

Institutionum ad verbi Dei scripti intelligentiam (*Institutes on the Understanding of the Written Word of God*)

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Tract. III, Quaest. V, App. 2, Q. 4.

Whether it is to be held as a matter of faith that Clement XI, now reigning, is the true successor of Peter in the Papacy.

§. I. *Opinions are presented.*

1. IN this question, which can be approached in two ways: first, whether this proposition, “Clement XI is the true successor of Peter, because it is established by the common acceptance of the Church that he was duly elected as Pope,” is a matter of faith; or second, whether it is merely a theological conclusion, because it is deduced from this premise of faith: “A person duly elected and commonly accepted by the Church as Pope is the successor of Peter,” and from this other proposition acquired by natural reason: “Clement XI was duly elected as Pope”—for indeed, all things which are deduced from matters of faith by human reasoning are theological conclusions. In contrast, matters of faith are said to be those which are contained either in Sacred Scripture or in the doctrine of the Church, whence that is to be held as a matter of faith to which faith immediately gives assent by virtue of divine revelation alone, as immediately proposed to us by the Church.

There are various ways of speaking about this. The first holds that it pertains to faith neither primarily nor secondarily that such a specific person is the true Pope; but that this is only certain with moral certainty.

The second holds that the said proposition is a theological conclusion because it is deduced from one premise of faith and from another premise known with moral certainty or through natural experience.

The third [argument], which is reducible to the second, states that it is scandalous and reckless to deny that such a particular man is the Supreme Pontiff.

The fourth [argument] is that it is immediately of faith that this particular man who has been duly elected and peacefully accepted by the Church as Pope is the true successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ. Ferre, in question 11, §7, states that this opinion is now so common that no one would dare assert the opposite.

§. II. *Conclusion responding to the question.*

2. I say: it is to be believed immediately as a matter of faith that Clement XI, now reigning in the Church, is the legitimate successor of Peter and the true Vicar of Christ. Thus teach Johannes a Sancto Thoma in [Summa Theologica] 2.2, disputation 8, article 2; Nuño [Nuñez] in volume 2, question 26, article 3, discussion 1; Gravina in book 4, controversy 4, disputation 3; Suarez in disputation 10, section 8; and Ferre in the place cited against Luther, who in his book on the power of the Pope said: “No one without revelation could reasonably assert that such a person is the head of a particular Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is the head of the Roman Church.”

It is proven firstly. The Church, which cannot err in matters of faith, now presents Clement XI to the faithful as the living and infallible rule of faith: therefore, by virtue of this proposition, it is immediately a matter of faith that Clement XI is the legitimate successor of Peter. The antecedent is certain: for the Church expects from Clement XI definitions of faith, desires the rule of morals, seeks the canonization of Saints, requests indulgences, and requires solutions in doubts concerning matters of faith. The consequence is proven: assent given to a proposition dictated by the Church in matters pertaining to faith is elicited immediately from faith, but the assent given by the faithful to this proposition—“Clement XI is the true successor of Peter”—rests upon the proposition of the Church saying that he is such. Therefore this assent, being in a matter pertaining to faith, is elicited immediately from faith.

You may respond that this proposition—“Clement XI is the Supreme Pontiff”—is a matter incapable of definition of faith, because it is contained neither in Sacred Scripture nor in the tradition of the Church, and otherwise the Church cannot define as a matter of faith except what is contained in one or the other source.

3. On the contrary, from the times of the Apostles it has been held as certain and practiced in the Church that the true successor of Peter is he whom the Church has elected and commonly accepted as such. Therefore, if the Church has elected and commonly accepted Clement XI as the true successor of Peter, then it is already established from the tradition of the Church that Clement XI is the legitimate successor of Peter and the true Vicar of Christ. This is demonstrated in two ways: First, when the Pope defines something, not only is that which he defines a matter of faith, but moreover it is a matter of faith that here and now he defines it correctly. This comes from the practice of the Church alone, thus understanding what Christ said to Peter, and consequently to all his legitimate successors: “Therefore I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail,” Luke 22,

