

# Cursus Theologicus Ad usum Tyronum elucubratus, Pars Quarta: De Fide, Spe, et Charitate (*Theological Course Elaborated for the Use of Beginners, Part Four: On Faith, Hope, and Charity*)

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## Disputatio II, Quæstio III

*Is it a matter of Faith that Clement XI is the true Vicar of Christ?*

I. FROM what has been said follows the resolution of this most celebrated question. Namely, whether this truth—that Clement XI is the true Pope and successor of Peter—is a material object of faith? This is commonly affirmed by Amicus [Franciscus Amicus] in disputation 3, section 5, against Cajetan [Thomas de Vio Cajetan] in his commentary on the Summa Theologica II-II, question 1, article 3, and also by Báñez [Domingo Báñez], Cano [Melchor Cano], and Córdoba [Antonio de Córdoba].

It must therefore be said that it is a material object of Faith that Clement XI is the true Vicar of Christ our Lord.

**Proof:** Because a theological conclusion derived from one revealed premise and another premise known with moral evidence strictly speaking is matter of Faith, as we demonstrated in the preceding question; but that Clement XI is the true Vicar of Christ is a theological conclusion derived from this revealed premise: *Everyone duly elected by the Church as Pontiff is the true Vicar of Christ*; and from this other premise now evidently known to the whole Church: *Clement XI is duly elected*; therefore such a conclusion is matter of faith.

**Confirmation 1** from the decree of Martin V in the Council of Constance, found in the acts, in which it is commanded that those suspected of heresy be questioned whether they believe that the Pope canonically elected, whoever he may be at the time, is Peter's successor, having supreme authority in the Church?

**Confirmation. 2.** If it were not a matter of faith that Clement XI is the true Vicar of Christ, then neither would it be a matter of faith that any other person was the true Vicar of Christ; for the election of Clement XI is established in the same manner as the election of other Pontiffs. But to say that it has never been a matter of faith that a true Vicar of Christ has existed in the Church contradicts both the promises of Christ the Lord and the very concept of the Ecclesiastical Republic, which, since it was instituted by Christ the Lord as a kind of moral body, cannot exist without a head; therefore [the conclusion follows].

It is confirmed, finally, because we are bound by divine faith to believe that the visible Church is the true Church of God, and that this particular Council, for example the Council of Trent, was true and catholic, to which the Holy Spirit gave assistance; but neither can the visible Church subsist with members alone without a head, nor is an accephalous [headless] Council true and legitimate; therefore it is a matter of faith that the visible Church and a legitimate Council have a visible head distinct from the invisible one, which is Christ the Lord: and consequently it is a matter of faith that this particular Pope is truly Christ's Vicar. And indeed the infallible authority of declaring and defining matters of faith belongs to a Council and to the Church by reason of its head; whence, when the see is vacant, nothing can be defined, since Christ the Lord said to Peter "*You are Peter,*" etc.; therefore it cannot be believed with divine faith that a Council is legitimate, and that the Church has the assistance of the Holy Spirit in defining matters of faith, unless it is believed as united to its head, and therefore unless it is a matter of faith that the Pope existing at the time is the true Vicar of Christ.

**II. Objection 1.** God has nowhere revealed that Clement XI is the true Pope; therefore this cannot be believed with divine faith.

**Confirmation.** It is not a matter of faith that this particular infant was baptized by a priest; therefore, neither is it a matter of faith that Clement XI was baptized; but if he is not baptized, if he is not a man, if he does not possess the other essentials of the pontificate, then he is not the true Vicar of Christ; therefore, it is not a matter of faith that he is the Vicar of Christ.

**Response.** I distinguish the antecedent: It is not explicitly revealed, I concede; implicitly, I deny both the antecedent and the consequent: in precisely the same way that it is revealed that this particular Church is the true Church of God, so it is entirely revealed that this particular Pontiff is truly the Vicar of Christ and head of the Church. For when Christ revealed that Peter and his successors are his Vicars, he implicitly revealed that Clement XI is also his Vicar, on the hypothesis that he was canonically elected and that such election is established.

**To the confirmation:** Having conceded the antecedent, I distinguish the first consequent: neither is it a matter of faith that Clement XI was baptized, on the hypothesis that his legitimate election is established, I deny the consequent; before this is established, I concede the first consequent with that substance, and deny the second. Since being Pontiff essentially includes being baptized, being a man, etc., when the election is established, just as it is a matter of faith that he is the true Pontiff, so also it is a matter of faith that he is baptized and possesses the other essentials of the pontificate: whatever may be the case regarding whether sacred orders are essential to the pontificate, about which Rodrigo de Arriaga raises doubt, since there appears to have been an ancient Pontiff who was elected before he had received sacred orders.

