

Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi, Volume 3A (*Treatise on the Church of Christ, Volume 3A*)

by Patricio Murray (Patrick Murray), 1866

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Disputatio XVII, Sectio V, § 2: De Vero Pontifice Statuendo

<i>Latin</i>	<i>English</i>
## § 2. DE VERO PONTIFICE STATUENDO. 93. Inter scholasticos olim disputatum fuit, an de fide divina sit hunc numero Pontificem, ut talem ab universa Ecclesia agnitum, esse revera successorem B. Petri ; aliis affirmantibus, aliis negantibus : D. 1, n. 43. Videatur SUAREZ, de Fide, D. 5, S. 8, n. 12 ; D. 10, S. 5. Quicquid de ista quæstione dicatur, fere omnes tenent theologi id ad minus certum esse. Etsi enim BANNES (quibusdam fabulis, suo ævo non satis disjectis et explosis, aliquantulum plane captus) concedere videretur casum absolute possibilem esse, in quo Pontifex ab Ecclesia agnitus non esset verus Papa, dicit tamen (pag. 63) quod “valde temerarium esset et scandalosum, si postquam Ecclesia acceptavit aliquem ut summum Pontificem, negaret aliquis illum esse summum Pontificem verum, nisi ostenderet illum non esse baptizatum, aut non esse virum . . . Neque judicandus est moralis casus, quod aliquis ascendet ad culmen Pontificatus, absque hoc quod sit baptizatus, eo vel maxime quod ad divinam providentiam spectare creditur, ut non permittat hominem nonbaptizatum ascendere ad sacerdotium, et	## § 2. ON ESTABLISHING THE TRUE PONTIFF. 93. Among the scholastics it was once disputed whether it is a matter of divine faith that this particular Pontiff, as acknowledged by the universal Church as such, is truly the successor of Blessed Peter; some affirming, others denying: D. 1, n. 43. See SUÁREZ, <i>On Faith</i> , D. 5, S. 8, n. 12; D. 10, S. 5. Whatever may be said about this question, nearly all theologians hold that it is at least certain. For although BÁÑEZ (somewhat plainly captivated by certain fables not sufficiently refuted and exploded in his age) seemed to concede that a case was absolutely possible in which a Pontiff acknowledged by the Church would not be the true Pope, he nevertheless says (page 63) that “it would be very rash and scandalous if, after the Church has accepted someone as Supreme Pontiff, anyone should deny that he is the true Supreme Pontiff, unless he could show that he was not baptized, or was not a man... Nor should it be judged a moral case that someone might ascend to the summit of the Pontificate without being baptized, especially since it is believed to pertain to divine providence that it does not permit an unbaptized man to ascend to the priesthood, and

multo minus ad summum Pontificatum.” Eodem forsan modo intelligendi sunt quidam veteres auctores, quos citat SUÁREZ, D. 10, S. 5, n. 2.

94. Certum omnino est Ecclesiam definiendo vel (quod idem est) aperte agnoscendo hunc, v. g., PIUM IX., esse vere Papam, infallibilem esse. Argumentum quod profert LUGO (D. 1, n. 327) ad probandum propositionem esse de fide, quæ affirmat hunc hominem esse verum Pontificem, probat saltem eam esse infallibiliter veram. “Ex Dei revelatione constat Ecclesiam non posse decipi in credendo universaliter aliquo errore, cum sit ‘Columna et firmamentum veritatis’ (1 Tim. ii.) : in qua Ecclesiæ universalis infallibilitate non minus contineri videtur quod non possit Ecclesia errare in agnoscenda vera regula visibili suæ fidei, quam in rebus aliis credendis per fidem : plus enim Ecclesiæ noceret error circa ipsam regulam veritatis et fidei, quam circa alia objecta particularia, cum esset error in ipso fidei fundamento. Cum ergo regula visibilis, quam Ecclesia in sua fide sequitur, et sequi omnino debet, sit ejus visibile caput, nempe summus Pontifex, cuius doctrinam et definitiones amplecti debet, non potest Ecclesia decipi acceptando pro Pontifice et regula fidei, eum qui vere non esset Pontifex nec fidei regula, sed pseudopapa et homo privatus.” Huic argumento, quod satis solidum esse videtur, duas adjungit confirmationes haud ita solidas.

