy the contradiction of which is found in the sacred writings, but he should be examined about whether [he holds it] knowingly or unknowingly, and, if unknowingly, whether he holds the heresy pertinaciously or without pertinacity. Likewise, therefore, even if someone holds an explicitly condemned heresy he should not always be regarded immediately as a heretic, but it should be examined first whether he can be convicted of pertinacity by witnesses or other legitimate proofs. If it cannot be proved that he is pertinacious he should be examined about whether he is ready to correct himself if it is clearly shown to him that his heresy has been explicitly condemned.

Their second argument is this. No one should be immediately regarded as a heretic if he holds a heresy the contradiction of which he is not bound explicitly to believe, for this is why someone who denies a truth contained explicitly in

divine Scripture is not thereby immediately to be regarded as a heretic. But no one or few people are bound to believe explicitly all the truths that contradict explicitly condemned heresies, because many do not have, nor can have, the books that contain the explicit condemnations. Even if someone unknowingly holds an explicitly condemned heresy, therefore, he should not immediately be judged a heretic.

**Student:** How can someone deny a truth explicitly contained in sacred Scripture unless he is a heretic?

**Master:** It is enough to believe every truth of divine Scripture implicitly. Thus blessed Augustine denied some truths contained in Scripture unknowingly and therefore was not a heretic. So also blessed Jerome seems to deny the truth of the gospel when, speaking of our redeemer in one of his homilies, he says: “And he began to question his disciples asking them, ‘Who do men say the son of man is?’; he did not say, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ lest he seem to ask about himself boastfully.” Yet in chapter 9[:18] of his gospel, Luke expressly reports that Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do the people say that I am?” So Jerome says that Christ did not say “Who do men say that I am?” while Luke says that he did say “Who do the people say that I am?” A clear contradiction is thereby found between Jerome and blessed Luke, and yet Jerome should not be regarded as a heretic, because he did not deny the truth of the gospel pertinaciously, but because at the time he did not remember the text of Luke’s gospel.

## Chapter 21

**Student:** Run through the objections that I made.

**Master:** The answer to your first objection [p.141.26] is that not everyone holding an explicitly condemned heresy should be regarded as a heretic, even if many people holding explicitly condemned heresies can be proved by other proofs to be heretics, that is if they can be convicted of pertinaciously holding an explicitly condemned heresy.

When you say [p.141.32] that anyone who holds an explicitly condemned heresy should more be regarded as a heretic than someone who does not hold to Catholic teaching, this (if it ought to be granted) is true of someone who holds pertinaciously an explicitly condemned heresy. If someone holds an explicitly condemned heresy unknowingly and without any pertinacity, however, it is not true, speaking, that is, of someone who does not consider Christian teaching to be true; blessed John, in the words you adduced is speaking of such a one. For blessed John is not speaking of someone who out of ignorance might not hold



some particular Catholic truth, because such a person should not be avoided by Catholics, unless he were to be convicted of pertinacity in some other way.

A brief reply to the decretals which you adduce [p.142.8] is that they all speak about people who knowingly slip into an already condemned heresy.

To the practice of inquisitors which you bring forward [p.142.18], some people say that inquisitors and some prelates often proceed unfairly and unjustly. For they say that many are unlearned and simple men blinded by greed and avarice who try to condemn those accused of heresy in order to acquire their goods. And therefore no assertion should be based on their practice.

To the reason [p.142.23], which seems to be more forceful, they say that some who hold explicitly condemned heresies can excuse themselves by ignorance. Others, on the other hand, cannot, because people can be convicted of manifest heresy in different ways, as is clear from what has been said and will be even clearer later if you follow up with questions on this matter: those, that is, who knew beforehand that the heresy was condemned, and who forced others in any way at all to hold it, and who were proclaiming that they would irrevocably defend it, and many others who have been spoken of above and will be below if you wish. But those who cannot in any way be convicted of pertinacity and are ready to be corrected can excuse themselves by ignorance and say: "We did not know that these are condemned as heresies, indeed we did not know that they are opposed in any way to Catholic truth."

**Student:** Before you go any further would you say whether those who are well informed about the sacred page and canon law can excuse themselves by ignorance if they hold explicitly condemned heresies.

**Master:** It is answered yes, because the well informed are not bound to know of every heresy that has been explicitly condemned. They should not be regarded as heretics, therefore, if they hold them in ignorance and are ready to be corrected.

**Student:** How is reply made to those [arguments] by which I proved that ignorance does not excuse?

**Master:** To the first [p.142.26] it is said that ignorance of the law is two-fold. One ignorance is of a law that it is necessary to know, and that [ignorance] does not excuse. Another ignorance is of a law that it is not necessary to know, and that does excuse one of sin, although in certain others it may not excuse. Therefore anyone who holds heresies the contradictions of which it is necessary for him explicitly to believe cannot be excused by ignorance. Anyone brought

up generally among Christians, therefore, who held that the Christian faith is false, or that Christ was not crucified or was not made flesh, or something of this kind, of which no Christian ought to be ignorant, cannot be excused by ignorance, because he is bound explicitly to believe that the Christian faith is true, that Christ was crucified and things of this kind which are easy to know and are published among all Catholics. Someone who held heresies the contradictions of which he is not bound explicitly to believe, however, could be excused by ignorance as long as he did not add any pertinacity.

To the second [p.142.28], about a constitution of the Apostolic See, it is said that it does oblige everyone after it has been so widely published that no one can claim ignorance. If it has not been so widely published, however, it does not oblige those who do not know it if they are not labouring under a crass and lazy ignorance.<sup>90</sup> Therefore the statement that it obliges everyone after two months is true of all who know it and all who are in reprehensible ignorance. It does not oblige others, however, in such a way that those acting contrary to it sin before God, though perhaps it may sometimes bind them to a punishment to be imposed by the Church. For to some it seems hard to say that all Christians are bound to know all the decretals of the highest pontiffs, when some people who study them, sometimes for 20 years and more, are ignorant of many of them. Many cannot even obtain a copy of them at all.

To the third [p.142.33] they say that even in things done publicly it is possible sometimes to claim ignorance, according to what is clearly gathered from the sacred canons, 9, q. 1, c. *Ordinationes* [c.5], 1, q. 1, c. *Si qui a simoniacis* [c.108] and others. Sometimes it is enough to prove such ignorance by an oath alone. And so they say, on the present topic, that even if some heresies have been publicly condemned in the past, even the learned can, nonetheless, claim ignorance now by saying that they do not know that such heresies have been condemned; and if proof of their ignorance is sought from them, it is enough for them to swear that they do not know; and in this way they are excused of heretical wickedness by ignorance.

## Chapter 22

**Student:** Would you discuss one further difficulty about this matter? Whether, that is, someone who knows that some heresy has been condemned, which he

---

90. On ignorance “crassa” and “supina” see Digest 22.6.6. On kinds of ignorance see 1 Dial. 7.60. Those labour under crass and supine ignorance “who are unwilling to know or do not care to know” (1 Dial. 7.9); “because they are unwilling to know... or neglect to inquire” (1 Dial. 7.53); “who are unwilling to be... informed and despise knowing... who could easily know” (1 Dial. 7.62).

thinks is ambiguous and has two senses, can be excused of heretical wickedness through ignorance if he holds it in the condemned sense which he does not think has been condemned?

**Master:** It is replied to this that if someone who knows a heresy has been condemned is not bound to know in which sense it has been condemned, he should not be judged immediately to be a heretic even if he holds to the condemned sense. If he is bound to know in what sense it has been condemned, however, he cannot be excused through ignorance.

The first is proved as follows. When some assertion has been condemned, no one is obliged by that condemnation to deny another assertion, unless it can be inferred from that condemned assertion alone; but from an ambiguous assertion with several senses a definite sense cannot be inferred. If an ambiguous assertion has been condemned, therefore, no one is obliged to deny any definite sense, because he can with probability doubt in what sense it has been condemned. If anyone out of ignorance and without any pertinacity, therefore, holds an ambiguous condemned heresy in the sense that its condemners intended to condemn, if they have not expressed that sense, he should not be judged immediately to be pertinacious and a heretic, but it should first be clearly shown to him not only that the ambiguous assertion has been condemned but also that the determinate sense conflicts with orthodox truth.

**Student:** They seem to err when they say an ambiguous assertion has been condemned, because an ambiguous assertion ought not be condemned, especially if it has a Catholic sense.

**Master:** You are answered that you plainly err. For sometimes an ambiguous assertion with some Catholic sense has been condemned. Indeed sometimes even assertions that are literally contradictory have been condemned, yet because they are literally contradictory one or other of them has a true sense.

**Student:** Would you give an example of that if you can?

**Master:** Isidore seems to bring forward an obvious example of this, as we find in 24, q. 3, c. *Quidam autem* [c.39], when he clearly implies that each of [the assertions] “God creates evil”, “God does not create evil” is a condemned heresy. And thus he regards those who assert each as manifest heretics, saying: “The Coliciani, named after a certain Colicius, say that God does not create evil, against the words ‘I am the Lord who creates evil’. The Floriani, from Florianus, say on the other hand that God created evil, against the words ‘God made everything good’.” From these words we gather that each of those

[assertions] “God creates evil”, “God does not create evil” is a heresy explicitly condemned. And yet the [assertion] “God creates evil” is ambiguous and has a Catholic sense, namely that God creates the evil of punishment; similarly the [assertion] “God does not create evil” has a Catholic sense, namely that God does not create the evil of fault.

**Student:** According to this they seem to grant that someone can without heretical wickedness hold that God creates the evil of fault, because they say that someone can without heretical wickedness hold an ambiguous assertion that has been condemned in the sense in which it has been condemned.

**Master:** They say that you argue badly because you are arguing from a particular, or an indefinite equivalent to a particular, to a determinate singular. For they do not say that it is always possible for someone without heretical wickedness to hold an ambiguous assertion that has been condemned in the sense in which it was condemned, but sometimes; because, they say, if someone is bound to know that the sense in which an assertion has been condemned is heretical and holds the assertion in that sense, he should be judged immediately to be a heretic; if he is not bound to know this, on the other hand, he should not be regarded as a heretic.

**Student:** What, therefore, should be the procedure about such a person?

**Master:** This has been answered above [p.147.18], because, they say, it is not enough to show to such a person that the ambiguous assertion has been condemned, but it is necessary also to show him clearly that such a sense is contrary to Catholic truth.

### Chapter 23

**Student:** According to these people, as I understand it, bishops and inquisitors correct errants in vain unless they prove that they are clearly opposed to apostolic teaching. But I still do not know what they think about the pope, whether, that is, those who err unknowingly are bound to retract their heresies at a pope’s simple correction, without the sort of correction they call legitimate.

**Master:** They say not, because often the pope is unlearned and simple; also because the pope can err against the faith; also because the pope is bound to give a reason for faith (since, as the gloss on *Extra, De rescriptis, c. Si quando* [X 1.3.5 *casus* and s.v. *rationabilem*] notes, “a reason ought to be given for everything if possible”); also because in a case concerning the faith it is licit to appeal from the pope; and because our faith does not rest on the wisdom of the

pope. For no one is bound to believe the pope in matters of faith unless the pope shows a reason for his statement by the rule of faith.

**Student:** That seems to be contrary to the custom of the Church. For sometimes the pope condemns heresies without offering any reason for his condemnation, and general councils also have composed creeds, distinguishing articles which, however, they do not prove by the rule of faith. It does not seem, therefore, that the pope would always be bound to give a reason for his condemnation of heretical wickedness.

**Master:** They reply to these points that it is never found that the pope has condemned some heresy and not given a reason for his condemnation; but sometimes this [is given] outside the condemnation, sometimes in the condemnation itself. For this is what Alexander III did, as is clear from *Extra, De haereticis*, c. *Cum Christus* [X 5.7.7], as also did Innocent III, *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide*, c. *Damnamus* [X 1.1.2]. However, if he does not give any reason in the condemnation itself, he ought to offer a reason for that condemnation in other assertions of his.

As for general councils composing creeds, the response is that although in the creeds themselves they may not prove the articles of the creeds by the rule of faith, they are nonetheless clearly proved outside those creeds, because those who compose the creeds either prove the articles themselves or approve, tacitly or expressly, proofs given by others.

**Student:** What if in the presence of the pope someone were to defend a heresy that he said he believed to be consistent with Catholic faith?

**Master:** They say that if, even before the pope, he were to defend a heresy a thousand times (unknowingly, with an explicit or tacit declaration that he is ready to be corrected when he learns that his opinion conflicts with Catholic faith), he should not be judged a heretic unless he were proved to be a heretic by other legitimate proofs; because, just as it is licit for him to defend an erroneous opinion unknowingly in this way the first time, so it is licit a second time and a third, and always, until it has been clearly proved to him that his opinion should be reckoned among the heresies.

**Student:** Perhaps someone defending his opinion in this way will say, even after his opinion has been proved heretical, that it has not been shown to him that his opinion conflicts with orthodox faith, and so he could never be convicted.

**Master:** It is not enough for him to deny that his opinion has been proved heretical. He will be compelled to stand by the judgment of experts. If they think that it has been sufficiently proved to him that his opinion is heretical, he is bound to retract it; otherwise he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** What if the experts and all the masters of theology, together with the pope, err?

**Master:** They will *de facto* condemn an innocent person. Nevertheless, according to the laws he will be able to assist his cause by the remedy of appeal. If his legitimate appeal is not granted, however, nothing remains for him but to commit himself to divine grace and not to fear being deleted from human society by an iniquitous judgment, since bad conscience does not blot him out of the book of the living.

**Student:** What if he defends an obvious heresy in writing?

**Master:** They say that he is not to be regarded as pertinacious or a heretic on this account, because in this regard it does not matter whether he holds or defends an erroneous opinion in speech or in writing. Blessed Cyprian left an heretical opinion in his writings, yet because he did not defend it pertinaciously he was not judged a heretic. Similarly Abbot Joachim wrote an heretical opinion, as Innocent III testifies in *Extra, De summa trinitate et fide Catholica*, c. *Damnamus* [X 1.1.2], yet he was not judged a heretic, as the gloss on that chapter *Damnamus* [s.v. *corrigenda*] says about Joachim, “because he was ready to be corrected and did correct himself (as the text goes on to say), he ought not be called a heretic, though at some time he erred in faith.” Similarly, although the opinions which Peter John [Olivi] left in his writings were condemned as heretical, he himself was not judged to be pertinacious or a heretic. Similarly, although blessed Jerome also wrote erroneous opinions (which also we do not read that he revoked), he was not regarded as a heretic.

**Student:** It seems from these [examples] that no one could be accused of heresy after his death; the sacred canons, however, openly assert the opposite of this.

**Master:** The answer is that after his death no one should be accused of heresy solely because he held a heresy in speech or writing, but if it can in some way be proved that he pertinaciously held a heresy in speech or writing he can be accused of heresy after his death. If it can be shown that he was pertinacious by other means than simply words or writings expressing heresy (for instance, by speeches, writings or deeds expressing pertinacity) he should be condemned.

**Student:** Would you give an example of this so that I may understand better what is said?

**Master:** If it is proved of someone after his death that he held in speech or writing that there were two persons in Christ, he should not for this alone be regarded as a heretic; he could be excused by simplicity or ignorance. If it is proved, however, that he knew that this assertion was condemned and afterwards held it in speech or writing, he should be condemned for pertinacity and heretical wickedness.

**Student:** As I surmise, according to these people the procedure must be the same against a person accused of heresy whether living or dead. Yet for inquisitors it is enough that it be proved only that someone dead held a heresy in speech or writing.

**Master:** They say that inquisitors often proceed wickedly and do much harm to the Church of God, totally coveting temporal gain.

#### **Chapter 24**

**Student:** Would you speak now about someone corrected by a companion or another person known to have absolutely no jurisdiction over him?

**Master:** These people say that someone legitimately corrected of heresy by a companion, a subject or anyone else is bound to put aside his heresy immediately and without delay, so that if, after this correction, he is convicted of holding that same heresy in speech or writing or of thinking in any way that it is true, he should be regarded as pertinacious.

They prove this first as follows. Our faith does not rest on the wisdom of men, according to the Apostle (1 Corinthians 2[:5]). With respect to anyone being bound to put aside his heresy, therefore, it does not matter by what person it may be shown to him by the rule of faith that his opinion conflicts with orthodox faith; but if it is clearly shown to someone by his prelate that his opinion conflicts with orthodox faith, he is bound to put it aside immediately, or else he should be considered pertinacious. He is bound to the same, therefore, whoever demonstrates it to him.

Second as follows. Anyone who is not ready to be corrected if he errs is pertinacious; but a person corrected legitimately by anyone at all — that is, a person to whom it has been clearly shown that his opinion conflicts with orthodox faith — who does not put aside his opinion immediately is not ready to be corrected; he should therefore be judged pertinacious and a heretic.

Third as follows. A person is no less bound to put aside his error if he has discovered the truth by the teaching of someone else than if he has discovered it for himself. But anyone who has discovered the truth by himself is bound to put aside his error immediately, on the example of venerable Anselm, who says in *Cur deus homo* book 1 ch. 18, “If anything I say undoubtedly contradicts sacred Scripture, I am certain that it is false and I do not want to hold it once I have learnt this.” Therefore, if someone has discovered a truth consonant with sacred Scripture through the teaching of any other person, whether a companion or a subject, he ought to put aside the contrary error without delay.

**Student:** According to these arguments there seems to be no difference between someone corrected by his prelate or by someone else not his prelate, even by his subject.

**Master:** The reply is that there is no difference with respect to this, that the error should be put aside, but in many other respects there is a great difference. A prelate and someone having jurisdiction over another can call him to give an account, compel him to listen to his teaching, force him to recant publicly and, if he has been found to be contumacious and rebellious in these matters and others pertaining to his [the prelate’s] office, can punish him with an appropriate punishment. Someone who does not hold jurisdiction over an errant, however, cannot exercise any of these over him.

**Student:** In correcting errants do they put any difference between the pope and other prelates?

**Master:** In respect of explicitly condemned heresies, they speak in the same way about the pope and other prelates, but in respect of heresies condemned only implicitly there is a great difference. Over those holding heresies condemned only implicitly prelates inferior to the highest pontiff are known to have no jurisdiction enabling them to punish errants or compel them to do anything. But if in their own conscience they think that the errants are pertinacious, they ought to accuse or denounce them to the Apostolic [i.e. the pope]. The Apostolic, however, can examine them and condemn them if he finds them pertinacious.

## Chapter 25

**Student:** I wish to know whether another way is assigned of convicting an errant of pertinacity.



### Other ways of showing pertinacity

**Master:** There is an eighth way, in the judgment of some, by which someone should be convicted of pertinacity, namely if he tries to constrain others to defend his error pertinaciously by commands, threats, punishments, promises, oaths or in any other way. That such a person should be considered pertinacious and a heretic they try to prove by many arguments.

The first is this. Whoever compels others to defend a heresy pertinaciously commits no less a fault than someone who agrees with an errant, or does not oppose him when he can, because that person not only agrees and does not oppose but even compels and insists. But whoever agrees with or does not, when he can, oppose an errant and someone pertinaciously defending heresy is entangled in the same crime and should consequently be considered pertinacious and a heretic. Therefore whoever forces or compels others pertinaciously to defend a heresy should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic. The major premise is obvious. The minor is proved clearly by sacred canons. For Isidore says (11, q. 3, c. *Qui consentit peccantibus* [c.100]), “Another father says: ‘If anyone agrees with another’s error let him know that he is to be judged culpable in the same way as that other.’” And Pope Leo says (*Extra, De haereticis, c. Qui alios* [X 5.7.2]), “Anyone who does not call others back from error when he can do so shows that he himself errs.” And Pope Innocent says (dist. 83, c. *Error* [c.3]), “An error not opposed is approved, and truth is struck down when it is not defended.” It is clearly gathered from these and very many others that anyone who agrees with heretical wickedness is counted among heretics. Therefore whoever forces others pertinaciously to defend a heresy or pertinaciously to cling to a heresy should even more be judged to be pertinacious and a heretic.

A second argument is this. Those who force others into sin by threats, terror, oaths, commands or menaces sin no less than those who order others to commit some crime. But those who order others to commit some crime are involved in the same crime. Those who force others into any sort of sin, therefore, are bound by the same sin, and consequently those who force others pertinaciously to defend heretical wickedness are entangled in the same pertinacity. The major premise of this argument is self-evident. The minor premise is proved by the authority of Alexander III, who says, as we find in *Extra, De sententia excommunicationis, c. Mulieres* [X 5.39.6], “... since he truly commits a crime on whose authority or order it has been committed.” Those who order others to commit a crime, therefore, are involved in the same crime.

A third argument is this. A person is said to do something who does it through another; thus also he is truly said to kill who kills through another, as Clement III attests, who says (*Extra, De clericis pugnantibus in duello, c. Henricus*, [X 5.14.2]), “There is no doubt that a homicide is perpetrated both by deed and by command, or by advice or by defence.” Therefore likewise someone is said to pertinaciously defend a heresy who defends a heresy pertinaciously through another. But whoever forces others pertinaciously to defend a heresy, pertinaciously defends that heresy through others. Therefore he also should be called a pertinacious defender of heresy.

A fourth argument is this. One who compels is more said “to do” than one who advises. But a person by whose advice some crime is committed is said to commit that same crime, as Augustine attests (*De Poenitentia*, dist. 1. c. *Periculose [Perniciose, c.23]*), “They deceive themselves perilously who think that the only murderers are those who kill a person with their hands, and not, even more, those through whose advice, deceit and encouragement people are killed. For the Jews did not kill the Lord with their own hands, as it is written ‘we are not permitted to kill anyone’, yet the Lord’s death is attributed to them because they killed him with their tongue by saying ‘Crucify! Crucify him!’” Therefore, much more, someone who compels another to commit a crime commits that same crime; and so whoever compels another to pertinaciously defend a heresy is known to pertinaciously defend that heresy himself.

A fifth argument is this. Those who share in a crime with criminals are caught up in the same crime; but someone who compels others to pertinaciously defend a heresy shares in the crime with the one pertinaciously defending the heresy, because he grants him help and support; such a person should therefore be regarded as pertinacious.

A sixth argument is this. Whoever is not ready to be corrected of a heresy he holds should be regarded as pertinacious; but whoever compels others to pertinaciously defend his heresy is not ready to be corrected; therefore he should be considered pertinacious.

A seventh argument is this. Whoever forces others to defend a heresy pertinaciously wants that heresy to be defended and held irrevocably; but such a person is pertinacious; therefore, etc.

**Student:** Those arguments work only of someone who compels others to defend his heresy pertinaciously. But it is possible to defend a heresy without pertinacity. Therefore even if someone compels others by punishments, threats,

commands and oaths to defend some heresy, he should not be regarded as pertinacious or a heretic as long as he does not compel them to defend it pertinaciously. This seems provable by the following argument. One who forces another, but not to a mortal sin, does not commit a mortal sin; and consequently he should not be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic on account of this compelling, since every heretic is in mortal sin. But it is not always a mortal sin to defend a heresy, although it is a mortal sin to defend a heresy pertinaciously. Therefore no one should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic because of such compelling.

**Master:** The reply to this is that although someone could defend a heresy without pertinacity, yet if one compels another to defend a heresy unrestrictedly, then as far as in him lies he compels that person to defend that heresy pertinaciously — just as if one compels another to swear that he will defend some heretical assertion irrevocably and forever, then as far as in him lies he compels him to defend that assertion pertinaciously, even though it is in the power of the one so compelled not to defend the heresy afterwards. The one so forcing, therefore, ought to be regarded as a pertinacious defender of heresy even if those compelled to swear later refuse to defend that heresy pertinaciously but want to go against their illicit oath. But when you say that anyone who compels another, but not to a mortal sin, does not commit a mortal sin, this is denied, because someone can sin mortally even by forcing another to do something good. For someone who compels another to make a vow of chastity or poverty, or something else supererogatory, can sin mortally, because such things can be recommended by persuasion but cannot be ordered. Speaking of such matters Augustine says that no one is compelled by law to act well but is forbidden to act badly.

## Chapter 26

**Student:** Is there another way of convicting someone of pertinacity?

**Master:** In a ninth way, a person can be convicted of pertinacity and heretical wickedness if he compels someone to abjure a Catholic truth, or constrains him by punishments, threats or commands to deny a Catholic truth. That someone who compels others to abjure any Catholic truth should be considered pertinacious and a heretic is shown as follows. Whoever compels another to abjure a Catholic truth compels that person to cling irrevocably to its opposing heresy; but such a person, as is clear from the preceding chapter, is pertinacious and a heretic. Therefore, etc. And by the same argument it is shown that

someone who compels others by threats, penalties or commands to deny some Catholic truth should be judged pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** Can such a person compelling others be excused by some ignorance, for instance if he believes that the assertion he compels the other to abjure or deny is heretical?

**Master:** It is said that such a person cannot be excused by any ignorance, because without being rash no one can attempt to compel another in any way, by an oath, by penalties, threats or commands, to abjure or deny some assertion, unless he is sure with sufficient certitude that the assertion is not consistent with the truth; no one, however, can have such certitude that a Catholic assertion is not consistent with Catholic truth; therefore he rashly compels another to abjure or deny the same. In this case, however, rashness is equivalent to pertinacity. Therefore such a person should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic.

### Chapter 27

**Student:** Are there more ways of convicting someone of pertinacity?

**Master:** In a tenth way, a person is convicted of pertinacity and heretical wickedness if he abjures a Catholic truth, or swears that he will forever uphold as Catholic an assertion that in truth is heretical. That such a person should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic is shown by the following argument. Anyone who declares that he intends to deny an assertion that is Catholic, or to hold an assertion that is heretical, should be considered pertinacious; someone who abjures a truth that is Catholic or swears that he will preserve an assertion that is heretical, however, is a person of this kind; therefore he should be considered pertinacious.

Again, someone who errs against the Catholic faith and is not ready to be corrected should be considered pertinacious and a heretic; but a person who abjures a Catholic truth and swears he will defend a heresy, or that he will cling to an heretical assertion, is not ready to be corrected; therefore he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** Is there some way a person like this can be excused of pertinacity?

**Master:** The answer is that by fear of death or severe torture he can be excused of pertinacity and heretical wickedness, but not of mortal sin.

**Student:** It seems that ignorance could excuse such a person. Ignorance excuses a person of lying if he says something false that he thinks is true, as Augustine asserts (22, q. 2, c. *Is autem* [c.4]). Therefore, likewise, ignorance can excuse

someone who abjures a Catholic truth he thinks is heretical, and someone who swears to hold an assertion that is heretical but he thinks is Catholic.

**Master:** The answer to you is that someone can be excused of lying, but without being excused of rashness. Augustine attests to this when he says, in the place you just cited (22, q. 2, c. *Is autem*), “No one should be judged a liar if he says something false that he thinks true, because as far as in him lies he does not deceive but is himself deceived. And so someone who incautiously believe falsehoods and holds them to be true should not be accused of lying but, sometimes, of rashness.” Likewise someone abjuring, and also someone swearing, in the way just described, can be excused of lying, but is not excused of rashness. Nor, therefore, can he be excused of pertinacity. For pertinacity can be found without lying, as it is found in those who are unknowingly heretics. For since such people think that what they are saying is true they are not lying, and yet they are considered pertinacious because they are not ready to be corrected.

### Chapter 28

**Student:** Go on to another way of convicting an errant of pertinacity.

**Master:** In an eleventh way, someone should be convicted of pertinacity if, erring against the faith, he persecutes, molests or impedes those who defend Catholic truth or oppose heretical wickedness. That such people should be regarded as pertinacious and heretics is proved by the following argument. Whoever tries to prevent the disclosure of Catholic truth and the uncovering of heretical wickedness is not ready to be corrected and is not seeking the truth with careful responsibility; consequently he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic. But an errant who persecutes, molests or impedes those defending Catholic truth and opposing heretical wickedness is trying to prevent the disclosure of Catholic truth and the uncovering of heretical wickedness. Therefore such a person should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic.

Again, those who err against the faith and culpably resist the truth should be judged to be pertinacious and heretics, because those who are reprobate concerning the faith should be counted among the pertinacious and the heretics. Errants who culpably resist the truth are like this, as the Apostle attests in 2 Timothy 3[:8], where he says of such people, “Now as Jannes and Mambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith.” But those who persecute, molest or impede those

defending Catholic truth and opposing heretical wickedness culpably resist the truth; if they err, therefore, they should be considered heretics and pertinacious.

The argument is confirmed. Those who resist Catholic truth are more at fault than those who resist the public power. But as the Apostle says in Romans 13[:2], “He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, get for themselves damnation.” Therefore, much more, those who resist Catholic truth get for themselves damnation. But whoever impedes the disclosure of Catholic truth and rejection of heretical wickedness resists Catholic truth; therefore they get for themselves damnation; but only through pertinacity, because it does not seem to be culpable to resist the truth in a way that is not pertinacious. Such people, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and heretics.

The argument is confirmed again. Whoever resists Catholic truth and believes in heretical wickedness does not sin any less than one who does not submit to the truth and believes in iniquity. But whoever does not submit to the truth and believes in iniquity sins mortally, as the Apostle attests when he says in Romans 2[:8-9], “But to them that are contentious and who submit not to the truth, but believe in iniquity [there will come] wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish”. Therefore whoever resists Catholic truth and believes in heretical wickedness sins mortally; but not without pertinacity; therefore such a person should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

Furthermore, Christians who, because of the persecution they inflict on those defending Catholic truth and opposing heretical wickedness, are worse than those corrupted by carnal impurity should be regarded as pertinacious and heretics, because the wickedness of their sin cannot be brought back to any other kind of sin except lack of faith, heresy or pertinacity. But Christians persecuting those who try to defend Catholic truth and oppose heretical depravity are worse than those stained with carnal sins. This is because they are not less evil than those who refuse to listen to preachers of the truth; but those who refuse to listen to preachers of the truth are worse than those who have been corrupted by carnal sins. The Truth Himself testifies to this when he says, in Matthew 10[:14-5], to preachers of the Gospel truth, “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet. Amen I say to, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.” Those who prevent the disclosure of Catholic truth and the uncovering of heretical depravity, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and heretics.

**Student:** That argument does not seem plausible except in reference to apostles and preachers performing miracles, because the Truth himself was speaking to the apostles as they were going to perform miracles. Therefore these people should be judged as worse than outrageous sinners if they attack defenders of Catholic truth and disapprovers of heretical wickedness whose words and assertions God would confirm with miracles, but not if they attack others who do not perform miracles.

**Master:** Others try to counter that objection or reply by saying that the confirmation of Catholic truth through sacred Scripture is of no less authority than [confirmation] through the performing of a miracle, so that one who does not believe divine Scripture would not cling firmly in faith to the performance of a miracle either, as Abraham himself testifies. For as we read in Luke 16[:31], he said to the rich feaster who besought the performance of a miracle, namely the resurrection of one dead, in order to induce his brothers to repent, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe one who rises from the dead.” Innocent III also seems to think this since he asserts (*Extra, De haereticis, c. Cum ex iniuncto* [X 5.7.12]), that just as the performance of a miracle is enough to prove an invisible mission from God so also is the testimony of Scripture. He uses these words: “He must confirm that invisible mission by the performance of a miracle or by the special testimony of Scripture.” Therefore, similarly, for defenders of Catholic truth and opponents of heretical wickedness not to be molested, they need only confirm their assertions by Scripture testimonies, without performing a miracle. And thus in the time of antichrist the elect will not perform miracles but will be supported by Scripture testimonies in place of miracles.

