

Cursus Theologicus juxta mentem Doct. Joannis Dunsii Scoti: Tomus Tertius, Complectens Tractatus de Virtutibus Theologicis, de Vera Religione, de Aliquibus Quæstionibus Libertinorum, & de Munere ac Methodo Prædicandi (*Theological Course According to the Mind of Doctor John Duns Scotus: Volume Three, Including Treatises on the Theological Virtues, True Religion, Certain Libertine Questions, and the Duty and Method of Preaching*)

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- OCR of the original text by AI (*claude-3-7-sonnet-20250219*).
- Translation of the original text performed by AI (*claude-3-7-sonnet-20250219*).
- Last Edit: April 2, 2025.
- Version: 1.0
- Selection pages: 300–310

Tract. II, Disp. III, Quaest. III

Whether IT IS A MATTER OF FAITH that Benedict XIV, now reigning and occupying the Episcopal See of Rome, is the Pastor of the Universal Church, the Vicar of Christ, and the Successor of Peter?

1. Some deny this, willing to accept as a matter of faith that the legitimate Bishop of Rome, or successor of Peter, is the Pope. But they are unwilling to accept as a matter of faith that this particular man, for example, Benedict XIV, is the Supreme Pontiff: because (they say) it is not a matter of faith that he was canonically elected as the Bishop of Rome, or as the successor of Peter, since this has not been revealed by God. Let our position be the following

CONCLUSION.

2. *It is a matter of faith that Benedict XIV, legitimately elected and accepted as such by the Church, is the true Pope, Vicar of Christ, and successor of Peter.* This is the most common view among Theologians. It is proven 1. from the Council of Constance, final session, where Martin V decrees that from those who return to the faith from heresy, among other things, it should be asked: *Whether they believe that the canonically elected Pope, whoever he may be at the time, with his proper name expressed, is the successor of Blessed Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God?* Therefore, it supposes this to be an article of faith, since those abjuring heresy are questioned only about truths of faith. It is proven 2. The Catholic Church now existing is, by divine faith, the true Church: Therefore, the Supreme Pontiff canonically elected, universally accepted, and venerated by the Church, is, as a matter of faith, the true Pontiff. No Catholic denies the antecedent: for Christ revealed that His Church would endure until the consummation of the world. The consequence is proven: the certainty regarding the existence of the head of a true and perfect body is the same as the certainty regarding the perfect existence of the true body itself: but by divine faith we are certain of the perfect existence of the body of the true Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ: therefore, etc.

3. They respond to contrary arguments that it is only a matter of faith that there exists a head of the Church, but not that the head of the Church is this particular Pontiff, who is called Benedict XIV. But against this: therefore it is already a matter of faith that in this true Church there exists a true head. But this cannot be anyone other than this particular Pontiff, who is called Benedict XIV. Therefore, etc. The minor premise is proven: this particular Pontiff, and no other, is received and adored by the universal Church as its head; but in this matter the universal Church cannot err. Therefore, etc. This minor premise is evident because in matters of faith, the Church cannot err, since it is the “pillar and foundation of truth,” according to St. Paul in 1 Timothy 3. Furthermore, the Church cannot receive something as a matter of faith which is not such; otherwise it would err in matters of faith. But it receives the definitions of Benedict XIV in matters of faith as articles of faith. Therefore, they are of faith. I further argue: but the definitions of Benedict XIV would not be matters of faith if his authority were not a matter of faith, because then it would be permissible to doubt it. Therefore, etc.

4. This point is pressed further: that conclusion is of faith whose two premises are of faith; but this conclusion, *“Benedict XIV is the true Pontiff,”* follows from two premises of faith: therefore, etc. All Catholics concede the major premise. The minor is proven: the premises from which the said conclusion follows are these: *“Anyone legitimately elected as Pope and received as such by the Church”* is the true Pope; *“But Benedict XIV is such a one”*; these premises are therefore of faith; consequently, the conclusion deduced from them is also of faith. The major premise is indeed conceded by all; otherwise it would not be of faith that the legitimate successor of Peter is the true Pope. The minor premise is demonstrated thus: by the very fact that the Church receives Benedict XIV as legitimately elected, God reveals that his election is legitimate, because Christ promised that His Church would never err in matters of faith. But the Church would err in such a matter if the

