

Jesus said to his disciples. Whom do you say that I am?

Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my father who is in heaven. AND I SAY TO THEE THAT THOU ART PETER; AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

AND I SHALL GIVE TO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven. S. Matthew xvi. 15-19.



Was anything concealed from Peter, who was styled the Rock on which the Church was built, who received the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the power of loosing and binding in Heaven and on earth?—TERTULLIAN Prescrip. xxii.

There is one God, and one Church, and one Chair founded by the voice of the Lord upon Peter. That any other Altar be erected, or a new Priesthood established, besides that one Altar, and one Priesthood, is impossible. Whosoever gathers elsewhere, scatters. Whatever is devised by human frenzy, in violation of the Divine Ordinance, is adulterous, impious, sacrilegious.—St. Cyprian Ep. 43 ad plebem.

All of them remaining silent, for the doctrine was beyond the reach of man, Peter the Prince of the Apostles and the supreme herald of the Church, not following his own inventions, nor persuaded by human reasoning, but enlightened by the Father, says to him: Thou art Christ, and not this alone, but the Son of the living God.—St. Cyril of Jerus. Cat. xi. 1.

COMPITUM:

The Meaning of the Ways at the Catholic Church. THE ROAD OF CHILDREN.

Continued.

But we are concerned here only with the first elements of instruction, to show that even at this stage of the road, truth, at least by its effects, has attractions for the infant mind. But now, leaving this special consideration, we can form a general estimate of the attractive force of Catholicism in regard to children, by observing the examples which are recorded of their fervour and constancy. As tender and but half-formed members of the Church, how many holy innocents seem to come before us here, in whose hearts the words of the little maiden described in the *Magnum Speculum*, 'Diligio te plus quam me quia te creasti, redemisti, dotasti me,' are engraven as by a divine hand! Some see truth through the beautiful poetic life of anchorites.—St. Catharine of Sienna, when a child, in order to imitate the life of hermits, resolved to withdraw to the desert. Leaving that lovely city by the gate which now bears the name of St. Mark, she walked on till she had lost sight of all houses. Here she thought must be the desert she was in search of. To complete her joy, she observed a little cave at the side of a mountain, and here she resolved to commence her life of solitude. Some are attracted by seeing holy men. In the time of Vincent of Beauvais, who relates the circumstance, there was in Thourouth, a town of Flanders, a boy named Achas, who was so moved by seeing some Franciscan friars in his father's house, that he begged and obtained permission to be clad thenceforth in a little habit like theirs; and so wonderfully did he evince the spirit of that holy rule in all his actions, imitating the friars even in preaching to other children, and giving salutary admonitions to all, not excepting his own parents, that strangers used to come from far to see him. It was impossible to describe his gravity and sanctity; and this ministry he discharged during two years, till at the age of seven he passed to a better life. Others, again, are moved by merely hearing of the holy. St. Gregory of Tours arriving at the monastery in which Vulfilacius was professed, in the territory of Troves; and having with much entreaty prevailed on him to relate his conversion, that venerable man began in these words: "When I was a very little boy, having heard the name of blessed Martin, but not yet knowing whether he was a martyr or confessor, or what good he had done in the world, or what region had deserved to receive his blessed limbs in burial, I used to celebrate vigils in his honour: and if any little pieces of money came into my hands, to give them in alms." Others see truth through the holy exercises of a community, as St. Gertrude, or Truth, when in the sweetness of grace truly lovely, in the 5th year of her age, she was planted as a lily in the garden of religion in the same monastery with St. Mechilde, whose harmonious voice so wrapt the choir while she sang. "What close attractions," asks her biographer, "could thus fix that dear little silver dove without malice, having rejected from her heart all the bitterness of sin?" Other children, again, receive truth through the voice of preaching. St. Bridget in her tenth year was so drawn and affected by a discourse on the passion of our Lord, that the impression was indelible. The next

