

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 upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven. S. Matthew xvi. 16-19.

THE CROSS.



Is the Church likened unto a house? It is placed on the foundation of a rock, which is Peter. Will you represent it under the figure of a family? You behold our Redeemer paying the tribute as its master, and after him comes Peter as his representative. Is the Church a bark? Peter is its pilot; and it is our Redeemer who instructs him. Is the doctrine by which we are drawn from the gulph of Sin represented by a fish's net? It is Peter who casts it; Peter, who draws it, the other disciples lend their aid, but it is Peter that presents the fishes to our Redeemer. Is the Church represented by an embassy? Saint Peter is at its head. Do you prefer the figure of a Kingdom? Saint Peter carries its keys. In fine, will you have it shadowed under the symbol of flock and fold? Saint Peter is the Shepherd, and Universal Pastor under Jesus Christ. S. Francis of Sales. Controv. Disc. 42.

CALENDAR.

- March 6—Sunday—Quinquagesima Sunday
- 7—Monday—S. Casimir King and Conf.
- 8—Tuesday—S. Thomas of Aquin C. Doct. dub. &c.
- 9—Wednesday—Ash Wednesday
- 10—Thursday—S. Francis Roman widow
- 11—Friday—Crown of Thorns of our Lord Jesus Christ, Great Doubt Sup.
- 12—Saturday—S. John of God Conf. Doubt from 8th.

THE CONFESSORIAL.—THE BISHOP OF DERRY TO LORD STANLEY.

As some of our readers may not have had an opportunity of seeing the Letters of the above gifted Prelate, we publish the following remarkable passages from his reply to the calumnies of Stanley against the Holy Tribunal of Penance.

"You are reported, my Lord, to have said that the Catholic Confessional is being conducted by us with a degree of secularity, and carried to an extent dangerous alike to the civil government and the peace of the community. The priest conceals the secrets of the guilty penitent, and is ever ready to denounce the informer." Is not this, my Lord, a sweeping censure on what every Catholic throughout the world, as well as the Catholics of Ireland, has ever believed to be an institution the most divine and sacred. Confession is practised in Ireland, dangerous to the government and peace of the community! In this assertion—I say it with all respect—there is as much ignorance, if not malice, as was ever conveyed in the same number of words. Our discipline, my Lord, as I stated above, regarding confession and the strict secrecy to be observed regarding things confessed, is the discipline of the Catholic Church throughout the world. It has been the discipline of the Church of God at all times and in all places. It is still the discipline of the sects who, in the earliest ages, separated from the Catholic Church. In this the Copts, the Armenians, the Maronites, the Nestorians, the Eutyrians, the Greeks, the Latins, are all agreed. The canon of the great Council of Lateran, on this subject, is a canon to which every Christian, if we except some of the new sects that the sixteenth century ushered into the world could, without the violation of either principle or practice, cordially subscribe.

"Let the priest take care, neither by word nor sign, nor in any way or manner, to discover the sins of his penitents. Should any presume to reveal the sin discovered to him in the tribunal of penance, we decree not only his deposition from the sacerdotal office, but also that he be thrust into a close monastery, there to do penance to the end of his life."—(Fourth Council of Lateran, held in 1215, under Pope Innocent, chap. "Omnis utriusque sexus.")

You, my Lord, either knew the existence of this canon, or you did not. If you knew it, while making the assertion regarding our Irish discipline, I can scarcely find a sufficiently respectful name by which to designate your conduct. If you did not know it, I am equally puzzled for an excuse for you, a Protestant, protesting in such a manner against sacred things, of which you could not speak a single sentence without falling into the most egregious blunders. What, my Lord, is still worse, you would seem, by the statement you made, to be wholly ignorant of the discipline of your own Church, though you profess to be one of its most ardent admirers, and zealous defenders. I beg to direct your lordship's attention to the 113th canon of the Church of England. It reads thus:—

"Provided always that if any man confess his secret and hidden sins to his minister for the un-

hardening of his conscience, and in order to receive spiritual consolation and ease of mind from him, we do not in any way bind said minister by this our constitution, but we do strictly charge and admonish him that he do not at any time make known to any person whatever, any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy."—(See the body of the canons drawn up in 1663.)