conclusion did not stand, since in acknowledging Benedict XIV as Pope, it acknowledges him as an infallible rule of faith, who, on the contrary supposition, would be a fallible rule. Therefore, etc. This is confirmed: by the very fact that God performs an evident miracle through the invocation of some confessor or martyr, or through veneration of their relics—so evident that it cannot be doubted in any way—He implicitly reveals that this person died in a state of grace. Why? Because (as all Catholic doctors maintain) it is repugnant to divine holiness to perform miracles at the invocation of one who is damned. Therefore, by the very fact that the Church (of which the Lord said it is the pillar and foundation of truth, and cannot err in matters of faith) has accepted Benedict XIV as the true Pontiff, and thus as an infallible rule of faith, God implicitly revealed that his election is legitimate. The consequence is clear: for just as it is repugnant to divine holiness to perform miracles at the invocation of the damned, so it is repugnant to divine faithfulness and providence concerning human salvation to permit the Church to err in matters of faith, which He promised would not err.

5. The conclusion is proven again: unless it were a matter of faith that the reigning Pope is the true Pope, successor of Peter, Head and Pastor of the Church, and Vicar of Christ, it would not be a matter of faith that the successor of Peter, Head and Pastor of the Church is the true Pope, nor that anyone is the true Pope. But the consequent is false and heretical; therefore, etc. The major premise is proven: the true Pastor and Head of the Church is a specific and singular man visibly existing in the Church, not someone vague, indeterminate, invisible, and unknown to the Church. But no one else can be this except Benedict XIV. Therefore, if he is not [the true Pope], there would be no one in the Church. Moreover, by divine faith we believe that the Council of Trent and other general Councils legitimately convened were true Councils defining dogmas of faith. But they could not be true Councils without a true Pope. Therefore, while by divine faith we believe they were true Councils, by the same divine faith we simultaneously profess that those specific Pontiffs who legitimately convened such Councils were true Popes. This is further explained: it is a matter of faith that only the true Pontiff can convene Councils, canonize Saints, and issue decrees binding in faith for all Christians. But Benedict XIV can do all these things, and all Christians are bound by faith to believe as a Saint whom he canonizes; to believe the decrees of faith emanating from him; and to accept as legitimate any Council he might convene, etc. Therefore, it is a matter of faith that he is the true Pope.

6. Furthermore, it is proven by another no less effective argument: it is the heresy of the accursed Luther that a Pope canonically elected and universally received by the Roman Church is not the Vicar of Christ, nor the true successor of Peter; therefore, the opposite position is a matter of faith. The consequence is evident: for if it is heresy to say, "*Christ is not true man*," then the opposing proposition, "*Christ is true man*," is and must be a matter of faith. Similarly, therefore, if it is a heresy of Luther and the Protestants that the Supreme Pontiff who is regarded by the Roman Church as the Vicar of Christ—as Benedict XIV is—is not truly such a Vicar of Christ, then the opposite proposition is and must be a matter of faith, namely, that the Supreme Pontiff who is regarded by the Roman Church as the Vicar of Christ—as Benedict XIV is—is truly such a Vicar of Christ.

7. It is finally proven (omitting many other proofs) that our conclusion is as follows: a particular proposition contained within a universal one revealed to the whole Church is immediately of faith, just like the universal proposition itself. But this proposition—“Benedict XIV is the Supreme Pontiff and Vicar of Christ”—is contained in a universal proposition revealed to the whole Church. Therefore, this proposition is immediately of faith. The consequence holds, and the major premise is certain; for a universal proposition is equivalent to all the particular propositions contained within it. Hence, it is the same whether God reveals some universal proposition or reveals each and every particular instance, unless an exception is otherwise established. However, it is fitting that God does not reveal each instance in particular, nor, as it were, dwell on this, but rather comprehends all under some universal proposition, as actual parts of it. For this reason, it is a matter of faith that Solomon, Peter, John, and so on with others, sinned in Adam; because God revealed that every human sinned in Adam. Similarly, it is a matter of faith that the Council of Trent could not err in decrees concerning matters of faith. Why? Because God revealed that every Council legitimately convened cannot err in matters of faith; nor can it be possible that a universal proposition be true and of faith, while a particular one is not also true and of faith—otherwise two contradictory propositions could be simultaneously true, as will easily be evident to anyone who considers the matter.

