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by Rev. Louis Farris Ferraris (Rev. Louis Ferraris), 1772

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## “Papa” A. 2 n. 63–88

**63** Our Conclusion is proven from the words spoken by Christ to Saint Peter in Luke 22, where He says: “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.” These words, as we have shown above from number 44, do not pertain personally to Peter alone, but to all his Successors in his Chair. Since it is established that Peter was thus confirmed by God, so that even his personal Faith could in no way fail, as is clearly denoted by those particles “for thee” and “thy,” which we examined above in number 43, the same must also be said concerning the other Roman Pontiffs, his Successors. Indeed, this privilege was obtained for them for this reason: that they might confirm their brethren in the Faith. But how will they confirm others if they themselves are either Heretics or Infidels? Will they establish in others that Faith which they themselves execrate and attack in their own minds? Furthermore, since the Pontiff is the living Rule whom all the Faithful must follow and always keep before their eyes, he ought to be fortified by some singular privilege, by which not only the See itself, but also the person holding it, is preserved from error in matters of Faith. Otherwise, if we admit that the Pope himself can fall into Heresy and defect from the Faith, what else could be expected but that he, being blind, would draw us who are also blind into the pit with him? This accords with Matthew 15, number 14, where it states: “And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit”; and Luke 6, number 39: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”; and chapter “Cum sit ars artium” (On age and quality), where it says: “For if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit.”

**64** Hence, concerning the Roman Church above all others, this unique excellence and singular prerogative is proclaimed: that all other principal and more ancient Churches had not only heretics but even heresiarchs as Bishops—namely, the Antiochene Church had

Paul of Samosata; the Alexandrian Church had Dioscorus; the Constantinopolitan Church had Dioscorus and Macedonius, and so with the rest—as Mendoza pursues *in question 4, Scholastic, § 4, argument 7*. The Roman Church, however, never had such. For among so many Roman Pontiffs, although some occasionally had somewhat questionable morals, no one was ever found who fell into heresy or apostasy, as thoroughly demonstrated by Bellarmine *in On the Pontiff, book 4, chapter 8 and following*, Laurea *on Faith, disputation 8, article 5, up to § 11*, Albertus Pighius *on Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, book 4, chapter 7*, Barbosa *book 1 of Universal Ecclesiastical Law, chapter 2, from number 52*, Mattheucci *in the cited location, Controversy 6, chapter 4, and Controversy 7, chapter 1*, and all others acknowledge this, as witnessed by Fagnani *in chapter “Significasti” 4, on election, number 69*. And Pope Agatho expressly testifies to this in his Epistle to Emperor Constantine, which was read *in the Sixth Synod, act 4*, and afterwards *in act 8* approved by all. *This, he says, is the rule of true Faith, which the Apostolic Church of Christ has vigorously maintained both in prosperity and in adversity, which by God’s grace is proven never to have strayed from the path of Apostolic tradition, nor has it ever succumbed to heretical innovations, because it was said to Peter: “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Here the Lord promised that Peter’s faith would not fail, and admonished him to strengthen his brothers, which, as is known to all, the Apostolic Pontiffs, predecessors of my unworthiness, have confidently done; See also what was said above in number 48.*

Nor does it avail to object that if every Pope, 65 like St. Peter, could not even as a private person fall into Heresy and defect from the Faith, this would be a matter of Faith, and consequently those holding the contrary opinion would be Heretics—which cannot be maintained, since this opinion is held by most distinguished Doctors, both Canonists and Theologians, as is evident from those cited above in n. 62, and as Fagnani notes in the cited chapter *Significasti 4. de election. num. 68*. This objection, I say, is not valid, because even if it were said to be a matter of Faith, as some maintain, among whom is Matthaeuccius *l. c. Controversia 7. c. 1. n. 7.*, as being revealed at least implicitly and virtually in that proposition, *I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail*, nevertheless those holding the contrary opinion would not be Heretics, because they do not maintain their own opinion with pertinacity, as would be required for Heresy, but are prepared to submit to the definition of the Church<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> **Note of a Roman Theologian.** When our Author asserts that the Pope cannot fall into heresy even as a private person, and that this is a matter of Faith, it should not be understood in the way Ferraris explains it, namely that those holding the contrary opinion are to be considered heretics and should abandon their persuasion. For this is a Scholastic question, not yet defined by the judgment of the Church, and it is permissible for anyone, while preserving the faith, to believe not only that it is not a matter of faith that the Roman Pontiff as a private person cannot fall into heresy (which is entirely true), but also that he can err. Likewise, when Theologians, along with our Author, state that it is a matter of faith that the Roman Pontiff cannot err in the Canonization of Saints, and that it is a matter of