**III. Objection 2.** Sometimes the Church, in accepting someone as true Pontiff, has erred; therefore it is not a matter of faith that the Pontiff accepted by the Church is the true Vicar of

Christ. The antecedent is proved: For it is reported that John VIII in the year 853 was a woman; Eugene IV also was deposed by the Council of Basel, although he had previously been accepted by the Church, and afterwards he ruled the Church.

**Confirmation.** Many Roman Pontiffs have erred in faith; but no one who errs in faith is a true Pontiff; therefore, etc. The major premise is established; for Saint Peter denied Christ the Lord, and compelled the Gentiles to judaize. At least the Pontiff can fall into heresy, even external heresy, and with this fall occurring, he falls from the Pontificate; therefore since it is not a matter of faith that this particular Pontiff has not fallen into heresy, it is not a matter of faith that he is the true Pontiff.

**Confirmation 2.** One who would deny that Clement XI is the Vicar of Christ would not be a heretic, nor would he sin against faith, but would be a schismatic sinning against charity and the unity of the Church; therefore as before.

**Response:** I deny the antecedent. Regarding that matter of Pope Joan, it must be said, along with [Robert] Bellarmine, [Martín] Becanus, and others most commonly, that John VIII was called a woman as a joke, because he was young and in his actions did not conduct himself in a manly fashion; so much so that, on account of his softness and indulgence toward Photius and other heretics who had arisen, the schism of the Greeks was born and strengthened. Hence heretics said that the Pope was a woman—which is entirely fabricated. Eugene IV was deposed by the Council of Basel, not when that Council was Catholic, but when it was a schismatic conventicle. The Church also sometimes did not recognize her true head, because his legitimate election was not yet established: nevertheless, the universal Church never conspired toward a false head. Add to this that, although someone elected simoniacally (for example) is not truly the Pontiff according to the chains of Julius II's bull, yet where the Church accepts him, his acts are valid, and he is to be regarded as the true Pontiff until he is convicted of simony; this is established from the law *Barbarius* in the Digest, *On the Office of the Praetor*. And therefore in such a case, lest the Church remain without a head, natural law in some manner prevails in this instance over the positive law of Julius II declaring that a simoniacal election is null.

**To the first confirmation:** No true Pope teaching ex cathedra has erred, whatever heretics may bark against this. Saint Peter denied Christ only with his mouth, not with his heart, nor did he teach Judaism, but rather wished to permit circumcision so as not to offend those recently converted to the faith; for this he was reproved by the Apostle. Many Doctors deny that the Pope can fall into heresy, since the Lord said to Peter in Luke 22: *I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail*. But setting this aside, as long as the Pope is not declared a heretic, the papal dignity persists in him, as is more commonly taught by Francisco Suárez, Thomas Cajetan, and Antonio Córdoba, cited by Arriaga in disputation 7, section 9. For just as the election must be established in order for one to be believed to be Pope, so too must heresy be established in order for one to cease to be believed to be Pope. Moreover, just as the Pope departs from the Pontificate only on account of the crime of heresy, according to Apostolic tradition, but not indeed on account of other crimes—because the first see is judged by no one (for when someone is elected simoniacally, he does not fall from office on account of this crime, but rather does not rise to the Pontificate)—so likewise he falls from office if he becomes perpetually insane, because then he is no longer civilly a man. Nevertheless, the Church must be certain of the insanity before he ceases to be Pope; and interiorly, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he

cannot err in defining those things which pertain to faith, to religion, and to the governance of the Church.

**Response to objection 2:** Someone can be schismatic without being heretical—namely, if he refuses to submit himself to Clement XI, even though he does not deny that Clement is the true Pontiff. For schism is a division of the Church and is opposed to charity, not only toward the Church but toward its head. However, this division can exist in the manner explained without the sin of infidelity. But everyone who denies that Clement is the true Pontiff sins not only against charity, but also against faith—provided that his legitimate election is established. Nevertheless, such a person is not punished as a heretic, because the truth which he would deny has not been proposed by the Church as a matter of faith. For heresy requires that someone pertinaciously contradict the Church when it proposes something to be believed as a matter of faith and as revealed by God.

**IV.** Other objections which heretics raise against these matters, such as concerning Pope Formosus, who held the papal seat for six years and was afterwards declared a pseudo-pontiff by Stephen VII, to such an extent that Stephen again ordained those who had received Orders from Formosus: As well as concerning Honorius I, who is found among those condemned by the Sixth Synod; these matters are to be examined in Bellarmine's work, book 4, "On the Pontiff," where he shows that these objections are improperly raised. For Formosus was a legitimate Pontiff, and Stephen VII erred not as Pontiff, but as a private man, while he raged against the dead Formosus, casting his corpse into the Tiber, because he had previously been prohibited by Formosus from obtaining the papacy. Honorius, however, was inserted among those condemned by the Sixth Synod only by Schismatics, not by Catholics.