**Student:** It seems that all the above arguments can be overcome in another way. To defend Catholic truth and to oppose heretical wickedness pertains to the office of doctors, as we read in *Extra, De haereticis, c. Cum ex iniuncto* [X 5.7.12]. But as it says there, “Since the order of doctors is, as it were, outstanding in the Church, no one else should indiscriminately usurp for himself the duty of preaching.” It is possible, therefore, licitly to impede those defending Catholic truth and opposing heretical wickedness; and consequently those who do impede in this way should not for that reason be judged pertinacious and heretics.

**Master:** It seems to those who assert the above that you do not understand their arguments. They do not mean to assert that anyone can indiscriminately assume to himself the office of doctor, but they affirm that no one should be molested in

any way at all on the grounds that he confesses Catholic truth and disapproves of heretical wickedness — though anyone can be molested justly if he confesses Catholic truth or opposes heretical wickedness where he ought not, or when he ought not, or before whom he ought not, or in any other way but the way he ought. They therefore mean mainly persecutors who persecute others because they oppose their own false assertions, since any Christian ought to have the freedom, provided the due circumstances are observed, to defend the truth, that is, to confess Catholic [truth] and to detest heretical wickedness, and he ought not on this account endure any persecution from Catholics; and anyone who inflicts persecution on someone for this reason should be counted among the heretics.

### Chapter 29

**Student:** I have heard enough about that way of convicting an errant of pertinacity, so explain another way.

**Master:** In a twelfth way, someone should be convicted of pertinacity if, erring against Catholic faith, he refuses to submit himself to correction and amendment by the person or persons whose concern it is. This is proved by the following argument. Whoever evades judgment ought to be held guilty, according to the testimony of Pope Boniface, who says (*Extra, De presumptionibus, c. Nullus dubitat* [X 2.23.4]), “No one doubts that he who is guilty evades judgment, just as he who is innocent seeks it in order to be absolved.” Pope Pelagius agrees with this when he says (11, q. 1, *Christianis* [c.12]), “It is clear that he who flees judgment has no confidence in his uprightness.” [col.903] This is clearly gathered also from the text of Pope Boniface, found in 3, q. 9, c. *Decernimus* [c.10], and from the words of Gregory, found in dist. 74, c. *Honoratus* [c.8]. Anyone erring against the faith who evades judgment, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and a heretic; anyone who refuses to submit himself to the correction and amendment of the person or persons whose concern it is evades judgment; he should be considered, therefore, pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** That argument seems to work for one called to court and absenting himself out of contumacy; it seems to prove nothing about others.

**Master:** They say that the above argument is conclusive for someone hindering the making of a judgment, not only for someone called to court and absenting himself out of contumacy. For just as someone who tries to prevent justice from being done is not free from crime, even if he has not been called to court (*Extra, De officio et potestate iudicis delegati, c. 1* [X 1.29.1]), so one who errs against



the faith and hinders the passing of judgment on his error cannot be excused of crime. But that crime seems to be nothing other than pertinacity. Such a person, therefore, deservedly should be judged to be pertinacious.

Again, someone erring against the faith who is not ready to be corrected and does not seek the truth with careful responsibility should be judged to be pertinacious and a heretic, as is clearly gathered from the words of Augustine found in 24, q. 3, c. *Dixit apostolus* [c.29]; but anyone who refuses to submit himself to correction and amendment by those whose concern it is, and impedes in any way at all the appropriate and legitimate examination of his error, even if he has not been called to court, is not ready to be corrected and is not seeking the truth with careful responsibility; therefore he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

Furthermore, as we find in John 3[:20], Truth Himself testifies that “He who behaves badly hates the light and avoids it so that his deeds will not be made known.” From these words we gather that whoever avoids the light so that his deeds will not be known behaves badly. For if he were not behaving badly he would do what is true; if he were to do what is true, however, he would come into the light, as the Truth says in the same place [John 3:21] “He who does what is true comes into the light.” If one who errs against the faith does not come into the light of strict judgment and open examination by those whose concern it is to enlighten the erring, therefore, he behaves badly; that badness, however, is nothing other than pertinacity; such a person, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** It appears from that argument that everyone who errs should be regarded as pertinacious unless he immediately comes into the light and seeks to have his assertion examined and inquired into by those whose concern it is. This seems too harsh, because it would involve many theologians in the charge of pertinacity.

**Master:** As you know, affirmative precepts bind always, but not for always.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, although someone who errs is bound to come into the light of a just judgment, he is nevertheless not bound to this on every occasion. But since “not to prevent judgment being made” is a negative [precept], it is binding on every occasion. He should be said to come into the light, therefore, who is prepared to come into the light when it is useful and necessary, and therefore, even if he does not on every occasion come into the light by seeking to have his assertion carefully inquired into, he should not be regarded as pertinacious. But whenever

91. See Thomas Aquinas, ST 2-2 q.33 a.2.

he tries to prevent his assertion being brought to due examination lest it be reproved, he should be said to hate the light and not to come into the light lest his assertion be reproved; and he is then, therefore, deservedly judged to be pertinacious. They try to infer from the above that if the pope teaches some heresy as doctrine and prevents the holding of a general council lest his assertion be examined, he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

### Chapter 30

**Student:** Do not hesitate to explain if an errant can be convicted of pertinacity in another way.

**Master:** In a thirteenth way, someone can be convicted as pertinacious, some people say, if he culpably refuses to be instructed about the truth. To explain this they make a distinction, saying that the errant's assertion either is censured by experts as heretical and a scandal has arisen from its being taught as doctrine, or is not censured by experts and the faithful are not scandalised by its being taught as doctrine.

Although in the second case the person refusing to be instructed about the truth may sometimes be held by God to be pertinacious and a heretic, yet it does not seem that he should be judged to be heretical in the forum of the Church, even if that same assertion were later condemned as heretical.

In the first case they say that someone refusing to be instructed about the truth should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic even in the forum of the Church. They try to prove this with many arguments, of which the first is this. Someone who errs against the faith and is not ready to be corrected and does not seek the truth with careful responsibility should be judged to be pertinacious and a heretic (24, q. 3, c. *Dixit apostolus* [c.28]); someone who refuses to be instructed about the truth if his error is censured by experts, however, is not ready to be corrected and is not seeking the truth with careful responsibility; he should therefore be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

**Student:** That argument seems to be conclusive also of someone refusing to be instructed about the truth whose opinion is not censured by experts and about whose opinion no scandal has arisen, because that person is not seeking the truth with careful responsibility.<sup>92</sup>

---

92. **Fr** (the Frankfurt manuscript) reads: "That argument would be as strongly conclusive, it seems, about the second case as about the first. Everyone erring in the way set out in the example sins against the faith and is considered a heretic by God; and it does not appear from this by whom he is ready to be corrected."

**Master:** The answer is that the argument is not conclusive about such a person, because he is presumed to be ready to be corrected and also to be seeking the truth with careful responsibility, when it is not clear that he is culpably neglecting to be corrected and it is not clear that he is omitting to seek the truth out of love for his error. A person about whose opinion no scandal has arisen and whose opinion has not been censured by experts as heretical is like this.<sup>93</sup>

If, however, someone whose opinion is censured by experts as heretical and gives rise to scandal does not seek the truth with careful responsibility when it is fitting, where it is fitting and as is fitting, there is a violent presumption about him that he refuses to have a truth opposed to his opinion made plain but would prefer the truth to be suppressed. For if, as Pope Innocent attests (*dist. 83. c. Error [c.3]*), “When the truth is not defended it is suppressed”, much more is truth suppressed if it is not sought when it ought to be sought. A suppressor of Catholic truth, however, should be considered pertinacious and a heretic. Therefore someone in this case who does not seek truth with careful responsibility should be adjudged pertinacious and a heretic.

A second argument is this. Someone who does not restrain himself from error when he can and should is more, or not less, at fault than someone who does not restrain others from error when he can and should; but whoever does not restrain others from error when he can and should is counted among those erring culpably, as the sacred canons clearly testify; therefore whoever does not restrain himself from error when he can and should is numbered among those erring culpably. But if an errant from whose error a scandal has arisen and who is censured by experts as heretical refuses to be instructed about the truth, he is not restraining himself from error when he can and should; he should be considered, therefore, among those erring culpably. But such a person is an errant pertinaciously, because to err without pertinacity does not make an errant culpable; such a person, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

A third argument is this. Anyone who wickedly savours [*sapit*] heretical and impious opinions should be regarded as pertinacious, because no one wickedly savours impious opinions without pertinacity; for someone who savours impious opinions without pertinacity does not savour impious matters wickedly, although he does savour them. But someone who errs against the Catholic faith

---

93. **Fr** reads: “You have not attended well to the designated difference between those two ways. For even if someone erring in the second way is sometimes considered a heretic before God, yet it is not also so before the forum of the Church, where every such person is presumed to be ready to be corrected and also to be seeking the truth with careful responsibility.”

and refuses to be instructed about the truth savours impious matters wickedly, as Pope Leo attests (24, q. 3, *Quid autem iniquius* [c.30]), “What is more wicked than to savour [*sapere*] impious matters and not believe those who are wise [*sapientes*] and more learned? But it is into this foolishness [*insipientia*] that they fall who, when they are prevented by some obscurity from learning the truth, have recourse not to prophetic words, nor to apostolic writings, nor to the gospel texts, but to themselves.” We gather from these words that anyone who savours impious matters and neither believes the wise nor has recourse to the Scriptures should be considered most wicked. But someone who refuses to be instructed about the truth neither believes the wise nor has recourse to authentic Scriptures. Therefore such a person should be considered most wicked and, consequently, pertinacious.

A fourth argument is this. Anyone who, because he does not want to be a disciple of truth, is as a result a master of error should be regarded as pertinacious. For in such a person there is found, in addition to ignorance of understanding, a wickedness of will. That wickedness of will, however, either is pertinacity or is not without pertinacity. But an errant who refuses to be instructed about the truth when he can and should be is a master of error because he does not want to be a disciple of truth, for someone who does not want to hear the truth does not want to be a disciple of truth. Such a person should, therefore, be considered pertinacious.<sup>94</sup>

---

94. **Fr** has a different fourth argument: “A fourth argument is this. Every errant who refuses to be instructed about the truth when he can and should be is someone who does not want to hear the truth; and every one who does not want to hear the truth is not a disciple of truth. Now everyone who is not a disciple of truth is a master of error, from the decretal cited in the immediately preceding third argument and from 2, q. 7, *Nos* [c.41]. But if every master of error should be considered pertinacious and heretical, then [considering every step] from the first to the last, every errant against the faith who refuses to be instructed about the truth when he ought to be and can be should be considered pertinacious and heretical. In the present case the consequence is valid as far as it goes, since from it can be formed many evident syllogistic forms in “barbara”, depending on the number of middle terms. The first form will be this. Every master of error should be considered pertinacious and heretical; but everyone who is not a disciple of truth is a master of error; everyone who is not a disciple of truth, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and heretical. The second form will be this. Everyone who is not a disciple of truth should be considered pertinacious and heretical; but everyone who does not want to hear the truth is not a disciple of truth; everyone who does not want to hear the truth, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and heretical. The third form will be this. Everyone who does not want to hear the truth should be considered pertinacious and heretical; but everyone erring against the faith who refuses to be instructed about the truth when he should be and can be does not want to listen to the truth; everyone erring against the faith who refuses to be instructed about the truth when he can be and ought to be, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and heretical. This is the conclusion first and principally aimed at, well concluded and true if all the premises of these three forms are true. This [that they are true] will be seen very easily, and first and most of all, concerning the major premise of the first form, if by

**Chapter 31**

**Student:** Is there another way of convicting an errant of pertinacity?

**Master:** In a fourteenth way, someone can be convicted of pertinacity if he bears witness in deeds or words that he will not retract an assertion of his which is heretical, because such a person is not ready to be corrected, and consequently he should be considered pertinacious.

**Student:** Tell of another way.

**Master:** In a fifteenth way, someone erring is convicted of pertinacity and heretical wickedness if, in favour of heretical wickedness, he prevents the reading of Catholic writings or prevents the preaching or publication of Catholic truths, because such a person is a defender of heretical falsity and a suppressor of Catholic truth.

**Student:** Is there another way of convicting an errant of pertinacity?

**Master:** In a sixteenth way, someone is convicted of pertinacity who invents and defends new errors in defence of heretical wickedness, because such a person is not ready to be corrected and is not seeking the truth with careful responsibility. He should be considered, therefore, as pertinacious.

**Chapter 32**

**Student:** I would like to hear of another way.

**Master:** Some people say that, in a seventeenth way, the pope especially can be convicted of pertinacity and heretical wickedness if he solemnly defines an error against the faith and asserts that it should be held by Christians as Catholic. That

---

master of error we understand one habituated to error by the putting aside of any habit to the contrary. For every such person is pertinacious, as may be deduced from a description of habit and of pertinacity. And it is clear from another [argument], for in every such master of error there is found, besides ignorance of understanding, a wickedness of will. That wickedness of will either is pertinacity or is not without pertinacity. In the remaining premises all the terms are either privatively opposed or are convertible or equivalent or are related as superiors or inferiors. Now because between privative opposites (always supposing constancy of substance and that it concerns an appropriate substance and in a determinate time) no intermediate occurs, just as the consequence is always valid from one of the privative opposites affirmed to the other one negated, and vice versa, or from the affirmation of an inferior, convertible or equivalent to the affirmation of the superior, convertible or equivalent, and from the negation of a superior, convertible or equivalent to the negation of the inferior, convertible or equivalent. Also always truly predicated are: one of the privative opposites not negated, of the other negated, and the negated, of the non-negated; also the superior, or convertible or equivalent, of the inferior, or convertible or equivalent affirmatively; and the inferior negated (and thus the convertible or equivalent), of the superior, convertible or equivalent negated." The **Fr** writer does not avoid logical technicalities!

such a pope should be regarded as heretical is proved first as follows. Anyone who constrains others to defend an error pertinaciously should be regarded as pertinacious; we clearly gather this from what was said above [p.153.2]. But a pope solemnly defining some error to be Catholic constrains Christians, as far as in him lies, pertinaciously to defend and preserve an error. For just as a legitimately made statute of the Apostolic See binds everyone, as we find in the last chapter of *Extra, De constitutionibus* [X 1.2.13], so if a pope, or someone presenting himself as pope, pronounces definitively that a heretical assertion should be held, he binds everyone, as much as in him lies, to hold and defend that assertion irrevocably. Therefore, he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

Second as follows. Anyone who himself or through others persecutes, punishes or molests those confessing Catholic truth and denouncing heretical wickedness should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic; this is based on what was said above [p.157.18]. A pope who solemnly pronounces that some assertion which is heretical should be held, however, is, as far as in him lies, by himself and through others persecuting, punishing and molesting those defending the opposing Catholic truth and those denouncing heretical wickedness, since by his statute he makes all those who contradict him in this respect worthy of anathema. Pope Nicholas attests to this at a sitting of a universal synod when he says, as we find in 25, q. 2, c. *Si quis* [c.18], "If anyone defies teachings, mandates, laws, interdicts, or pronouncements which have been promulgated by the head of the Apostolic See in favour of Catholic faith or ecclesiastical discipline for the correction of imminent or future evils, let him be anathema." As far as in him lies, [such a pope] subjects Catholics contradicting his definition to many other penalties too, because those opposing apostolic commands and pronouncements are punished with various penalties, as we clearly gather from the words of Gregory found in dist. 12. c. *Preceptis* [c.2] and dist. 19. c. *Nulli* [c.5] and from the words of Pope Hadrian recorded in 25, q. 1, c. *Generali* [c.11] and from other sacred canons. Through others also, as far as in him lies he punishes, persecutes and molests Catholics who contradict him, because as far as in him lies he obliges lesser prelates to punish those who contradict his assertion with all the penalties which prelates ought to inflict on those who disobey apostolic commands. Someone like this who presents himself as pope, therefore, should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

Third as follows. Someone who errs against the faith should be regarded as pertinacious and a heretic if he bears witness by deed or word that he is not willing to be corrected by those whose concern it is, because such a person is

not ready to be corrected and consequently should be considered pertinacious and a heretic. Someone who presents himself as pope and solemnly pronounces that a heresy should be held, however, bears witness by act and also by words that he is not willing to be corrected by a general council, to which however it pertains to correct even a pope of heresy. Therefore he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic. The major premise is obvious, the minor is clearly proved. For since, as far as in him lies, by his statute he constrains all Christians — and consequently a general council, since only Christians ought to be present in a general council — to hold his assertion, he bears witness and shows by deed that he is not willing to retract his assertion on account of a general council. He bears witness to this by his word too, when he says at the end of a bull that no one is permitted to oppose matters defined by him, for it is customary to put such words or their equivalent at the end of papal statutes, and they are tacitly understood even if they are not put there. Therefore such a person should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

Fourth as follows. Whoever has finally confirmed himself in some heretical assertion should be considered pertinacious and a heretic, because such a person affirms an heretical assertion irrevocably and, consequently, is not ready to be corrected; but presenting himself as pope and solemnly pronouncing that a heretical assertion should be held, in that assertion he confirms himself by final deliberation. Therefore he should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

Fifth as follows. Anyone who persists too much in an error is pertinacious; but such a person persists too much in an error, because no one can proceed to pronounce that an error should be held without being rash; therefore such a person should be considered pertinacious and a heretic.

### Chapter 33

**Student:** Discuss another way of convicting someone of pertinacity.

**Master:** In an eighteenth way, someone can be convicted of pertinacity and heretical wickedness if he consents to such a definition by the pope, by advising, urging, inducing or asserting that it should be defined in that way. This is proved by the following argument. Doers and consenters are involved in a similar charge, just as an equal punishment also binds them, as the sacred canons clearly affirm [p.153.15]. But a pope who in such a way defines that an heretical assertion must be held as Catholic should be considered pertinacious

and a heretic. Therefore everyone consenting to it should also be numbered among the pertinacious and the heretics.

**Student:** Let that argument for that way suffice for now. Describe, therefore, another way of convicting of pertinacity.

**Master:** In a nineteenth way, someone should be regarded as pertinacious if, being less than the pope, he prescribes in a definitive statement that some heretical assertion should be held, enjoining and imposing it on others that they should think of it and regard it as Catholic. Whoever agrees with such a prescription should also be considered pertinacious and a heretic. This is clear enough from what was said above, because if a pope who prescribes in this way and those who agree with him should be regarded as pertinacious and heretical, much more should one who is less than the pope and issues such a prescription, thus usurping the papal office, and those who agree with him, be judged to be pertinacious and heretical.

### Chapter 34

**Student:** Describe another way of convicting an errant of pertinacity.

**Master:** In a twentieth way, someone can be convicted of pertinacity if he does not resist heretical wickedness though he has the power to do so. This seems to be provable in many ways by the sacred canons. For Pope Innocent [III] says (dist. 83. c. *Error* [c.3]): “An error not resisted is approved”. It seems, however, that whoever approves an error should be judged to be pertinacious. Whoever does not resist an error if he can do so, therefore, should be considered pertinacious. Again, Pope Leo says (*Extra, De hereticis, c. Qui alios* [X 5.7.2]): “Whoever does not recall others from error when he can do so shows that he errs himself.” From these words we are given to understand that whoever can recall heretics from error and does not do so should be numbered among the heretics and, consequently, should be considered pertinacious. Pope John, also, says (dist. 86. c. *Facientis* [c.3]): “Whoever neglects to put right something he can correct undoubtedly has the fault of a perpetrator”. Therefore whoever neglects to put right pertinacious heretics whom he can correct has the fault of pertinacious heretics and should be held, as a consequence, to be among the pertinacious heretics.

**Student:** I want to know whether all the learned think that such people are heretics.



**Master:** Some people say that they should more properly be called favourers of heretics and heretical wickedness rather than heretics, yet they could, according to them, also be called pertinacious because pertinacity extends to more vices than to heresy.<sup>95</sup>

---

95. What emerges from book 4 seems to be this. Pertinacity is a state of mind that can reasonably be inferred, though fallibly, from certain external signs. If a person rejects the Christian faith, or rejects all or part of the Bible, or holds that the Church has erred, or denies a truth he is presumed to know the Church teaches, or rejects a Catholic truth he had previously accepted as Catholic truth, then he can be regarded as a heretic immediately without further examination (i.e. without dialogue to find out whether he is ready to be corrected) unless it seems possible that he acted in fear of death or torture or was in fact ignorant of something Catholics are presumed to know. If a person who errs is “legitimately corrected”, i.e. if it is shown clearly to him (e.g. by showing him a relevant text of the Bible), in a way suited to his education and understanding, that his opinion conflicts with Catholic truth, and he still holds to his opinion, then he is pertinacious and a heretic. The “bare admonition of a prelate”, i.e. the bare say-so of some person in authority, without an explanation suited to the person’s capacity, does not oblige a person to abandon an heretical opinion, because faith does not rest on human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4-5). A person not legitimately corrected may defend what is in fact a heresy a thousand times even in the face of the pope himself without being pertinacious or a heretic. A prelate or anyone else legitimately corrected, even by someone without jurisdiction, must retract his heresy. With respect to being bound to put aside a heresy it does not matter who shows that the opinion is a heresy. There are external indications of pertinacity relating to attempts to impose heretical doctrines on others. A person can be regarded as a heretic, without further examination, if he tries to force others by commands, threats, punishments, promises, oaths, or in any other way, to defend a heresy pertinaciously, or forces someone to deny Catholic truth, or swears that he will always assert as Catholic an assertion which in fact is heretical, or persecutes defenders of Catholic truth, or errs against Catholic truth and refuses to submit to correction and amendment by those whose concern it is (e.g. a pope who teaches some heresy and prevents the holding of a Council), or refuses to be instructed although the learned censure his statement as heretical, or shows by deeds or words that he will not retract an assertion which is heretical, or prevents reading of Catholic writings or preaching or publication of Catholic truths, or fabricates and defends new errors in defence of heresy, or, conducting himself as pope, solemnly defines an error against the faith, or supports one conducting himself as pope in defining a heresy. The pope and other Church authorities must not try to impose false beliefs on Catholics. If they do try to impose any belief that is not Catholic truth, they are heretics and automatically lose office. (See also Kilcullen, “The medieval concept of heresy”, \*, and “Analysis of the Argument: Dial. 1-5”, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/1d1-5Analysis.html>.)



## Book 5

### Chapter 1

**Student:** Because it seems to me that those who do not resist heretical wickedness when they can should be called favourers of heretics rather than heretics, I do not want to ask more about them here; but when I question you later about favourers, harbourers and defenders of heretics I will take care to find out more about them too. But having inquired about how someone can be convicted of being a heretic, I now propose to investigate who can be defiled by heretical wickedness. And because all Christians seem to suppose that the **whole multitude of Christians** cannot become heretics, with some supposing that a **general council** cannot, some on the other hand supposing that the **Roman church** cannot, some supposing that the college of **cardinals** cannot, and some indeed supposing that also the **pope** cannot be soiled with heretical wickedness, I want you therefore to reveal to me what Christians think about those five. But would you tell me first whether everyone thinks that a pope who enters [office] canonically cannot become a heretic.

#### Can a pope become a heretic?

**Master:** There are opposing opinions about this. Some say that a pope who enters [office] canonically can err against Catholic truth and cling pertinaciously to heretical wickedness, but others say that a pope who enters [office] canonically cannot err against the faith.

**Student:** Do not put off explaining how those who maintain the former opinion support themselves.

#### That a pope *can* become a heretic

**Master:** They try to uphold that assertion by citing authorities and examples and also by reasoning. They try to show it first by the following text of blessed Paul. For we read in Hebrews 5[:1-2]. “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins, who can have compassion on those who are ignorant and err, because he himself is compassed with infirmity.” We gather from these words that just as every priest taken from among men, and the highest pontiff is also such a one, can have compassion on the ignorant and on those who err, so they are known to be compassed with infirmity, that is with the capacity for ignorance and error.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 10[:12] the Apostle gives a general warning to everyone not confirmed in grace when he says, “Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall.” We are given to understand by these words that every person not confirmed in grace can fall into sin and consequently can err against the faith. Just like others, therefore, the pope can err against the faith.

Again, in Galatians 6[:1], when the Apostle is teaching the whole body of prelates how they ought to instruct their subjects he says, “If a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” We are given to understand by this that a prelate can be tempted by the same fault by which his subject has been overtaken and can commit the same fault. Since therefore the pope was not excepted from that warning of the Apostle, and his subjects can err against the faith, the highest pontiff too should consider lest he be tempted by an error against faith and fall into heretical wickedness.

Again, they prove this by a text of Boniface the martyr found in dist. 40, c. *Si papa* [c.6]. Speaking about the pope he says, “No mortal presumes to convict him of faults; he who is going to judge everyone else should be judged by no one, unless he is discovered deviating from the faith.” We gather evidently from these words that the pope can deviate from Catholic faith and fall into heretical wickedness. The gloss on that text clearly affirms this when it says about the phrase “from the faith”: “Huguccio understands this to mean, when the pope refuses to be corrected. For if he were prepared to be corrected he could not be accused... Mention is made here especially of heresy because even if the heresy were secret he could still be accused of it.” And he goes on to ask, “Would the pope be able to decree that he could not be accused of heresy?” In reply he says, “I answer no, because the whole Church would be endangered by that.” We clearly learn from these words that the pope can be accused of heresy, and consequently he can be ensnared by heretical wickedness.

Again, they try to prove the same assertion by a text of Pope Urban (25, q. 1, c. *Sunt quidam* [c.6]): “It should be known very well that the reason why in some cases he can establish new laws is that in those cases the evangelists have not said anything. But when the Lord or his apostles or the holy fathers who followed them clearly have in substance defined something, the Roman pontiff should not give a new law but rather should confirm what has been proclaimed even with his life and blood. For if he were to strive — may it not happen! — to destroy what the apostles and prophets have taught, he would be convicted not of giving judgment but rather of making an error.” This implies that although

the Roman pontiff should not err against [the teaching of] the apostles and prophets, nevertheless he can do so, and so he can be corrupted by heretical wickedness.

This is asserted and affirmed both in substance and verbally by many glosses on the decretals. For the gloss on 24, q. 1, c. 1 says [s.v. *heresim*], “This is a case”, that is when someone falls into an already condemned heresy, “in which a pope can bind a pope, in which the pope falls under the canon of sentence passed. The rule that an equal cannot release or bind an equal is not an objection, because from the very fact that the pope is a heretic he is less than any Catholic whatsoever.”

Again, the gloss on 24, q. 1, c. *A recta* [c.9, s.v. *novitatibus*], “I ask of which church you understand it to be said that it cannot err; not of the pope himself who is called the church (the same place c. *Quodcumque* and 4, q. 1, c. *Scire debes*), because it is certain that the pope can err, as in dist. 19, c. *Anastasius* and dist. 40, c. *Si papa*.”

Again, the gloss on 25, q. 1, c. *Que ad perpetuam* says [c.3 s.v. *nulla commutatione*]: “The pope cannot dispense against a general statute of the Church nor against the articles of faith. For even if everyone were to agree to it, it could not be decreed, but all would be heretics, as in dist. 15, c. *Sicut sancti*.”

## Chapter 2

**Student:** Let those authorities suffice for the said assertion. Would you therefore bring forward some examples?

**Master:** That a pope who enters [office] canonically can err against Catholic truth is shown by many examples. The first example concerns blessed Peter, the chief of the apostles, whom divine providence permitted to err after he was raised to the papacy, for this reason, so it seems, namely so that his successors (far inferior to him in faith, constancy and holiness) would not think that they are unable to fall into error. For blessed Paul clearly asserts that blessed Peter erred against the truth of the gospel when he says in Galatians 2[:11]. “But when Cephas was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” And that he was to be blamed because he erred against gospel truth he shows when he adds [Gal. 2:14], “But when I saw that he walked not uprightly unto the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as the Jews do, how dost thou compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?’” We are given to understand by these words that blessed Peter deviated from the truth of the gospel. That he did

turn away from the faith we find in the decretals at 2, q. 7, § *Ecce*, where Gratian argues, from the example of Paul rebuking Peter, that subjects can rebuke their prelates. He answers this argument by saying that this is permitted when prelates turn away from the faith as Peter turned away. Thus he says the following at that place, “Paul rebuked Peter, who was the chief of the apostles. We are given to understand by this that subjects can rebuke prelates if they have been blamable.” And he answers this argument by saying, “But this is easily rebutted if we attend to why he was rebuked. Peter was forcing the Gentiles to live as do the Jews and to fall back from the truth of the gospel, making a party with the Jews and secretly avoiding Gentile foods. But it is the same whether one turns aside from the faith oneself or one drives others away from the faith by example or words. This example does not prove, therefore, that prelates should be accused by their subjects unless they happen to have turned away from the faith or to have forced others to turn away.” It is clear from these words that blessed Peter fell into error by not walking rightly according to the truth of the gospel.

**Student:** Do modern doctors maintain that blessed Peter erred against the faith?

**Master:** Thomas Aquinas plainly maintains this. For he says (2, 2, q. 33, article 4): “To resist someone to their face in front of everyone exceeds the proper measure of fraternal correction. And therefore Paul would not have rebuked Peter in this way unless he were in some way his equal in respect to the defence of the faith.... But it should be known that when danger threatens the faith, prelates should be reproved by their subjects even publicly. For this reason, that there was imminent danger of a scandal, Paul, who was subject to Peter, publicly reproved him on a matter of faith.”

**Student:** I marvel how they presume to number blessed Peter among the heretics.

**Master:** You are mistaken, attributing to them a falsity that they do not say. They do not think that blessed Peter was a heretic, even though he erred, because he did not cling to his error pertinaciously. For at blessed Paul’s correction he immediately set himself right and willingly listened to his rebuke; nor did he in any way interfere with blessed Paul’s preaching of the truth.

**Student:** As I see it then, according to them if blessed Peter had clung pertinaciously to his error he should have been counted among the heretics. So would you turn to other examples.

**Master:** The second example concerns blessed Pope Marcellinus, who erred against the faith by worshipping idols. Pope Nicholas says about him (dist. 21, c. *Nunc autem* [c.7]), “In the time of the emperors Diocletian and Maximianus, Marcellinus, bishop of the city of Rome, who later became a noteworthy martyr, was put under such compulsion by pagans that he entered their temple and put grains of incense on the coals.” And in his *Legend* we read as follows, “Marcellinus was led to a place of sacrifice to burn incense, and he did so.” And we also find this in the *Chronicles*, “Being compelled by Diocletian he put in place incense for idols.... ‘I judge’, he said, ‘that I should be deposed for the crime of idolatry, and I anathematise, too, whoever hands my body over for burial’, and weeping he said, ‘Alas, how bitter I am that I cannot remain in the priesthood.’” We gather from this that blessed Pope Marcellinus erred against the faith by committing the crime of idolatry.

**Student:** That does not prove that blessed Marcellinus erred against the faith in his mind, but only that when forced he committed an act of idolatry.

**Master:** It is true that blessed Marcellinus did not err in his mind by clinging to heretical wickedness, but from the fact that he denied Christ in refusing to confess that he was a Christian, we infer that he could have erred in his mind and could have become a heretic just as he became an idolater.

**Student:** Give other examples.

**Master:** A third example given concerns Pope Liberius, who, as we clearly read in the chronicles, agreed with the perfidy of Arianism.

**Student:** We do not read that Liberius agreed with the Arians when he was a true pope, but only after he renounced the papacy.