95. Contra hæc si *objiciatur* I. falsum esse id quod in principio argumenti affirmatur, nempe, universam Ecclesiam non posse aliquem errorem credere : potest enim, et de facto saepius creditit.

96. *Resp. Distinguo* : Possunt omnes et singuli fideles errorem aliquem credere in rebus ad religionem nullomodo pertinentibus, in historia, geographia, astronomia, &c. : *Concedo* : In rebus ad religionem pertinentibus : *Subdistinguo* : Possunt credere errores ut conjecturas vel meras opiniones liberas : *Transeat* : Ut

much less to the Supreme Pontificate.” In perhaps the same way should be understood certain ancient authors whom SUÁREZ cites, D. 10, S. 5, n. 2.

94. It is absolutely certain that the Church, by defining or (which is the same thing) by openly acknowledging that this man, for example, PIUS IX, is truly Pope, is infallible. The argument that LUGO presents (D. 1, n. 327) to prove that the proposition affirming this man to be the true Pontiff is *de fide*, proves at least that it is infallibly true. “From divine revelation it is established that the Church cannot be deceived in universally believing any error, since she is the ‘pillar and foundation of truth’ (1 Tim. ii.): in which infallibility of the universal Church it seems no less contained that the Church cannot err in recognizing the true visible rule of her faith, than in other matters to be believed by faith: for an error concerning the very rule of truth and faith would harm the Church more than concerning other particular objects, since it would be an error in the very foundation of faith. Since therefore the visible rule which the Church follows in her faith, and must absolutely follow, is her visible head, namely the Supreme Pontiff, whose teaching and definitions she must embrace, the Church cannot be deceived by accepting as Pontiff and rule of faith one who would not truly be Pontiff nor rule of faith, but a pseudo-pope and private man.” To this argument, which seems sufficiently solid, he adds two confirmations that are not so solid.

95. Against these points, if it should be *objected* I. that what is affirmed at the beginning of the argument is false, namely, that the universal Church cannot believe any error: for she can, and in fact has often believed such.

96. *Response. I distinguish*: All the faithful individually and collectively can believe some error in matters that in no way pertain to religion—in history, geography, astronomy, etc.: *I concede*: In matters pertaining to religion: *I subdivide*: They can believe errors as conjectures or mere free opinions: *Let it pass*: As certain truths to be believed obligatorily, on the authority of the

veritates certas et obligatorie, ex auctoritate Ecclesiæ definitis, credendas : *Nego.* Vid. supra, n. 60, et D. 11, n. 29. Quæ in istis locis tradidimus et breviter probavimus, omnino consona sunt doctrinæ theologorum et antiquorum et recentiorum. “Ecclesia non potest errare in rebus fidei . . . tenendo aliquid de fide, quod non est, aut tenendo aliquid non esse de fide, quod revera est.” **BANNES**, l. c. D. 3, Concl. 2, p. 130. Quod dicit hic **BAN**. de iis quæ fidem immediate spectant eadem ratione dicendum est de iis quæ eam nonnisi mediate spectant. “Ostendit **MELCHIOR CANUS**, C. 4 de locis, c. 4 [Concl. 2], eam etiam vim prædictarum promissionum esse, ut nequeat Ecclesia tota persuadere sibi sententiam aliquam erroneam, etiam in materia quæ non pertineat ad fidem [quasi, nempe, pertineret ad fidem]. Nam hoc quidem pati alienum esset ab illo Spiritu veritatis, quo semper Ecclesia regitur.” **VALENTIA**, Q. 1, D. 7, § 16, p. 190. “Non minus repugnat Ecclesiam fallere vel falli, dum aliquid credendum proponit omnibus fidelibus cum intentione eos obligandi, quam fallere vel falli Prophetam aut Evangelistam, qui Spiritu Sancto afflatus scribit.” **GONZALEZ**, de infallibilitate R. Pontificis, S. 1, § 2, n. 7, apud **MUZZARELLI**, Œuvres Choisies, vol. 2, p. 396 (edit. Bruxell. 1846). Ita et **TANNER**, D. 1, Q. 4, n. 292; **BAILLY**, P. 1, C. 19, S. 1, vol. 2, pag. 42. Vid. et **BOUIX** de Curia Romana, p. 400; **BOUVIER**, p. 389; **TOURNELY**, vol. 2, p. 535.