v. 32. Since, therefore, it is established by the same practice of the Church that he is the true successor of Peter whom the Church peacefully receives as such, it follows that it is immediately a matter of faith that this man who has been duly elected and peacefully accepted by the whole Church is the true and legitimate Pope. Second, just as the election of such a person as Pope can suffer defect either on the part of the person elected or on the part of the Electors, so the particular definitions of such a Pontiff can suffer defect, either on the part of the definition, if it does not have the requisites, or on the part of the matter defined, if it is not in the realm of faith; and nevertheless it is to be believed immediately as a matter of faith that such a particular definition is correct and optimal, because the practice of the Church teaches that whenever the Pontiff defines, he defines correctly. Similarly, therefore, it will be immediately a matter of faith to believe that Clement XI is the true and legitimate successor of Peter, because the ancient tradition of the Church teaches that he is the true Pope whom the Church peacefully accepts as such. For God would never allow someone who had not been canonically elected to be peacefully accepted by the Church as the living rule of faith; or if He permitted such peaceful acceptance, He would supply for whatever defects were committed in his election.

4. It is proven secondly: If Clement XI were to define something concerning faith, it would have to be infallibly believed as a matter of faith. Therefore, it must be infallibly held as a matter of faith that Clement XI is the true successor of Peter. The antecedent is certain and is established from what has been said previously. The consequence is proven thus: The reason why whatever Clement XI might define in matters of faith would have to be infallibly believed is because Christ promised infallibility in defining matters of faith to the true successors of Peter. But it cannot be infallibly believed as a matter of faith that such a definition comes from a true successor of Peter unless it is also infallibly believed as a matter of faith that such a person is the true successor of Peter. Therefore, as soon as one infallibly believes whatever Clement XI defines in matters of faith, one already infallibly believes that he is the true successor of Peter. The minor premise is proven: One believes the definition infallibly insofar as one infallibly believes that such a definition comes from a true successor of Peter. Therefore, according to the principle that “the reason why something has a certain quality must itself possess that quality to an even greater degree,” it follows with even stronger reason that one infallibly believes that such a Pontiff, from whom the definition proceeds, is the true successor of Peter.

If you should respond that the infallibility of a definition does not rest upon the infallibility of the one defining as its formal reason, but only as a condition and instrument through which God speaks. Therefore, since such great infallibility is not required in the instrument as is required in the formal reason to which the effect is assimilated, it will be sufficient for the infallibility of a Pontifical definition that it be infallible that this man defining is the Supreme Pontiff, but it is not required that this be immediately of faith.

5. Against this: although the infallibility of a definition is formally reducible only to the first revealing truth, and to the true successor of Peter it is reducible merely as a condition sine qua non; nevertheless, there exists such a connection between this formal reason and the

aforementioned condition, in order to grant infallibility to a Pontifical definition, that a Pope's definition cannot be immediately of faith unless it is immediately of faith that such a one defining is the true successor of Peter. This is explained thus: e.g., Titius here and now immediately assents through faith to some proposition defined by the Pontiff, because God reveals it to him through the true successor of Peter. Therefore, it is necessary that he immediately assent through faith that God speaks to him through the successor of Peter. But if he does not assent through faith that Clement XI is the true successor of Peter, he cannot immediately assent through faith to this proposition: *God speaks to me through the successor of Peter*, for this proposition contains these two things: first, *the first truth speaks*, and second, *He speaks through the successor of Peter*. Therefore, in order to assent immediately through faith to that whole proposition, it is necessary that he immediately assent through faith to both propositions, and thus that Clement XI is the true successor of Peter.

§ III. *Objections Resolved.*

6. It is objected firstly that in the Church, the certainty of the Sacraments is equally as necessary as the certainty of the visible Head. But for the certainty of the Sacraments, it suffices that we believe by faith their truth in general, without believing their certainty in particular cases. Therefore, by the same reasoning, for the certainty of the visible Head, it will be enough to believe by faith that every duly elected man is the true successor of Peter, even if it is not believed by faith that this particular man was duly elected and is the true successor of Peter. Therefore, it is not immediately a matter of faith that the Pontiff now reigning in Rome is the true successor of Peter. The minor premise is certain. For although it is a matter of faith that everyone duly baptized is free from original sin, nevertheless it is not a matter of faith that this particular person is duly baptized. Similarly, although it is a matter of faith that in every properly consecrated host the body of Christ is physically and really present, nevertheless it is not a matter of faith that this particular host is duly consecrated, and thus that it physically contains the body of Christ.