**Master:** They say that no pope while remaining pope can err pertinaciously against the faith, because from the fact that he erred pertinaciously against the faith he would be deprived of the papacy *de iure* even if *de facto* he conducted himself as pope; and they do not mean, therefore, that a pope can become a heretic while he remains pope, but that he can be a true pope at first and later become a heretic. This happened to Liberius who was first a true pope and later became a heretic. It is inessential that he meanwhile renounced the papacy, for he could have become a heretic even if he had never renounced the papacy.

**Student:** Are there more examples?

**Master:** A fourth example is cited concerning Anastasius II, who was repudiated by the Roman church because of heretical wickedness. We read as

follows about him in the decretals (dist. 19, [c.9]): “Anastasius II, a Roman by birth, lived in the time of King Theodoric. At that time many clerics renounced communion with him because, without seeking advice from bishops or presbyters and clergy of the whole Catholic Church, he had had dealings with a deacon of the church at Thessalonica, named Fotinus, who had associated with Acacius; and because he secretly wanted to recall Acacius (and could not do so) he was struck down by God’s command”, because, as the gloss says [s.v. *divino*] (it is taken from the chronicles), “While he was at stool his intestines burst out.” It is clear from this that Anastasius was defiled with heretical wickedness, on account of which Catholic clerics laudably renounced communion with him.

**Student:** We do not learn from this that Anastasius was a heretic but that he had dealings with a heretic, that is with Fotinus. But many people have dealings with heretics who should not be considered heretics.

**Master:** He shared pertinaciously with heretics in a crime. So the gloss says that “this man participated in wrong-doing”, that is in heresy, and was a heretic for the reason that he knowingly participated in a heresy condemned by the Church. This is clear from the fact that he wanted to recall Acacius, whom he knew to be condemned by the Church for a heresy already condemned, and so Anastasius himself had knowingly agreed with an assertion that he knew was condemned; therefore he was to be regarded as a heretic.

**Student:** It is clear enough from the chronicles and the glosses on the decretals that Anastasius was a heretic, and so would you cite another example.

**Master:** The fifth example is brought forward not to prove that a pope has in fact fallen into error, but to show that the pope can become a heretic and be accused of heretical wickedness. For, as we read in the decretals at 2, q. 7, § *Item cum Balaam*, the Roman synod decreed that Pope Symachus should reply to the reproaches of his accusers. So at that place we find the following: “Having been deprived of [the regalia] of his dignity in the Roman synod, Pope Symachus is ordered to be returned to his former state that he might come to defend himself and, if it seemed properly done in this way, to reply to the representations of his accusers. The matter seemed worthy of the greatest number of priests and was deserving of this process; when it was later being arranged how he should be called to account, the pope came forward to plead his case, but was impeded by his enemies.” We gather from these words that Pope Symachus was accused, and, in the judgment of the synod, was able to be accused. The gloss on dist. 17, § *Hinc etiam* explains on what charge he was arraigned, when it says that Pope Symachus “was first accused of heresy, but



when the false accusation of his accuser became clear he was later absolved.” It is clear from this, therefore, that the synod reckoned that Pope Symachus was able to be accused of heresy; and consequently a pope can become a heretic.

A sixth example is brought forth concerning Leo, whom blessed Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, convicted of error. There are opinions about him, nevertheless, with some people saying that he was never a true pope but only a usurper of the papacy, and others saying that he was a true pope before he slipped into heresy.

A seventh example cited to prove that a pope can become a heretic concerns Sylvester II of whom we read that he did homage to the devil and also consulted him while pope; they affirm from this that he could become a heretic, because anyone who invokes or worships demons and keeps pestilential company with them can incur heretical wickedness.

The eighth example concerns several highest pontiffs maintaining opposed assertions about matters concerning faith, that is John XXII on the one hand, and on the other hand Nicholas III and very many others who defined an agreed opinion on the poverty of Christ and his apostles or approved one defined by others, an opinion that John XXII clearly rejects [cf. p.186.36]. We infer from this that because one of them erred in the faith, either John XXII or Nicholas III should be regarded as a heretic. For whichever of them erred, by defining his error solemnly and constraining others to hold it, he adhered to his error pertinaciously; therefore one or other should be adjudged a heretic.

Again, they cite the example of Innocent III and the same John XXII, one or other of whom erred in the faith. For as we read in *Extra, De celebracione missarum, c. Cum Marthe* [X 3.41.6], Innocent III states and asserts clearly that the saints in heaven are perfectly blessed, that everything prospers for them according to their wishes, and that consequently they see God. Again, in his book *De contemptu mundi*, Innocent teaches as doctrine that the souls of the condemned are now in hell where they are being severely punished, but John XXII teaches and preaches that the souls of the saints do not see God and that the souls of the condemned are not in hell and will not be punished before the day of general judgment. Since contradictory propositions cannot be true at the same time, it is therefore certain that one of them has erred, and so it is quite clear that a pope can err.

Next the example of John XXII and blessed Gregory is cited. For as is clear from his book *Dialogues* blessed Gregory believed that the souls of the saints in

heaven see God and that the souls of the condemned are being punished in hell. John XXII denies both these [statements]. Therefore one of them has erred.

Then they give the example of John XXII and many other highest pontiffs who contradicted him about the contingency of events. For John XXII teaches as dogma and preaches that everything happens of necessity: because everything has been preordained by God; but God's ordinance cannot be prevented. Whence and for this reason he expressly maintains in his constitution *Quia vir reprobus* that Christ, as a man, could not have renounced a temporal kingdom and universal lordship of things, because he would have acted against the Father's ordinance. For this reason too he rejects and opposes the theologians' distinction between God's absolute and ordinate power. For the same reason he also says that God has necessarily, and not contingently, predestined the elect to eternal life. And so he plainly maintains that everything happens of necessity.

Yet many highest pontiffs contradict him. For as we find in dist. 86, c. *Facientis* [c.3], Pope John VIII says, "Whoever neglects to put right something he can correct undoubtedly has the fault of a perpetrator." We clearly gather from these words that sometimes someone does not correct those whom he should correct; and so he can correct, and he can not correct; therefore not everything happens of necessity.

Again, as we find in dist. 83, c. *Consentire* [c.5], Pope Gregory says, "He who does not attend to the curtailing of those things which should be corrected seems to be in agreement with the one who errs." We are given to understand by these words that it is possible for someone not to correct what nevertheless he ought [to correct]; and consequently he can correct, and he can not correct.

Again, as we find in *Extra, De hereticis*, c. *Qui alios* [X 5.7.2], Pope Leo says, "He who does not call others back from error when he can do so", etc.

Again, as we find in 2, q. 7, c. *Negligere* [c.55], Pope Eleutherius says, "To neglect to disturb the wicked when you can do so is indeed nothing other than to favour them."

Again, as we find in *Extra, De sententia excommunicationis*, c. *Quante* [X 5.39.47], Pope Innocent III says, "Catholic authority condemns those who act and those who agree with them to be punished with the same penalty, inferring that those who fail to oppose manifest villainy when they can do so are favouring the delinquents."

Again, as we find in dist. 83, c. *Error* [c.3], Pope Innocent uses the same words as Eleutherius, saying, "To neglect to disturb the wicked when you can", etc.

Again, as we find in the same distinction § 1, Pope Symachus says, “For he is proved to inflict death on the weak who does not prevent this when he can.”

See that seven highest pontiffs clearly affirm in substance and in words that someone can do something that he does not do. Many other popes in their writings assert this in substance; and consequently, according to them, not everything happens of necessity, as John XXII affirms. Therefore, either he has erred or they have erred, and it is certain that this [question] touches on faith. Therefore some highest pontiff has erred against the faith.

### Chapter 3

**Student:** Matters that touch the most holy father lord Pope John XXII I want to postpone until the treatise on his dogmatic teachings. So would you now bring into the middle some arguments for the above assertion.

**Master:** The above assertors try to prove by many arguments based on authoritative writings that a pope entering [the papal office] canonically can afterwards, before any voluntary renunciation [of the office], not only err but also be stained by heretical wickedness. Their first argument is as follows. Any pure wayfarer [*viator*] who has the use of reason but has not been confirmed in grace can err against the faith and adhere pertinaciously to that error, because such a one can, if he wishes, disagree with any truth that is not self-evident nor learnt by sure experience nor proved to him demonstratively and can opine its opposite, because according to blessed Augustine no one can believe unless he is willing. But the pope is a pure wayfarer and not a *comprehensor*,<sup>96</sup> for if he were a *comprehensor* he would not be able to err. A pope is also someone who has the use of reason (generally speaking: for if he were to lose the use of reason through sickness, old age, or some other reason he would from then on, while he lacked the use of reason, not be able to become a heretic, just as children, those who are insane or even those merely sleeping cannot become heretics as long as that state lasts). Moreover the pope has not been confirmed in grace, since he can sin and be damned. Therefore such a pope can, if he wants to, disagree with a truth that is not self-evident nor learnt by sure experience nor proved to him demonstratively. But there are many Catholic truths which are not self-evident, have not been learnt by sure experience and have not been proved demonstratively to the pope, since blessed Gregory says that “faith for which human reason offers proof does not have merit”. If he wishes, therefore, a pope

---

96. For the contrast viator/comprehensor see Thomas Aquinas, ST, 3 q15 a10. A *comprehensor* is one who has intuitive vision of God, a *viator* is someone living in this life.

can disagree with truths of this kind, and consequently he can be entangled in heretical wickedness.

A second argument is this. Someone appointed to an office through which grace and virtues are neither necessarily conferred nor necessarily increased can fall into heretical wickedness, if he could have been stained with heretical wickedness before he obtained the office. This is well known, because without grace or virtue no wayfarer who could previously have incurred some heretical wickedness can be preserved from that wickedness (unless he loses the use of reason). But in the reception of the papal office grace and virtues are not necessarily conferred, nor also are they necessarily increased then. Therefore, since the pope was able to be involved in heretical wickedness before obtaining the office of pope, it follows that also after obtaining that office he can be polluted by the same stain (if he does not lose the use of reason).

The major premise is manifest; the minor is proved by authorities and by reason. By reason, indeed, because someone who obtains the papal office can be in mortal sin; but grace and virtues are not conferred on anyone who is in mortal sin, nor are they increased in such a one while the mortal sin persists. It can happen, therefore, that virtues and grace will neither be increased in someone raised to the papacy nor will be conferred on him then.

This also seems to be clearly provable from many writings of the saints. For blessed Gregory says (dist. 40, c. *Non loca* [c.4]): “It is not our place or our orders that bring us close to our creator, but it is our good deserts that join us to him or our bad ones that separate us from him.” By these words we are given to understand that without good deserts no ecclesiastical dignity brings closer to God those raised to that office or dignity. From this we clearly conclude that in the reception of the papal office grace and virtues are not necessarily conferred nor necessarily increased, since without good deserts — in fact with bad deserts — it is possible for someone ambitious, greedy or involved in some other wrong to be appointed to the office of the papacy. Thus also, as we find in c. *Nos* of the same distinction [c.3], Gregory says, “We who are in charge should be known not for the dignity of our place or our family but for the nobility of our way of life, not for the fame of our cities but for the purity of our faith.” And in c. *Illud* of the same distinction [c.9], blessed Ambrose says, “So that you might notice that anyone acquires grace for themselves not by the nobility of their place or of their family but by their virtue, take note of the fact that man was made outside paradise but woman within.” And as we find in the same distinction c. *Non est facile* [D.40 c.2], blessed Jerome says, “It is not easy to stand in the place of

Peter and Paul, that is to hold the see of those reigning with Christ; for this reason it is said that the children of the saints are not those who hold those places [founded by] the saints but those who do works like theirs.” And as we read in c. *Multi* of the same distinction John Chrysostom says [c.12], “It is not the see that makes the priest but the priest the see, not the place that sanctifies the man but the man that sanctifies the place.” As the last chapter of the same distinction records, the same man also says, “It is not the one greater in honour who is more just, but it is the one who is more just who is greater.” It is quite clear from these [texts] that grace and virtues neither are necessarily conferred on the obtaining of an ecclesiastical dignity nor are they necessarily increased.

This also seems provable through divine Scripture because, as we find in 2 Machabees 5[:19], “The Lord did not choose the people on account of the place, but the place on account of the people.” We conclude from this that the Lord does not approve of a prelate on account of his dignity but approves of a dignity on account of the merits of its prelates. And so in the obtaining of a dignity it is not necessary for grace and virtues to be infused or increased .

**Student:** It seems to follow from that argument that in the obtaining of orders grace is neither conferred nor increased..

**Master:** It does not follow from that argument that grace is neither conferred nor increased when orders are conferred, but it does follow that, just as it can happen in the conferring of baptism and other sacraments that grace is not conferred or increased, because of the indisposition of the one to be baptised (if he persists in mortal sin, for instance), so this can happen in the obtaining of orders and any ecclesiastical dignity whatever.

**Student:** Would you bring forward other arguments?

**Master:** A third argument is this. Whoever has not been confirmed in faith and has the use of reason can err against the faith. But the pope has not been confirmed in faith. Because if he were confirmed in faith that would be by some supernatural gift; but no supernatural gift by which he is confirmed in the faith appears to have been conferred on the pope. For among all the supernatural gifts normally conferred on pure wayfarers, those which particularly and especially make the recipient strong in faith are grace and the theological virtues (namely, faith, hope and charity) and the gifts of the holy spirit. But a pure wayfarer is not confirmed in faith by these, since they are often found to be more perfect and greater in others, who nevertheless are not confirmed in faith by them, than in the pope; therefore the pope is not confirmed in faith by them. And thus no

conferred supernatural gift confirms him in faith; therefore he can err against the faith.

**Student:** That argument is not conclusive, because it would be proved by it that a general council, indeed the whole congregation of the faithful, could err against the faith. Because no supernatural gift appears to have been conferred on a general council or on the congregation of the faithful by which it is confirmed in faith, since grace and virtues and the gifts of the holy spirit do not confirm wayfarers in the faith; yet among all the supernatural gifts conferred on a general council and the congregation of the faithful it is known that these are the chief.

**Master:** The aforesaid assertors grant that this argument, taken barely like this, is not conclusive, because it is possible for God to preserve from error and heresy not only the congregation of the faithful but also the pope and any other wayfarer without a supernatural gift informing their soul; through God the congregation of the faithful will remain immune from every heresy until the end of the world. But this should not be affirmed of a person or college unless God has revealed that he or it will never err against the faith. But God has revealed this about the congregation of the faithful, and not about the pope. It is therefore rash to say that a pope entering [office] canonically will never err against the faith.

**Student:** Bring forward other arguments.

**Master:** Their fourth argument is this. Ecclesiastical sacraments are not of less efficacy and power with respect to an act of faith than is any ecclesiastical dignity; but by the receiving of baptism, which is called “the sacrament of faith” (*Extra, De baptismo et eius effectu* [X 3.42.4]), no one is confirmed in faith so that he cannot afterwards err against the faith; therefore no one is confirmed in the faith by obtaining any ecclesiastical dignity, even the papacy.

A fifth argument is this. Faith and grace are not less inconsistent with error than any ecclesiastical dignity; a person is not more confirmed against error and heresy by an ecclesiastical dignity, therefore, than by faith and grace; but no pure wayfarer is confirmed in faith by faith and grace in such a way that afterwards he cannot err and be corrupted by heretical wickedness. No one is confirmed in faith, therefore, by an ecclesiastical dignity, even by the papacy; in such a way that afterwards he cannot be stained by heretical wickedness.

A sixth argument is this. Both a justly deposed pope and a pope who had renounced the papacy of his own free will can err against the faith; therefore a

pope can also err against the faith before his deposition and voluntary renunciation. The antecedent is clear; because if a deposed pope and one who has renounced the papacy could not err against the faith, it would follow that, besides the pope, some pure wayfarer entangled in many sins would not be able to err against the faith. The consequence is proved, because a wayfarer does not acquire the power of erring against the faith by a meritorious act; but both the deposition of a pope and [a pope's] voluntary renunciation can be meritorious. For if a pope who deserves to be deposed accepts his deposition or patiently endures it for God's sake, he acquires merit. So if from love of God John XII had endured it patiently when he was deposed from the papacy, he would have acquired merit with God. It is probable too that both Pope Syriachus, who renounced the papacy and went with the 11,000 virgins,<sup>97</sup> and Celestine V, who renounced the papacy, acquired merit before God. So the power of erring against the faith is not acquired by such a deposition nor by renunciation, and so a pope has the power to err against the faith before his deposition or renunciation just as he does after it.

**Student:** That argument seems to assume a false assertion, namely that a pope can err against the faith before he is deposed. For according to law it seems that as soon as a pope errs against the faith he is deposed.

**Master:** Some people reply to this objection by saying that there are two kinds of deposition, namely by man and by law. A pope can err against the faith and incur heretical wickedness before being deposed by man, and the above argument is effective about that deposition, because the pope first becomes a heretic and later, having changed and become satisfactory to God, he could be deposed by man and could accept that deposition meritoriously. Before deposition by law, however, a pope can err against the faith out of simplicity or ignorance without being added to the number of heretics, because even if he has out of ignorance or simplicity deviated from the faith, yet if he is prepared to be corrected he is not deprived of the papacy. But if he clings pertinaciously to his error against the faith, he is by that very fact deposed from the papacy and is *de iure* stripped of all authority, not by man but by law.

**Student:** Add other arguments.

**Master:** Their seventh argument is this. No one is confirmed in faith by a dignity which is received unworthily, illegitimately and wrongly; but it is

---

97. See Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, p.1208. According to the legend, Pope Syriachus (otherwise unknown to history) resigned the papacy and went with St Ursula and her 11,000 handmaids to Cologne, where they were martyred.

possible for someone unworthy to ascend illicitly and wrongly to the papacy, namely out of ambition, by simony or in many other wicked and wrong ways; such a person, therefore, is not confirmed in faith by the papacy.

Their eighth argument is this. A condition through which the one assuming it is confirmed in faith, and in which no one can err, should not be shunned by perfect men, but should be sought with all their desire. For such a state either is completely safe from any spiritual danger, or is less dangerous than a state in which no one is confirmed in faith, since on account of a defect of faith a person is both more imperfect and more inclined to sin. But the papacy should not be sought but should be shunned, and it is not less dangerous than other states in which it is possible to err against the faith; it is for this reason that blessed Clement refused to become pope. Therefore no one is confirmed in faith by the papacy.

A ninth argument is this. A person who cannot err against faith does not need the expertise of others living in this mortal life in order to define and determine doubts that emerge about faith, just as a person not able to err in geometry or some other discipline would not need the advice of others in order to settle doubts in that discipline. In the same way too, because the congregation of the faithful cannot err against faith, it does not need the wisdom of non-Christians to determine what is in harmony with Catholic truth. But the pope does need the expertise of others in order to make clear and determine the many doubts that emerge about Catholic faith. For otherwise general councils would have been assembled in vain to make doubts clear and to eradicate heresies. It would also be vain to consult experts on the sacred page. Therefore, the pope can err against faith.

Their tenth argument is this. Every pure wayfarer who can commit an actual mortal sin against the law of God can incur heretical wickedness, because such a person can be culpably blinded, since the malice of sinners blinds them, as we find in Wisdom 2[:21]. For it is written about the ungodly there, "For their own malice blinded them." And so they could be led into such great blindness that they deny Catholic truth. But the pope can commit an actual mortal sin, according to the clear testimony of the martyr Boniface, as we read in dist. 40, c. *Si papa* [c.6], and Pope Symachus, as we find in 9, q. 3, c. *Aliorum* [c.14]. The Catholic Church manifestly implies this too, since it does not cease pouring out prayers to God for the pope's spiritual salvation. Therefore the pope can incur heretical wickedness.



Their eleventh argument is this. Those who are to be preferred to the pope in the exposition of the Scriptures can err against the faith; therefore much more can the pope err against the faith. The consequence is obvious because it holds through the argument from the lesser,<sup>98</sup> also because someone who cannot err against the faith should be preferred in exposition of the divine Scriptures to someone who can err, and also because, just as a liar should not be preferred to a truth teller, so someone who can lie about matters of faith should by no means be preferred to someone who cannot lie. But the antecedent is plainly proved. For, as was argued above [p.138.3], according to what we find in dist. 20, § 1 of the decretals, commentators on the divine Scriptures should be preferred to highest pontiffs in the exposition of Scripture. These commentators, however, can err against faith, according to what was proved before [p.38.17] about blessed Cyprian, Augustine and Jerome. Origen, also, not the least of the commentators on divine Scripture, erred clearly and fell into heretical wickedness. Therefore much more can highest pontiffs, who are often unlearned, wicked and ignorant of the divine Scriptures, fall into heretical wickedness.

Their twelfth argument is this. Whoever can be accused of heresy and condemned for heresy can err against Catholic faith and be stained with heretical wickedness. This is self-evident, because if the crime is one that the person cannot commit, there is no accusation. However, a pope can be accused of heresy and condemned for heresy, as is clearly proved above [p.172.15]. Therefore, a pope can become a heretic.

Their thirteenth argument is this. Whoever can commit a heretical act can become a heretic. That a pope can commit a heretical act, however, is clear from the examples of blessed Marcellinus and of Sylvester II. Therefore, a pope can become a heretic.

Their fourteenth argument is this. It is not licit to assert about any person that he cannot err against faith unless this can be shown by sacred Scripture, by teaching of the Church or the saints, or by argument based on that teaching. But it cannot be shown in any of those ways that a pope cannot err against faith. For if it could be shown it would be proved most of all by those texts of the Saviour, “I am with you always to the end of the age” (end of Matthew [28:20]) and “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once

98. Cf. OND 121.115ff: “Si illud, quod minus videtur inesse, inest, et illud quod magis”: “if what seems *less* likely to be true of something is true, also what [seems] *more* [likely to be true is true]”. Cf. Aristotle, Rhetoric II.23, 1397b16-18. Cf. “a fortiori...”.

converted, confirm thy brethren” ([Luke 22:31-2]). But it cannot be shown by those texts that the pope cannot err against the faith.

Not by the first, because that text cannot be understood of the pope, since when [the Roman] see is vacant there is no pope, and so Christ did not say about the pope, but about the Church militant, “I am with you always to the end of the age.” Again Christ did not mean that he would remain with the Church militant to the end of the age only through faith, but also through love and a good life. It is certain, however, that Christ is often not with the pope in love and a good life, since the pope is often a wicked man without love. The above words, therefore, should not be understood of the pope.

Nor should the second text be understood of the pope, as though Christ prayed that the pope’s faith should not fail. First, because the Apostolic See is often vacant, and yet the faith for which Christ prayed does not then fail; also because a pope can renounce the papacy or be deposed and afterwards err against faith, and yet at no time will the faith for which Christ prayed fail. Therefore Christ said the aforesaid words to blessed Peter in reference to Peter himself; because in the end Peter’s faith did not fail (though it did fail for a time, which is why Christ said to him, “And thou, being once converted”, that is, after your faith has failed and you have turned back to the faith, “confirm thy brethren”). Christ also said those words, that is, “But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not”, to Peter representing the congregation of the faithful, because Peter’s faith did endure and will endure without interruption in the congregation of the faithful to the end of the age. For the faith that blessed Peter held, preached and taught will not fail, but will persist in some Christians, cleric or lay, men or women, to the end of the age.

Their fifteenth argument is this. Whoever can be a supporter and defender of heretics and heresy can be stained with heretical wickedness. Indeed, such a person should be considered a heresiarch, according to the testimony of Pope Urban, who says (24, q. 3, c. *Qui aliorum* [c.32]), “Whoever defends an error of others is more culpable than those who err, because not only does he err himself, but he also prepares and confirms stumbling blocks of error for others. So, because he is a teacher of error, he should be called not only a heretic but also a heresiarch.” But a pope can be a supporter and defender of heretics and heretical wickedness, as is proved by two examples. The first concerns Anastasius II who was a supporter of the heretics Fotinus and Acacius, as we find in dist. 19, c. *Anastasius* [c.9]. Some people give as a second example John XXII, who was at one time a supporter and defender of Nicholas III and his

decretal *Exiit qui seminat* and also of Clement V and his decretal *Exivi de paradiso*; and yet, so some people say and write, those decretals *Exiit* and *Exivi* clearly contain many errors about the poverty of Christ and his apostles and also about a vow to renounce ownership of all temporal goods individually and also in common.

**Student:** They are proceeding maliciously towards the most holy father Pope John XXII, for they are trying to conclude that he was, or is now, a heretic.

**Master:** I want you to know that some people think it is not shown maliciously, but truly and irrefutably, that John XXII either was or is now a heretic. For they affirm that it cannot by any evasion be denied that his teaching about the poverty of Christ and his apostles, about the renunciation of ownership of all temporal goods, both individually and also in common, and about gospel poverty is opposed to the teaching of Nicholas III and other highest pontiffs. Since all the above issues pertain to faith or to good morals it is therefore necessary that one or the other of those contrary teachings is contained under heretical wickedness. Either the teaching of John XXII is heretical, therefore, or the teaching of Nicholas III and the other highest pontiffs who agree with him on the above issues is heretical. If John XXII's teaching is heretical, since he solemnly declared that it must be held, it follows that he himself should be considered pertinacious and a heretic. If, however, the teaching of Nicholas III and the other highest pontiffs is heretical, then when John XXII solemnly approved and in many ways commended it in his decretal beginning *Quorundam exigit* he was to be regarded as a heretic, because he was a defender and supporter of heretical wickedness.

Now from the above some people fashion a sixteenth argument as follows. A pope who contradicts himself about matters of faith can err against faith. However, a pope can contradict himself about matters of faith. They prove this by the example of John XXII, who is found to have contradicted himself, since he first approved Nicholas III's teaching about the poverty of Christ and his apostles and about the renunciation of the ownership of all temporal goods, both individually and also in common, and later contradicted it.

#### Chapter 4

**Student:** Although I do not think that the arguments that seem to impugn the most holy father our lord pope are conclusive, though they are difficult to refute (I will think carefully about their refutation), yet some others do seem powerful. So it does indeed seem probable to me that it is not impossible for a pope who

enters [office] canonically later to become a heretic. Now because truth that has been criticised shines more brightly in the light,<sup>99</sup> I beg you to try to argue the opposite case.

### **That a pope cannot become a heretic**

**Master:** There are many arguments for the opposite assertion, which, as is said, John XXII and also, it is reported, brother G[erald] maintain. First as follows. In a community there can be no sure judgment without vacillation about doubts which arise if everyone in the community can err about these doubts and their foundations. But in the Church militant there is sure judgment without vacillation about doubts that arise concerning the faith. For otherwise it would not be necessary to adhere firmly to any determination, definition or declaration of the Church militant about matters of faith, because whoever can err should not be believed with undoubted faith. Therefore not everyone in the Church militant can err. Therefore there is someone in the Church militant who cannot err; and this is no one but the pope. Therefore a pope cannot err about matters of faith.

Second it is argued as follows. The person to whom all questions of faith should be brought and by whom all questions of faith should be defined cannot err against faith or incur heretical wickedness, because if someone erred against faith he could not rightly make a definition about matters of faith. But all questions of faith should be brought to the highest pontiff and defined by him (24, q. 1, c. *Quotiens* [c.12], *Extra, De baptismo et eius effectu, c. Maiores* [X 3.42.3]). Therefore a pope cannot err against faith.

Third as follows. Someone whose writings are counted among the canonical writings cannot err against faith, because whoever can err against faith can be rejected by believers; but if an author is rejected his writings are also rejected (*Extra, De hereticis, c. Cum Celestinus* [X 5.7.4]); but writings that can be rejected should not be numbered among the canonical writings; therefore someone whose writings should be considered canonical cannot err against faith. But the writings and decretals of a pope are counted among the canonical Scriptures, as Augustine attests. In book 2 of his *De doctrina Christiana*, found in dist. 19, c. *In canonicis* [c.6], he says: "In regard to canonical scriptures [i.e. in deciding which writings are canonical], the most expert investigator of divine Scriptures should follow the authority of the greater number of Catholic

---

99. Cf. C.35 q.9 c.7, Grave, CIC vol.1 col. 2455. Ockham often invokes this saying: OND Prol.10; 1 Dial. 5.4.6-7; Brev. 1.5.14, 2.13.45; 3.2 Dial. Prol.52-3. See Jürgen Miethke, "Der 'Dialogus' Ockhams als Fiktion eines Lehrgesprächs zwischen Lehrer und Schüler", p.719 n.46.\*overlaps N3\*

churches, among which of course are those that have merited to have the Apostolic See and others [that have merited] to receive letters from it [i.e. from the Apostolic See].”<sup>100</sup> Pope Agatho agrees with this too. As we find in the same dist. c. *Sic omnes* [c.2], he says, “All the laws of the Apostolic See should be accepted as being confirmed by the divine voice of Peter himself.” Therefore the pope, whose writings are so authentic, cannot err against faith.

Fourth as follows. The highest pontiff under the new law should not be thought of as having less authority, dignity, sanctity or strength of faith than the highest priest or judge under the old law; but the highest priest or judge under the old law was to be considered of such strength and authority that on any difficult question no one was permitted to doubt his definition or judgment or to oppose it in any way. God himself testified to this, as we find in Deuteronomy 17[:8-13], when he said to all the people, “If thou perceive that there be among you a hard and doubtful matter in judgment and thou see that the words of the judges within thy gates do vary: arise, and go up to the place, which the Lord thy God shall choose. And thou shalt come to the priests of the Levitical race, and to the judge, that shall be at that time: and thou shalt ask of them, and they shall shew thee the truth of the judgment. And thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place, which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach thee, according to his law; and thou shalt follow their sentence: neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand. But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, who ministereth at that time to the Lord thy God, and the decree of the judge, that man shall die, and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel: And all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride.” We gather from these words that under the old law anyone who did not obey the command of the priest and judge about any difficult or doubtful question was worthy of death. It follows from this that no one was permitted to doubt whether a priest and judge had made a correct determination. Therefore, under the new law, which is known to have more perfect ministers, much more is no Catholic permitted to doubt whether the pope makes a correct determination on a question of faith. This would not be true if the pope were able to err against faith.

**Student:** The text from Deuteronomy that you have brought forward does not seem to be to the point, because it does not speak about a question of faith but about other civil and criminal questions.

---

100. The text quoted does not really support the argument. However, the gloss remarks, “among these writings the writings of the Apostolic See will be put first”.

**Master:** This does not hinder the argument, because there should be no anxiety about the judgment in a question of faith of someone whose judgment should not in any way be doubted in civil and criminal questions. For whoever cannot err in questions of this kind also will not be able to err in a question of faith, since anyone who can err against faith will also be able to go astray in other [matters], since those who err in faith should also not be believed on other [matters] (because, as the sacred canons testify, unbelievers and heretics can in no way judge or give testimony in cases concerning believers).<sup>101</sup>

**Student:** I will have a conversation about this with you later, so would you pass on to other arguments.

**Master:** Fifth it is argued as follows. Someone appointed to a dignity which confers the sanctity of innocence on the one holding it cannot become a heretic. But the papacy confers the sanctity of innocence on the pope, as Pope Symachus attests. He says (dist. 40, c. *Non nos* [c.1]), “Who will doubt that he is holy, whom the crown of so great a dignity raises up? If he lacks any good acquired by merit, that which was shown by his predecessor in the position suffices. For it either raises the illustrious to these heights, or it gives glory to those who are raised.” We gather from these words that when the dignity of the papacy raises someone up, it makes him shine with holiness even if he were bad before. Therefore he cannot become a heretic unless he renounces the papacy.