You perceive my Lord, the truly awkward position in which you placed yourself! Were you ignorant, my Lord, of the existence of this constitution? or if not ignorant of its existence, where was your sense of equity when you imputed to the Catholic Church in Ireland, as a crime, what as the obedient son of the Church of England you must ever eulogise and commend as a virtue?—Where, my Lord, were your just weights and measures—that equanimity—that strict impartiality—the most ennobling dispositions and qualifications of a legislator? It may be that you, being initiated in the mysteries of the English sanctuary, understood well that this canon was not being carried out to its full extent—that your ministers, traitors to their duty, set the canons and discipline of that Church at defiance, and did reveal to somebody, the government no doubt, the secret sins of the unhappy sinners who too confidently committed their secret crimes to their frail and faithless keeping—that false to their God, to their sacred office, and their penitents, who were then "to unburden their consciences for spiritual consolation and ease," they (the ministers) only listening to bribery, sacrilegiously made the chair of mercy and of the strictest fidelity, "a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." Is it indeed my Lord, this treacherous practice that has made the power of the keys which they vainly assumed, as idle and as useless in their hands as a shattered reed? Is this indeed the reason that has made the British Episcopalians Protestants generally shudder at the bare thought of confession and during life, and even in death, deride and scorn their priests inviting them to a special revelation of their sins? Is this indeed, my Lord the cause why the injunction, so clearly expressed in your Book of Common Prayer, reads there an idle, unmeaning, unpractical theory—professedly beautiful and advantageous to the sinner burdened with sin—to the heart deeply wounded with iniquity—but practically a hideous spectre standing out in bold relief at the entrance to your holy of holies, having on its lips hurried words of comfort and solicitude for the interests of souls, but on its front, inscribed in characters of fire, treachery, to scare away the faithful from its approaches, or rather, like the God of the Carthaginians or Idumians, it stands with you on its blood stained tripod, as if inviting its foolish worshippers to fling their children into its burning embraces, that with a traitor's consuming hug, it might the more conveniently destroy its unsuspecting victims. I never, my Lord, could understand hitherto why your earnest invitations to confession, in your preparations for communion were so disregarded, so contemptuously spurned, or whence came it that this rubric of your Book of Common Prayer for the visitation of the sick has been so ignominiously treated by your Episcopalians Protestants, as if it were naught but an unmeaning, lifeless cipher—a *vox præterea nihil*. Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter—after which confession the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort—Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him of his great mercy, forgive thee thine offences, and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in

the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

I feel deeply obliged to your lordship, and in the name of the Catholics of the British Empire and of the world, I sincerely thank you for the information you have, however unintentionally, afforded us regarding the secret of the discipline that was among you. Guileless as we were, we attributed the indifference regarding this sacred institution of yours to anything, it appears, but the proper cause. We foolishly believed that your people treated the keys in the hands of your ministers, as the blasphemous assumption of intruders into the fold of Christ, who had no commission from heaven to forgive or retain sins—that they considered that confession to such persons would not be less ridiculous than the confessions made of old by those who sought to be initiated into the mysteries of Ceres. You, my Lord, have let out the secret at last, in letting us understand, by your charges against the Catholic Church in Ireland, that treachery in the ministry of reconciliation was with you considered a virtue. Oh my Lord, "tell it not in Gath, speak not of it in the streets of Ascalon," lest the maids of Israel tremble. The violation of such sacred confidence a social virtue! *Proh pudor*, my Lord! But to come more directly to your charge against our Irish Confessional. I beg your attention while testing the truth or falsehood of your slander by our doctrine and discipline regarding the Confessional. You hitherto might have pleaded the excuse of ignorance. Peace forth, should you blaspheme against us, if it were nothing but to give your malice a substantial form, let the blasphemy proceed from knowledge.

The Confessional, my Lord, we believe to be the ordinary channel appointed by God through which the grace of justification passes into the soul of the sinner who has proved false to his baptismal vows, and mortally stained the white robe of innocence he received from the waters of regeneration. On the grace of justification—on the manner in which God justifies the sinner, as not only you, but others mistake, or seem to mistake, our belief and doctrine, a brief outline of our views on this subject, if not to you, may at least be useful to others. To you, at all events, there will be this important advantage, that with the full evidence of the case before you, you will be the better able to comprehend the full extent of the danger of such doctrines and discipline.