8. The a priori reason is: because for faith only two things are required. First, that there exists a revelation concerning the object to be believed. Second, that this revelation is so proposed that to any most prudent person no reasonable foundation for doubting the existence of the revelation presents itself. Therefore, on the supposition that an individual is contained within the universal revelation, and furthermore such revelation is prudently applied through moral evidence, by the light of which it is known to be morally impossible that this individual is not contained under that universal revelation, nothing is lacking for faith to be absolutely exercised toward such an individual. Indeed, heretics are heretics not because they deny that God is infinitely truthful in His attestations, but because they deny the application of divine revelation to the mysteries of our faith most imprudently, and with moral necessity not to deny it; because one who, even if he does not deny, imprudently doubts the existence of revelation, or the application of that universal to particulars, sins against faith, either by the sin of Heresy, as many maintain, or against the precept of believing what is most prudently proposed to be believed, as others teach.

9. Now let us come to the principal minor premise: This universal proposition: “*Every man duly elected by the Church as the successor of Peter is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church*” is a proposition revealed by God to the whole Church. But in this universal proposition is contained this particular proposition: “*Benedict XIV is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church.*” Therefore, this particular proposition is contained in a universal proposition revealed by God to the whole Church. The consequence holds. The major premise is established by what was said above concerning the transmission of Peter’s keys to his successors until the consummation of the world—which only Protestants and manifest heretics can deny. The minor premise is also evident, because the particular propositions contained in that universal proposition can be none other than these: “*This man or that man duly elected as successor of Peter is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church.*” Therefore, since we are presently

speaking of Benedict XIV, not in just any capacity, but presupposing a legitimate election and acceptance, both on his part and on the part of the Church, it follows that this proposition—*“Benedict XIV is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church”*—is a particular proposition contained in that universal proposition. This containment is made clear in this syllogism: *“Every man duly elected by the Church as the successor of Peter is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church; but Benedict XIV is duly elected by the Church as the successor of Peter; therefore, Benedict XIV is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church.”*

10. This particular statement is confirmed not by any other reasoning: *Solomon sinned in Adam* is immediately of faith solely because it is contained in that universal proposition: *All sinned in Adam*. This containment is explained thus: *All children of Adam sinned in him; Solomon is a child of Adam; therefore, he sinned in him*. Similarly: *All true bread can be transubstantiated into the Body of Christ; but this bread is true bread; therefore, this bread can be transubstantiated into the Body of Christ*. Similarly: *Every infant rightly baptized obtains grace; but this infant baptized by me is rightly baptized; therefore, this infant is in a state of grace*. In these syllogisms, no one can deny the particular propositions established as consequences without falsifying those universal propositions revealed by God. Nor can anyone deny the assent of faith to these particulars without denying it to those universals. And precisely the same reasoning applies in our case; since God has revealed to the whole Church this universal proposition: *Every man rightly elected as successor of Peter is the Supreme Pontiff of the Church*, and furthermore it is certainly established that Benedict XIV was rightly elected as successor of Peter; otherwise the Church would not be in peaceful acceptance, but would protest, as it often protested in the time of an Antipope; nor would Benedict XIV himself be in peaceful possession, as no one was during the time of an Antipope, until both renounced their claims and one of them, or another, was elected and peacefully declared by the Church itself. Therefore, this particular proposition, *Benedict XIV is the Supreme Pontiff*, is immediately of faith. Wherefore, anyone who—supposing at least the moral evidence of the minor proposition from the peaceful possession of Benedict himself and the acceptance of the whole Church, by which it is established that he is contained under the subject of the major proposition—would deny such a particular proposition established as a consequence, could not help but deny that universal proposition; and consequently would act against the faith immediately and would be a heretic, just as in the aforementioned syllogisms.

11. Argument I. This proposition: *Benedict XIV is the true Pope* is not found in Sacred Scripture, neither explicitly nor implicitly; therefore, it is not a matter of faith. Response: I deny the antecedent, because it is contained in these Oracles: *The Church is the pillar and foundation of truth*; and, *You are Peter, etc.*; and, *The gates of hell shall not prevail*. From these it is inferred that the Church does not err when it acknowledges Benedict XIV as its legitimate head and true Pope. For if the Church were to err in this matter, it could err in all other matters pertaining to faith, which is manifest heresy; and it would not know that it has a true Head and Pastor, nor would it be sufficiently directed by the Holy Spirit in a matter of supreme and greatest importance; and thus God would not stand by His promises, nor would Christ Himself, etc., all of which are contrary to faith. Furthermore,

even if this were in no way contained in Sacred Scripture, it is considered revealed by the very fact that the indefectible Church acknowledges the one elected as Supreme Pontiff.