Sixth as follows. If a pope could err against the faith and be infected with heretical wickedness, by the same reason, and much more strongly, any Christian can be condemned for heresy. But when anyone from some college can become a heretic, the whole college too can become heretical. Therefore it would follow that the whole congregation of Christians could incur heretical wickedness. This is clearly opposed to gospel teaching.

Seventh as follows. Anyone who can err against faith can command something against divine precepts. But it is not necessary to obey in all matters someone who can order something against divine precepts, because, in accord with blessed Peter’s opinion in Acts 5[:29], we should obey God rather than someone ordering something against God. Therefore if a pope can err against faith it is not necessary to obey the pope in all matters. But this seems to oppose the sacred canons, for Gregory says (dist. 19, c. *Nulli* [c.5]), “It is not lawful for

---

101. “Heretics cannot be judges since they possess neither authority nor right (24 q. 1 c. *Didicimus*) [col.1849], nor can they be witnesses (Extra, *De hereticis*, c. 1) [col. 1669], nor can they be accusers (2 q. 7 c. *Alieni* [col.913], and c. *Pagani* [col.913], and c. *Non potest*) [col.913]”; 1 Dial. 6.19, tr. Knysh.

anyone to want or be able to transgress the precepts of the Apostolic See.” Gregory also says (dist. 12, c. *Preceptis* [c.2]), “Let not apostolic precepts be resisted with obstinate pride, but let those things which have been commanded by the holy Roman Church and its apostolic authority be discharged in a healing way.” It is clear from these that the precepts of a pope should be obeyed in all matters, and consequently he cannot err.

Eighth as follows. If a pope could become a heretic, he could be judged by man; but a pope cannot be judged by man, as the sacred canons attest; therefore, a pope cannot become a heretic.

### Chapter 5

**Student:** Although those arguments seem difficult to me I cannot agree with their conclusion. So would you tell me how they may be answered.

#### Replies to arguments that a pope cannot become a heretic

**Master:** The reply to the first of them [p.188.6] is that in a community that has not been left to itself but has been kept safe by someone who cannot err, there can be sure judgment about doubtful matters even if any member of that community singly can err, because none of them individually is kept safe from the possibility of erring, as the community is. So it is of the Church militant, because any individual in the Church militant is left to the guidance of his own counsel, so that he can with the help of divine grace remain in the faith, or else turn away from the Catholic faith, according to the choice of his own will. But the community of Christians is kept safe by God in such a way that if one of them turns away from faith, another will by divine gift remain firm in faith. So if the pope errs against faith there will be another Christian, man or woman, who will not withdraw from faith.

**Student:** Is it valid to argue: “Any Christian can err against faith; therefore the whole community of Christians can err against faith”?

**Master:** Many people say that such a mode of arguing is not valid but is the fallacy of “figure of speech”, because often [to go] from a noun which is not collective to a collective noun is the fallacy “figure of speech”. An example is this: “Any one of the people can be sustained by one piece of bread a day, therefore the people can be sustained by one piece of bread a day”. Another is this: “Either part of the contradiction can be true, therefore the contradiction can be true”.

**Student:** I am not happy that you are branching out to the science of reasoning, so would you report how reply can be made to the other arguments.

**Master:** The reply to the second argument [p.188.17] is that although questions of faith should not be brought to a heretic, they should nevertheless be brought to someone who can become a heretic, before he becomes a heretic. And therefore, although a pope can fall into heretical wickedness, before he falls questions of faith should be brought to him; but if he has incurred heretical wickedness no question of faith should be brought to him from then on. Therefore, a question of faith should be brought, not to him who does err, but to him who can err against faith.

It is said to the third argument [p.188.24] that papal writings and decretals not opposed to divine Scripture and to the sacred teachings of the holy fathers should be accepted as canonical writings, that is, as authoritative and worthy of veneration. And it is about papal decrees, writings and letters of this kind that Augustine, Pope Agatho and other holy fathers speak. Papal writings and letters, however, that contradict the sacred page or sacred teachings should be rejected by all believers. Gratian attests to this at dist. 19, § *Hoc autem*, where he says, “But this,” namely that decretals are of equal authority with the canons, “should be understood of those decrees or decretal letters in which nothing is found which is opposed to the decrees of earlier fathers or to gospel teachings.” And in the same distinction at § *Quia ergo* he says, “Therefore because he,” that is Anastasius II, “issued these rescripts impermissibly and not canonically but against decrees of his predecessors and successors — as Felix and Gelasius, who excommunicated Acacius before Anastasius, and Hormisdas, third after Anastasius, who later condemned the same Acacius, prove — he was as a result repudiated by the Roman church and, as we read, was struck by God.” We gather from these words that a pope can write decretals which should not be accepted by Catholics. Indeed they try to prove this by an example. For on matters pertaining to the teachings of faith the decretals or rescripts of John XXII oppose and are contrary to decretals and rescripts of Gregory IX, Innocent IV, Alexander IV, Nicholas III, Clement V and some other highest pontiffs. However, contraries should not be accepted by Catholics. Either the writings of John XXII, therefore, or the writings of the aforesaid highest pontiffs should be rejected by Catholics.

The reply to the fourth argument [p.189.7] is that under the old law it was necessary for everyone to obey the highest priest and judge in difficult and doubtful questions, when he was declaring the truth of his judgment according



to divine law. If he had ordered something against divine law, however, he ought not to have been obeyed, as we evidently gather from chapters 13 and 17 of Deuteronomy. However, that the highest priests under the old law and also the chief judges could make orders against the law of God and err against the truth of faith is certain from the fact that many of them turned aside from the truth of judgment and faith, as could be shown by many examples, because many highest priests around the time of the Maccabees abandoned the law of the Lord. Indeed the priest Urias in obedience to King Achaz erected an altar against the law, as we find in 4 Kings 16. The highest priests in the time of Christ also erred against the law in many ways. Some of the judges of the Hebrews after Joshua also acted against the law, and all the kings except for David, Hezekiah and Josiah committed idolatry. So even the highest priests and supreme judges under the old law could make an order against the law, and in that case they should not have been obeyed. And similarly we should deem that the highest pontiff can err against divine law. Yet if he does not err we should abide by his judgment.

The reply to the fifth argument [p.190.11] is that the office of the papacy does not necessarily confer the sanctity of innocence on the one receiving it. For many highest pontiffs committed enormous crimes while they were in office. Blessed Marcellinus committed idolatry. Anastasius II fell into heresy and the supporting of heretics. Stephen VI wickedly persecuted Pope Formosus when he was dead by pronouncing that all his decrees were invalid. He even ordered that the body of Formosus, laid out in council and stripped of its papal vestments, be dressed in lay clothing and that his hands be cast into the Tiber after two fingers of his right hand were cut off. Sergius IV ordered that Pope Formosus be dragged out of his tomb, dressed in priestly garb on the pontifical chair, to be impiously decapitated and cast into the Tiber, and he wickedly deordained all those who had been ordained by him. John XII was a hunter and was lewd, publicly embracing women. He ordered that the nose of John, a cardinal deacon, and that the hand of a certain sub-deacon be cut off. He was at length deprived of the papacy. Benedict VII put out the eyes of the cardinal deacon John, after he had first plundered the church of St. Peter. Sylvester II consulted demons while he was pope. It is clear, therefore, that the papacy does not confer the sanctity of innocence.<sup>102</sup>

The reply to the decree of Symachus [p.190.13], however, is that Pope Symachus did not intend to argue that no one can be pope unless he is holy,

102. Cf. NM pp. 953-4. The source is Martini *Chronicon*, p.430-1. Not Sergius IV but Sergius III. Formosus was not dug up twice; some chroniclers attributed actions of Stephen VI to Sergius III.

since it is certain that many very wicked men have remained in the highest pontificate; but Pope Symachus wants to affirm that it should be presumed of someone raised to the office of the papacy that he is holy, even if he had been bad before, unless the contrary is clearly apparent. And so he does not say that he is holy but “who will doubt that he is holy?”, as if to say that no one should doubt him by making evil conjectures but should presume that someone raised to the papacy is holy, unless the contrary is clearly the case. This is how the gloss on this point expounds it. It says [s.v. *quis enim*], “And if sometimes popes were perhaps not good, they are always presumed to be good;” and arguing to the contrary it says, “Are not dist. 19 c. *Anastasius* and dist. 21 c. *Nunc autem* opposed?” It says in reply to this objection, “But it is not said here that they are holy, but that they are presumed to be holy until the opposite is certain... When it is said here ‘always to act well’ it is understood of those things that can equally be turned to good and to evil, because always when there is doubt a presumption is made in favour of his action. But certainly the same thing is true of any priest, as in 11 q. 3 *Absit*, dist. 41 c. 1 and 16 q. 1 *Si clericatus*. I reply that this is true, but yet it is presumed more in the case of the pope, as in dist. 93, c. 1. So it would be a kind of sacrilege to dispute about his deed, as in 17 q. 4 § *Qui autem*.”

The reply to the sixth argument [p.190.21] is, as to the first, that it is not universally true that if anyone from a college can err the whole college can err, because sometimes a college is specially kept safe and yet no particular individual is specially kept safe in that way. In this way too some temporal lord could preserve some monastery by preventing everyone there being killed at the same time, even if he were unwilling, as long as there were many of them, to defend any one particular person. But if it happened that all of them were killed except one, he would defend that one until he was joined by someone else in the same monastery, and from then on he would leave him to himself. Such a lord would preserve the monastery, and yet he would not preserve anyone from the monastery except in a certain situation for a while.

The reply to the seventh argument [p.190.27] is that the pope should not be obeyed if he orders anything against the law of God or against good morals. For if he were to order someone to fornicate, to sacrifice to idols, to invoke demons, to deny faith in Christ or to do something wrong in itself, he should not be obeyed. The sacred canons, however, speak of the case in which the pope orders something permissible and pertaining to his office.

The reply to the last [p.191.5] is that in a certain situation the pope can be judged by man.

### Chapter 6

**Student:** After the above [remarks] about the pope I want to know what the learned think about the college of cardinals, that is, whether they all think that the college of cardinals can be stained by heretical wickedness.

#### Can the cardinals become heretics?

**Master:** There are conflicting opinions about this. For some people think that it is not possible for the whole college of cardinals to become heretics, and brother G[erald Ot] seems to be of this opinion. He clearly asserts this, as I have heard from some Friars Minor, in the legal proceedings at Perpignan directed against brother M[ichael]. There are many arguments for this assertion.

#### That the cardinals cannot become heretics

First as follows. The Roman church cannot become heretical: 24, q. 1, c. *Pudenda* [c.33] and c. *A recta* [c.9] and c. *Memor* [c.10]. [In c. *Memor*] pope Sixtus says, “I am mindful that I preside over the church in the name of the person [Peter] whose confession was glorified by the Lord Jesus and whose faith never fosters any heresy, but indeed destroys all heresies.” The church that Sixtus ruled, however, was the Roman church; therefore the Roman church cannot become heretical. But that Roman church is not the pope, because the pope rules over the Roman church, but no one can rule over himself. Therefore the pope is not the Roman church that cannot become heretical. Nor is the universal Church the Roman church, because the Roman church is the mother of the other churches and their head; the universal Church, however, is not the head of the other churches, but is the whole body. Nor can it be said that the Roman church is the Roman people, nor the clergy with the people, nor the whole clergy containing the college of cardinals as part. For it pertains to the Roman church to make arrangements about other churches, as we clearly gather from the sacred canons. This does not pertain, however, to the Roman people, nor to the clergy and people, nor to the whole Roman clergy containing the college of cardinals as part. Therefore by “the Roman church” should be understood the college of cardinals only, and consequently that college cannot become heretical.

Second as follows. The Apostolic See cannot become heretical, as Pope Eusebius attests (24, q. 1, c. *In sede* [c.11]): “The Catholic religion has always been preserved without stain in the Apostolic See.” But the Apostolic See is not

the pope, who presides over the Apostolic See, nor is it the Roman people, nor the clergy with the people, nor the whole of the clergy. Therefore it is the college of cardinals, and consequently the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

Third as follows. The college which alone and exclusively has the power to choose the highest pontiff, who is the head of the Church, cannot become heretical. Because if that college were heretical it would be deprived of the power to choose the highest pontiff, since heretics ought not choose the highest pontiff, and consequently the whole Church would lack the power to choose the highest pontiff; and this is to be regarded as unsuitable. But power to choose the highest pontiff pertains to the college of cardinals alone, as we gather from a decree of Pope Nicholas placed in dist. 79 [c.9]. Therefore the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

Fourth as follows. The college to which it pertains to correct and judge the pope if he deviates from the faith cannot err against faith, because if it could err against faith the pope would not be subject to its judgment — indeed other Christians too would not necessarily be subject to its judgment in a case concerning faith, because they could appeal from it if it erred; therefore much more would the pope not be subject to its judgment. But the college of cardinals can judge a heretical pope, as is proved by the example of those who rejected Anastasius II for heretical wickedness, dist. 19 [c.9], who were cardinals. It pertains to cardinals, therefore, to judge a pope in a matter of heretical wickedness, and consequently the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

Fifth as follows. The college which would cause the whole multitude of Christians to become heretical if it became heretical cannot become heretical; but if the college of cardinals became heretical the whole multitude of Christians would become heretical because, as we find in 6, q. 1, § *Verum*, “If the head becomes weak the remaining members of the body easily become corrupted.” The college of cardinals is the head of Christianity, however, so if the college of cardinals became heretical the whole of Christianity would easily become heretical. But the whole of Christianity cannot become heretical, and so the college of cardinals cannot become heretical either.

Sixth as follows. If the college of cardinals could become heretical, much more could any other college become heretical, and so there would be no college of Christians which could not incur heretical wickedness. As a result the whole of Christianity could be defiled with heretical wickedness, and this is not to be conceded. Therefore the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

Seventh as follows. That college cannot become heretical which no Christian dares resist in matters of faith and against which no Christian dares defend Catholic faith, because if such a college became heretical the whole faith would be endangered. But no Christian dares to resist the college of cardinals in matters of faith nor to defend anything touching on the faith against that college. Therefore the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

Eighth as follows. The college of cardinals is worthier and more noble than the college of bishops, for cardinals at the Roman curia are ranked ahead of bishops. But the college of bishops cannot become heretical, because it succeeds the college of apostles, which could not become heretical. Neither, therefore, will the college of bishops be able to become heretical; and consequently, much more, the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

Ninth as follows. A college that cannot be accused of heresy cannot become heretical. But the college of cardinals cannot be accused of heresy, because it could only be accused of heresy by inferiors, and, according to canonical decrees, inferiors cannot accuse superiors. Therefore the college of cardinals cannot be accused of heresy and consequently cannot become heretical.

Tenth as follows. If the simple are saved in the faith of some college, it cannot become heretical, because if it did become heretical the simple could not be saved. But the simple are saved in the faith of the greater ones; however cardinals are the greatest of the greater ones. Therefore the simple are saved in the faith of the cardinals and, consequently, the college of cardinals cannot become heretical.

### Chapter 7

**Student:** Set out the opposing opinion with the arguments for it.

#### **That the cardinals *can* become heretics**

**Master:** Some people hold it as beyond doubt that the college of cardinals has not been confirmed in faith, just as the colleges of monks and other clergy have not been; and therefore it can become heretical. Nor is it certain that it will never err against faith (just as it is not certain that it *will* err against faith). Those who maintain this assertion try to support it with many arguments, of which the first is this. We should not attribute to a particular college established voluntarily and at his good pleasure by the highest pontiff that it cannot err against faith, because that there is some college that cannot err against faith cannot be proved in any way except because Christ promised believers that the Catholic faith would last to the end of the age; but Christ's words promising this should not be understood of a particular college established by the highest

pontiff, because Christ did not base his promise on arrangements made by the highest pontiff. The college of cardinals, however, is a particular college established voluntarily and at his pleasure by the highest pontiff, since we do not read that it was established by Christ or the apostles — since we find no mention of cardinals in sacred Scripture or in the acts of the apostles. It is therefore rash to say that the college of cardinals will never err against faith.

Second as follows. A college the highest pontiff can destroy or make null is not that Church which cannot err, because that Church which cannot err cannot be null (24, q. 1, c. *Pudenda* [c.33]) and, consequently, cannot be destroyed and brought to naught by the highest pontiff. Just as the highest pontiff established the college of cardinals, however, so he could destroy it and bring it to naught, because he could omit to replace cardinals who died. In doing this he would not be said to be a transgressor of a precept of the Lord, because we do not find any divine precept about creating cardinals. Therefore the college of cardinals is not that Church which cannot err against faith.

Third as follows. The Church that cannot err against faith did not begin after the time of the apostles, because it was to the Church which existed in the time of the apostles that Christ made the promise that he would remain with it until the end of the age, when he said in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], “I am with you always to the end of the age.” Christ clearly indicated by these words that from that time to the end of the age the Church would not abandon the Catholic faith, and so the Church which cannot err did not begin after the time of the apostles. But the college of cardinals did begin after the time of the apostles. The college of cardinals, therefore, is not that Church which cannot err.

Fourth as follows. A college that is inferior to the pope is not the Church that cannot err against faith, because, just as the pope can err against faith, so every college inferior to him can err against faith. The college of cardinals, however, is inferior to the pope. Therefore it can err against faith.

**Student:** This argument would prove that the whole congregation of believers could err against faith, because the whole is inferior to the pope.

**Master:** The answer is that the argument is not valid of the whole congregation of believers, because when the Apostolic See is not vacant the whole congregation of believers is not inferior to the pope, because it includes the pope. But the whole multitude of believers except for the pope is inferior to the pope, and of that multitude it is granted that it can err against faith because, according to them, faith could remain with the highest pontiff alone.

**Student:** Would you finish the other arguments?

**Master:** A fifth argument is this. Only of that Church of which it is firmly believed that outside it there is no salvation should it be firmly held that it cannot err against faith. But there can be salvation outside the college of cardinals, for many who are not cardinals are saved. Therefore the college of cardinals is not the Church that cannot err.

Sixth as follows. Just as every person who can err in morals can also err against faith, so every college which can err against good morals can err against faith. But the college of cardinals can err against good morals. For if there were only two or three cardinals, it would not necessarily be the case that any of them was in charity — indeed each of them could be in mortal sin, since it is certain that sometimes the most wicked men are raised to the office of cardinal. Therefore the college of cardinals can err against faith.

Seventh as follows. That college which can err in lesser and easier matters can also err in greater and more difficult matters. However, it is a lesser and easier matter to choose the highest pontiff than to determine questions of faith. But the college of cardinals can err in the choice of the highest pontiff, for it clearly did err when it chose a woman as pope.<sup>103</sup> It could also choose a pope as a result of simony, as the gloss on dist. 79 c. *Si quis pecunia* [c.9 s.v. *non apostolicus*] openly implies. Therefore the college of cardinals can also err in determining questions of faith.

Eighth as follows. The college of cardinals does not excel the college of apostles in sanctity or in firmness of faith. To those who consider their life and morals this is so well known that it does not need proof. But the college of apostles could err and did err, for at the time of Christ's passion none of them remained fast in faith. Therefore, much more, the college of cardinals can err against faith.

**Student:** That argument does not seem valid, because though the college of apostles erred before the sending of the holy spirit, after that it did not err.

**Master:** It does not seem to them that this hinders the argument. Because not only after the sending of the holy spirit, but even before Christ's passion, the college of apostles shone with a richer grace of sanctity and a greater brightness of truth than the college of cardinals. For before his passion Christ commended them in many ways, saying at Matthew 5[:14,13], "You are the light of the world", "You are the salt of the earth", and at John 15[:15], "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called

103. Female pope: Martini *Chronicon*, p.428.

you friends because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you.” And he commends them for their firmness at Luke 22[:28], “You are they who have continued with me in my temptations.” So if the apostles, who according to blessed Gregory are like cedars, could turn aside from the faith, it would be rash to say that the cardinals, who like reeds are disturbed by every breeze of teaching, cannot stray from the path of Catholic truth.

Ninth as follows. No ecclesiastical dignity sanctifies a wayfarer or establishes him as unable to turn aside from faith. This is clearly proved by the texts cited above [p.180.20], and is gathered too from the words of Chrysostom included in dist 40, c. *Multi* [.12]. For he says, “The place does not sanctify the man... He who sits rightly on his throne receives the honour of the throne, he who sits unjustly does a wrong to the throne.” We are given to understand by these words that an ecclesiastical dignity does not bestow sanctity and, consequently, does not confer the impossibility of erring against faith. But the whole multitude of cardinals could have erred against faith before acquiring the dignity of the cardinalate. Therefore the same multitude can err against faith after acquiring the dignity of the cardinalate.

Tenth as follows. A college which is more eminent than and superior to the college of cardinals, namely the college of archbishops and bishops, can err against faith. Therefore much more can the college of cardinals err against faith. Here two things would have to be proved, namely first that the college of archbishops and bishops is more eminent than the college of cardinals. This is shown from the fact that at one time cardinals of the Roman church were chosen and appointed to archbishoprics, according to what is found in the register of Innocent and in the deeds of the Roman pontiffs; but no one should be chosen from a greater position to a lesser one, rather the reverse. Therefore the position of archbishop is more eminent than the position of cardinal. Second, it has to be proved that the college or community of archbishops and bishops can err against faith. This is clear from the fact that Christ did not promise that the Catholic faith would remain among bishops until the end of the age.

Eleventh as follows. It is said of only one Church militant that it cannot err against faith. But the college of cardinals is not that Church, though it is part of that Church, just as the church of Paris is also part of that Church, because it is the congregation of believers that is the Church that cannot err. But the congregation of cardinals is not the congregation of believers, though it is part of it. Therefore the congregation of cardinals can err against faith.



This argument is confirmed, because what belongs to the whole Church should not be attributed to a part of the Church, even the principal part, unless this can be shown by necessary reason or by a clear authoritative text. But the college of cardinals is a part of the Church that cannot err against faith. An inability to err against faith, therefore, should not be attributed to the college of cardinals, since this cannot be shown by necessary reason or by a plain authoritative text.

Twelfth as follows. The college that cannot err against faith does not need the advice of others in order to determine questions of faith. The college of cardinals, however, often needs the advice of other orthodox in order to determine questions of faith, for otherwise it would be superfluous to hold general councils for questions of this kind. Therefore the college of cardinals can err against faith.

## Chapter 8

**Student:** To me it seems hard to assert that the college of cardinals can err against faith, yet the arguments brought forward for it appear difficult. So show me how reply is made to the arguments for both sides, and first how the arguments for the first assertion are answered.

### Reply to arguments that the cardinals cannot become heretics

**Master:** The reply to the first of them [p.195.14] is that “Roman church” is taken in many ways. Sometimes it is taken as the universal Church, sometimes as the pope, sometimes as the clergy and people of Rome, sometimes as the college of cardinals. However, the Church that cannot err is the universal Church, and not the college of cardinals.

**Student:** Would you not say more about that matter here, because I will ask you about it later. But say how the second argument [p.195.34] is answered.

**Master:** Some people reply to the second that by “Apostolic See” sometimes the pope is meant, sometimes his diocese, sometimes the pope with the college of cardinals, sometimes the universal Church. According to some people, however, that Apostolic See which cannot err against faith is the universal Church, but according to others it is the Roman diocese.

**Student:** Would you also pass over this now, and speak to the third argument [p.196.5].

**Master:** A reply to the third argument is that just as the emperor, who once had the power to choose the highest pontiff (as we find in the decretals at dist. 63, c. *Adrianus* [c.22] and c. *In synodo* [c.23]), could have incurred heretical

wickedness, so too that college which now has the power to choose the highest pontiff can be stained with heretical wickedness.

**Student:** If that college were to become heretical no one in the Church of God would have the power to choose the highest pontiff, and so there would not be sufficient provision made for the Church of God in the choice of the highest pontiff.

**Master:** The reply is that sufficient provision has been made, because if the college of cardinals became heretical the choice would devolve upon the Romans. If, however, as some people say, it were possible for all the Romans to become heretical, the power to choose the highest pontiff would devolve upon other orthodox persons.

**Student:** I will discuss this with you elsewhere, so tell me how reply is made to the fourth argument [p.196.14].

**Master:** A reply is made to that argument by making a distinction. Because *either* the pope publicly and notoriously falls into a manifest heresy already explicitly condemned, and in that case not only the college of cardinals, if it has remained in the faith, but also the diocesan of the place where the pope was staying would have the power to judge the pope who had become a heretic: and then the minor premise of that argument is denied. Because just as a pope who has become a heretic is subject to the judgment of a believing diocesan (who however can himself err), so also a pope who has become a heretic is subject to the judgment of the college of those cardinals who remain in the faith (which [i.e. the college] however can become heretical — though if it were to become heretical, it would not have the power to judge a heretic pope). *Or* the pope would fall into a heresy which has been condemned only implicitly, and then it would not be the college of cardinals but a general council that would have power to judge him.

**Student:** How can someone who can err judge a heretical pope?

**Master:** It is replied that just as bishops and inquisitors into heretical wickedness, who undoubtedly can err against faith, can judge heretics, before they themselves fall into heretical wickedness, so also, though the college of cardinals can err against faith, yet, if it has not erred but remains in orthodox faith, it can judge a pope who has become a heretic.

**Student:** Speak to the other arguments.

**Master:** A reply to the fifth [p.196.24] is that if the college of cardinals became heretical, that would not make the whole multitude of Christians heretical. To “If the head becomes weak” etc. it is answered that it is true of many members, yet it does not always prove true of all members. For in the time of Anastasius II the head, that is Anastasius, who was pope, was weak with heretical wickedness and yet many members remained sound and whole.

The sixth argument [p.196.33] is answered in two ways. The first way is by granting that there is no particular college, either of prelates, religious, clerics, laity, men or women, which cannot err against faith. Yet God will never permit the universal college of Christians, which in fact comprises men and women, to err against faith. In another way it is said that, besides the universal college, the college of the Roman diocese cannot err against faith. And [anyway] the inference is not valid: “The college of cardinals can err against faith, therefore any other particular college can err against faith.” For sometimes some prerogative belongs to a whole which should not be attributed to a part, and so, though the whole Roman diocese cannot err against faith (according to them), yet the college of cardinals, which is part of that diocese, can err against faith.

A reply to the seventh [p.197.1] is that if the college of cardinals erred against faith, other Christians would be found who would dare to resist them. Because fear of death would not drag them away from the confession and defence of Catholic truth, just as in the times of the emperors, who were lords of the world and of much greater temporal power than the cardinals, many holy martyrs confessed the Catholic faith and defended it with all their strength.

**Student:** Such people would not be found now.

**Master:** It is said that they would be. For if very many seculars now oppose the whole college of cardinals to defend temporal goods, it ought not be regarded as incredible that some of them would risk themselves for the defence of the faith if the college of cardinals were to attack the Catholic faith.

**Student:** Tell me an answer to the eighth argument [p.197.7].

**Master:** To the eighth argument it is said that the college of bishops could err against faith, and that it is not certain — either from divine Scripture, from the teaching of the universal Church or from the teaching of the saints — that all the bishops in the time of anti-Christ, or in some other time, will not stray from the Catholic faith. Indeed some people think, though they cannot have a strong foundation for this, that just as the priests and Pharisees crucified Christ, so

bishops, religious and clerics will be the principal followers of anti-Christ and that no cleric or religious will oppose him.

**Student:** This is rashly said, even if it is not certain whether any clerics would resist anti-Christ. So pass on and indicate how answer is made to the ninth argument [p.197.13].

**Master:** It is said to the ninth argument that the college of cardinals could be accused of heresy, and when it is said that inferiors cannot accuse inferiors this is denied in many cases.

The reply to the tenth [p.197.18] is that if the cardinals became heretical, the simple would not be saved in the faith of the cardinals. They would be saved in the faith of the apostles and other saints who believed explicitly what the simple believe implicitly. So when it is said that the simple are saved in the faith of the greater ones, or in the faith of the Church, this should be understood [as meaning] that they are saved in faith the apostles explicitly had, and which greater ones still have, if the greater ones are not simple in divine law and are Catholics and faithful. For if only the unlearned, or those having little knowledge of divine law, were Catholics, while all bishops, religious and clerics were heretics, then even if the unlearned did not explicitly believe many things which pertain to the faith yet, believing that the true faith is that which the apostles preached and for which the holy martyrs were killed, they would be saved in the faith of the greater ones, that is, of the apostles and other saints who believed explicitly what they believe implicitly.

## Chapter 9

**Student:** I have heard how those who hold the second opinion reply to the arguments for the first opinion. Now I want to know how those affirming the first opinion try to refute the arguments brought forward for the second opinion.

### Reply to arguments that the Cardinals can become heretics

**Master:** To the first [p.197.31] it is said that just as according to the holy fathers Christ directly gave primacy to the Roman church though there is no mention of this found in divine Scripture, so Christ promised that the Roman church would last to the end of the age. However the Roman church is the college of cardinals. But when it is said that the college of cardinals was established by the highest pontiff, it is replied that, though it was established in this way by the highest pontiff, it nevertheless succeeds an earlier college that could not err, and therefore neither can it err against faith.

To the second [p.198.7] it is said that the highest pontiff cannot destroy or make null the college of cardinals, just as he cannot change the state<sup>104</sup> of the Church (25, q. 1, c. *Que ad perpetuam* [c.3]).

To the third [p.198.16] it is said that the college of cardinals has succeeded the Church that in the apostles' time could not err, and therefore it cannot err.

To the fourth [p.198.25] it is said that it is granted that some church inferior to the pope cannot err against the faith, just as the Roman church over which the pope presides is inferior to the pope and yet cannot err against the faith.

To the fifth [p.199.2] it is said that no one can be saved who is outside the college of cardinals in such a way that he is opposed to it in matters that the college of cardinals believes, though it is possible to be saved even if one is not a cardinal.

To the sixth [p.199.7] it is said that the whole college of cardinals, even if there were only two, could not err against good morals, because it would be kept safe by God.

To the seventh [p.199.14] it is said that just as the Church is sometimes kept safe in major matters and not in minor ones — for the congregation of believers is kept safe by God so that it does not sustain damage to Catholic faith, although God allows it be afflicted with many bodily stresses and anxieties — so the college of cardinals is kept safe so as not to err in faith, yet it is not kept safe so as not to err in choosing the highest pontiff.

To the eighth [p.199.22] it is said that it is not because the cardinals have greater sanctity or firmness of faith than the apostles had that the college of cardinals cannot err, but because of Christ's promise. So if that [eighth] argument were valid it would prove that at any time after the apostles the congregation of believers could err against faith, because among the congregation of believers after the apostles' time there has not been found greater sanctity or greater firmness of faith than the apostles had.

To the ninth [p.200.8] it is said that an ecclesiastical dignity does not sanctify any person or make them unable to turn aside from the faith, yet Christ does keep safe from error against faith any college that has some spiritual dignity, just as the Christian religion does not sanctify any person or make them unable

---

104. The "state" of the Church is its fundamental structure. Cf. Gaines Post, "Copyists' Errors and the Problem of legal Dispensations 'contra statutum generale Ecclesiae' or 'contra statum generalem Ecclesiae' according to the Decretists and Decretalists ca 1150-1254", pp. 357-405.

to turn aside, yet Christ keeps safe the college of those who receive the Christian religion so that it does not err against faith.

