

Dogma Doctrine Theology

What Are They?

Dogma

Has been infallibly taught by the Church *as something that is divinely revealed*.

Examples: Divinity of Christ, Assumption of Mary

Infallible Doctrine

Has been infallibly taught by the Church but *not* (or *not yet*) defined as divinely revealed.

Examples: Priesthood is reserved to men, Anglican orders invalid

Non-Infallible Doctrine

Is taught by the Church but has not been infallibly defined.

Examples: Bishop and priest are two different ranks of holy orders, Mormon baptism is invalid

Theological Opinion

Is not taught by the Church but is permitted by the Church.

Examples: The fire of purgatory is Christ himself, there are 9 choirs of angels

We can represent the relationship between dogma, doctrine, and theology as a pyramid.

Dogmas and infallible doctrines (the most authoritative teachings) are at the top.

To learn more about this subject, go to:

www.JimmyAkin.com/dogma

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About the Examples

Divinity of Christ: Defined by First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325).

Assumption of Mary: Defined by Pius XII ([Munificentissimus Deus](#); 1950).

Reservation of the priesthood to men: Defined by the Church's ordinary Magisterium (cf. [Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Professio Fidei](#) 11).

Anglican orders invalid: Also infallible doctrine (cf. [Doctrinal Commentary](#) 11).

Bishop and priest different ranks of holy orders: This question was settled at Vatican II, which taught that "by episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of orders is conferred" ([Lumen Gentium](#) 21). Council did not use the language needed to infallibly define this.

Mormon baptism invalid: First taught by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ([decree, June 5, 2001](#)). Since the CDF cannot teach infallibly, this must be non-infallible doctrine.

Fire of purgatory is Christ: Mentioned by Benedict XVI as an opinion of some recent theologians ([Spe Salvi](#) 47).

9 choirs of angels a matter of theological opinion: See John Paul II ([general audience, August 6, 1986](#)).