12. You will object: It is not a matter of faith that the election of Benedict XIV was legitimate; therefore it is not a matter of faith that he is the Supreme Pontiff. The answer is to deny the antecedent. Since one cannot be a legitimate Pontiff except through legitimate election, by the very fact that one truth is revealed, the other is revealed as well. You will object further: this election with respect to the Cardinals is naturally known, because they naturally and evidently know that all requirements proceeding from Canon Law were observed; therefore it is naturally known to them that the elected person is the true Pope. Therefore for them it is not a matter of faith, since faith is evidence of things not seen. Moreover, with respect to us, whatever we know about such a Canonical election, we receive from human testimony; but this testimony does not establish the assent of Divine Faith, of which we speak: therefore, etc. The response to the first objection: I concede that the electing Cardinals naturally know that the election is Canonical. However, this does not prevent them from simultaneously believing that the elected person will be the true Pope, Peter's successor, and Vicar of Christ. The reason is that what is naturally known and seen is one thing, and what is believed by faith is another. Therefore Pope Anacletus in his second epistle, and from Canon *Electionem*, distinction 79, said: *God has reserved to Himself the election of Roman Pontiffs, although He has conferred the power of electing upon the electors*. What is seen, therefore, is one thing, and what is believed by divine faith is something entirely different. From this also comes the solution to the second objection. By human faith we know from the testimony of the electors that this particular Pope has been Canonically elected; by divine faith, however, we believe that he possesses divine power as the Vicar of Christ and Peter's successor. St. Peter naturally knew that Christ had said to him: *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church*; and simultaneously he believed that spiritual power as head of the Church had been given to him, which he saw by faith and did not know naturally.

13. Arg. 2: The truth of the Pontificate in an elected Pope depends on many contingencies: therefore it is not a matter of faith. The antecedent is proven: It can happen that the elected person is a woman, that he is not baptized, that he is not ordained, that he is a Heretic, etc.: but all these conditions, and any one of them, renders the election null: therefore, etc. The response is to deny the antecedent, and to its proof, deny the major premise. Because it pertains to God's providence that the electors are not deceived, nor does the Church proceed to the reception and public adoration [of an invalid pope] by the whole Church: for then the Church would no longer be the pillar and foundation of truth. And the gates of hell would prevail against it.

Regarding that matter of a woman, we say that it is a fabulous story invented and nurtured by Heretics, who claim that John VIII was a woman and that she gave birth in the Amphitheater called the Roman Colosseum. But this fable deserves to be despised rather than refuted. See Bellarmine, book 3 on the Roman Pontiff, chapter 24; Baronius, year 853; our Macedo, and other controversialists. Those who (say the Salmanticenses in their Treatise on Faith) now transcribe or narrate that history should be severely punished,

unless they are excused by ignorance, not realizing that this degrades the majesty of the Church; and according to our conclusion, it is a formal heresy, or at least, according to all Catholics without exception, erroneous, scandalous, and temerarious.

14. Concerning other matters, to some Reverend Doctors it seems harsh to assert that, after the peaceful acceptance by the Church and the peaceful possession by the Supreme Pontiff, it is elevated to the certainty of faith that the elected person is baptized, ordained, that the Ministers had the proper intention, etc. Therefore, they defend that it is a matter of faith that *Benedict XIV is the Vicar of Christ*; and from this it is inferred, as a theological conclusion, that he is not a woman, that he is baptized, ordained, etc. But it is better to respond that there is no inconvenience in asserting that the aforementioned truths are also matters of faith, because by the very fact that God permits him to be rightly elected, and to be recognized by the Church as legitimately elected, and to be considered as such by himself, exercising the Pontifical dignity, God virtually reveals that he possesses all the requisites for the Papacy.