The tenth [p.200.19] is answered in two ways. One way is that the college of archbishops and bishops cannot err against faith; and they grant that there are several particular colleges, besides the congregation of believers, which cannot err against faith, namely the college of cardinals and the college of bishops. In another way it is said that the college of cardinals is more eminent than the college of bishops with respect to some matters, although with respect to others it is inferior to it, and therefore, although cardinals can be chosen to be bishops, yet the college of cardinals themselves can be confirmed in faith.

To the eleventh [p.200.32] it is said that it is affirmed of only one general Church militant that it cannot err against faith. Yet it is not inconsistent with this that there is some particular church that cannot err against faith, just as it is granted that the congregation of believers cannot err, and yet along with this it is also granted that a general council cannot err against faith.

To the last [p.201.7] it is said that the college of cardinals needs the advice of others in determining questions of faith so that their determination may be made more authentic by the agreement of many.

### Chapter 10

**Student:** To my insignificance it seems that an adequate response has been made to the seventh, eighth and ninth arguments, but I do not understand the replies to the other arguments. Nevertheless I want to defer a fuller discussion of them to another time. Now, however, prompted by the foregoing, I want to know what scholars think about the college of cardinals together with the pope, that is, whether the pope and all the cardinals at the same time can be entangled in heretical wickedness.

#### Can pope and cardinals be heretics together?

**Master:** There are various opinions about this. People who say that the pope cannot err against faith, and also those who affirm that the college of cardinals cannot err against faith, have to say consequently that the pope together with the college of cardinals cannot err against faith. Their argument seems to be especially that the Roman church cannot err against faith; however the Roman church is the pope together with the college of cardinals; therefore, etc. Again, the Apostolic See cannot err against faith; however the Apostolic See consists only of the pope and the college of cardinals; therefore, etc.

Others affirm plainly that the pope together with the whole college of cardinals can err against faith. Their basic arguments have been touched on above [pp.184.14, 200.31, 199.1, 199.6]: because if the pope together with the cardinals could not err it would be in vain that general councils gathered to determine questions of faith; also because it is held of only one Church that it cannot err; also because there is salvation outside the pope and the cardinals; also because all of them can at the same time be entangled in wickedness, and so they can at the same time all err against faith.

### **Chapter 11**

**Student:** As I see it, the question I put forward before depends on another, whether, that is, the Roman church or the Apostolic See can be infected with heretical wickedness. Would you therefore not delay discussing it.

#### **Can the Roman Church become heretical?**

**Master:** You can clearly infer from the above that not everyone agrees about that question of yours. So some people say, without making a distinction, that neither the Roman church nor the Apostolic See can err against faith, understanding by the “Roman church” and the “Apostolic See” the pope alone, or the college of cardinals alone, or the pope and the cardinals together. However, others say that the Roman church cannot err against faith, understanding by the “Roman church” the Roman clergy, who consist of the pope, the cardinals, and other clerics. Others say that the Roman church which consists of all the clergy living in every part of the world cannot err; and some of them say that although some clergy can err against faith, yet the majority will never err against faith. But others say that the multitude of clergy can err against faith, yet some clergy will always remain in the faith.

However, others make distinctions concerning the Roman church, saying that by the name “Roman church” is meant sometimes the pope, sometimes the college of cardinals, sometimes all the Roman clergy, sometimes the pope with the cardinals, sometimes the whole Roman diocese, sometimes indeed the whole congregation of believers. And they say about the Roman church used in this last way that it cannot err. Of the pope, however, and the cardinals and the whole diocese of Rome distinct from other dioceses established in other provinces, they grant that they can err against faith, and it is not certain either from Scripture or from the teaching of the universal Church that the city of Rome together with the whole region pertaining to the bishopric of Rome will

not adhere to anti-Christ when he comes, nor also whether before the time of anti-Christ it will all forsake the faith.

### Chapter 12

**Student:** I wonder at their saying that sometimes “Roman church” means the congregation of believers. So if they can draw this out from genuine writings, would you kindly explain.

#### **“The Roman Church” can mean the totality of believers.**

**Master:** They try to show from Scripture that the congregation of believers can be meant by the “Roman church”, first as follows. Every church of Romans can be called the Roman church; but all believers can be called Romans. And thus blessed Paul, who was born completely outside Italy, before he had come to Rome affirmed that he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16[:37]). Therefore the whole congregation of believers can be called the “Roman church”.

They argue second as follows. That Church which has neither stain nor wrinkle nor anything of this kind can be called the Roman church, as Pope Pelagius attests. Speaking of the Roman church he says (dist. 21, c. *Quamvis* [c.3]), “So the first see of the apostle Peter is the Roman church which has neither stain, nor wrinkle nor anything of this kind.” The gloss on this says [s.v. *nec aliquid*], “An argument that wherever there are good people, there is the Roman church.” We are given to understand by these words that the whole congregation of good people, wherever they are, can be called the Roman church, and consequently the whole congregation of believers can be called the Roman church.

### Chapter 13

**Student:** I perceive that people’s opinions about the proposed question vary in many ways. Would you investigate only two of them at the moment. Argue first for the opinion asserting that the Roman church that is distinguished from the congregation of believers as a part from its whole cannot err against faith. Would you later try to argue for the opposing assertion?

#### **(A) That the Roman Church that is part of the wider Church cannot err**

**Master:** That the Roman church that is distinguished from the whole congregation of believers as part from its whole cannot err against faith is shown in many ways, first as follows. The church that has been preferred to the rest of the churches by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour cannot err against faith, because, as we find in Acts 5[:39], “God’s work cannot be



dissolved by men.” If however the church that has been preferred by the divine voice to the rest of the churches were to fall into error, it would cease to be the head of the other churches, and so God’s work would be dissolved. But the Roman church that is distinguished from other churches, and consequently from the whole congregation of believers as a part from its whole, has been preferred by the Lord’s voice to other churches, as Pope Pelagius attests (dist. 21, c. *Quamvis* [c.3]): “Although all the Catholic churches established throughout the world make up the one marriage bed of Christ, yet the holy Roman church, Catholic and apostolic, preferred to the rest of the churches not by the decrees of synods but by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour, has acquired primacy.” Therefore this Roman church cannot err.

Second as follows. A church cannot err against faith if it cannot lose its privilege over other churches, because any church that became heretical would thereby lose every privilege over all the orthodox, since all heretics are less than any Catholic (24, q. 1, § *Si autem*). However the Roman church cannot lose its privilege over other churches, because if it could lose its privilege anyone who tried to take away this privilege from it would not have to be regarded as a heretic, since no one should be counted among heretics on account of an assertion that can be true. But whoever tries to take away the Roman church’s privilege falls into heretical wickedness, as Pope Nicholas attests. Speaking about the Roman church which is distinguished from other churches he says (dist. 22, c. 1): “There is no doubt that anyone who takes away its right from any church does an injustice, but whoever tries to take away from the Roman church a privilege given to it by that highest head of all churches undoubtedly falls into heresy; and since the former is called unjust, this latter should be called a heretic.” These words establish that whoever tries to take away a privilege of the Roman church should be called a heretic, and consequently such a privilege cannot be taken away from the Roman church. And as a consequence of this the Roman church cannot become heretical, because if it were to become heretical it would lose every privilege.

Third as follows. A church cannot err against faith if without it no Catholic church can be ruled, because God will never, to the end of the age, leave the universal Church unruled; therefore to the end of the age he will not abandon the church without which no church is ruled. But without the Roman church no Catholic church can be properly managed, as Pope Anacletus attests (dist. 22, c. *Sacrosancta* [c.2]): “Now this Apostolic See was established, as was said before, as head and hinge by the Lord and not by anyone else and, just as a door is governed by its hinge, so, by the Lord’s arrangement, all churches are

governed by the authority of this holy Apostolic See.” Therefore this Apostolic See, which is the Roman church, cannot err against faith.

Fourth as follows. A church cannot err against faith if anyone who dissents from it should not be counted among Catholic bishops, because no one should be excluded from the number of Catholics because of a disagreement with heretics. But anyone who disagrees with the Roman church should not be regarded as a Catholic bishop, as blessed Ambrose attests (24, q. 1, c. *Advocavit* [c.23]): “Cyprian summoned Bishop Satirus; he did not think that any grace was true except the grace of true faith and he questioned him about whether he was among the Catholic bishops, that is whether he was in agreement with the Roman church.” We are given to understand by these words that no one can be among Catholic bishops unless he is in communion with the Roman church. Therefore the Roman church cannot err against faith.

Fifth as follows. The Church outside which no one is saved cannot err against faith; but, as blessed Jerome attests, no one can be saved outside the Roman church. Speaking about the Roman church he says (24, q. 1, c. *Quoniam vetus* [c.25]): “Following no reward except Christ, I am joined by communion in Christ to your blessedness, that is the church of blessed Peter. I know that the church has been founded on that rock. Whoever eats lamb outside this house is impious. If anyone is not in Noah’s ark he will perish when the deluge rules... Whoever does not gather with you scatters.” We are given to understand by these words that whoever is not through conformity and unity of faith within the Roman church of which Jerome speaks cannot be saved. Therefore the Roman church cannot err against faith, because if it were to err, whoever was within it would not be saved.

Sixth as follows. The church from which any Christian who withdraws should be counted as among the schismatics cannot err against faith. But whoever withdraws from the Roman church is numbered among the schismatics, because he is regarded as outside the Church, as Cyprian attests (dist. 93, c. *Qui cathedram* [c.3]): “Anyone who abandons the see of Peter upon which the Church is founded is not assured of being in the Church.” And as we find in *Extra, De maiori et obedientia*, [c. *Solite*; X 1.33.6] Innocent III affirms that all those “who would not recognise Peter and his successors as masters and shepherds” are outside Christ’s sheepfold and consequently are schismatic. Therefore the Roman church cannot err against faith.

Seventh as follows. A body cannot exist without members; the Church of believers, however, is the mystical body of Christ; therefore the Church cannot

exist without members. But the principal member is known to be the head; the Roman church is the head of the whole Church of God; therefore the Church of God cannot exist without the Roman church. But the church without which the Church of God cannot exist cannot err against faith. Therefore the Roman church cannot err against faith.

Eighth as follows. A church that no evil can destroy cannot err against faith. But no evil can destroy the Roman church, as Pope Pelagius attests (24, q. 1, c. *Pudenda* [c.33]): “Since the church is one, it is certain that no other exists but that which is founded in an apostolic root.” Below, reporting the words of Augustine, he adds, “And if that cannot rightly be called a church in which there is schism, it follows that, since the Church cannot be nothing, the Church is that which, founded through successions of bishops in the root of the Apostolic See, can in no way be extinguished by men’s wickedness — even if their wickedness is well-known and cannot be excluded, but is judged to be something that must be tolerated by reason of the times.” We are given to understand by these words that no evil can destroy the church founded by the successions of bishops in the root of the Apostolic See, which is the Roman church. Therefore it cannot err against faith.

The conclusion that the Roman church cannot err against faith they try to support with authoritative texts. Jerome says (24, q. 1, c. *A recta* [c.9]): “This holy and apostolic church, the mother of all the churches of Christ, through the grace of almighty God, is found never to have strayed from the path of apostolic tradition, and it has not succumbed in a blameworthy way to heretical novelties; but as in the beginning it received the rule of Christian faith from the chief texts of the apostles of Christ, in faith it remains intact.” Jerome also says (24, q. 1, c. *Hec est fides* [c.14]): “The holy Roman church, which has always remained unstained, will — with the Lord providing for it and blessed Peter bringing it help — in the future age remain firm, free from the assault of heretics, and it persists immovable for all time.” It seems from these [texts] that the Roman church has never erred and never will err against faith.

#### Chapter 14

**Student:** If I am not mistaken, to know whether the Roman church can err against faith it is useful to investigate at some length from whom the Roman church acquired rule over all other churches. Because if it obtained rule from God it does not seem possible for it to be deprived of that rule except by God alone, and thus it will have that rule until the end of the age, and consequently it will never err against faith. If it obtained its rule from man, however, I do not

see why it cannot err against faith like other particular churches. So I ask you to digress a little from the main theme and take time to discuss this matter by indicating what scholars think of it. For later I will surely get you to return to the main theme.

### **How did the Roman Church come to rule all other churches?**

**Master:** Different people assert different and opposing opinions about the rule or primacy of the Roman church. Some say that neither blessed Peter nor any of his successors nor the Roman church had primacy from God or Christ over other churches. Indeed, they say that blessed Peter was not superior to the other apostles by Christ's ordination, and no bishop is superior to any other by Christ's ordination. They try to prove six assertions about this matter.

\* The first is that blessed Peter did not have rule over the other apostles by Christ's decree.

\* The second is that blessed Peter was not bishop of Rome.

\* The third is that blessed Peter acquired primacy over the other apostles by decree of the apostles.

\* The fourth is that no priest has any power over other [priests] by Christ's decree.

\* The fifth is that before the time of Constantine the church of Rome did not have rule over other churches.

\* The sixth is that the church of Rome received primacy over other churches from the emperor Constantine himself.<sup>105</sup>

### **Chapter 15**

**Student:** I am much surprised that any educated person presumes to maintain those conclusions. Nevertheless, in order to exercise my wits I want to hear their arguments, because perhaps from them the truth will shine more clearly.

#### **(1) Christ did not appoint Peter to rule the other apostles**

**Master:** The first assertion, namely that blessed Peter did not obtain rule over the other apostles by Christ's ordination, they try to prove by texts from the divine Scriptures and from the saints. And they can make the following argument. Blessed Peter obtained no rule from Christ over those who received

---

105. This is an outline of the position of Marsilius of Padua. See *Defensor pacis*, II.xvi, xviii.7, xxii.10, xxii.19.

from Christ power, rule or primacy equal to the power or primacy of blessed Peter, because an equal is known to have no primacy over an equal. However the apostles received from Christ power equal to blessed Peter's power. They try to show this by texts of sacred Scripture and the saints. They try to make it clear first on the authority of Christ, when he said to all the apostles at Matthew 18[:18], "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven." They say that it is quite clear from these words that a power of binding and loosing equal to Peter's power was given to the apostles by Christ. But blessed Peter did not receive from Christ any other power in which he may be said to excel the others except the power of binding and loosing. Blessed Peter and all the other apostles, therefore, obtained equal power from Christ. John the evangelist seems to affirm this also when he reports the Saviour as saying in chapter 20[:21-3], "[Jesus] said therefore to them again, 'Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.'" We are given to understand by these words that the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ had promised to blessed Peter, he gave at that time to all the apostles; and so, when he said [Matt. 16:19], "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven", he promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven to all the apostles in the person of blessed Peter. Therefore, since the keys promised and later given to blessed Peter designate his power, it follows that the other apostles received from Christ power equal to that of blessed Peter. And so Peter did not obtain from Christ power, rule or primacy over the other apostles.

Further, it should be regarded as superfluous, vain and useless for someone to receive power over others which he ought not exercise over them; but nothing superfluous, vain or useless can be found among the works of Christ. Now Christ did not give blessed Peter any power over the other apostles that Peter ought to have exercised over them. On the contrary he forbade such power over the apostles to blessed Peter and to all the other apostles, saying at Matthew 20[:25-6], "You know that the princes of the gentiles lord it over them and they that are the greater exercise power over them. It shall not be so among you." We read the following too at Mark 10[:42-3], "But Jesus calling them said to them, 'You know that they who seem to rule over the gentiles lord it over them, and their princes have power over them. But it is not so among you.'" Luke 22[:25-6] also reports Christ as saying, "The kings of the gentiles lord it over them; and they that have power over them over them are called beneficent... But not so

with you.” We are given to understand by these words that no apostle ought to have exercised power over the others. Therefore, blessed Peter did not have from Christ power or primacy over the other apostles.

**Student:** Those texts do not seem to advance the point. For the above words of Christ should be understood of temporal power. However, blessed Peter did not have from Christ temporal power over the other apostles, but spiritual power. Therefore it can be proved by the above texts only that blessed Peter did not have the temporal power over the other apostles that the kings and rulers of the Gentiles are known to have.

**Master:** They try to exclude this reply by showing that Christ forbid any apostle to have any power, temporal or spiritual, over the other apostles. For as we read in *Extra, De verborum significatione, c. Intelligentia* [X 5.40.6], Hilary attests that “the meaning of what is said should be taken from the reasons for speaking.” The aforesaid words of Christ, therefore, should be interpreted according to his reason for speaking. Christ uttered the above words, however, on the occasion presented to him by the dispute among the apostles about which of them would seem to be greater. For we read in Luke 22[:24-5], “And there was also a strife amongst them, which of them should seem to be the greater. And he said to them, ‘The kings of the gentiles’” etc. The dispute among them, however, was not about temporal greatness, but about spiritual. When Christ forbid them to have power, therefore, he included not just temporal power but spiritual power too. Therefore blessed Peter did not receive from Christ any power, either temporal or spiritual, over the others.

Again, if any spiritual power or primacy was given by Christ to blessed Peter over the other apostles, it was given to him by those words in the last chapter of John [21:17], “Feed my sheep.” But no spiritual power or primacy over the other apostles was given by those words. Therefore, he did not receive from Christ primacy over the other apostles. The major premise of this argument is granted by the others. The minor premise is proved. Because feeding the sheep spiritually happens in only three ways, that is by salutary teaching, by exemplary living and by discipline or correction. But each of these ways of feeding Christ’s sheep was common to all the apostles. For all the apostles were bound to feed all Christ’s sheep by teaching, as the Truth himself attested when he gave this order to all the apostles in the last chapter of Matthew [28:19-20], “Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” They were also all bound to feed [Christ’s

sheep] by exemplary living, since Christ said to them in Matthew 5[:14,16], “You are the light of the world.... So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” The way of feeding by correction and discipline is established in John 20[:23], where Christ said to all the apostles, “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained”; here Christ is seen to have committed to all the apostles power to correct others.

**Student:** That argument is not conclusive, because the power to correct all Christians was granted to blessed Peter not only in the forum of conscience but also in the forum of the church; however, when Christ said to the other apostles, “Whose sins you shall forgive”, etc., he committed to them the power to correct in the forum of conscience only.

**Master:** They try to disprove that reply in this way. When Christ ordained the way of correcting in the forum of the Church, he did not commit anything special to blessed Peter. Rather, he committed the power of correcting in the forum of the Church only to the community of the Church, saying at Matthew 18[:15-8], “But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.” We are given to understand by these words that it was to the Church that Christ gave the power of correcting in the forum of the Church, not to any apostle in particular.

**Student:** Those words speak about fraternal correction, not about judicial correction in the forum of the Church.

**Master:** They reply that in the beginning of that text Christ is speaking about the fraternal correction that, often at least, should precede judicial correction; at the end, however, he speaks about judicial correction in the forum of the Church, when he says, “And if he will not hear them, tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.”

**Student:** How can it be valid that Christ committed the power of correcting in the forum of the Church only to the Church when the apostle Paul excommunicated a Corinthian and affirms in 1 Timothy 1[:20] that he handed some people over to Satan?

**Master:** The reply to this is that by Christ's commission only the community of believers had the power of correcting in the forum of the Church. Nevertheless, Christ did not limit the community of believers to a fixed way of correcting — it could correct those at fault either itself as a whole, when that was convenient, or through some particular person acting on the community's behalf. And therefore the community could commit the power of correcting to a determinate person, and it was in this way, they say, that blessed Paul received the power of correcting from the community of believers of one province or of various provinces.

**Student:** According to this it follows that Christ did not leave any head for the Church.

**Master:** They grant that Christ did not leave any head for the Church which would have the power by Christ's decree to restrain those at fault in the forum of the Church; but he did not make inadequate provision for the Church, because, by decreeing that the Church would have the power to correct, he arranged it that the Church might choose for itself one head, or several heads according to the diversity of provinces. Indeed, they say that it is for the good of the community of the Church that the Church has power to choose for itself one head or several, who could be deposed when it seemed appropriate to the Church. Therefore, since Christ made the best provision for the Church, he gave it power to choose for itself one head or several. For just as it is often convenient for a community to have one head, so it could sometimes be convenient for a community to be ruled by many. Similarly it is also convenient to have sometimes a perpetual ruler and at other times one not perpetual but temporary, and therefore in some secular communities it is not unwisely arranged that the rulers resign their office or are completely deposed every year or after three months or after some number of months, years or days; in certain communities also there is not one man alone set in charge as ruler but several. Now a reason for all this is given, because when making provision for the government of any community, it is appropriate to attend not only to the conditions and customs of the subjects, but also to the conditions and customs of those who are to be put in charge. And therefore, because it can happen that no one in the community is found suitable and adequate to undertake by himself the rule of that community, in such a case not one person but several will govern advantageously. But when in the community someone is found who can suitably rule alone, and the subjects willingly endure the rule of one person, then it is better for one person to be in charge of the community than several. Therefore, because of the great variety of persons, places and times, it is not possible in



such matters to give a certain rule. Therefore, since Christ did not give the Church a certain rule when a certain rule cannot conveniently be given, it remains that Christ did not decree that one head should always be set over the Church, since often this can redound to the destruction of the Church.

**Student:** They are trying to annul completely the power of the highest pontiff. But let us pass over this now. Please tell me whether those who make this assertion try in some other way to strengthen their opinion that blessed Peter did not receive from Christ power or primacy over the other apostles.

**Master:** They try to fortify that assertion with authoritative texts from the holy fathers, and first with a text from blessed Anacletus, who was near in time to the apostles and so was more familiar with their deeds. Anacletus says (dist. 21, c. *In novo* [c.2]): “In the New Testament the priestly order began after Christ the Lord from Peter, because it was to him that a pontificate in the Church of Christ was first given, when the Lord said to him [Matt. 16:18-9], ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’ It was this man, therefore, who first received the power of binding and loosing from the Lord and first led the people to faith by the power of his preaching. But the rest of the apostles received honour and power with him in equal fellowship.” They gather from these words that blessed Peter had no power over the other apostles by Christ’s ordinance, both because Anacletus affirms that they were equal in power and honour, and because he affirms that the pontificate given to blessed Peter consists in the power of binding and loosing; but all the apostles were equal in this power. Therefore in respect to the pontificate they were equal.

**Student:** That text does not support them because, as the gloss on it says, “Every bishop is equal to the Apostolic [i.e. the pope] with respect to the order and nature of his consecration, yet Peter was greater than the others in administration.”

**Master:** Some of those who affirm the above say that the gloss is wrong here because it clearly falsifies the text, since the text affirms that all the apostles were equal in power to blessed Peter. Administration, however, is a certain power or an act of power. Therefore Peter was not superior to the other apostles in administration.

Also, they prove the above assertion, that blessed Peter was not superior to the other apostles, by a text of Cyprian (24, q. 1, c. *Loquitur* [c.18]): “The Lord says to Peter, ‘And I say to you, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my

Church'. He builds the Church on one man, and although after his resurrection he bestows equal power on all the apostles and says, 'As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.... Receive ye the Holy Ghost', yet to manifest oneness, he determined by his own authority the origin of that oneness, beginning from one man. Certainly the other apostles were endowed with honour and power in fellowship equal to Peter." By these words we are given to understand that although Peter was the first to have power from Christ, yet afterwards the apostles received equal power, and so from then on Peter was not by Christ's ordination superior to them in power, and consequently not in administration.

Also, they prove this by the text of blessed Augustine. For he says (2, q. 7, c. *Paulus* [c.33]), "Paul censured Peter, which he would not have dared to do if he had not known that he was his equal."

**Student:** The gloss at that point [s.v. *imparem*] replies to this when it says that he knew that he was equal "in merit but not in administration."

**Master:** They think that this reply is false and frivolous. It is false, they say, because although Paul would have known that he was in charity and had many merits, yet he did not know that he was equal to blessed Peter in merit; indeed, it is probable that, being truly humble, he regarded blessed Peter as surpassing him in sanctity. And he could not have known in any way except by revelation that he was equal in merit to blessed Peter, but we do not read that God revealed to blessed Paul that he was equal in merit to blessed Peter. Therefore it is rash to say that Paul knew he was equal in merit to blessed Peter, because what is not brought forward from authentic scriptures is affirmed rashly. It is also frivolous, because equality of merit is not required in order for someone to censure another, for then a less good person could never censure a better one. Therefore Augustine means that Paul was equal to Peter in power and that he was not subject to him either in administration or in anything else that pertains to superiority and power.

## Chapter 16

**Student:** I did not think that so many texts would verbally suggest this heretical opinion. However, I do not want to hear more arguments for it now, although I do want to discuss it more carefully at another time. But so that I may better understand the opposing Catholic truth, show how that truth may be fortified by texts of the greater ones. Yet do not make clear to me which assertion you regard as the truer.

### Christ did appoint Peter to rule the other apostles

**Master:** That blessed Peter did have from Christ power and primacy over the other apostles is shown in many ways, first as follows. The person to whose care and rule at the time of the apostles the whole of the Lord's flock was committed by Christ also received care and rule from Christ over the apostles, who were at the time part of the Lord's flock. But the whole of the Lord's flock was committed by Christ to the care and rule of blessed Peter, when he said to him at the end of John [21:17], "Feed my sheep", not distinguishing between these sheep and those. Therefore the apostles also, who would not have been considered as outside the number of sheep, were committed to the care and rule of blessed Peter.

Second as follows. The apostles themselves were subject to him to whom in the apostles' time rights over both the earthly and the heavenly kingdom were committed. But in the apostle's time those rights were committed to blessed Peter, as Pope Nicholas attests. In dist. 22, c. 1, he says, "He erected it on the rock of a faith soon arising, who gave blessed Peter, the bearer of the keys of eternal life, the rights of both earthly and heavenly empire". Therefore the apostles, who lived then, were subjects of blessed Peter.

Third as follows. A head is known to have principancy<sup>106</sup> over other members. But blessed Peter was head of the apostles, as Pope Leo attests (dist. 19, c. *Ita dominus* [c.7]): "In this way our Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, brought it about that the truth which was previously contained in the proclamation of the law and the prophets issued forth from the apostolic trumpet for universal salvation, as has been written, [Romans 10:18] 'Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' But the Lord wanted the sacrament of this service to pertain to the office of all the apostles, so he located it principally in most blessed Peter, the highest of all the apostles, so that he might pour forth his gifts from him, as though from the head to the whole body." We plainly learn from these words that blessed Peter was appointed by Christ head of the apostles. Therefore he had primacy over them from Christ.

Fourth as follows. The person who in the time of the apostles appointed priests for all churches had principancy<sup>107</sup> over the apostles themselves. But according to

---

106. Principancy is the status of *princeps*, meaning first man, chief, prince. *Princeps* is ambiguous between leadership and rulership. Peter was often referred to a "*princeps apostolorum*", often rendered "prince of the apostles", though it could just as well mean "chief of the apostles". "Primacy" and "principancy" seem interchangeable.

a text of Pope Innocent (dist. 11, c. *Quis nesciat* [c.11]), blessed Peter appointed priests for all churches in the time of the apostles: “Since it is clear that no one established churches in all of Italy, in Gaul, in Spain, in Africa and in Sicily and adjoining islands except those whom the venerable apostle Peter and his successors appointed as priests....” Therefore blessed Peter had the principality over the other apostles.

Fifth as follows. Blessed Peter had received power to rule all the apostles, as Gregory attests (2, q. 7, c. *Petrus* [c.40]): “Peter had received power to rule, and yet he who was first among the apostles [replied] to a complaint against him....” Therefore blessed Peter had principality over the apostles.

**Student:** I do not care for you to bring forward many arguments for that truth, since the authority of the Church should be enough for it to be held. For the universal Church sings of blessed Peter, “You are the shepherd of the sheep, prince of the apostles.” Would you move on, therefore, to the other four<sup>108</sup> assertions that you mentioned and briefly make clear the arguments for them.

## Chapter 17

### (2) Peter was not bishop of Rome

**Master:** Their second assertion is that blessed Peter was not bishop of Rome. They are moved to assert this from the fact that in the whole of divine Scripture describing the acts of the apostles we do not find that blessed Peter was at Rome; and it does not seem probable to them that blessed Peter would have ruled the Roman church and yet blessed Luke would have made no mention of this at all.

### (3) It was the other apostles who appointed Peter to rule them

Their third assertion is that it was by an ordinance of the apostles that blessed Peter had principality over them. They show this by a text from blessed Anacletus located in dist. 21, c. *In novo* [c.2]. Speaking about blessed Peter, he says, “But the rest of the apostles received honour and power with him in equal fellowship, and wanted him to be their chief.” It was, therefore, by the choice of the apostles that Peter was made their chief.

## Chapter 18

---

108. Actually five; see above, p.212.11.

#### **(4) So far as their power is from Christ, priests are equal**

Their fourth assertion is that by Christ's ordinance no priest has any power over other [priests], nor does any have by Christ's arrangement greater power than any other over the flock committed to him, but any superiority of one priest over another was established by priests themselves as a remedy for schism and for the common good. They try to prove this by a text from Jerome (dist. 93, c. *Legimus* [c.24]): "When the Apostle clearly teaches that bishops and priests are the same, what does one who serves tables and widows" etc.<sup>109</sup> And below: "I have heard other testimony which makes it very clear or manifestly establishes that a bishop is the same as a priest [Titus 1:5-7], 'For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee, if any be without crime, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be without crime, as the steward of God.' And [1] Tim. [4:14 says], 'Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy and through imposition of hands by the priesthood.' And also in his first letter [5:1] Peter says, 'As a priest myself I beseech the priests among you....'. And below: "Do the testimonies of such great men seem insignificant to you? The son of thunder whom Jesus loved dearly, who drank in the teachings flowing from the Saviour's heart, sounds forth with his gospel trumpet [2 John 1]: 'The priest to the elect lady and her children whom I love in the truth.' And in another letter [3 John 1], 'The priest to the dearly beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.' The later choice of one who was set over the rest was made as a remedy for schism, lest everyone should tear asunder Christ's Church by drawing it to himself. For indeed at Alexandria from Mark the evangelist to the bishops Bede and Dionysius priests always chose one from among themselves and placed him, whom they called a bishop, in a higher grade, just as the army makes an emperor for itself." They gather from those words that there was by Christ's ordinance no superiority among the priests from whom blessed Jerome draws his examples, since after all the above examples Jerome says, "The later choice of one who was set over the rest was made as a remedy for schism." We are given to understand by these words that after Christ's ordinance the rule of one priest over others was established by the priests themselves. Blessed Jerome gives the examples of blessed Peter, blessed John the evangelist, and the other

109. "I am told that some one has been mad enough to put deacons before presbyters, that is, before bishops. For when the apostle clearly teaches that presbyters are the same as bishops, must not a mere server of tables and of widows [Acts 6:1-2] be insane to set himself up arrogantly over men through whose prayers the body and blood of Christ are produced?" <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001146.htm> "

priests appointed by Timothy. Therefore blessed Peter did not have by Christ's ordinance any superiority over other priests of any kind. They conclude from this that no priest is superior to any other by Christ's ordinance, but by human ordinance only.

Also, they show in particular that bishops do not have superiority over priests by Christ's arrangement from a text of blessed Jerome's commentary on Paul's letter to Titus. Jerome says (dist. 95, c. Olim [c.5]): "Formerly priest and bishop were the same, and before there were, at the devil's instigation, factions in religion and it was said among the people, 'I belong to Paul', 'I belong to Apollos', 'I belong to Cephas', churches were governed by a common council of priests. But after each priest began to think that those he had baptised belonged not to Christ but to him, it was determined throughout the world that one priest would be put in charge... and the seeds of schism removed. (And a little later:) Therefore, just as priests know that by the custom of the Church they are subject to the one who has been put over them, so bishops knew that they were greater than priests more by custom than by the truth of the Lord's direction and that they ought to rule the church in common." It seems very obviously to be asserted by these words that there is no distinction by the Lord's arrangement between bishops and priests. So they say that formerly every bishop was a priest and every priest a bishop. And therefore the whole distinction between the pope and patriarchs and archbishops and between bishops and priests is by human ordinance and not by an ordinance of Christ.

