

If infallibility is a charism properly belonging to the church, this can be so, in my judgment, only insofar as the indicative implies an imperative and the infallible church remains ever the fallible church, analogously to the way in which the justified remains ever the sinner, the believer ever the unbeliever, and so on. This is as true of exercises of the charism on the part of representatives of the church in acting as its magisterium (*doctores*) as it is of exercises of the charism on the part of the whole church in accepting the magisterium's teachings (*auditores*).

Of course, any talk of "the charism of infallibility" presupposes the validity, specifically, the *credibility*, of the Christian witness by which the church is constituted as the church and receives any of the charisms properly belonging to it. But from the standpoint of anyone who does not share this presupposition, all such talk of a *charism* of infallibility is at best talk expressing a *claim* to infallibility whose validity may be more or less problematic. Therefore, while the church advancing this claim may be unhesitatingly conceded to have the right to determine what is appropriately Christian—namely, that which is in substantial agreement with the formally normative witness constitutive of the church—whether or not it also has the right to determine what is existentially, and therefore morally as well as metaphysically, credible or true may be exactly as problematic as its claim to be infallible.

Even so, if it is the church itself rather than any teachings of the church that is said to be infallible—its teachings being at best irreformable or irreversible—there would appear to be room sufficient to distinguish adequately between the constitutive *assertions* of the church and any and all *formulations* of its assertions, together with the assumptions and consequences belonging to these formulations. What is irreformable or irreversible is not the formulations of the assertion, or their assumptions and consequences, but the assertions themselves as well as, naturally, their presuppositions and implications.

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