15. Argument 3: One who says “Benedict XIV is not the true Pope” would not be a heretic; therefore, it is not a matter of faith that he is such. I respond by distinguishing the antecedent: one who would say this before the Church’s acceptance and peaceful possession [of the papacy] would not be a heretic, I concede; after acceptance and possession, I deny: because this would oppose the Council of Constance and the Decree of Martin V. And the Council of Florence has already defined that the Roman Pontiff canonically elected succeeds to the full power of St. Peter. Therefore, are some Catholics who defend the opposite conclusion heretics, and should they be denounced to the Supreme Tribunal of the Inquisition? Let them answer for themselves: For it is certain that they are not heretics if they deny this before peaceful possession and acceptance, while the Cardinal Electors are divided; but according to the most common opinion of Catholics, they are heretics and should be denounced—provided they do not, in good faith due to reasons that seem sufficient to them, believe that it is not an article of faith.

16. Argument 4: That Benedict XIV is the true Pope is derived from a discursive process; but faith is not discursive; therefore, etc. I respond by distinguishing the major premise: it is derived from a discursive process that necessarily infers and purely applies or represents the terms, I concede; from a discursive process that infers contingently or probabilistically, and serves as the motive for assent, I deny. Similarly, I distinguish the minor premise and deny the conclusion. For indeed this proposition: “Heaven is created”; and this: “God exists”; are naturally known, and through natural reasoning; nevertheless, they are matters of faith when we assent to them insofar as they are revealed by God. Furthermore, in this syllogism: *Every man is redeemed by Christ; but Peter is a man; therefore, Peter is redeemed by Christ*: we know naturally that Peter is a man; truly we do not give assent to the conclusion by virtue of that minor proposition as the motive for assenting, nor by virtue of the inference, but from the supernatural motive of the revealed major proposition, since it has been revealed that every man is redeemed. The minor proposition therefore only serves for the recognition of Peter, or for explaining and applying the universal revelation to a particular subject matter. Therefore, similarly, it is one thing

for me to know naturally that Benedict XIV has been canonically elected as Bishop of Rome; and another thing for me to believe from that motive that he is the true Pope.

17. Final argument: a universal proposition can be a matter of faith without the particular proposition thereby being a matter of faith. Therefore, it can be a matter of faith that everyone rightly and properly elected is the Vicar of Christ, without it thereby being a matter of faith that Benedict XIV is the true Vicar of Christ.

The antecedent is proved: it is a matter of faith that every properly consecrated host contains the body of Christ; but it is not a matter of faith that this particular host contains it: therefore, etc. I respond by distinguishing the first antecedent: it can be a matter of faith, etc., if the containment of the particular in the universal is unknown or not certainly known, I concede; if it is not unknown but is known with sufficient certainty that the particular is contained in the revealed universal, I deny. Indeed, although some say it is certain and a matter of faith that Christ is in this particular host consecrated by Peter, because I have no reason to doubt the proper consecration, and consequently I have moral and most prudent certainty of the containment of this particular in that universal. Nevertheless, the Doctors commonly respond that it is not a matter of faith that Christ is in this particular host: because it is not absolutely and positively certain, but rather negatively and relative to the act of adoration, that this host was properly consecrated. And this suffices so that its adoration is not an act of idolatry but of Religion: for this virtue, it is enough that a probable and prudential judgment about the existence of the object of its acts precedes. But for an assent of faith, greater certainty is required, such as we have concerning Benedict XIV, by the very fact that he is acknowledged and received by the Church, which cannot err regarding faith and morals, as the true Vicar of Christ. For this reason, the adversaries themselves say it is so certain that Benedict XIV is the true Pope that to assert the contrary is reckless, scandalous, and erroneous; which does not occur in doubting the proper consecration of this particular host: therefore, there is a great disparity. But the first response conforms more with the Profession of Faith, which in Spain is requested from the dying when they receive the Viaticum.

18. Some oppose our conclusion by pointing to several Popes who were intruded into the Pontificate. But this is not the question we are addressing; for our conclusion proceeds concerning one who is ritually and canonically elected. Indeed, certain intruders were completely abrogated and are not counted in the series of Pontiffs; some others are included in that series, but not for the time of their usurpation, but rather for the subsequent period in which, with the consent of the Electors having been added, they were elected as legitimate Pontiffs according to the customary rites. Hence it must be considered that an election is established as legitimate when the Catholic Church receives someone as a legitimate and undoubted Pontiff; for the consensus of the universal Church cannot be fallible. Thus, just as the Church cannot venerate as a Saint one who is not a saint, nor hold as a matter of faith something that is not of faith, so too it cannot be deceived in receiving as the true Pontiff, and as the certain rule of these matters, one who is not the true Pontiff and the true living rule.