### **Chapter 19**

**Master:** Their fifth assertion is that before the time of Constantine the Roman church did not have principancy over other churches.

Their sixth assertion is that the Roman church received primacy or principancy over other churches from the emperor Constantine.

#### **(5) The Roman Church did not rule the others before Constantine**

#### **(6) The Roman Church received primacy from Constantine**

Now some try to prove those two assertions at the same time as follows. The emperor Constantine established the Roman pontiff as head of all churches; therefore it was from Constantine, and not earlier, that the Roman church had principancy over other churches. The antecedent is proved by what we read in the

decretals at dist. 96, [c.14],<sup>110</sup> taken from the deeds of the blessed Sylvester: “The Emperor Constantine, on the fourth day after his baptism, conferred a privilege on the pontiff of the Roman Church, that pontiffs or priests throughout the world should have the Roman pontiff as their head, as the judges have the king.” .... And just as ours is an earthly imperial power, so we have decided that his sacred Roman Church should be honoured, and that the sacred seat of blessed Peter should be exalted gloriously, more than our empire and earthly throne, giving it power and glory, dignity, vigour and imperial honour. And we decree and enact that it shall hold the principality over the four sees, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, as well as over all the churches of God in the whole world; and the pontiff for the time being of the sacred Roman Church shall be higher than, and the chief of, all priests even throughout the world. And by his judgment let everything be arranged that is necessary for the worship of God and the faith and firmness of Christians.” We are given to understand by these words, it seems, that the Roman church acquired principality over other churches only from Constantine.

### Chapter 20

**Student:** That assertion about the primacy<sup>111</sup> of the Roman church does not please me. Would you therefore try to support the opposing assertion with arguments.

#### The Roman Church had primacy before Constantine

**Master:** That the Roman church obtained the principality over all other churches before the time of Constantine is put in three ways. The first way is that it had the principality by the authority of general councils. So we read as follows in the decretals at dist. 17, § *Hinc etiam*, “We know that, first, the merit of blessed Peter the apostle and then, following the Lord’s order, the authority of venerable councils handed unique power over the churches to his see.” These words establish that venerable councils handed unique power over the churches to the see of blessed Peter.

### Chapter 21

In another way it is said that the Roman church received primacy and principality over all churches directly from Christ when he appointed blessed Peter as highest pontiff, saying [Matt. 16:18], “You are Peter” etc.

---

110. This is from the “Donation of Constantine”, discussed by Ockham, \**Short Discourse* pp.163-9. Ockham regards the “Donation” as apocryphal. 111. *Primatus*, “primacy”, interchangeable with “principality”. \*sort out notes on these words\*

Pope Pelagius seems clearly to believe this when he says (dist. 21, c. *Quamvis* [c.3]), “The holy, Catholic and apostolic Roman church was not preferred to the rest of the churches by any decrees of a synod, but obtained primacy by the words of our Lord and Saviour in the gospel when the Lord said, ‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.’”

Pope Nicholas seems to affirm this too when he says, as we read in dist. 22, c. 1, “Whether patriarchs of whatever degree, or metropolitan primacies, the seats of bishoprics or the dignity of churches of whatever order — the Roman church established them all. But that [Roman] church he [Christ] alone founded and built on that rock of a faith just coming into being... It was not therefore any earthly sentence, but that Word by which heaven and earth were set up and through which all the elements were made, that founded the Roman church.”

Blessed Anacletus also seems to agree with these when he says (dist. 22, c. *Sacrosancta* [c.2]), “The sacrosanct Roman and apostolic church obtained primacy not from the apostles but from the Lord our Saviour himself, as he said to the apostle Peter, ‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.’”

Pope Gelasius seems to agree with this too. For he says (9, q. 3, c. *Cuncta* [c.17]), “Without any preceding synod, the Apostolic See had power both to absolve anything that a synod had wrongly condemned and to condemn, without there being a synod, those whom it so befitted, and it doubtless had this power because of the principality that blessed Peter the apostle at the word of the Lord has always held and will hold.”

Again, Pope Leo says (24, q. 1, c. *Cum beatissimus* [c.16]), “Since the blessed apostle Peter received principality from the Lord, and the Roman church remains as established by him.”

We are given to understand by all these that the Roman church received and had principality over all other churches from Christ himself before his ascension into heaven.

## Chapter 22

The third way of speaking is that the Roman church did not have the principality over other churches directly from Christ; rather it was subject to another church for many years after the Lord’s ascension, and it did not in fact first obtain the principality from councils, or even from the college of apostles. But it acquired the principality first and directly from blessed Peter’s transferring his see to Rome and preferring the Roman church to all other churches; and therefore it acquired the principality from Christ indirectly. For having been chosen as pope



and prelate of the whole Church by the Saviour before his ascension, blessed Peter accepted primacy on his own behalf, on behalf of his successors and also on behalf of the church where he should decide to locate his see. And therefore, because he transferred his see from Antioch to Rome and never afterwards transferred it to another church, from that time the Roman church held the principality over other churches.

Marcellinus seems to affirm this, when writing to all the bishops set up through Antioch. He says (24, q. 1, c. *Rogamus* [c.15]): “We ask you, dearest brothers, not to teach or believe anything but what you received from the blessed apostle Peter and the rest of the apostles and fathers. For he to whom the Lord said, ‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church’, is the head of the whole Church. His see was originally with you and was afterwards transferred at the Lord’s command to Rome, where with the support of divine grace we are in charge today. But if your Antiochian [church], which formerly was first, has given way to the Roman see, there is no [church] which is not subject to its authority.”

From these [texts] they try to infer many assertions relevant to their purpose. The first of these is that before his ascension the Lord appointed blessed Peter head of the whole Church. Pope Anacletus also obviously affirms this (dist. 22, c. *Sacrosancta* [c.2]): “There was a certain difference [of power] among the blessed apostles, and, though all were apostles, it was nevertheless granted to Peter by the Lord, and desired among them, that he should rule over all the rest of the apostles, and ‘Cephas’, that is ‘Head’, would maintain headship and principality over the apostolate.” Christ promised him this when he said in John 1[:42], “Thou shalt be called Cephas.”

The second assertion they infer from the above [texts] is that the church of Antioch had principality over other churches. Because, just as blessed Peter was the first and chief of all Christians, so his see was the first among all churches. But before blessed Peter had his see at Rome it was at Antioch,<sup>112</sup> as is said here. Anacletus affirms this too, saying in the text cited above [dist. 22, c. *Sacrosancta* c.2], “The third see at Antioch, of the same blessed apostle Peter, is held to be honourable; he held the see there before he came to Rome.” Pope Anterius agrees with the above when he says (7, q. 1, c. *Mutationes* [c.34]), “Having been made our master and the chief of the apostles, Peter was transferred for utility’s sake from the city of Antioch to Rome, to be able to make more progress there.” These words establish that blessed Peter’s see was

112. Parvis, “When Did Peter Become Bishop of Antioch?”, pp.263-72.

first at Antioch, where he had the see for seven years, as we find in the chronicles; and so the church of Antioch for seven years had principality over all churches, including the Roman church (if any Romans had then been converted).

The third assertion they infer from the above is that the Roman church obtained the principality after the church of Antioch. Thus eleven years passed after the Lord's ascension before the Roman church had the principality over other churches. They conclude from this that it did not have the principality before the Lord's ascension.

**Student:** If the above were true, then for four years the church of Jerusalem would have had the principality over all other churches, because, as we find in the chronicles, Peter held a cathedral see after the Lord's passion for four years before he chose the see of Antioch for himself, and we do not read that his see was anywhere except at Jerusalem. At that time, therefore, the Jerusalem church held the principality over all other churches; and yet this does not seem to be true.

**Master:** It is said to this in one way that for four years blessed Peter did not hold any cathedral see, not choosing a church for himself, but as ruler and chief of all sat wherever he chose. But after four years he chose a see for himself in Antioch, not wanting to appoint anyone else as bishop while he was there. The church of Jerusalem was not first, therefore, because blessed James, as we read in his Legend, was appointed by the apostles as bishop of the people of Jerusalem immediately after the Lord's passion, and so Peter did not make that church his own; but he was in charge of it, as he was of the rest, while it had its own particular bishop besides Peter; it was otherwise with the church of Antioch.

**Student:** I want to know further whether, according to them, the pope could transfer the papal see from Rome to another city.

**Master:** Some of them<sup>113</sup> reply to this that it could indeed be done by the authority of the highest pontiff. Their argument is that the pope has as much power with respect to the Apostolic See as blessed Peter had. Therefore, just as blessed Peter for utility's sake transferred his see from one city to another, so the pope could transfer the papal see from Rome to another city.

---

113. Since the beginning of Chapter 20 (p.223.18) the Master has been reporting the views of people who reject the view of Marsilius. They do not all agree. At this point it seems likely that the opinion is that of Ockham and his associates.

**Student:** If the pope were to transfer his see to Paris, would it be granted by them that the church of Paris obtained principality “by the gospel voice of the Lord” [p.209.10]?

**Master:** They would say Yes, because just as they say now of the Roman church that it obtained principality by the gospel voice of the Lord because before his ascension the Lord conferred the principality on blessed Peter, according to the testimony of the evangelist, and also gave him power to place any church which he chose for his see in authority over all churches, so the church of Paris would be said to have obtained the principality over other churches by the gospel voice of the Lord, because before his ascension the Lord gave power in the person of Peter to every successor of blessed Peter to place any church in authority over all other churches.

**Student:** Do all of them maintain that the pope could transfer his see from Rome?

**Master:** Many of them assert that he could not do so, because Peter transferred his see from Antioch to Rome not on his own authority but at the command of the Lord, and so the pope could not transfer that see from Rome unless the Lord himself were to command it.

**Student:** Tell me another reply to the objection by which it is shown that the Jerusalem church had principality over all other churches for four years.

**Master:** Another reply is that it is true that the Jerusalem church did have principality over all other churches for that much time, because blessed Peter had his see there for that many years.

### **Chapter 23**

**Student:** Leaving aside this matter of the principality of the Roman church, would you go back to our main intention and bring into focus the arguments of those who maintain that the Roman church that is distinct from the congregation of believers as head from body can err against faith.

#### **(B) The Roman Church that is part of the wider Church *can* err**

**Master:** To prove that the Roman church can err some people bring forward many arguments. Their basic argument, however, is an argument often touched on above [pp.201.1, 203.14, 207.5] for showing other assertions, and it runs as

follows.<sup>114</sup> That which is promised to a whole and not to any part should not be attributed to any part, even to the chief part. But Christ's promise that it would never err against faith was made to the whole congregation of believers, and not to any part of it. This ought not be attributed, therefore, to any particular church of Catholics. Since the Roman church is part of the Church, therefore, and is not the whole Church, an inability to err against faith should not be attributed to it.

**Student:** When Christ said to Peter [Luke 22:32], "I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not", did he promise the church of which Peter would be the head that its faith would never fail?

**Master:** They say that Christ said this to Peter not as representing any particular church, but for the universal Church. They provide an argument for this, saying that when Christ said the above words to Peter, Peter was no more head of the Roman church than of the church at Antioch, but at that time he was going to have his see first at Antioch and later in Rome. Therefore, since in the above words there is no mention of Rome more than of Antioch, they should not be understood of Rome any more than of Antioch, because general terms apply equally to all particulars. But the above words should not be understood of Antioch, because the faith of that church has already failed, and therefore they should not be understood of the Roman church.

**Student:** How can they say that the faith of the church of Antioch has failed, since there is still a patriarch of Antioch who can be called the church of Antioch?

**Master:** That there may be some patriarch of Antioch is not due to Christ's promise but to a voluntary arrangement by the highest pontiff, who creates such a patriarch even though the church of Antioch has failed; and it often happens that there is no patriarch of Antioch.

**Student:** Even if the patriarch of Antioch dies, the church of Antioch does not die, because there is still someone who can be created patriarch of Antioch.

**Master:** In that way it could be said that the faith of the church of Marseilles can never fail because there will always be someone who can be created bishop of Marseilles, even if everyone from Marseilles was converted to Islam, or there will always be some people who could choose someone who could be created bishop of Marseilles. They say, therefore, that since it is maintained only on the

---

114. See above \*\*8.63 ff, p.238: so not sepe. A related argument, \*\*\*\*\*"Una sola ecclesia..." (One Church, [namely the whole Church, not a part of it]...) is used more often: 7.112 ff, p.235; 10.19 ff, p.242. And below: 26.11 ff, p.283; 30.5 ff, p.295; 33.11 ff, p.308.

basis of the divine Scriptures that the Church will never err against faith, because there will always be some believers in the Church of Christ, and since the words of divine Scripture by which it is inferred that the Church will never err against faith do not make any mention of the Roman church, no more than of the church of Antioch, just as it was rash to affirm that the church of Antioch will not err against faith, so it is rash to affirm now that the Roman church will never err against faith.

**Student:** Although divine Scripture does not verbally mention the Roman church when it declares that the Church will never err against faith, the words of Scripture should nevertheless be understood of the Roman church, because divine Scripture should be understood as it has been explained by the holy fathers. But the saints understand those words of Scripture to refer to the Roman church. Thus they also affirm that the Roman church will never err against faith.

**Master:** On this the answer to you is that the saints do not expound those words of Scripture as applying to the Roman church in so far as the Roman church is a part distinguished from other churches, but the words of Scripture that talk about that matter they expound as applying to the Catholic and apostolic Church that comprises every church holding the faith of the apostles, whether in Rome, Gubbio, Spain or France. And the saints do not say that the Roman church that is at Rome, or which acts *de facto* as the Roman church, cannot err or will never err against faith, although sometimes they affirm that it will not be found to have erred as a totality, even if sometimes most of it has erred. (For in the time of Pope Liberius after he agreed to the Arian perfidy most of the Christians of Rome agreed with heretical wickedness; for then few Romans resisted the emperor and Liberius, and those few clerics who opposed Liberius were killed.) However, although the saints have asserted that the Roman church as a totality has not erred against faith in time past, they never affirm that it will not err in the future.

**Student:** These people are obviously wrong because, as you argued earlier [p.211.27], blessed Jerome is speaking of the future when he says that “with blessed Peter bringing it help [the Roman church] in the future age will remain free from the assault of heretics.”

**Master:** They say that you are deceived by an ambiguous phrase, the senses of which you are unable distinguish. For in one sense the words of blessed Jerome are equivalent to the following conditional, “If blessed Peter brings it help [the Roman church] in the future age will remain” etc, and that sense is true, although it is rash to assert that blessed Peter will bring help, because it is not

known whether God, and likewise blessed Peter, will abandon the Roman church, just as he abandoned the church of Antioch a long time ago. Another sense is equivalent to the following causal [statement], “Because blessed Peter will bring help, [the Roman church] in the future age will remain” etc, and Jerome did not mean it in that sense. A third sense is the following temporal [statement], “When blessed Peter brings help” etc., and that sense is also true. But it is not known for how long a time blessed Peter will bring help to the Roman church against the assault of heretics. And it is rash to assert, therefore, that until the end of the age he will bring help against heretics to the Roman church that is part of the universal Church.

#### Chapter 24

**Student:** I would like to know whether they try to support themselves with other arguments.

**Master:** They try to fortify their assertion with many other arguments. Thus their second argument is the following. Every church which began after Christ’s ascension can err against faith. Because the Church Christ predicted would continue in faith until the end of the age also existed, for its part, before Christ’s ascension; for when, in predicting that his Church would continue in faith to the end of the age, Christ said in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], “I am with you always till the end of the age”, he did not mean only the future Church after his ascension but also meant that at no time, either before or after his ascension, would the whole Church of Christians withdraw from Catholic faith; therefore he did not mean a church that began after the ascension. But the Roman church began after the Lord’s ascension, because after Christ’s ascension the apostles and other disciples preached in other places before Rome. Therefore Christ’s words about the Church’s remaining in faith until the end of the age should not be understood specifically of the Roman church, but should be understood disjunctively and in common of the Roman church and others. Because the Catholic faith will remain until the end of the age in the Roman church, or in the Pisan church, or in some other church, for there will always be someone who is a Catholic and faithful.

Their third argument is this. After it had begun the Roman church was able to err against faith; therefore it is still able to err against faith. The antecedent is clear, because before blessed Peter arrived in Rome the church that had begun there could err against faith, for then it had no more been confirmed in faith than other churches. The consequence is clear, because we do not read that it was afterwards confirmed in faith. Therefore it is rash to assert that it could not err.

**Student:** It seems that because the apostles Peter and Paul founded and consecrated the Roman church it could not err.

**Master:** This does not seem to be true, according to them, because the apostles Peter and Paul founded the Roman church only by instructing the Romans carefully in faith, by encouraging them by teaching and examples to faith and good works, by confirming their teaching with miracles and, finally, by consecrating the city of Rome by their own martyrdom. But Christ did all those things for the church of Jerusalem; because he diligently instructed it in faith and encouraged it to faith and good works by teaching, examples and miracles; he also accepted death on its behalf, as on behalf of the rest too, and in this way consecrated Jerusalem by his passion and death. And yet by all these the Jerusalem church was not confirmed in faith, even though the works, teaching, life and death of Christ were of much greater efficacy than the works, teaching, life and martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul. Peter also, and other apostles, founded the church of Antioch, blessed Paul also founded many churches, other apostles also consecrated other churches by their martyrdom, and yet none of these churches was confirmed in faith. Similarly, therefore, nothing seems to have been done in the Roman church because of which it should be regarded as confirmed in faith. For many greater things were done for the establishment of faith at Jerusalem and in Judea than in Rome. If therefore neither Jerusalem nor Judea was confirmed in faith, it is rash to say that the Roman church has been confirmed in faith.

And so also from this a fourth argument is formed as follows. The Roman church was not more chosen by God than the Jerusalem church; but God permitted the whole Jerusalem church to withdraw from the faith; it is rash to say, therefore, that God will never permit all the Romans to withdraw from the faith. And so the Roman church will be able to err against faith.

**Student:** Even if all the Romans who live in Rome were to err against faith, the Roman church would nevertheless not err, because then the Roman church would not be at Rome but elsewhere, just as the Roman church is now at Avignon.

**Master:** They say that in this you are trying to proceed sophistically through equivocation. Because, they ask, what church are you calling the Roman church? For either you mean [1] the people or multitude of Romans, whether clerics or laypeople, living in the area of Rome or having their dwellings there. Or you are calling the Roman church [2] the clerics who have titular churches in Rome. Or you are calling the Roman church [3] the pope together with the

cardinals, or the pope alone or the college of cardinals alone. Or you are calling the Roman church [4] those who maintain the faith which the apostles founded and preached at Rome. [1] If you are using “Roman church” in the first way, the argument [from p.227.31] stands, because all Romans having their dwelling in Rome could err against faith, just as all the inhabitants of Jerusalem did indeed err at one time. [2] If in the second way, again the argument stands, because clerics having churches in Rome have not been more chosen by God than were the clerics who had churches in Jerusalem; all of them erred, however, and so all those having churches in Rome could err. Again, it is rash to say that all those having titular churches in Rome could not be killed by pagans or by other evil people; therefore then there would not be faith in clerics having titular churches in Rome, and yet the faith would not fail. Therefore Christ’s words promising that the faith would last until the end of the age should not be understood of those people. [3] But if you are calling the Roman church the pope together with the cardinals, or the pope alone, or the college of cardinals alone, still it can err, because it is rash to say that the pope together with two cardinals, if there were not more, cannot err against faith. [4] If however you are calling the Roman church the Church that maintains the faith the apostles founded and preached at Rome, they grant in that sense that the Roman church cannot err; but that Roman church is the universal Church, wherever there are believing Catholics. And this Church which is called Catholic and apostolic and which cannot err in the same way comprises Pisans and Lombards and Spaniards as it does Romans. And of this Church only do they grant that it cannot err.

Their fifth argument is this. The Roman church that is a particular church — whether it consists of all Romans, or the Roman clergy only, or the pope with the cardinals — has not been more chosen by God than was the nation of the Jews, as a member of which Christ was to receive human flesh, which principally he had come to save, as he himself said in Matthew 15[:24], “I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel”. But that nation was not confirmed in faith so as not to be able to err. Therefore neither has the Roman church been confirmed in faith so as not to be able to err.

**Student:** It would be proved by that argument that the whole multitude of Christians could err against faith, just as the whole multitude of the nation of the Jews was able to err against faith.

**Master:** It is replied that the argument is not valid of the whole multitude of Christians as it is of the Roman church, because there cannot be salvation outside the universal Church, since Christ will never give another law besides



the Christian law in the way he was going to provide another law besides the law of the Jews. There can be salvation, however, outside the Roman church which is a particular church, for many people are saved besides the Romans. And therefore, though the above argument is conclusive of the Roman church, which can err just as the multitude of Jews was able to err, it is nevertheless not conclusive of the universal Church.

Their sixth argument is taken from the above, because every church outside which there can be salvation can err against faith. There can be salvation outside the Roman church, however, as there was after Christ's ascension before there was a Roman church. Therefore the Roman church can err against faith.

Their seventh argument is this. The Church that cannot err against faith does not need the advice of others to determine questions of faith. However the Roman church does need the advice of others in determining questions of faith, for otherwise it would be useless to assemble general councils to determine and define questions raised about the faith. Therefore the Roman church can err against faith.

Their eighth argument is this. The church that the pope's authority can make inferior to other churches can err against faith, for a church that cannot err against faith does not have another particular church superior to it. By the pope's authority, however, the Roman church can be made inferior to other churches, for the pope could transfer the papal see from Rome to another city. If this were done the Roman church would be subject to another church. Therefore the Roman church can err against faith.

Their ninth argument is this. It is rash to say that a people which will perish before the day of judgment cannot err against faith. But the Roman people will perish before the last day. For we read as follows in Numbers 24[:24], "They shall come in galleys from Italy, they shall overcome the Assyrians, and shall devastate the Hebrews, and in the end they themselves shall perish." Those words can be understood only of the Romans. Therefore the Romans will perish and consequently it is rash to say that faith will remain among the Romans until the end of the age.

**Student:** Those words can be understood of the temporal empire of the Romans, because that will perish, but they must not be understood of the church of the Romans.

**Master:** They do not take the above words as applying to the Roman church, because, just as they regard it as rash to say that the Roman church will *never*

err against faith, in the same way they regard it as rash to say that the Roman church *will* err against faith, since neither side of that contradiction can be deduced from the authoritative writings. And therefore they take the above words from Numbers 24 as applying to the temporal power of the Romans, arguing from this that it is rash to affirm that the church will not cease in Rome; because although God can by his own power alone preserve the regions where believers live against the power of unbelievers, it is rash to say that God will in fact miraculously preserve some place or city where believers live against the invading power of unbelievers — especially in the time of anti-Christ, when false christs and false prophets of the anti-Christ will produce great signs and omens, and the elect will not have grace to perform miracles, as the apostles and martyrs of Christ had; it is rash to affirm, therefore, that God will miraculously preserve the city of Rome from the yoke of unbelievers. Therefore, since the temporal power of the Romans began to fail some time ago and continues to fail more and more, while the power of unbelievers and the wicked is becoming greater, it is not clear that the city of Rome cannot be subjugated by unbelievers, just as in ancient times the city of Rome subjugated other provinces. Therefore, just as it is not asserted without rashness that the city of Rome *will* come under the dominion of pagans, so it is rash to affirm, prophesying concerning future events that are unknown to us,<sup>115</sup> that unbelievers *will never* occupy the city of Rome and expel all the believers from the city; and so it is rash to say that all the Catholics will never be driven out of Rome. And just as it is rash to say that all the Christians will never be driven out of the city of Rome not to return again, so it is rash to say that if by the power of unbelievers all the Roman Christians except ten or twelve were driven out of Rome never to return, those ten or twelve who remain could not err against faith or be converted to the sect of those occupying Rome.

**Student:** If all Christians were now driven out of the city of Rome by the power of unbelievers, the Roman church would not therefore cease, just as those who were driven out would not cease to be Romans.

**Master:** They grant that the Roman church would not cease because of that, but if those who were driven out died without children, which would not be

---

115. “They can not be absolved of foolish rashness who, from mystical senses of divine scripture alone – which they can not infer by evident argument from other places in scripture and can not demonstrate by inviolable argument and have not been assured of them by certain, particular and miraculous revelation – dare to predict any future contingents, or are not afraid to affirm when future events will come about which have been predicted in sacred literature without any specification of time... For such rash men, near to heretical wickedness,...”; Ockham, 3.1 Dial., 3.19.

impossible, the Roman church would cease and there would no longer be any Roman Christians.

**Student:** If they did all die without children some clerics could still be ordained in place of the earlier ones, and that college of clerics could be called the Roman church.

**Master:** This is attacked in two ways. First because by that means it could be said that the church of Pisa could not err against faith, because whether all the Pisans were driven out of Pisa or all were to become heretics or all were to die, clerics could be ordained and the former Pisan titular churches could be allotted to them verbally. [It is attacked] second because some people say that the faith of the Church could remain in mere laypeople; indeed some say that it could be preserved in women, as at the time of Christ's passion it was preserved only in Christ's mother.

**Student:** Tell me another argument for their main assertion, if they have one.

**Master:** Their tenth argument is this. The Church militant is not more accepted by God than the whole multitude of angels was before the confirmation of the good ones and the fall of the bad ones. But before the confirmation of the good angels and the fall of the bad, no part of the whole multitude of angels was kept safe by God in such a way that no part of that whole multitude was unable to fall into sin and be eternally condemned, although God ordained that the whole multitude of angels would not fall. In a similar way, therefore, no part of the Church militant is kept safe by God in such a way that it cannot err against faith, although God will never permit the whole Church militant to err against faith. But the Roman church is part of the Church militant. Therefore the Roman church that is part of the Church militant can err against faith.

## Chapter 25

**Student:** Although I firmly maintain that the Roman church cannot err against faith, as the arguments and texts brought forward above clearly prove, would you nevertheless like to explain how those who affirm that the Roman church can err against faith reply to them. When I have learnt that their replies to them are unreasonable I will better understand their strength.

### Replies to arguments that the Roman Church cannot err

**Master:** They reply to the first of them [p.208.33], saying that the following is false: The church that has been preferred to the rest of the churches by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour cannot err against faith. For the church of

Antioch was preferred to other churches by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour in the same way as the Roman church was. Because we do not find that the Roman church was preferred to other churches by the Saviour's voice in any way except because blessed Peter, having been set above the rest of the believers by our Lord, had his see in Rome. But blessed Peter had his see first in Antioch and later in Rome. During the time when blessed Peter sat at Antioch, therefore, the Antioch church was preferred to the rest of the churches by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour, just as later the Roman church was preferred to the rest of the churches. But the Antioch church was not confirmed in faith but was able to err against faith. Therefore, even though the Roman church was preferred to all churches by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour, it was nevertheless not confirmed in faith but was able to err against faith. And therefore they say that it is rash to claim that it will never err against faith; and it is also rash to claim that it will so err, because each of these is unknown to us, since neither of them has been revealed by God.

And when it is said that the work of God cannot be destroyed by men, they answer that many works of God can be destroyed by men. For charity and other virtues infused in a wayfarer are works of God, and yet they can be destroyed by free will, because someone who at first has charity and virtues can sin mortally, and charity is driven out by mortal sin. In this way they say of the Roman church that although it received dominion in [the person of] blessed Peter, the whole of Rome can nevertheless be occupied by unbelievers until the end of the age. Nor is it known whether unbelievers will ever capture the whole of Rome and keep it until the end of the age. The whole of Rome and all the Christians in it could also be converted to another sect. Nor does anyone know, unless God has revealed it to someone, whether in the time of anti-Christ the whole of Rome will be converted to him; indeed it is not known whether the whole of Rome and everyone living in it will be converted to the sect of Mohammed or to some other heretical wickedness.

When it is assumed in the same argument, however, that if the church that has been preferred to the other churches by the divine voice were to err against faith it would cease to be the head of the other churches, they reply that if the whole of Rome were converted to the sect of the Saracens or to some other heretical wickedness, and the pope, all the cardinals and all the clergy having titular churches in Rome were to fall into heretical wickedness, it could still be said that in some way the Roman church did not cease to be head of the other churches. This is not because there would then in fact be some pope or some college or some person outside every other particular church who (or which)

would be the head of other churches, but because Catholics would be bound to choose a highest pontiff, when they could do so conveniently, and he would be father of all Catholics and should by right, though not in fact, hold the see of Rome, just as patriarchs are now appointed for Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem who by right ought to have their see in those cities. And therefore, just as it is now said that the church of Constantinople is the second church after the Roman one, the church of Alexandria the third, the church of Antioch the fourth and the church of Jerusalem the fifth, because if those cities were occupied by believers their churches would have that order, and the patriarchs named after those cities when they are in fact appointed retain that order among themselves, so, if all the Romans were turned away from the faith, the highest pontiff would still be the head of believers and, if Rome were converted to the faith, he should have preeminence with respect to other churches.

**Student:** If the whole of Rome were occupied by unbelievers or had converted to another sect, would it be necessary, according to them, to appoint clergy in place of the earlier ones who had been at Rome, in the same way as it would be necessary to appoint a highest pontiff who should by right have his see at Rome?

**Master:** They reply that it would be enough to choose a highest pontiff only, because except for the papacy the other titular churches at Rome can be varied, increased or reduced. So it is that there are now more [titular churches] than there were in the times of the apostles, and perhaps none of them existed in blessed Peter's day. If the whole of Rome had turned away from the faith, therefore, it would be enough for Catholics to choose a Roman pope, just as a patriarch of Antioch is now appointed, and it would not be necessary to assign the other titular churches of Rome to other clerics, just as clerics are not allotted now to the churches which once existed in those cities with patriarchs [such as Antioch].

They grant, therefore, that the words of Pelagius contain the truth that the "holy Roman church, Catholic and apostolic", acquired primacy in [the person of] Peter not mainly "by the decrees of a synod but by the gospel voice of our Lord and Saviour" when the Lord set Peter above all the believers. And he did not acquire the principality over other churches by any other means except because the Lord preferred blessed Peter to everyone, making no mention at that time of the Roman church. But blessed Peter later chose that place for his see and therefore from then the Roman church acquired primacy by the authority of God, who wanted the see that Peter chose to be first.

To the second argument [p.209.12] there are several replies. In one way it is said that the Roman church could lose its privilege over other churches because the pope could transfer the papal see from Rome to another city, just as blessed Peter transferred his see from Antioch to Rome. In another way it is said that, although the Roman church can for a time and *de facto* lose its privilege over other churches, yet it does not simply lose it, because if the Roman church returned to the faith it would recover the same privilege it had before. In a third way it is said that the Roman church, as distinct from the pope who governs it, can simply lose its privilege without the translation of the see. Because its privilege consists principally in the power to choose the highest pontiff and to manage the Apostolic See; but it can lose this privilege without the translation of the see, just as it did lose it once, for as we find in dist. 63, c. *Adrianus* [c.22], Charlemagne had this right, and later Otto, the first king of the Germans, acquired it, as we read in dist. 23 c. *In synodo* [c.23]. Therefore the Roman church can lose its privilege.