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faith that this particular Roman Pontiff is the legitimate Successor of Peter; these statements should not be understood as if they must be embraced as dogmas of faith by everyone. Since these matters have not been defined by the judgment of the Church, they cannot be proposed as dogmas of faith. But these assertions should be readily understood to mean that private Doctors contend to deduce from revealed principles that these matters are so certain as to pertain to the faith. However, others may, without harm to dogma, hold the contrary opinion; as indeed Ludovicus Antonius Muratorius does in his work on the Moderation of Intellects, along with others who contend that the privilege of inerrancy granted to the Church for establishing dogmas of faith pertains to those things that are revealed by God, but not to human affairs. Therefore, since the Roman Pontiff, in rendering judgment in the Canonization of Saints, relies on the testimony of men who attest to the Sanctity of a person and to the miracles performed in confirmation of that sanctity; and since judgment concerning a legitimate Pontiff depends on his baptism, valid ordination, and legitimate election, which matters depend on human actions, these Authors believe that the Canonization of Saints does not pertain to the dogma of faith, nor is it a dogma of faith that this Roman Pontiff is the legitimate Successor of St. Peter, although we are certain of these matters with moral certainty, and we cannot call them into doubt except through the greatest temerity. It should also be added that when we pronounce that it is a matter of faith that the Roman Pontiff is infallible, we should not maintain our opinion in such a way as to declare as heretics those French Theologians who say that the decrees of Roman Pontiffs are not infallible unless the consent of the majority of Bishops is added; for heretics are only those who obstinately resist a dogma proposed by the Church. The Church, however, has not thus far condemned French Theologians, and tolerates their opinion. **Response of the Author:** What I assert, that the Pope cannot fall into heresy even as a private person, and that this is a matter of faith, etc., should be understood as I explain in the passage cited, where I expressly say: nevertheless, those who think the contrary do not become heretics, because they do not maintain their own opinion with the pertinacity required for heresy, but are ready to obey the definition of the Church. And the pertinacity of which I speak is pertinacity that is not prepared to obey the definition of the Church, should such be explicitly given. But I also say that this is a scholastic question, therefore I do not resolve it as certain, but only as more probable, as I expressly state in my conclusion there, number 62: "The Pope, more probably, even as a private person, cannot fall into heresy, and cannot fail in faith"; according to those classical Authors cited there, among whom is our most learned Matthaeuccius in his dogmatic work first published in Rome, and then in Venice, controversy 7, chapter 1, number 3, where he states: "It must be said that the Roman Pontiff, as a private person, cannot fall into heresy, and cannot fail in faith." And in the same sense should be understood what I have handed down concerning the infallibility of the Pope in the Canonization of Saints, and that this Roman Pontiff, Clement XIII for example, legitimately elected, and accepted as such by the Church, is the true Pope, and legitimate successor of Peter.

**66** Nor is it valid to say that the Sacred Canons suppose that the Pope as a private person can defect from the Faith, as is indeed supposed in the Canon *Si Papa d. dist. 40*, where it is established that the Pope cannot be judged by anyone for any crime whatsoever, unless he is caught deviating from the Faith, and thus the Pope, as regards himself and as a private person, can fall into Heresy and defect from the Faith. This is not valid, I say, because that text is not from any Pontiff or General Council, but from a certain Boniface the Martyr, Bishop of Mainz, who could have held that opinion, as many others have held and still hold. Therefore, it carries no force for us as coming from a private Doctor, since our position is supported by greater authorities and reasons, to the extent that if it is not a matter of Faith, it is nevertheless certain with an infallible certainty just short of Faith.

**67.** It is a matter of Faith that Benedict XIV, for example, legitimately elected and accepted as such by the Church, is the true Pope. *This is common teaching among Catholics.*

**68.** This is proven firstly from the Council of Constance, *final session*, where Martin V in his Constitution beginning *Inter cunctos decrees* that among other things, those who return to the Faith from Heresy 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?”* Thus, it supposes this to be an article of Faith, since those abjuring Heresy are questioned only about the truths of Faith. Furthermore, it is a Heresy of Luther that the Pope is not the Vicar of Christ, whose 25th error was condemned along with others by Leo X in his Constitution beginning *Exurge*, wherein it states: *“The Roman Pontiff, Successor of Peter, is not the Vicar of Christ instituted by Christ himself in Blessed Peter over all the churches of the entire world.”*

**69.** It is proven secondly. That conclusion is of Faith, whose two premises are of Faith; but this conclusion: *Benedict XIV is the true Pope* follows from two premises of Faith, therefore it is of Faith. The major premise is most certain; The minor is proven, because these two premises (from which the said conclusion follows) *everyone legitimately elected as Pope, and as such accepted by the Church, is the true Pope; but Benedict XIV is such*, are of Faith, and indeed concerning the Major no Catholics doubt, otherwise it would not be of Faith that the legitimate Successor of Peter is the true Pope. The Minor is also certain, because by the very fact that the Church receives him as legitimately elected, God reveals that his election is legitimate, since Christ has promised that His Church would never err in matters of Faith, as is evident from the Gospel texts adduced above *from n. 42 to 44*. But the Church would err in such a matter of Faith if the conclusion did not stand; Since the Church, acknowledging the elect as the legitimate Pope, acknowledges him as the infallible Rule of Faith, who would then be fallible, and therefore, etc. Furthermore, because the Definitions of Benedict XIV speaking *ex Cathedra* are of Faith, but they would not be of Faith unless it were of Faith that Benedict XIV is the true Pope, therefore, etc.

**70.** Nor is it valid to object that it is not a matter of Faith that Benedict XIV was validly baptized and canonically elected, since this has not been revealed, and therefore it is not a matter of Faith that he is the true Pope. This objection, I say, is invalid, because although it has not been explicitly revealed, it is nevertheless implicitly revealed through the peaceful

acceptance of the universal Church: for by the very fact that God reveals someone to be the legitimate Pope, He also implicitly reveals that this person possesses all the necessary requirements for the Papacy.

**71.** Nor is it valid to object that although it is a matter of Faith that Christ is present in the Eucharist, it is not a matter of Faith that He is present in this particular Host, and therefore, although it is a matter of Faith that the true Successor of Peter is the Pope, it is not a matter of Faith that this particular man is the Pope. This objection, I say, is invalid, because the consequence and the parity are denied, and the disparity exists because it is not certain that this particular Host has been validly consecrated. But the case is different regarding the acceptance of the Pope, since it has been revealed that this man is the Pope by the very fact that he is acknowledged and received as such by the indefectible Church.