night she beheld Him in mystic vision on the cross, and heard Him speak to her. In life's young hours those sights and sounds did nurse her spirit's folded powers. Moreover, innumerable books were re-operating with preachers to familiarize the minds of children with the divine infancy of Christ, as in the moral homilies of the monk Cassar of Heisterbach, entitled 'De Infantia Salvatoris.' To the child Jesus, in all their sufferings, they were especially directed; as indeed all their sorrows seem inexplicable without a reference to the mystic doctrines of union with our divine Lord in his expiatory afflictions. In fine, others see truth through the offices of the Church. In the life of the holy patriarch of Constantinople, Caesarius, who lived towards the end of the ninth century, we read, that when a child of five years, declining all puerile amusements, he applied his whole mind to learn all the sacred prayers which are not secretly and mystically offered in the sacrifice of the mass, which he used to pronounce from memory, imitating at the same time the priest in offering the bread, and incensing the altar with a thurible. Eadburga, daughter of Edward the Elder with his wife Edgiva, supplies another example. When a child, her father, wishing to try whether the little girl was inclined to God or to the world, placed in a chamber the symbols of different states—on one side a chalice and Gospels; on the other, bracelets and necklaces. Hither the child was brought in the arms of her attendant, and sitting on her father's knee, was desired to choose which of all these objects she pleased. Rejecting the earthly ornaments, with stern regard she instantly fell prostrate before the chalice and the Gospels, and worshipped them with infant adoration. The company presently exclaimed aloud, and fondly hailed the prospect of the child's future sanctity. Her father embraced the infant. "Go," said he, "whither the Divinity calls thee, follow with prosperous steps the spouse whom thou hast chosen; and truly blessed shall my wife and myself be, if we are surpassed in holiness by our daughter."

In general we may remark, that the constancy of innumerable young martyrs and confessors, as by their early actions may be judged, shows what a hold Catholicity possesses upon the infant mind. St. Peter Nicolas Paschal, when a boy, hearing his parents often speak of the sufferings and martyrdom of the fathers in redeeming Christian slaves from the Moors, one day called on some Moorish children, and shutting himself up with them in a retired part of the house, said to them, "Tie me with ropes, and drag me about, and trample on me, as your people treat the Christians in your country." These boys did so; and dragged him about for a long time, till the great noise alarmed the servants, who coming up found him half dead. He had been educated by a French priest, a doctor of Paris, who on his passage from Narbonne to Spain had been taken by the Moors, and put in the chain. The Seigneur Paschal hearing of his condition, had purchased him from his patron, and appointed him tutor to his son. Lopez de Vega, borrowing from familiar scenes of actual life around him, represents in his drama called 'La Santa Liga' the ransom of captives by the Trinitarians. A merchant is first employed to conduct it; and on his saying that he cannot rescue two of the same family, a captive child exclaims, "If so, then take my mother, and leave me in her place. I promise you not to forget God, or that I am a Christian."

What a spirit strong and mild, which death or pain or peril could despise, yet melt in tenderness. What genius wild yet mighty was enclosed within one simple child.

In 1457 many children met together in different parts of Germany to go on a pilgrimage to the Church of Mount St. Michael in Normandy. Nothing could turn them from their design.—They passed by Thurgovia, as the historians of that land record. But earlier, in 1298, in the time of Pope Innocent III, there was a more remarkable instance, which, in spite of the brutal comment of Mathieu Paris, I shall cite. In the village of Cloies, near the castle of Vendome, a simple shepherd lad, called Stephen, naturally eloquent, declared that the Saviour had charged him to preach a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Land. He went about through the cities and towns, singing in his mother tongue 'Seigneur Jesus Christ! aide nous a reconquerir la sainte croix.' Many boys about his age followed him. In other parts of France children of both sexes imitated him, and set off to join Stephen, singing and carrying crosses, banners, and censers. There were 15,000 in Paris alone under the age of twelve. Every where as they passed the inhabitants were their hospitality and alms as ordinary and necessary to all questions as to where they were going, they replied, 'To God. We are going to take the holy cross beyond the sea. The Almighty calls us to succeed the Holy Land at Jerusalem.' The youth of Burgundy and of the frontiers of Germany were inflamed to follow them. In the archbishopric of Cologne boys of noble families imitated their example. Apprentices and young labourers, animated with a child-like love of their Saviour, flocked to the same standard.—The King of France took alarm; but moved by the sanctity of the object, he scrupled to act without consulting the university. The doctors disapproved of the movement; and then the King ordered the children to return to their parents. The greatest number obeyed, but many persevered; and however blamed by a number of ecclesiastics, it is certain that the people favoured them. 'Only infidels,' said they, 'and despisers of God, can blame such a pious impulse.' Pope Innocent, on hearing of it, exclaimed, lamenting, 'These children shame us; while we sleep, they set off with joy to recover the Holy Land.' Many thousands of them reached Marseilles, where they embarked.—Amidst all their subsequent calamities, these poor young pilgrims gave affecting proofs at least of their faith and constancy. Many on falling into the hands of the Turks preferred death to apostasy. Not one, it is said, could be prevailed upon to abjure Christ. In Germany, too, near 20,000 children had assembled, dressed as pilgrims, marked with a cross, and carrying scapulars and staves. They crossed the Alps under their little chief Nicolas, who was himself a boy not quite ten years of age. On their road through Italy many perished; some returned home after cruel sufferings, but grieving only for their return, others went to Rome to demand, absolutely from their vow; for they had taken vows from which only the Pope, they said, could free them. Pope Gregory IX afterwards raised on the east of St Pierre, where two of the ships from Marseilles had perished, a church, dedicated to the new holy innocents, with a foundation for twelve ecclesiastics; and he caused the bodies that had been recovered from the