To the text from Pope Nicholas [p.209.20] it is said that Nicholas is speaking of the Roman church *that is the pope*, because only to the Roman church that is the pope, in the person of blessed Peter, was that privilege directly given by Christ. The Roman church that is *subject* to the pope, however, has no privilege except from the pope, and the pope can take it away whenever it pleases him. Pope Nicholas means to affirm, therefore, that any person who tries to take away a privilege of the Roman church that is the pope, i.e. by asserting that the pope was not set above all Christians, is a heretic, because he has fallen into an erroneous assertion that “smacks of” manifest heresy, since from it together with certain truths that cannot be denied without evasion there follows the manifest heresy that blessed Peter was not set by Christ above all believers.<sup>116</sup> And therefore those who say that the pope can *not* transfer the papal see from Rome say that someone striving thus<sup>117</sup> to take away a privilege of the Roman church which is the pope is a heretic, taking the word “heretic” strictly. But those who say that the pope *can* transfer his see say that [that person] is a heretic, taking the word “heretic” broadly — in the sense that someone is called a heretic who pertinaciously maintains an assertion that is not a heresy in the strict sense of the word, but is a heresy in the sense that any assertion which smacks of manifest heresy is called a heresy. How such assertions are distinguished, however, is evident from earlier remarks [p.56.7] where heresies were dealt with.

---

116. The rest of the paragraph does not seem to make good sense. \*\*\*\*\*

117. By saying that the Roman church can err?

It is replied to the third argument [p.209.31] that the universal Church could be ruled without the Roman church that is subject to the pope and is not the pope. The answer to the text from blessed Anacletus is that he calls the highest pontiff “the Apostolic See” because the highest pontiff, whether he is at Rome or at Gubbio, is the head and hinge by which all churches, with the Lord arranging matters, are ruled, when he is a true pope. Yet this church can err against faith, because the pope can fall into heretical wickedness; but then another should be substituted for him by Catholics, who will rule the Catholic Church whether he be in Italy or in Spain.

It is said to the fourth argument [p.210.3] that this is false, “The church from which anyone who dissents should no longer be numbered among Catholic bishops *cannot* err against faith.” But this factual statement is true: “The church from which anyone who dissents, etc., *does* not err against faith”. And therefore as long as the Roman church does not err against faith, whoever dissents from it in faith should not be counted among Catholics; but if it were to err against faith this would not be true. Blessed Ambrose was talking in reference to his own time, when the Roman church did remain firm in faith. If it were to err against faith, however, those dissenting from it should be numbered among Catholics.

It is said to the fifth argument [p.210.14] that for someone to be “outside” the Roman church can be understood in two ways: either he is pertinaciously opposed [to it] with respect to matters of faith, or he is not a Roman but is from some other particular church. Whoever is in the first way outside the Roman church while it does not err cannot be saved unless he returns to it, and Jerome is speaking in this sense. Someone outside the Roman church in the second way can be saved. But Jerome is mainly speaking about a pope who is a Catholic successor to blessed Peter, and it is true about him, because whoever is pertinaciously opposed to him in matters of faith cannot be saved.

It is said to the sixth argument [p.210.26] that blessed Cyprian is speaking about the see of Peter which is a Catholic highest pontiff holding the faith of blessed Peter, whether he is at Rome or Lyons. And Innocent III, as is patently obvious, is speaking about Catholic successors of blessed Peter.

It is said to the seventh [p.210.36] that although in many respects there is a likeness between the mystical body of Christ which is the Church and the material body of a person, yet they are not alike in all respects. For without a head the body of a person does not remain alive for any time, but the mystical body of Christ can remain alive for a time without a head on earth. For it often lacks a head on earth, although then it does have a head in heaven, namely

Christ who is the head of the Church, as we find in Ephesians 1. For it frequently does lack the highest pontiff, who is the head of the Church, and yet it does not then fail to be alive spiritually; indeed it lives with the life of grace. Nevertheless it should appoint a head for itself when it can do so conveniently. The mystical body of Christ can exist without many members, therefore, because every particular church is a member of the Church. Hence the churches of Paris, Lyons, Lucca and Genoa are members of the Church, and yet the mystical body of Christ could exist without them. For even if those churches were to abandon the faith, the mystical body of Christ would not on that account perish. And therefore although the Roman church is the main member of the Church after the pope, there could nevertheless be a Church without it.

It is said to the eighth [p.211.6] that evil could destroy the Roman church. But when Pope Pelagius says that there is no other church except that which is founded in an apostolic root, they grant this, because every Catholic church, whether it is at Rome or at Pisa or at Naples, has been founded in an apostolic root, since [it is founded] on apostolic teaching.

When Augustine is quoted [p.211.10], it is answered through the same [argument] that no human evil will be able to destroy the Church founded in the root of the Apostolic See by successions of bishops — that is, the Church maintaining the apostolic teaching and which succeeding bishops have ruled (even if sometimes such rule has been interrupted) and will rule in future (though perhaps with a large interruption in rule). And that Church, whether it is in Rome, Gubbio, Spain or Britain, cannot become null, even if all the Romans and the whole of Italy, France, Spain and Germany were to abandon the Catholic faith; because if it is not in those regions it will be in Syria, or in Egypt, or in Ethiopia, or in India, or elsewhere, where God pleases.

To the first text from Jerome [p.211.20] the answer is that blessed Jerome is talking about a past time before his own time, and is not talking about the future. And if he were talking about the future, it could be soundly understood that he was talking about an apostolic Church that follows the faith of the apostles.

A reply was given above [p.229.33] to the other text from Jerome [p.211.26], that his words should be understood with the condition “if blessed Peter brings help” etc.



## Chapter 26

**Student:** We have discussed as much as I want in this work whether the Roman church can become heretical. So let us now discuss whether a general council can fall into heretical wickedness.

### Can a general council become heretical?

**Master:** There are opposing assertions about a general council, one that it cannot become heretical, the other that it can be defiled by the stain of heresy.

**Student:** Although I most firmly believe that a general council cannot become heretical, I will nevertheless listen with a willing mind to arguments for the opposing assertion.

### That a General Council *can* err

**Master:** That a general council can err against faith seems provable by arguments and examples. Now the first argument, which was also brought forward above [p.200.32] in connection with other assertions, is as follows. There is only one Church militant which cannot err against faith, because only of the universal Church militant do we find in authentic writings that it cannot err. A general council, however, although it is part of the Church militant, is nevertheless not the universal Church. It is rash to say, therefore, that a general council cannot err against faith.

**Student:** Although a general council is not the universal Church, it does nonetheless represent the universal Church and acts in its place. And therefore just as the universal Church cannot err against faith, so also a general council cannot err against faith.

**Master:** This reply is attacked. First because, just as a general council represents the universal Church and acts in its place, so the pope too represents the universal Church and acts in its place, because he is the public person acting in place of and having oversight over the whole community. But despite this the pope can err against faith. Therefore a general council too, notwithstanding this, can err against faith. [It is attacked], second, because a person or college acting in the place of another does not enjoy every prerogative enjoyed by the community in whose place he (or it) acts. From the fact that the universal Church cannot err against faith, therefore, it cannot be inferred that a general council cannot err against faith, even though it acts in place of the universal Church.

A second argument is this. A congregation that can be dissolved by human will can err against faith, because the Church that cannot err against faith will last until the end of the age according to Christ's promise in the last chapter of Matthew [28:28]. But a general council can be dissolved by human will, as indeed it is dissolved. Therefore a general council can err against faith.

A third argument is this. People who can err against faith while living in various places will be able to err against faith even if they gather together in the same place, since coming together in the same place does not make anyone unable to turn aside from faith. Because, just as a place does not sanctify anyone, so a place does not confirm anyone in faith. But all those who come together at a general council were able to err against faith before they came together, because if 100 or 200 bishops come together it is certain that all of them could have fallen into heretical wickedness by a choice of their will. Therefore they will also be able to fall into heretical wickedness after they meet.

**Student:** That argument is not successful, because God particularly helps those who have come together as one, as the Truth himself testifies when he says in Matthew 18[:20], "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And therefore, even though those coming together at a general council were able to err against faith beforehand, after they meet and stay together in Christ's name they will not be able to err.

**Master:** That reply is attacked, because although God especially helps those who have gathered together as one in Christ's name, nevertheless, they are not confirmed in grace and faith, even while they remain together, in such a way that they are not able, by the free judgment of their will, even while they remain locally together, to withdraw from God's grace and from faith. And therefore, although God does especially help those gathered together at a general council in Christ's name, they are nevertheless not confirmed in faith by such divine help in such a way that they cannot fall into error. Hence it would be established by the above reply that no provincial council could err against faith, because, if they meet gathered together as one in Christ's name into a provincial council, God specially helps them. It would also follow by the same argument that a general or provincial chapter of monks or mendicant religious could not err against faith, because sometimes they gather together in Christ's name.

Their fourth argument is this. No human summoning of particular people, nor also any human commissioning directed towards particular people, can confirm them in faith or, also, preserve them from error, because the Catholic Church is preserved from errors only by the power of God. But particular people who have

gathered together in a general council are called only by a human summons and do not receive any authority or power except by human commission. From the fact that they have come together in a general council, therefore, they are neither confirmed in faith nor necessarily preserved from errors. Therefore after they have gathered together in a general council they will be able to fall into heretical wickedness in the same way as they could before.

Their fifth argument is this. If those gathered together in a general council cannot err against faith this is either [1] because of the brilliance of their wisdom, or [2] because of the strength of their holiness, or [3] because of their authority or power, or [4] because Christ promised the apostles that the faith would last until the end of the age. [1] It is not on account of the first [reason], both because many wise Catholics are often found outside a general council who can defend the faith even if all those gathered together in a general council were to err, and because God often reveals to children what is hidden from the wise and prudent. Therefore even if all those in a general council were to err, and only children and the unlearned were not gathered in the council, one should not in any way despair that God would not reveal the Catholic truth to the children or inspire them to defend the known truth. For this would be to the glory of God, who would in this way show that our faith does not rest on the wisdom of humans gathered together in a general council but on the strength of God, who sometimes chooses those who are foolish in the world to confound the wise. [2] Nor should it be said that those called to a general council cannot err on account of their holiness, both because sometimes holier people do not come together in a general council and because holiness does not confirm anyone in the Church militant in faith. [3] Nor should it be said that they cannot err against faith on account of the third [reason], because authority or power in this life does not confirm anyone in faith, as seems sufficiently shown by the texts brought forward above [p.180.3] where it was asked whether the pope can err against faith. [4] Nor [should it be said] on account of the fourth [reason], because in promising the apostles that the faith would last until the end of the age Christ made no mention of a general council.

### Chapter 27

**Master:** Secondly, they show by examples that a general council can err against faith. The first example is of a synod of Pope Stephen VII, which erroneously declared invalid all the ordinations carried out by Pope Formosus. Hence it [the synod] was later condemned at a synod celebrated at Ravenna by Pope John IX.

A general council can err, therefore, because it is certain that one of those synods, one of which condemned the other, did err.

**Student:** One of those synods erred, but not against faith, because it erred only about the ordinations of Pope Formosus.

**Master:** This reply is attacked, because every congregation that can err against good morals can err against faith, since bad morals blind the understanding, so anyone who can sin can also fall into an error against faith. If one of those synods erred against morals, therefore, by impiously and wickedly approving or condemning ordinations carried out by Pope Formosus, it follows that it was also able to err against faith.

**Student:** Another reply to the example just given is possible, that the synod celebrated by Stephen VII was not a general council but was a particular synod of certain bishops Stephen summoned to the particular synod.

**Master:** It seems to others that this cannot hold good, because every synod gathered together on the authority of a pope is called a general council. Hence the gloss on dist. 17, § 1 notes that “some councils are general, some are special or provincial, some are episcopal. A universal [council] is one which is constituted by the pope or his legate and with all the bishops” (that is, all those present: for we never read that all the bishops came to any general council). Since, therefore, Stephen’s synod was celebrated on the authority of a pope, it follows that it ought to be called a general council.

**Student:** Do they bring forward more examples [showing] that a general council can err?

**Master:** They also bring forward as an example the second synod of Ephesus, which erred and so “was condemned”, as the gloss on dist. 15, c. 1 notes.

Their third example is of the general council at Lyons celebrated under Gregory X, which erred against good morals by approving the Preaching and Minorite orders, as we find in *Extra, De regularibus, c. Religionum*.<sup>118</sup> That it erred they prove from the fact that the status of the Minorites is unlawful, as is manifestly certain from the constitutions of the lord John XXII, *Ad conditorem, Quia quorundam* and *Quia vir reprobus*.

A fourth example is of the council of Vienne, which erred by approving the constitution of Nicholas III beginning *Exiit qui seminatur*. They try to prove this also from the constitutions of the lord John XXII.

---

118. Wrong reference.

## Chapter 28

**Student:** I will have a discussion with you about those last two examples, which touch on the constitutions of our lord pope, when I ask you about all his teaching. Would you therefore omit them now, and try to argue for the opposing assertion, i.e. that a general council cannot err against faith.

### **That a general council cannot err**

**Master:** That a general council cannot err against faith seems provable by many arguments, of which the first is this. If the Roman pontiff is subject to some congregation's judgment in a case of faith, that congregation cannot err against faith, because the pope is not bound to obey the commands of a congregation that can err against faith; for if it could err against faith, the pope could justifiably reject its judgment. But in a case of faith the pope is subject to the judgment of a general council since, as is noted in [the gloss on] dist. 19, c. *Anastasius* [c.9, s.v. *concilio*] a synod is greater than the pope in a case of faith. Therefore a general synod cannot err against faith.

A second argument is this. There is sure judgment in the Church militant about difficulties and obscurities that arise concerning the faith, for otherwise the whole Church militant could err against faith. But final judgment about difficulties and obscurities that arise about the faith resides with a general council. Therefore a general council cannot err against faith.

A third argument is this. A congregation from which it is not permissible to appeal in a case of faith cannot err against faith. Every flawed case is to be mitigated by the remedy of appeal (2, q. 6, c. *Liceat* [c.20]). However a case of faith handled by a congregation that can err against faith can be flawed. It is therefore permissible to mitigate by remedy of appeal a case of faith handled by such a congregation, if it is flawed, and so it is permissible to appeal from it. But it is not permissible to appeal from a general council in a case of faith. For if it were permissible to appeal, the appeal would have to be made either to another general council, or to the pope, or to the universal Church. [There can] not [be an appeal] to another general council, because by the same argument it would be permissible to appeal from that general council, and so no end could be imposed in such a case. Nor should an appeal be made to the pope, because in a case of faith the pope is inferior to a general council, and therefore it is not permissible to appeal to him from a general council. Nor should an appeal be made to the universal Church, because such an appeal would be fruitless since the universal Church cannot come together as one at the same time.

A fourth argument is this. A congregation that cannot be accused of heresy cannot err against faith. However, a general council cannot be accused of heresy, for there is no person or college to whom (or which) a general council is subject in a case of faith. Therefore a general council cannot err against faith.

A fifth argument is this. That congregation whose works persist “firm with vigour” cannot err against faith, because an error against faith cannot persist with any vigour of firmness. But the works of a general council persist “firm with every vigour”, as Isidore attests (dist. 15, c. 1): “These are the four principal synods which contain our faith most fully. If there are any other councils which holy fathers full of the spirit of God have enacted, they remain firm with every vigour”. Therefore, a general council cannot err against faith.

A sixth argument is this. If the definitions and determinations of some congregation should be considered as established by universal consent, it cannot err against faith. A general council, however, is such a congregation, as Gregory attests (dist. 15, c. *Sicut* [c.2]): “All those persons whom the aforesaid venerable councils reject, I reject; those whom they honour, I embrace; because, since they have been established by universal consent, whoever presumes to loose those whom they bind, or to bind those whom they loose, destroys himself and not them.” Therefore a general council cannot err against faith.

**Student:** That text of Gregory does not seem to be to the point, because blessed Gregory is speaking there only of the four principal councils, not of all [councils].

**Master:** The reply to this is that although Gregory is speaking there of the four principal councils, he does nevertheless offer a reason why they should be accepted, namely because “they have been established with universal consent”. But no one general council was established more with universal consent than any other, because if that were so, one would be more general than another, indeed one would not be general. But the same cause and reason have the same effect. Therefore, if those four councils should be accepted precisely because they were established with universal consent, therefore all general councils should also be accepted because they were established with universal consent. But those four were established with universal consent. But a council that is absolutely to be accepted and embraced cannot err against faith. Therefore, no general council can err against faith.

A seventh argument is this. A congregation cannot err against faith if it is decreed that its decisions and works should be observed and guarded. It is

decreed, however, that the works and decisions of all general councils should be observed and guarded, as Gelasius attests (dist. 15, c. Sancta Romana [c.3]): “If there are any councils hitherto established by holy fathers after the authority of those four, we decree that they are to be both observed and guarded.” Therefore, a general council cannot err against faith.

An eighth argument is this. A congregation cannot err against faith if, if it did err, the universal Church would err. But if a general council errs the universal Church would err, because if it erred there would be no one who would dare or be able to defend orthodox faith. Therefore a general council cannot err against faith.

### Chapter 29

**Student:** Although my belief that a general council cannot err against faith is undoubted, would you nevertheless not put off making clear how those who maintain the opposite assertion reply to the arguments brought forward for the truth.

#### Replies to arguments that a General Council cannot err

**Master:** They reply to the first argument [p.245.8] that this is false: “If the Roman pontiff is subject to some congregation’s judgment in a case of faith, that congregation cannot err against faith,” because although the pope is not subject to the judgment of any congregation which does err against faith (since from the very fact that it erred pertinaciously against faith no Catholic would be subject to its judgment in a case of faith), he is bound to obey a correct judgment (not a false one) of any congregation which *can* err against faith but *does not*, just as every Christian is subject to the pope in a case of faith when he does not err against faith, though he can err against faith. In this way too, the subjects of bishops, in respect of things certainly not contrary to orthodox faith,<sup>119</sup> are subordinate to the bishops, even though bishops, even in respect of things that are certainly heresies condemned explicitly, can err against faith.

And when it is taken [as a premise] that the pope is not bound to abide by the commands of a congregation that can err against faith, this is denied; although he should not obey the commands of any congregation which *does* err against faith, just as no other Christian should. Nor can the pope refuse to be judged by a congregation that can err against faith, although he can refuse to be judged by one that does err against faith.

<sup>119</sup> Bishops cannot enforce an opinion unless a pope or council has defined it as orthodox. See above, p.60.32.

**Student:** What if a general council did in fact err by wrongly and falsely condemning the pope for heretical wickedness?

**Master:** They say that in such a case nothing would remain for the pope except either to convoke another general council, if he were able to do so, or to protect himself by force or, if all human counsel and help were to fail, to commit himself to divine grace and endure patiently the injury inflicted on him.

To the second argument [p.245.16] it is said that although “judgment” is taken in many ways, at present it is enough explain two of them. There is a judgment of sure and truthful knowledge by which anyone judges well of what he knows, and a judgment of that kind pertains to anyone skilled in any art. There is another judgment of authority or judicial sentence. Speaking of judgment in the first way, there is in the Church militant certain judgment with respect to things that must be believed explicitly to attain eternal salvation, because until the end of the world there will always be some Catholics who will remain explicitly in the true faith about such matters. But about things that need not be believed explicitly, there need not always be in the Church militant such judgment, because there are many things about which it is better to doubt piously than to define rashly one or the other part of a contradiction; however, about all such matters it will never be the case that all Christians will either err pertinaciously or doubt pertinaciously, but there will always be some in the Church who at an appropriate time and place will seek the truth about such matters with diligent care, ready also to hold it explicitly if they find it, whether through their own meditation or through an opportunity provided by the Scriptures or by other people (whoever they are) or through divine revelation. And therefore it will never happen that all will fall into heretical wickedness. But it is not necessary that the judgment by authority or judicial sentence in the Church militant be always certain; on the contrary it can sometimes fail and, it seems, sometimes has failed. For in the time of Pope Liberius, who held the papacy for six years after he had agreed with the Arian perfidy, there was no true judgment by authority and judicial sentence about matters pertaining to faith. Before the time of Constantine, also, judgment of that kind about matters of faith seems to have failed, because, as Isidore attests (dist. 15, c. 1), in those days Christianity was divided into various heresies because Catholics had no opportunity to meet as one.

**Student:** Isidore says there that bishops had no opportunity to come together as one, and therefore Christianity was divided into various heresies. We are given to understand by this that if there had then been an opportunity for convening a



general council, Christianity would not have been divided into various heresies, and so it seems that a general council cannot err against faith.

**Master:** They reply to this that Isidore is speaking about a time when bishops were Catholic, and it is true that as long as it remains in Catholic truth a general council of Catholic bishops cannot err. Nevertheless all those bishops, along with all their clergy, could err against faith.

**Student:** Tell me how they reply to the third argument.

**Master:** They reply to the third argument [p.245.21] that if a general council were to err against faith, it would be permissible to appeal from it. And when it is said that [there could] not [be an appeal] to another council, they say that it would be permissible to appeal to another general council if an opportunity were given to call together another council. And if that council in its turn were to err, it would be permissible to appeal to another. And it would always be so until Catholics met. Again, if the pope were not present at a general council, it would be permissible to appeal to the pope himself if the council erred, or to the pope together with another council to be summoned. Appeal should chiefly be made to the universal Church, if it were able to come together. But if Christianity were so infected with heretical wickedness that the pope, the cardinals, prelates, the clergy, rulers and the powerful were heretics, and only a few simple, poor people remained in the Catholic faith, while a council regarded as general erred against faith, nothing would remain for the faithful but sorrow and grief and to hold onto the advice blessed Jerome gives a prudent churchman when wickedness prevails in what is called the house of God and justice is completely oppressed. He says (11, q. 3, c. *Quando ergo* [c.23]): “Therefore when a prudent and intelligent churchman learns that there are many impieties in what is called the house of God, and that they are not only many but also strong and able to oppress justice, and that the madness of the learned has gone so far that they accept money for judgment and do everything for gifts, and shun the poor in the city gates and disdain to listen to them, let him be silent at that time,<sup>120</sup> lest he give what is holy to dogs and throw pearls before swine which, turning, will trample them,<sup>121</sup> and let them imitate Jeremiah<sup>122</sup> when he says, ‘I sat alone’ ‘because I was full of bitterness.’” In the same way, when a Catholic and faithful man learns that there are many heresies in Christianity, and that Catholic truth has fallen among the mob and that the madness of prelates, the learned, the

120. “Enemies of the just, taking bribes, and oppressing the poor in the gate. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence at that time, for it is an evil time” Amos 5:12-13.

121. Matthew 7:6.

122. Jeremias 15:17, Lamentations 1:20.

clergy, the powerful and the rulers has gone so far that they are trying to destroy orthodox faith, and disdain to listen to the teaching of the holy fathers, and are killing, oppressing, persecuting and attacking the defenders of Catholic truth, let him be silent at that time and not appeal publicly to them, lest he give what is holy to dogs and throw pearls before swine, which, turning, will trample them by expounding the sacred Scriptures falsely, despite their opposition,<sup>123</sup> distorting them towards heretical falsity. And let him imitate Jeremiah when he says, “I sat alone, because I was full of bitterness.”

To the fourth argument [p.246.1] it is replied that a general council can by law be accused of heresy. For if a general council that was convoked and was at first faithful were to slip into heresy before its physical dissolution,<sup>124</sup> it could by law be accused of heresy before the Catholic pope, if he were not present, and could be judged according to canonical laws. But if the pope were present in such a council and together with that congregation fell into heretical wickedness, the power of judging them all would devolve upon Catholics, just as, if all the prelates and clergy of the world were infected with heretical wickedness, the power of judging them all would devolve upon faithful Catholic laypeople. As long as a general council remains faithful, therefore, it is subject in a case of faith to no person or special college, although it is subject to the universal Church even if it remains faithful. But if such a congregation were to fall into heresy before those who had come together physically separated from each other, that whole congregation would immediately be subject by the law itself to another person, college or congregation.

To the fifth argument [p.246.5] it is replied that Isidore is speaking about general councils properly convoked and celebrated without any error in good morals or in Catholic truth.

To the sixth argument [p.246.12] it is replied similarly that Gregory is speaking about general councils properly celebrated by Catholics.

To the seventh [p.246.35] it is replied in the same way that Gelasius is speaking about councils properly celebrated “by holy fathers”, who, if they had been heretics, would not have been holy.

To the eighth [p.247.6] it is replied that if a general council were to fall into heresy there would remain other Catholics who, secretly and publicly, as was

---

123. Cf. 254.21.

124. Dissolution as a body *de facto*. As soon as it fell into heresy, it would have been dissolved as a general council, though it might continue as a body to meet and be called a general council. See above, p.183.18.

appropriate, would dare to defend orthodox faith. For he who is able to raise up spiritual children of Abraham from stones, his fleshly children having been condemned, as the Baptist teaches [Matthew 3:9], is also able to raise up Catholic children of God from stones, that is from laypeople and abject and despised paupers, if all those gathered together at a general council fall into heresy, indeed if all the clergy of the world and those powerful in secular affairs are condemned for heretical falsity. For just as he [God] first founded the Catholic faith on unlearned laypeople, having rejected priests, religious people and magistrates, so if all the learned and powerful fall into a false understanding, he can provide paupers, the simple, the unlearned and rustics for building up the orthodox Church.

### Chapter 30

**Student:** I am moved to astonishment that they presume to affirm that all the clergy can be ensnared by heretical falsity. And because scarcely ever does anyone assent to an error without reason, would you reveal what moves them in favour of that opinion?

#### That all the clergy *can* err

**Master:** Their principal reason is this one, which has often been brought forward for many assertions [p.200.32], namely that there is only one Church militant that cannot err against faith. It is certain, however, that the congregation of believers, which in fact consists, or can consist, of the clergy and the laity, cannot err against faith. The whole multitude of the clergy, however, is not that congregation, although it is part of it, just as the whole multitude of the laity is also part of it. Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy can err against faith.

**Student:** Do they have any less principal foundations for that assertion?

**Master:** They try to establish it with many other arguments. Thus their second reason is this. That whole particular multitude of Christians who in all places create a scandal for orthodox faith, and who alone divide the Church and lead people away from the house of God, can err against faith. The multitude of the clergy is like that, as blessed Jerome attests (24, q. 3, c. *Transferunt* [c.33]): "Examining old histories thoroughly, I cannot find that the Church was divided and the people led away from the house of the Lord except by those whom God had appointed as priests, and by prophets, that is investigators. Therefore they return to that complicated trap, placing a stumbling block in all places." We are given to understand by these words that priests and investigators, that is doctors, have been accustomed to divide the Church of God and to lead people away

from the house of God by placing a stumbling block for the Catholic faith everywhere. Therefore all priests can err against faith. By the word “priests”, however, inferior clergy are meant, according to the gloss notes on *Extra, De cohabitatione clericorum et mulierum*, c. *Si quisquam sacerdotum* [X 3.2.2, s.v. *Sacerdotum*]. Therefore the whole multitude of clergy can err against faith.

Their third reason is as follows. The whole multitude of those who are worse than the laity can err against faith, because there is no apparent reason why God would particularly preserve such a multitude from error against faith. But the clergy are worse than the laity, according to what the gloss on *De penitentia*, dist. 1, c. *Quis aliquando* [De Pen. D.1 c.87, s.v. *gloriam*] notes. It says, “You have it from this chapter that the clergy are worse than the laity, and above 24, q. 3, c. *Transferunt*.” Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy can err against faith, just as the whole multitude of the laity could err against faith.

Their fourth reason is this. The whole multitude of those from whom all evil proceeds can err against faith, because heretical wickedness is known to come forth especially from them. But “all evil has proceeded from priests”, as the gloss on dist. 50, c. *Et purgabit* notes [c.15 s.v. *a domo*]. Therefore the whole multitude of clergy can err against faith.

Their fifth reason is this. The whole multitude of those whom the laity have the power to judge can err against faith. But as Jerome attests the laity have the power to judge bad clergy. In 8, q. 1, c. *Vereor* [c.22], he says: “I fear how the Queen of the South, who has come from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, will judge the people of her time; and the Ninevites, who did penance at the preaching of Jonah, will condemn those who spurned a saviour greater even than Jonah; in this way very many among the people will judge bishops.” We are given to understand by these words that it is rash to affirm that the laity will never judge bishops by a comparison of their [respective] lives. Just as the laity can err in morals and faith, therefore, so too bishops, and by the same argument other clergy, can err against good morals and faith. Therefore it is rash to affirm that the whole multitude of clergy will never err against faith.

Their sixth reason is this. The multitude of those than whom the laity can be better can err against faith. But the laity can be better than the clergy, as blessed Jerome attests (8, q. 1, c. *Qualis* [c.21]): “How edifying will it be for a student if he perceives that he is better than his master?... It is violently destructive of the Church of God”, i.e. this, “for the laity to be better than the clergy.” It is clearly implied by these words that the laity can be better than the clergy. Therefore just

as the whole multitude of the laity can err against faith, so it will be possible for the whole multitude of the clergy to err against faith.

Their seventh reason is as follows. The multitude of those who can sin and among whom scarcely anyone is found who is truly penitent after sin can err against faith, because sin blinds the understanding and so can lead at length to error against faith, if it is not erased by penitence. But all the clergy can sin, and among the clergy scarcely anyone is found who is truly penitent after sin, as John Chrysostom attests. In *De poenitentia*, dist. 1, c. *Quis aliquando* [c.87], he says: "Who has ever seen a cleric readily doing penance? If he is discovered, he humbles himself, sorrowing not because he has sinned, but being dismayed because he loses his glory." We are given to understand by these words that the clergy are seldom found truly penitent. It is rash to affirm, therefore, that the whole multitude of the clergy will never err against faith.

Their eighth reason is as follows. A multitude can err against faith if they are known to excel other Catholics and believers in ecclesiastical dignity alone, which does not necessarily confirm nor increase virtues and grace. For because grace and virtues are neither necessarily conferred nor increased by such a dignity, they have nothing by reason of which they cannot err against faith, just as [they could] before. But the clergy possess nothing necessarily more than lay Catholics and believers except their clerical status, which can be called an ecclesiastical dignity. But no ecclesiastical dignity in the Church militant necessarily confers grace and virtues nor necessarily increases them, as was shown above by many texts [p.180.20]. Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy can err against faith, just as they were all able to err against faith when they were laymen.

Their ninth reason is this. If the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err against faith just as the whole multitude of the laity can err against faith, this is either by reason of [1] the rule and authority that the clergy have over the laity, or by reason of [2] the greater holiness in which the clergy are strong, or by reason of [3] the wisdom and learning the clergy have beyond the laity, or [4] because the whole Catholic faith would be endangered if the whole multitude of the clergy were to err.

Not because of the [1] first, both because, as has been said, ecclesiastical dignity or rule does not necessarily confer on the one possessing it, nor necessarily increase in him, grace and the virtues, and because, with respect to ecclesiastical rule and power, the highest pontiff possesses plenitude of power, and yet the

pope can be stained by heretical wickedness. Therefore also the whole multitude of the clergy notwithstanding such rule can be defiled by heretical wickedness.

The [2] second also does not prevent it, because many of the laity are found who are holier and more unwavering in faith than the clergy. Blessed Ambrose attests to this (8, q. 1, c. *Quid autem* [c.23]): “But why do I censure you when you can convict me with one word. For I am convicted when in this respect I see the clergy more negligent than you. How can I correct the children when I cannot improve my brothers? or with what confidence may I be angry with the laity when I am silent at the shame of my brethren?” We are given to understand by these words that the laity can be more holy than the clergy. Therefore it ought not to be said that because they are more holy the whole multitude of the clergy could not err against faith.