It is answered by denying the Major premise. For the certainty that the Church must have regarding the Sacraments is different from the certainty it must have regarding its visible Head. Concerning the Sacraments, the Church must believe as a matter of faith that the Sacraments were instituted by Christ the Lord for the attainment of our salvation; likewise, that the Ministers of the Church have the power to confect and administer them. But that this or that particular Minister has truly confected or validly administered a Sacrament, this the Church is not bound to believe as a matter of faith. It is most true that the Minister of the Church, whenever he uses the proper matter and proper form with the proper intention, validly confects or confers a Sacrament; but that such a Minister, even if he has used the prescribed matter and prescribed form, has truly confected a Sacrament, is not certain, because he could have been deficient in intention. Therefore, although we are bound to believe as a matter of faith that in every properly consecrated host there is the true Body of Christ, we are nevertheless not bound to believe as a matter of faith that in this particular determined host there is the true Body of Christ, because it may be that the Priest did not have the intention of consecrating it. Similarly, we are bound to believe as a

matter of faith that through the Sacrament of penance sins are remitted, such that one who is absolved from sins on earth by a proper Minister is also absolved from these same sins in heaven; but that this particular person is absolved from sins is not certain with the certainty of faith, because the Minister could have been deficient in intention which, being an internal act, cannot be known with certainty by the faithful. Therefore, they are not bound to believe as a matter of faith that this particular Minister administered a true Sacrament; it is enough that they believe as a matter of faith that the Redeemer of souls instituted true and efficacious Sacraments for their salvation. However, regarding the certainty of the Pope, the reasoning is different, since the faithful are not only bound to believe in general that definitions emanating from a properly elected and commonly accepted Pope are matters of faith; but they are bound to believe immediately as a matter of faith that definitions proceeding from this particular Pontiff, to whom the Church submits itself as the true Vicar of Christ, are to be held as matters of faith. They cannot show immediate faith to these unless they also immediately believe as a matter of faith that this particular Pope is the true successor of Peter. Indeed, if one believes such a definition because of this Pope who defines it, it is necessary that one believes this defining Pope has the power to define matters of faith, which power he cannot have unless he is the true successor of Peter. Therefore, it is not sufficient for the faithful to believe in general that a man properly elected as Pope and peacefully accepted by the Church is a living rule of faith, true successor of Peter, and Vicar of Christ; but furthermore, one must believe as a matter of faith that this Clement XI, to whom the Church now submits itself as its true visible Head, is properly elected and the true successor of Peter, because Christ granted infallibility in definitions only to Peter and his legitimate successors.

7. The second objection: the definitions made in matters of faith by a General Council are to be held as matters of faith no less than the definitions made in the same matters by the Roman Pontiff. But for those conciliar definitions to be believed as matters of faith, it is not necessary to believe as a matter of faith that the Bishops gathered in the Council are true Bishops. Therefore, neither will it be necessary to believe as a matter of faith that this Roman Pontiff is the true successor of Peter in order for his definitions of faith to be believed. The consequence is proven thus: Christ, who granted to the Roman Pontiff the authority to define matters of faith, bestowed the same authority upon the Bishops gathered in a General Council, who are true Bishops and true successors of the Apostles. Therefore, if we are bound to believe the definitions of these Bishops as matters of faith without having to believe as a matter of faith that they are true Bishops and true successors of the Apostles, similarly we should be able to believe as matters of faith the definitions of such a specific Roman Pontiff without having to believe as a matter of faith that he is the true Pope, the true successor of Peter.

It is answered, given the premises, by denying the conclusion. For the definitions in matters of faith made by such a determined Pontiff are believed for one reason, and the definitions in the same matter made by a General Council are believed for another reason; the latter are believed as matters of faith because they are made in a Council assembled by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff and confirmed by him, not because they are made by such and such Bishops. Therefore, there is no reason why one must believe as a matter