sea to be preserved as the relics of martyrs who had sacrificed their lives for the faith.

Thus the attractions of Catholicism even in the most eccentric and astonishing deviations to which it gave rise, led to acts of self-devotion which were in harmony with the sweetest and most glorious attributes of the child; and therefore, if we suppose the case of an impulse as powerful being imparted to the young by any antagonistic principle, a simple comparison of the results would be sufficient to proclaim the divine truth of the former; as the consequences of the latter, in relation to the disposition of the young heart, would inevitably prove nothing but what is now beheld in foreign cities, a revolting violation of nature. But we have been following strange and long deserted paths; let us retrace our steps. In general, it was through the ordinary means of conveying grace to souls that children beheld truth, and so from the baptismal font began to enjoy their heavenly rest, becoming each a sample to the youngest, to the more mature a glass that feasted them, and to the graver a child that guided dotards. Tasso, educated by the Jesuits, made his first communion before the completion of his ninth year, though at that age, he says, he might have been taken for a boy of twelve. "Never shall I forget," he says, "my secret devotion on observing the gravity and reverence of the place, and the swelling of breasts, and the profound piety of those better instructed than myself, who went with me to receive the body of Christ." But at this stage of the road of children, alas! alas! a great catastrophe has left traces which must be noticed; for this delightful road of childhood has, in some regions, been intercepted, broken off, and purposely turned aside from its right direction to mislead the guileless feet of innocents, where contagious blastments are most rampant. Heresy has passed here, and placed obstructions in the way; the canker galls the infants of the spring before their blossoms are disclosed. We must, therefore, now consider the condition of children born of parents separated from the unity of faith, and yet after proceeding a few steps upon this new and dangerous path, we shall find that even poor children are not left in the first stages of their journey through life's tangled forest, without signals which can serve to direct them from their misguided wanderings, to the central point from which only external circumstances are causing them to diverge.

For oft the spirit seems prompted
Far hence to roam;
Till by unerring instinct guided,
It sinks to home.

The Catholic Church has left so many vestiges of itself in hands which were thought to shut it out for ever, that even there it continues to be as elsewhere, the city upon a hill. A thousand little, as well as great things, about which children will inquire, are inexplicable without it; and, as a recent poet says, 'Frequently an idea suggested by some slight occasion sinks deeply into the young mind. What has struck it returns at intervals, and simple childhood has its astonishments.' Then returns scenes of old prophetic history; for holy writ in babes hath judgment shown when judges have been babes. But let us mark who in this obscurity are the violets now that strew the green lap of each new come spring, and who will be most apt to gather them.

Hurter, *Greschite*, tom in lit xv. Chron Mont Mars in Martene Thes i. Chron Senon iv 3, in D'Achery *Spicileg Jac de Vorag*. Chron Januens in Muratori S Six 40. Vincent Bellow xxx 3. Gesta Trov &c in Martene Coll Amp iv Hist Naventions Monast in Martene Thes ii. Alberic Mag Chron Belg Baron *Annales Ord S S Trin* 9. Blakely's *Hermite*.

* Joan Major, *Magnum Speculum*, 389.
† Hist lib viii 15.
‡ *Insinuationes Div Pietatis S Gertrud*, Abb lib 1.

• Sur Die 12 Feb.
† *Gail Magmes*.
‡ Hist de l'Ordre de la Mercy, 181.

• Papikofser Hist de Thurgow.