We believe this justification, my Lord, to be not only the remission of sin, or merely a cloak for iniquity, as many believe, but the sanctification and renovation of the interior man, through the voluntary susception of grace and gifts. We believe, by this grace and gifts man, from being unjust, becomes just, so as to be made an heir according to the hope of eternal life. How dangerous, my Lord, is not this doctrine to the civil government? We believe the final cause of this justification to be the glory of God, of Christ and of eternal life; the efficient cause, a merciful God, who gratuitously washes us from our sins, and sanctifies us, sealing and anointing us with his promised holy spirit—the pledge to us of our inheritance—the meritorious cause, his most beloved and only begotten Son, our Lord Christ, who while we were his enemies, on account of the exceeding charity with which he loved us, merited for us this justification by his holy passion on the wood of the cross, and thereby satisfied, for us, God his Father. The subjective cause, the sinner's soul—the formal cause, the justice of God, not that with which he himself is just—with which we gifted are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and with which we are not only reputed, but are truly called and

are just—each receiving justice according to the measure that the Holy Ghost distributes to each, as he freely willeth, and according to the proper disposition and co-operation of each; the instrumental cause, in the case in question, we believe to be the sacrament of penance, to which Christ, who has proper dominion over his own gifts, and can, of course, distribute them according to his own good will and pleasure, in the manner and on the conditions he pleases, has ordinarily annexed the grace of justification. This, of course, my Lord, is a doctrine highly dangerous to the peace of the community? Not to proceed. God in this renovation of sinful man, disposeth all things sweetly, yet effectually, wisely and mercifully prepares and arranges the temple of the soul for the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

As in the six days' work of the creation, He prepared, ornamented, and beautified the great and material temple of the world, for the introduction of its Lord and master, under Him, man, and thereby showed that He, the great architect, was in this work a free, and not a necessitated agent, so in the great moral work of justification, He, to mark his freedom, and the gratuity with which he bestows his gifts, ordinarily proceeds, as it were, step by step, to its glorious completion. He first breathes in a manner on man spiritually dead, and stirs up the faith that is within him—the root and foundation of all justification. Man under the influence of the gift of faith, and aided by grace, willingly, freely, firmly assents to all that God has revealed, believe, without hesitation, in his promises and menaces, and especially believes that Christ Jesus has merited for him justification by his redemption, in suffering for us as man, and giving, as God, an infinite value to his sufferings. What, my Lord, in this belief is dangerous to the civil Government? Faith, moreover, in the menaces of God, introduces fear, the beginning of wisdom, which makes us dread God's justice in consideration of our sins, and tremble at the thought of the temporal and eternal punishments he has reserved for those who have mortally offended him. A firm faith in God's promises introduces the sweet angelic hope, by which we confide that God is disposed to pardon us through the merits of our Divine Saviour. Fear sends us in spirit to the regions of eternal misery, there to meditate in trembling on the inexorable fires, lit up by the breath of an angry God, and prepared for the evil doer. Hope encourages us to raise our heads, and confidently cast our eyes on the infinite mercy of God, and on our full manifestation in the person of Christ crucified; and to consider that, from his cross, he stretches out his arms to embrace us—that he inclines his head to give us the kiss of peace—that he pours out his blood to cleanse us from our iniquities—and that he offers us his side, opened with a spear, as a passage to his loving heart. Hope in God's mercy introduces the disposition of incipient love—the sweetest daughter of heaven, for how can we consider God so good as to have given his only-begotten Son to die for us sinners, and confidently lean on his mercy, without beginning to love him as the source of all mercy and justice to us. In consequence of this beginning of love, man begins to detest sin as an offence against Him whom he loves, and to be heartily sorry for his transgressions, as opposed to God, the source of all justice—to God the essential Beauty, Sanctity and Order—the great fountain from which alone these things flow to us. This hatred of sin, this sorrow for having offended God, as the source of all justice to us, disposes us to firmly resolve to revenge on ourselves our faithlessness—to commence a new life, becoming by, for, and in God