of faith that the Bishops assembled in that very Council are true Bishops; the former are believed because they are made by the Supreme Pontiff, to whom alone Christ granted infallibility in defining matters of faith, and from whom this infallibility is derived to the Council. And therefore it is necessary to believe as a matter of faith that such a Pontiff is the true successor of Peter. Nor did Christ ever confer upon a Council, that is, upon Bishops assembled therein, that power or infallibility concerning matters of faith which He gave to the Supreme Pontiff: for He did not say: *I have prayed for you all, that your faith may not fail*, but He said: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail*. This infallibility is indeed in the Council, but connotatively in relation to the Supreme Pontiff, as will be explained more fully *in the following third appendix*. To what is added in the proof, that Bishops are the successors of the Apostles, it is said to be true when speaking of succession in ordinary power, not in extraordinary power; for the Apostles, as immediate Legates of Christ, had a twofold power, one extraordinary, the other ordinary. All Bishops as their successors possess this ordinary power, by means of which they can do whatever the Apostles did. But the extraordinary power, which the Apostles had to determine matters of faith, does not pass to their Episcopal successors, but ceased with them. Yet the power of defining matters of faith, since it was ordinary in Peter, passes to all his legitimate successors, to whom, just as to Peter, it was granted by Christ; hence it is necessary to believe that this one is the true successor of Peter, so that his definitions may be believed.

8. The third objection: It is not established by faith that the Electors of Clement XI were legitimate; nor that they observed all the requirements that ought by law to be observed in the election of the Supreme Pontiff. This is only known to him from the faith of those who promulgate the election. Therefore, since the Church is not certified with the certainty of faith regarding the validity of the election, neither is it bound to believe as a matter of faith that Clement XI is the legitimate successor of Peter.

I respond by making a distinction in the antecedent: “It is not established by faith that the Electors, etc.” Before the peaceful acceptance of such a man by the Church as the true Pontiff, let the antecedent stand. After the peaceful acceptance by the Church, I deny the antecedent and the consequence. Before the Church’s acceptance, it cannot be established as a matter of faith that this man has been properly elected, because the peaceful acceptance of this elected man as the successor of Peter is equivalently, or virtually, a definition that he is Pope. Thus, through such acceptance, as if through a definition, it is declared that the one who is peacefully accepted by the Church as Pope is the true successor of Peter; and then it is theologically inferred that in his election, whatever was required by law to be observed was indeed observed.

9. You may insist: before something is immediately defined as a matter of faith, it is necessary that it be at least mediately of faith, that is, that it be virtually contained either in Scripture or in the tradition of the Church. But before the said acceptance by the Church, it is not mediately of faith that this man is Pope; therefore, that common acceptance by the Church cannot have the character of a virtual definition.

It is answered by denying the minor premise, for from the moment the Cardinals, in the person of the Church, promulgate this man as duly elected, he already enters the order of Peter's successors, all of whom are contained in that proposition of Scripture: "*You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.*" And thus it is already mediately of faith, that this Pope, following the subsequent acceptance by the Church, is declared to be immediately of faith that this man duly elected is the true successor of Peter. And this proposition of faith legitimately proceeds from the Cardinals: because according to Pontifical laws they are assembled to duly elect, and to legitimately promulgate the elected one, and to present him to the whole Church, so that it may accept him whom they have elected as the true successor of Peter. For since that action is constitutive of the Pope, they cannot assemble by virtue of a decree of the present Pope, and thus they assemble by virtue of the decrees of predecessor Pontiffs, just as in the case of schism a Council is assembled in the same manner.

10. It is objected, fourthly, that it is not a matter of faith that this man elected as Pope has been validly baptized. Therefore, neither is it a matter of faith that he is the true successor of Peter. The antecedent is certain. The consequent is proven first: only a validly baptized man is a subject capable of the Papacy. Therefore, if faith cannot be given regarding his baptism, neither can faith be given regarding his Papacy. It is proven secondly, in this enthymeme: this man is Pope, therefore he is validly baptized. The consequent is contingent, therefore the antecedent is not a matter of faith. Otherwise, there would be a true antecedent and a false consequent. It is proven thirdly. That this man elected as Pope is the successor of Peter is a condition sine qua non necessarily required for a definition emanating from him in matters of faith to be held as a matter of faith. But also that this man be validly baptized is a condition sine qua non for him to be Supreme Pontiff. Therefore, if it is not a matter of faith that this man is validly baptized, neither will it be a matter of faith that he is Supreme Pontiff.