Nor should it be said [3] that the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err because of the greater wisdom or learning in which the clergy are strong, because just as wisdom or learning often occasion stability in faith, so they often occasion heretical wickedness. Hence it is that the authors of heresies are commonly learned men with knowledge of the divine Scriptures, taking their errors from those sacred Scriptures and trying to support those errors through the sacred Scriptures, as blessed Clement attests in dist. 28 c. *Relatum* [rather, D.37 c.14]. Blessed Jerome also implies it in his prologue to the Bible, where he asserts that some people twist sacred Scripture, despite its opposition, according to their own will. It should not be said, therefore, that on account of greater knowledge of the Scriptures the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err against faith.

Nor should it be said that it cannot err against faith because [4] faith would be endangered if the whole multitude of the clergy were to err, because, as blessed Paul witnesses in 1 Corinthians 2[:5], “Our faith does not stand on human wisdom but on the power of God.” But by God’s power Catholic faith can be preserved among the laity just as it can among the learned and the clergy, especially since simple and poor laypeople are often found to be more stable in faith than the clergy, and particularly because Christ founded the faith through the ignorant and the unlearned. Therefore even if all the clergy were to deviate from the faith, faith would not be endangered.

Their tenth reason is the following. The whole multitude of the clergy is not holier nor more stable in faith than was the college of apostles; at the time of Christ’s passion, however, the college of apostles erred in faith; therefore also the whole multitude of the clergy can err against faith. They say, therefore, that

just as it is rash to say that the whole multitude of clergy will err against faith, so it is rash to say that the whole multitude of the clergy will *not* err against faith, either at the time of anti-Christ or at another time. For of no congregation, multitude or college should it be firmly maintained that it will never err against faith except in so far as this can be gathered from Christ's words promising the apostles that the Catholic faith will remain until the end of the age. However, although Christ spoke in that promise to the apostles who were bishops, nevertheless he was not speaking exclusively of them, but he spoke of people in the future. Among those in the future, however, he did not make any special mention of the clergy. Nor should his words be understood of any particular multitude of Christians, but of the whole multitude, because it will never be true that the whole multitude of Christians errs in faith, but whether it will be true that the whole multitude of clergy errs in faith is not known by us, but by God who knows everything that will happen. The gloss on 24, q. 1, c. *A recta* [c.9] agrees with this assertion when it says [s.v. *novitatibus*], "I ask of what church do you understand that it is said that it cannot err." In response it says, "I reply that the congregation of believers itself is here called the Church." We gather from these words that the congregation of believers is that Church of which it is said that it cannot err. The faithful laity, however, belong to the congregation of the faithful in the same way as the clergy. It should not be understood of the multitude of the clergy, therefore, that it cannot err against faith.

### Chapter 31

**Student:** You have brought forward enough arguments for that assertion, which I consider false. Therefore I ask you to bring forward some arguments for the opposite assertion.

#### **That all the clergy *cannot* err**

**Master:** There are two principal foundations for the opposite assertion, from which it follows that the multitude of clergy cannot err against faith. The first is that the Church cannot err against faith, the second is that the multitude of clergy alone is the Church.

**Student:** Their opponents grant that the Church cannot err against faith, so prove only that the clergy alone are the Church.

**Master:** That the clergy alone are the Church we gather manifestly from words of the holy fathers. For as we read in dist. 63, c. 1, Pope Hadrian says: "Let any secular ruler or powerful man, or layman with some other office, who tries to act against a common, harmonious and canonical election of an ecclesiastical

order be anathema, until he obeys and agrees to what the church has shown itself to want in the ordination or election of its own ruler.” It is clear from this that the church is distinguished from the laity. Therefore the clergy alone are the Church.

Again, Innocent III says (*Extra, De constitutionibus, c. Ecclesia* [X 1.2.10]): “We, considering that no power over churches and ecclesiastical personages has been bestowed on the laity,” etc. We are given to understand by these words that the laity have no power at all over the Church or ecclesiastical personages. It is certain, however, that some laypeople acquire power over other laypeople. Therefore laypeople are not ecclesiastical personages or part of the Church, and so only the clergy are called the Church.

**Student:** It is acknowledged that only the clergy are called the Church and men of the Church. Therefore, since it is certain that the Church cannot err against faith, it follows that the multitude of the clergy will never deviate from faith. So do not press on further with that argument but try to bring forward others.

**Master:** A second argument for that assertion is as follows. The whole multitude of those to whom (and not others) it pertains to determine questions of faith, and to correct those erring against faith, cannot err against faith. Because if the whole of that multitude were to err, the whole of the faith would perish. But it pertains to the clergy alone, and not to the laity, to determine questions of faith and to correct those erring against faith. Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err against the faith, since the faith cannot perish. The major premise seems certain, because until the end of the age the Church of God will never be without the authority to determine questions of faith and to correct heretics. The first part of the minor premise is proved. That it pertains to the clergy alone to determine questions of faith is clear, because it pertains to the Apostolic See, over which clergy alone preside, to determine questions of faith (24, q. 1, c. *Quotiens* [c.12] and *Extra, De baptismo et eius effectu, c. Maiores* [X 3.42.3]). The second part [of the minor premise] is also proved because heresy is an ecclesiastical crime. Therefore it pertains to the clergy alone to take cognisance of the crime.

**Student:** I will ask you a lot about that matter later. So would you pass over it and bring forward another reason for that assertion.

**Master:** Their third argument is as follows. The whole multitude of those who are not subject to the judgment of anyone outside that multitude cannot err against faith, because if the whole of that multitude were to err against faith



there would be no one who was able to punish heretics. But, as the sacred canons attest, the clergy are not subject to the judgment of anyone else except clergy. Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err against faith.

Their fourth argument is as follows. The whole multitude of those who are known to have alone (and not others) the power of choosing the head of the Church cannot err against faith, because the Church will never come to the state in which it cannot choose a head for itself, since indeed every congregation can appoint a head for itself. But according to canon law only the clergy, and not the laity, have the power to choose the head of the Church, i.e. the highest pontiff. Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy will never err against faith.

Their fifth argument is as follows. The house of God which is the Church militant cannot not exist, just as the Church cannot not exist (24, q. 1, c. *Pudenda* [c.33]). But the house of God which is the Church militant necessarily includes priests, because it necessarily has the power binding and loosing, as Jerome attests (24, q. 1, c. *Omnibus* [c.20]): "Having taken everything into account, I think it is not rash for me to say that others are in the house of God in such a way that they are the very house of God which is said to be built on the rock, which is called the unique dove.... This house also received the keys and the power of binding and loosing." We gather from these words that the house of God, which is called the unique dove, which it is certain is the Catholic Church, has the keys and the power of binding and loosing. However the keys and that power are found only in priests. Therefore there will be some priests in the Catholic Church until the end of the age, and consequently the whole multitude of the clergy will never err against faith.

A sixth argument is as follows. Until the end of the age Christ will remain with the Church militant, not only through faith and love but also by his sacramental presence. Therefore there will always be some priests in the Church who will have the power to make the body of Christ. But if the whole multitude of the clergy were to become heretical, there would be no one in the Church with power to make the body of Christ. This will never happen, so the whole multitude of the clergy will never deviate from faith.

Their seventh argument is as follows. The ecclesiastical hierarchy will continue until the end of the age. But the ecclesiastical hierarchy consists only in prelates, priests and the rest of the clergy. Therefore some prelates, priests and other clergy will continue believing and Catholic always until the end of the age.

The last three arguments are confirmed by one argument as follows. If the whole multitude of the clergy could become heretical, by the same reasoning the whole multitude of the clergy could be eliminated by death, indeed could be killed. But the whole multitude of the clergy will never be eliminated before the end of the world; because if the whole multitude of the clergy were eliminated, not only would the Church be deprived of the keys to the kingdom of heaven, the power of binding and loosing and also the sacrament of the body of Christ and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but it would also be deprived of the power of having them. For although the Church would *de facto* lack those things if the whole multitude of the clergy were to become heretical, nevertheless some Catholics could be ordained by heretical clergy, if any were remaining. It seems to some people that this would be permissible in that case, just as at a time of necessity it is permissible to receive the sacrament of baptism from heretics. When these were ordained all the above matters could be rectified. But if no clergy, either Catholic or heretical, were to remain, there could never be anyone in the Church to have the keys and the power of binding and loosing or the ability to consecrate the body of Christ, and there could never be an ecclesiastical hierarchy. And so it is not fitting to say that the whole multitude of the clergy can be eliminated by death. Therefore<sup>125</sup> it is not fitting to affirm that the whole multitude of the clergy can fall into heretical wickedness.

Their eighth argument is the following. The whole multitude of those from whom whoever is separated cannot have peace with the Church of God cannot err against faith. But whoever is separated from the whole multitude of the clergy cannot have peace with the Church of God, as Cyprian attests (7, q. 1, c. *Novacianus* [c.6]): “Whoever, therefore, does not preserve peaceful union and unity of the Spirit and separates himself from the tie of the church and the college of priests can have neither the power nor the honour of a bishop, since he has not wanted to have the unity or peace of the episcopate.” We are given to understand by these words that whoever separates himself from the college of priests cannot have honour, peace or unity with the Church of God. Therefore the whole multitude of the clergy, which is understood by the word “priests”, cannot err against faith.

### Chapter 32

**Student:** Those arguments for an assertion that I think is true are enough for me, and I do not think that their opponents could find persuasive replies to them.

---

125. But this does not seem to follow, if heretical clergy can make valid ordinations.

And yet so that I might understand their strength, tell me how those opponents try to reply to them.

### **Replies to arguments that all the clergy cannot err**

**Master:** They think that the first [p.255.33] is entirely frivolous, because it proceeds by ambiguity. For this word “church” has various senses. Sometimes it is taken for a material house, and it is taken that way in 1 Corinthians 11[:22] when the Apostle says, “What, have you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God... ?” Second, the word “church” is taken as a congregation of Christian believers, general or particular, which can include both men and women. And “church” is taken that way in Acts 20[:28] when the Apostle says to the elders, “Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God”, where the word “church” includes both men and women, because it does not pertain to bishops to rule men only, but also women. The Apostle also takes the word “church” in this sense in his letter to Philemon [v.2] where he speaks of “the church which is in thy house”, because in Philemon’s house there were both men and women and perhaps no cleric (except possibly Archippus), because Philemon himself was not endowed with an ecclesiastical dignity. The Apostle always takes “church” in that sense also in his other letters. “Church” is taken in that way in Proverbs 5[:14] also, which says, “I have almost been in all evil, in the midst of the church and the congregation.” “Church” is also taken that way in *De consecratione*, dist. 1, c. *Ecclesia* [c.8], where Pope Nicholas says, “How would a church, that is a gathering of Catholics, be established without the assent of the Apostolic See, when according to sacred decrees not even a basilica, which is known to include within it the company of Catholics, should be built without the pope’s instruction?” Here “church” is taken as a gathering of Catholics, which does not exclude women or laymen. They say that the word “church” is taken in divine Scripture only in the above two senses. And therefore they say that laymen and women belong to the Church, as that is taken in divine Scripture (which is the basis of the whole of Catholic faith), and are ecclesiastical personages just like the clergy.

In canon law, however, this word “church” has other senses apart from the above, because the clergy have restricted the word “church” to the clergy, calling only the clergy the church (although, as has been said, according to the way divine Scripture uses the word “church”, laymen and women are ecclesiastical personages as are the clergy, so they are part of the Church like the clergy). And if we take “church” in this way only for the clergy, it still has

several senses, according to what the gloss on *Extra, De verborum significatione*, c. [*Cum*] *clerici* notes [s.v. *ecclesia Placentina*, X 5.40.19], because “sometimes it denotes only a bishop (7, q. 1, c. *Scire*), sometimes it is used for the greater part of a chapter (dist. 56, c. *Apostolica*), sometimes it is restricted to canons of a mother church (dist. 63, last § and 10, q. 1, c. *Antiquos*), sometimes it denotes any church in a province (*Extra, De usu pallii*, c. *Cum super*)”.

Through this they answer the first argument, saying that one church can err against faith while another cannot do so. The clergy are the church that can err, but they are not the Church that cannot err against faith, though if they are Catholic they are part of the Church that cannot err. They try to prove by a text of blessed Ambrose that there is indeed a church that can become heretical. Ambrose says (24, q. 1, c. *Que dignior* [c.26]): “If there is some church that rejects faith and does not possess the bases of apostolic preaching, it should be abandoned, so that it cannot scatter its stain of perfidy. The Apostle also clearly affirmed this when he said [Titus 3:10], ‘A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid.’” It is clearly apparent from these words that some church can be infected with heretical wickedness. And they say that that church is the church of the clergy, which would then not be the true Church but should be called the church of the wicked. But when you said that it is known that only the clergy are called the church and ecclesiastical personages, they say that, as has been shown, the opposite is known through divine Scripture and also through the ordinances of the holy fathers.

**Student:** The first argument is not as strong as it seemed, because it has been clearly proved that the word “church” often comprehends laymen and women also. So indicate how they reply to the second argument.

**Master:** They reply to the second [p.256.16] by denying its major premise, saying that although when the clergy are Catholic and learned in the sacred page and the laity are unlearned and ignorant of the divine Scriptures, the laity should not principally involve themselves in questions of faith, but should learn from the clergy about matters of faith, and should not principally be the correctors of those erring against faith, but should carry out what has been prudently ordained by prelates for the correction of heretics; yet if all the clergy fall into heretical wickedness, all of the above pertain to the laity, so far as their knowledge is sufficient.

**Student:** I will ask more questions about that matter later, so would you pass on to the third argument.

**Master:** The reply to the third argument [p.256.34] is that the clergy are not exempt from the judgment of the laity except by the will of the laity, and therefore if all the clergy were to become heretics they would all be subject to the judgment of the laity, because it was never the intention of the laity to grant immunity to the clergy when they were all attacking Catholic faith.

**Student:** I will discuss this with you later as well, so tell me how they reply to the fourth reason.

**Master:** The reply to the fourth [p.257.4] is that if all the clergy were to become heretical the power of choosing the highest pontiff would devolve upon the laity, just as also the laity have sometimes had the power of choosing the highest pontiff.

**Student:** This too I will particularly investigate at another time, so set forth how they reply to the fifth reason.

**Master:** The three following reasons [p.257.11] seem to contain the same difficulty. For this reason, some of them say that although the greater part, indeed almost the whole multitude, of the clergy can err against faith and pertinaciously attack Catholic faith, there will always remain at least one Catholic priest bishop who can licitly carry out those things that pertain to his order. And therefore they grant that all the masters of theology and the clergy inferior to a priest bishop can err against faith, yet God will always preserve some orthodox priest bishop so that the Church does not lose the power of possessing the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the authority of binding and loosing and the power of consecrating the body of Christ and having an ecclesiastical hierarchy. But those who maintain that the whole multitude of the clergy can become heretical say that, even if all the clergy were to become heretical, the Church would not on that account lose the power of having the things referred to above, although it could never have them by human power but by a miraculous divine operation. For if all the clergy were to become heretics, God could in various ways ordain priests and bishops from some lay Catholics. He could do this by his will alone, and he could also reveal it to his Church. Once this revelation was made and confirmed by miracle, all Catholics would be bound to consider those so ordained by God as true bishops and priests.

**Student:** It is not likely that God would ordain bishops and priests in that way.

**Master:** They say that just as it is rash to affirm that God will ordain bishops and priests in this way, so also is it rash to deny this, because this would be rashly to predict future events. Indeed they regard it as a manifest heresy to say

that God cannot do this, because it impudently strikes against the article of faith concerning God's omnipotence.

**Student:** Tell me their reply to the last reason.

**Master:** Their reply to the last [p.258.21] is that whoever separates himself from the multitude of the clergy when they are Catholic cannot have peace with the Church of God, and it is about such a case that Cyprian's words should be understood. When all the clergy were heretics, however, whoever did not separate himself from their college, at least spiritually, and was not labouring under probable<sup>126</sup> ignorance, would not have peace with the Church of God.

### Chapter 33

**Student:** Although I maintain that the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err against faith, I nevertheless do not want you to reply to the arguments to the contrary, because I will try to find reasonable responses to them by my own meditation, which I intend to discuss with you after the completion of this present work. Now, however, since you seemed to imply that some people affirm that the whole multitude of men, both clergy and lay, can err against faith, I beg you to try to find some reasons for that assertion.

#### **That all males can err**

**Master:** It is true that some people maintain that the whole multitude of men can err against faith, and that the Catholic faith could be preserved in Catholic women. The main argument for these [assertions] is ready to hand, and is of the kind touched on often above [p.200.32]. The Church militant which cannot err against faith is only one, because nowhere do we find that there are several churches militant which cannot err against faith. The multitude of men is not that one single church which cannot err against faith but is only part of that Church (when the men are Catholic). For if men were not part but the whole of that single Church that cannot err, no woman would be saved, because no female wayfarer is saved unless she is part of that Church militant which cannot err. But if the multitude of men is not that single Church which cannot err, it follows that the whole multitude of men can err against faith.

Their second reason is as follows. The whole multitude of the clergy can err against faith; therefore the whole multitude of men can also err against faith. The consequence is proved, because the whole multitude of men and the whole multitude of the clergy differ only as two parts of the Church militant, one

126. Acting under probable ignorance seems to mean acting, after genuine investigation, on an opinion that is mistaken but supportable by arguments.

greater, the other lesser. But there seems no reason why the greater part cannot err just as the lesser can, because no reason can be thought of why the whole multitude of men cannot err except that men are wiser than women, or holier, or have a greater capacity for ecclesiastical power (that is for the orders and keys of the Church, for the power of consecrating the body of Christ, and for dispensing ecclesiastical sacraments). But from all of these it can equally be concluded that the whole multitude of the clergy cannot err against faith as that the whole multitude of men cannot err against faith, as seems clear from what was said before [p.257.11]. If the whole multitude of the clergy can err against faith, therefore, the whole multitude of men can also become heretical; but the whole multitude of the clergy can become heretical, as, they say, was proved above [p.251.18 ff]; therefore, etc.

A third reason is the following. If something has happened once, and it has not been revealed by God that it will not happen again, and it cannot be proved by natural reason that it will not happen, it is rash to assert that that will never happen. But the whole multitude of men did once err against faith, namely, at the time of Christ's passion. For then the whole faith of the Christian Church remained in the mother of Christ. But it has not been revealed by God that this will never afterwards happen, and it is certain that this cannot be proved by natural reason. It is not affirmed without rashness, therefore, that the whole multitude of men will never err against faith.

**Student:** Christ revealed to the apostles that the whole multitude of men will never err, when he said in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." He did not say this to them for the apostles themselves, because they would die before the end of the age. Therefore he said it to them for their successors.

**Master:** They do not think that this is conclusive, because Christ said those words to the apostles for the faithful who believed in him and for those who would believe in him in future. However women would believe in him just like men. Therefore Christ's words should not be restricted to men. For the same reason, they say that Christ's words when he said to Peter [Luke 22:32], "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not", should not be restricted to men.

#### **Chapter 34**

**Student:** It should in no way be believed that the whole multitude of men will err against faith, just as it should not be believed that unbelievers will occupy the whole of Christianity. For this seems very clearly to conflict with divine

Scripture and the words of Christ. As we read in Matthew 24[:21-2], when Christ foretold the destruction of the temple and the Jewish people, which was later carried out by Titus and Vespasian, he said, “For there shall be then great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be. And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved.” We gather from these words that there will never be as great a suffering as that caused by the Romans. However if all the men of Christianity were destroyed, there would be a much greater suffering of Christians than that which the Romans caused. Therefore the whole multitude of Christian men will never be destroyed and consequently will never err against faith.<sup>127</sup>

Again, the greatest turning away from the faith by Christians in the future will be in the time of anti-Christ. But at that time many Christian men will remain faithful, as the Truth himself attests. Speaking about a future persecution at the time of anti-Christ he says (Matthew 24[:24]), “For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and will show great signs and wonders, in so much as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” We gather from these words that in the time of anti-Christ there will be some elect holy men who will not be led into error. Blessed John seems to attest to this in various places in Revelations.

These are [reasons] among others that plainly convict the aforesaid assertion of improbability. Although I do not doubt the conclusion, would you nevertheless make known how they can be answered, so that I might understand the truth more clearly and have the opportunity of thinking about many things relating to that matter.

### Chapter 35

**Master:** Do you want me to reveal what I think about the foregoing?

**Student:** I do not want you to disclose what you think in your own mind, but would you not hesitate to recite some replies that could be thought of and maintained by someone?

**Master:** With this agreed, that everything I say will be taken only as what some investigator of difficult questions can consider should be said as harmonious with the truth, I will show how it is possible to reply to the above examples.

**Student:** I have made this agreement with you for the whole work [p.2.12] and want to keep it, and I ask you to keep it.

---

127. Cf p.258.1.



**Master:** I also want you not to attribute the things to be said to brother M[ichael] and his followers. For just as I have recorded many opinions in what has been said above that openly conflict with assertions of the lord John and his followers, which nevertheless brother M[ichael] and his followers do not maintain, some of which indeed they try to attack, so in the future part of this work I will (unless you do not want me to) report many things which brother M[ichael] and his followers try to disprove.

**Student:** I have wanted you to hold to this method from the start, because I want you to record the opposing opinions of all Catholics, and even sometimes opinions held by no Christian (though they can have Catholic or heretical defenders). For in this way we will exercise the wit of the studious more variously and more effectively.

**Master:** With these agreements in place, I will try to explain for your curiosity how it is possible to reply to the objections brought forward. To the first, two things can be said. The first is that Christ's words, "For there shall be then great tribulation," etc., taken literally, should not be understood of the persecution undertaken by Titus and Vespasian. This seems to be obviously provable, first because the suffering caused by the flood, when there were only eight souls saved in the whole world, was much greater than the suffering caused by Titus and Vespasian, since then there were many souls saved.

**Student:** Those words of Christ are not meant of the general suffering of all mortals, which was the kind brought about by the flood, but of the particular and special suffering of the Jews, of which there was none greater than that brought about by the Romans.

**Master:** This reply can be attacked as follows. For Christ is not talking there only about the particular suffering of the Jews, but he is talking also of the suffering of other peoples and kingdoms, since just before that he says [Matthew 24:7], "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," etc. These words cannot be understood about Judea only, which was a single kingdom. So Christ's words "For there shall be then great tribulation," etc., should not be understood of the suffering inflicted on the Jews by the Romans. They are understood, therefore, either of the general suffering of all living persons or of the particular suffering of some certain people or peoples. They cannot be understood of a general suffering, because that which was brought about by the flood was greater than that which the Romans brought about. Nor can they be understood of the particular suffering of a people or peoples brought about by the Romans, because the suffering of the people of Sodom, in which

everyone perished, was greater than the suffering inflicted by the Romans. The above words of Christ, therefore, should not be understood of the suffering that was brought about by the Romans.

**Student:** Can it be proved in another way that those words of Christ should not be understood of the suffering brought about by the Romans in the time of Titus and Vespasian?

**Master:** It is shown in another way as follows. The suffering that will occur at the time of anti-Christ will be greater than the suffering brought about by the Romans. Therefore those words should not be understood of the suffering brought about by the Romans.

**Student:** So, about what suffering should they be understood?

**Master:** It can be said that those words should be understood particularly of the suffering of the faithful, of those, that is, who maintain a right faith in God, among whom some are the elect, and others those foreknown for eternal punishment. And not of any suffering, but of the suffering that will come about under anti-Christ, when those maintaining the right faith will have so great a suffering as they never had [before], although often unbelievers have had greater suffering and perhaps will have in the future. For the suffering brought upon unbelievers by the flood was greater than the suffering of believers will be in the time of anti-Christ, because in the flood all the unbelievers perished together, but it will not be so great for believers at the time of anti-Christ because not all of them will perish. Greater too was the suffering of the people of Sodom when five cities were destroyed than the suffering of believers will be in the time of anti-Christ. And so the suffering of unbelievers has often been worse than will be the suffering that Christ predicted will come. This will nevertheless perhaps be so great that very few believers will remain firm in faith. And whether those believers will be men or women, only God knows, and those to whom God has particularly revealed it.

To the second objection [p.264.11] it can be said that the elect include men and women, and so from the fact of Christ's promise that in the time of anti-Christ the elect will endure it cannot be concluded that those elect will be men. For women will be able to be elect then.

**Student:** It seems that those who maintain that assertion do not think much of the stability and constancy of Christians.

**Master:** There is a certain assertion that openly affirms that it is rash to assert that at every time there will be Christians who will be more constant in faith

than the Jews were. For although there have been Christians very constant in faith, and some will be firm in faith in the future, it can nevertheless not be known by any wayfarer, except one to whom God has revealed it, whether the multitude of Catholics will come to as small a number as there was in the time of Noah, the times of the Patriarchs and under the old law, and whether Saracens or other unbelievers will occupy all the lands of Christians and believers. For to define something in such matters is rashly to predict future events. When the faults of Christians demand it, God will be able to allow them all to be subjugated by unbelievers and, with a few exceptions, to be converted to their sect. Afterwards, if he wishes, he will be able to convert the whole world to the faith through the piety of the few, just as he subjugated a great part of the world to the faith through a few disciples. And therefore some say that if the Saracens or other unbelievers invade Christianity, it will be rash for Christians to presume that they are to be protected by divine power, if they have neglected to purify their lands — throughout every part of which by now have spread heresies, simony, persecutions, slanders and false charges against the innocent, violent judgments, wars, disagreements and discords about possessions and lordships and rights, occupations and invasions of things belonging to others, ambitions, favouritism of persons, impious and wicked distribution of honours, anger, envy and injustices and innumerable other spiritual and carnal vices with which all, or almost all, of Christianity seems to be infected. For if all the heretics and those who favour them and those involved in other evils are killed, and the lands of all Christians are occupied by unbelievers, God will also be able, by means of two or three or twelve or twenty or more of the orthodox whom he will choose, to increase Christians more than ever before and, with the unbelievers rooted out, to subject the Holy Land and more regions than they ever had before to their control. Nevertheless they refuse to predict what will happen about those matters, since they do not believe that they have a spirit of prophecy. And therefore they grant, as you said before, that it should not be believed that unbelievers will ever occupy the whole of Christianity; and nor should it be believed that they will *not* occupy the whole of Christianity; for neither [of these alternatives] is certain except to God and to anyone to whom God has revealed it. Although some people say that in the time of anti-Christ the persecution and annihilation of Catholics will be so great that every region throughout the whole world will be occupied by unbelievers and apostates, and they say that it cannot be known from divine Scripture or the teaching of the universal Church whether something similar will happen, or will not happen, before the times of anti-Christ.

**Student:** It is certain that faith in Christ will persist to the end of the age. Therefore it is certain that unbelievers will never occupy the whole of Christianity.

**Master:** They reply by saying that you are arguing badly, because faith in Christ will be able to persist among Catholics scattered and hiding in lands occupied by unbelievers, just as now some Jews and Saracens (even publicly) remain in Christian lands.

### Chapter 36

**Student:** I think that assertion so absurd that I do not consider it worthy of further disproof. So, putting it aside, I want you briefly to investigate another more reasonable assertion, in order to complete the matter that I began. For I ask you to disclose to me whether some people think that the whole multitude of Christians can be stained by heretical wickedness.

#### Can the whole body of Christians become heretics?

**Master:** Jews, Saracens and pagans maintain very strongly that the Christian faith is erroneous.

**Student:** I do not mean to ask about them, but about Christians, including among Christians also heretics.

**Master:** I do not know of any Christian who would maintain this.

**Student:** Although you do not know that any Christian maintains this, would you nevertheless try to think of some arguments for it.

**Master:** No argument except a sophistical one can be brought forward for a false conclusion.

**Student:** I agree that no argument except a sophistical one can be adduced for that assertion; yet arguments which are persuasive and difficult to resolve are often introduced on behalf of falsities, so would you try to find some like that.

**Master:** That the whole multitude of Christians having the use of reason can err against faith is proved by the following argument. With respect to the possibility of erring and sinning, the same judgment should be made about many, and about few, who have freedom of will and ability to sin. But on account of their freedom of will and ability to sin a small multitude of Christians can err against faith. For the same reason therefore, the whole multitude of Christians can err against faith. This argument is confirmed, because where there is the same cause there should be the same effect. However, the reason why a Christian can err

against faith is because no one believes unless he is willing, in that the articles of faith are not self evident. But that cause is found among the whole multitude of Christians, because the articles of faith are not evident to the whole multitude, and so they do not believe unless they are willing. Therefore the whole multitude of Christians will be able to err, just as one by himself.

A second argument is the following. A multitude not confirmed in faith can err against faith, just as a multitude of those who have the use of reason who have not been confirmed in grace can sin. The whole multitude of Christians, however, has not been confirmed in faith, because no Christian in this life has been confirmed in faith. *A fortiori*, therefore, the whole multitude has not been confirmed in faith. Therefore the whole can err against faith.

A third argument is this. A multitude when it is alone can err against the faith, if it can err against the faith after others are added to it (others through whom nothing of goodness or virtue is diminished in it, but rather increased), because the multitude is stronger with others added than it was alone. But the whole multitude of Christians now existing, if it remains intact and no one dies, after many others have become Christians and priests and bishops [i.e. with many others added], will be able to err against the faith. Therefore this multitude, if it remains alone (with no one else becoming Christian, before anyone else accepts the faith), can err against the faith. And thus this [statement] is possible: "The whole multitude of Christians errs against the faith".

A fourth argument is this. It does not seem provable by any authoritative text that it is not possible for all Christians apart from two bishops to err against faith, because all Christ's promises about faith lasting to the end of the age can be saved if there are at any time at least two Catholic and faithful bishops.<sup>128</sup> Let it be assumed, therefore, that all Christians become heretics except for two bishops. With this assumed it is proved that those two bishops can err against faith before anyone else becomes a Catholic. This is shown first thus: neither of them has been confirmed in faith at the time; therefore either of them can err against faith. Second thus: God would not have a greater care for those two bishops because they were the only believers than he had for our two first parents when they were the only believers; but our first parents were able to err against faith when they were alone; therefore those bishops too would be able to err against faith.

A fifth argument proves particularly that the whole multitude of Christian men and women who have use of reason can err against faith. Because the

---

128. Cf p.261.14.

whole multitude can err against faith if, when they have erred, all Christ's promises about faith lasting to the end of the age are saved. But if the whole multitude of Christian men and women who have the use of reason err, Christ's promises about the faith persisting can be kept. For spiritually Christ is truly with baptised infants through grace and virtues. And Peter's faith, for which Christ prayed, would not fail, because it would be found in infants, for infants have the habit of faith. If the whole multitude of Christians who have use of reason err, therefore, Christ's promises can be kept through baptised infants. Therefore it is rash to affirm that the whole multitude of Christians who have use of reason will never err against faith.<sup>129</sup>

---

129. What emerges from book 5 seems to be this. Any part of the Church may become heretics. Christ's promise to be with his Church all days until the last day (Mt. 28:20) guarantees only that there will always be at least one individual in the Church who will speak up against an error being proclaimed as Catholic truth. We cannot know whether unbelievers will capture Rome and hold it until the last day, or whether Roman Christians will all become Muslims or follow the anti-Christ. The future is known only to God and those (if any) to whom he reveals it. Christ has promised that the faith will persist until the last day, but at some future time it may survive only in a few scattered Christians hiding in lands occupied by unbelievers.