97. Si *objiciatur* II. Deum, in casu pseudopapæ pro papa vero habiti, sicut et in quocunque casu, Ecclesiæ suæ provisurum esse infallibiliter.

98. *Resp.* Deus semper providet Ecclesiæ, sed per medium illud quod ipse perenne et inconcussum ad id constituit. Undenam vero habet Ecclesia indefectibilitatem suam omnimodam et perpetuam (D. 4, n. 6)? Ex eo quod petræ, i. e. Petro et successoribus ejus, inædificatur (D. 6, n. 136, &c.). Nunquam ergo super aliam crepidinem ædificabitur.

Church defining them: *I deny.* See above, n. 60, and D. 11, n. 29. What we have taught and briefly proved in those places is entirely consonant with the doctrine of theologians both ancient and recent. “The Church cannot err in matters of faith... by holding something as of faith which is not, or by holding something not to be of faith which truly is.” **BAÑEZ**, loc. cit. D. 3, Concl. 2, p. 130. What **BÁÑEZ** says here about those things which immediately regard faith must be said for the same reason about those things which regard it only mediately. “**MELCHIOR CANO** demonstrates, C. 4 de locis, c. 4 [Concl. 2], that such also is the force of the aforesaid promises, that the whole Church cannot persuade itself of some erroneous opinion, even in a matter which does not pertain to faith [as if, namely, it pertained to faith]. For this indeed would be alien to that Spirit of truth by which the Church is always governed.” **VALENCIA**, Q. 1, D. 7, § 16, p. 190. “It is no less repugnant for the Church to deceive or be deceived while proposing something to be believed by all the faithful with the intention of obligating them, than for a Prophet or Evangelist who writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to deceive or be deceived.” **GONZÁLEZ**, de infallibilitate R. Pontificis, S. 1, § 2, n. 7, in **MUZZARELLI**, Œuvres Choisies, vol. 2, p. 396 (Brussels edit. 1846). So also **TANNER**, D. 1, Q. 4, n. 292; **BAILLY**, P. 1, C. 19, S. 1, vol. 2, p. 42. See also **BOUIX** de Curia Romana, p. 400; **BOUVIER**, p. 389; **TOURNELY**, vol. 2, p. 535.

97. If it should be objected (II): God, in the case of a pseudo-pope being held as the true pope, just as in any case whatsoever, will infallibly provide for His Church.

98. Response: God always provides for the Church, but through that means which He Himself has established as perpetual and unshakeable for this purpose. From whence, indeed, does the Church have its complete and perpetual indefectibility (D. 4, n. 6)? From the fact that it is built upon the rock, that is, upon Peter and his successors (D. 6, n. 136, etc.). Therefore, it will never be built upon any other foundation.

99. Si *urgeatur*, in casu Papæ dubii vel nullius, Deum extraordinario modo providere Ecclesiæ.

100. *Resp.* In casu pseudopapæ ab omnibus pro Papa vero et indubitato habito, adesset error positivus Ecclesiæ universalis, credentis tanquam obligatorie et palam profitentis, ut veritatem sacram, quod omnino falsum esset: imo adesset definitio Ecclesiæ hunc esse Papam verum; ista enim universalis agnitus esset revera definitio ejusmodi. In casu vero Papæ dubii vel nullius, vi termini nulla esset definitio talis, nullus error universalis, sed dubium purum vel ignorantia. *Sola* in hoc casu provisio a Deo facienda in eo esset, ut debito tempore eligeretur Papa certus. D. 6, n. 295; D. 16, n. 38. His alia adjici possent capita discrepantiæ.

99. If it should be pressed: in the case of a doubtful pope or no pope, God provides for the Church in an extraordinary manner.

100. Response: In the case of a pseudo-pope being held by all as the true and undoubted Pope, there would be present a positive error of the universal Church, believing as obligatory and openly professing as sacred truth what would be entirely false: indeed, there would be present a definition of the Church that this one is the true Pope; for this universal recognition would truly be such a definition. In the case, however, of a doubtful pope or no pope, by the very terms there would be no such definition, no universal error, but pure doubt or ignorance. Only in this case would the provision to be made by God consist in this: that in due time a certain Pope would be elected. D. 6, n. 295; D. 16, n. 38. To these could be added other points of difference.