It is answered that, given the antecedent, the consequence is denied. For although for the Papacy it is required, first of all on the part of the subject, that he be validly baptized, nevertheless faith that he is Pope does not rest on this. It is believed that this man is Pope because the Church submits to him as such and peacefully accepts him as Pope. Therefore, it is not necessary that if it is a matter of faith that this man has been validly elected as Pope, it would likewise be a matter of faith that this same man has been validly baptized. And thus the response to the first proof of the consequent is evident. To the second proof, we respond by distinguishing the antecedent: the consequent is contingent by virtue of its terms, I concede; as inferred from an antecedent of faith, I deny. This proposition: "this man (pointing to the Pope) is validly baptized" is contingent by virtue of the connection of the predicate with the subject; however, as a conclusion inferred from this antecedent: "this man is Pope," it is necessary and theological. Let there be an example: this proposition, "Peter will be saved," is contingent by virtue of its terms; nevertheless, as inferred from this infallible antecedent, "God has predestined Peter," it is infallible. To the third proof, we respond by distinguishing the major premise: it is a condition sine qua non in a general sense, I deny the major; it is a condition that directly influences the fact that the Pope's definition is a matter of faith, I concede the major. And

the minor premise is distinguished: it is a condition *sine qua non* directly influencing the fact that it is a matter of faith that this man is Pope, I deny the minor; it is a condition *sine qua non* pertaining to the subject upon whom the Papacy falls, I concede the minor. And the consequence is denied. Faith, therefore, that the Pope's definition is legitimate rests on the fact that God speaks through the mouth of the true Pontiff, and thus it is immediately reduced to God speaking as the formal influencing reason, and to the mouth of the true Pontiff as the animated instrument through which divine truth becomes known to us. Thus, it is necessary to believe both that God speaks and that He speaks through the true Pontiff. Faith that this man is the true Pope, however, is reduced to the Church, which accepts him as Pope, but it is not reduced to the fact that he is baptized. Hence, although being baptized is required on the part of the subject, nevertheless since it influences neither principally nor instrumentally the faith in this truth: "this man is Pope," it is not necessary to believe immediately as a matter of faith that this man is baptized.

11. The fifth objection: It is not heresy to deny that Clement XI is the true Pope. Therefore, it is not a matter of faith that Clement XI is the true Pope. The consequence is valid, because heresy is the denial of some truth of faith. The antecedent is proven thus: One who denies that Clement XI is the true Pope would not be denying anything else of faith, but would merely be schismatic. But being schismatic is not the same as being heretical, therefore, etc. The minor premise is proven: heresy is opposed to faith, and schism is opposed to charity, from which the peace of the Church is derived. Therefore, etc.

This is confirmed first: Currently it is not a matter of faith that Clement X was the true Pope, therefore neither was it a matter of faith that he was the true Pope when he reigned. The antecedent is evident, for this is believed because men testify to it either by word or in writing. The consequence is proven: If during the reign of Clement X it had been a matter of faith that he was Pope, it would still now be a matter of faith that he was Pope, because what was once a matter of faith will always be a matter of faith to have been a matter of faith. Therefore, if it is not now a matter of faith that he was Pope, neither was it a matter of faith that he was Pope when he reigned.

This is confirmed secondly: Currently, the definitions issued in matters of faith by preceding Pontiffs are matters of faith, and yet it is not now a matter of faith that they were true successors of Peter. Therefore, a Pope's definition can be a matter of faith without it being believed as a matter of faith that he was, or is, a true successor of Peter.

It is confirmed thirdly. The Pope, immediately upon becoming a heretic, ceases to be Pope by the invisible judgment of God. But it is not a matter of faith that the current Pontiff is not a heretic. Therefore, neither will it be a matter of faith that the current Pope is the legitimate successor of Peter.

12. The objection is answered by denying the antecedent. To the proof, the major premise is denied, because one who denies that Clement XI, whom the Church believes to be the true successor of Peter, is the true Pope, directly departs from the faith of the Church, and thus is a heretic, and not merely a schismatic. St. Augustine says in book 20 against Faustus, chapter 3: "Schism is holding the same opinions and worshipping with the same

rites as others, while delighting solely in the division of the congregation; heresy, however, holds opinions different from those which the Church believes.” Therefore, whoever obstinately denies that Clement XI is the true Pope would hold an opinion different from what the Church believes, and would consequently be a heretic, not merely a schismatic. And although it has not yet been definitively established that it is immediately a matter of faith that the Pope reigning at a given time is the true Pope, and several Catholic authors hold that this is not immediately a matter of faith, neither objection is valid. The first is not valid because Martin V, in his condemnation of the errors of Wycliffe at the Council of Constance, among the interrogatories to be made to those suspected in faith to determine whether they believe legitimately, includes this question: “Likewise, whether he believes that the canonically elected Pope, whoever he may be at the time (with his name explicitly stated), is the successor of Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God?” Nor does the second objection stand, because we maintain our position as more probable, indeed as the safer one, though not so certain that it cannot be denied by anyone. Nevertheless, those who deny it should carefully consider the words of the aforementioned interrogatory, as well as the reasons adduced in its proof, and take counsel for themselves.

13. To the first confirmation, we respond by denying the antecedent, because if it was to be believed as a matter of faith that Clement X was the true Pope and legitimate Vicar of Christ while he was living and governing the Church of God, why should it not now be a matter of faith that he was such, just as it is regarding all his predecessors? For if historians were to weaken this faith by writing in their accounts that Linus, Cletus, Clement, and the rest were Supreme Pontiffs, it would follow that it would not even be a matter of faith that Peter was the Supreme Pontiff, since historians write the same about Peter as they do about his other successors.

To the second confirmation, we respond by denying the minor premise. Indeed, from the definitions of faith issued by these Pontiffs themselves, it follows that it is a matter of faith that said Pontiffs were true successors of Peter.

To the third confirmation, we respond by denying the antecedent. For the Pope, however much he may be a heretic, must always be regarded as the true Pope until the Church declares him to be a heretic and as such deposes him. For just as God confers the Papacy only upon him whom the Church elects, so He does not take away the Papacy except from him whom the Church declares a heretic. This matter, however, will be discussed more openly in the following question, § 2, number 11. And although it is not formally a matter of faith that the current Pontiff is not a heretic, it nevertheless seems virtually certain that he is not such, from the fact that it is believed as a matter of faith that he is the true Pope.

14. It is objected thirdly, that for definitions made by the Pontiff in matters of faith to be believed as matters of faith, it is not necessary to believe as a matter of faith that the Pontiff from whom they come is the true Pope. Therefore, it follows that a definition can be a matter of faith, yet it need not be a matter of faith that such a Pontiff is the Pope. The antecedent is proven: for the definitions of the Pope in matters of faith to be believed with

supernatural faith, it suffices to believe without doubt that this man is the Pope. Just as, for example, Titius, who has never seen Vienna, believes without doubt that Vienna exists, and yet he does not believe by divine faith that Vienna exists, for concerning it he has only moral certainty, founded on the testimony of so many trustworthy men asserting that Vienna exists. Therefore, etc. The antecedent is proven: the faith by which one believes that this particular man is the true successor of Peter does not influence the faith by which one believes that his definitions in matters of faith are infallible truths of faith, since this latter faith is influenced only by the First Truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures; for God does not now speak through the mouth of the defining Pontiff as He once spoke through the mouths of the Prophets. Therefore, etc.

It is answered by denying the antecedent. To the proof, the antecedent is again denied, and to its proof it is said that pontifical authority does not influence the faith by which we believe pontifical definitions as a formal reason for believing. Pontifical authority influences only as a condition without which the formal reason for believing would not be applied, insofar as the Pontiff, in defining, merely declares something to be of faith and consequently to be believed because God has revealed it. Nevertheless, it is necessary to believe by faith that such a declaration proceeds from one who has the authority to declare matters of faith. Hence, if it is not established with metaphysical certainty that the one who declares truly has the authority to declare, we could never believe with metaphysical certainty that such a declaration is legitimate. Therefore, when we believe a pontifical definition, we believe two things by faith: first, that which is proposed in such a definition, and this we believe because God has revealed it; second, that such a definition is legitimate, and this we believe by the same faith by which we believe that this defining Pontiff truly has the authority to define. Thus, although the faith by which we believe that this defining person is the true Pope functions only as a condition with respect to the matter defined, nevertheless, for us to believe that the definition is legitimate, it does not function as a condition, but is the very faith itself. For we believe a definition to be legitimate only because we believe that it comes from a legitimate Pontiff. Nor, in order to believe by faith that this particular Roman Pontiff is the true Pope, must we consider whether he defines something of faith; it is to be believed by faith that he is the true Pope even before he defines anything, because the common acceptance of the whole Church is a declaration, or an equivalent definition, that this particular person elected as Pope is the true successor of Peter. Therefore, whether he defines something or not, as long as he is commonly accepted by the whole Church, it must be held as a matter of faith that he is the legitimate successor of Peter.