



Jesus said to his disciples, Whom do you say that I am!

Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ 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. xii.

There is one God, and one Church, and one Altar 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 Jerusalem. Cat. xi. 1.

Calendar.

February 1—Thursday—St. Ignatius B M Doub.
 2—Friday—Purification of the B. V. M. doub II cl.
 3—Saturday—St. Dionysius P C doub sup comm St Blasius B M.
 4—Sunday—Septuagesima Sunday semid.
 5—Monday—St. Agatha V M doub.
 6—Tuesday—Prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ great doub sup comm St Dorothy V M.
 7—Wednesday—St. Romuald Abbot doub.
 8—Thursday—St. John of Matha C doub.
 9—Friday—St. Zozimus P C doub comm St Appollonia V M.
 10—Saturday—St. Scholastica V.
 11—Sunday—Sexagesima Sunday semid.
 12—Monday—St. Telesphorus P M doub.
 13—Tuesday—Comm of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ grt doub.
 14—Wednesday—St. Agatha P C doub sup comm St Valentine.

COMPITUM ;
OR,
The Meeting of the Ways at the Catholic Church.
Continued.

O golden age of childhood! when heaven and earth, as poets say, 'seem blended at the distant hill, prophetic intuition of the faith of him who hath indeed become a child,' yielding to the impulse of an infancy outlasting manhood! A thousand fantasies begin to throng into the memory of venerable priests, and kind, gracious beckoning monks and nuns, and gentle tongues that syllable men's names on sands and shores, and desert wildernesses, and all creating thoughts which in one way or other lead us to the rock on which we have secure rest for ever. Children in their tabernacle know the secrets,—not of cities, not of human society, not of history, but of God—their fair eyes are full of infinite sweetness—their little hands, joyous and blessed, have not committed evil—their young feet have never touched our defilement—their sacred heads wear an aureole of light—their smile, their voice, proclaim their twofold purity. O the paradisaical ignorance coveted, perhaps, by angels, of all the errors which heresy has sown to later times; what cruelty to intercept the view of children by suffering their feet to get entangled in such briars, and their minds to be thus cankered, as is the bud bit with an envious worm; ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air, or dedicate his beauty to the sun! Later they will not thank you; for happier had it sufficed them, to have known good by itself, and evil not at all. As terns and other birds, from arctic solitudes, when found flapping their long silver-tapering wings over our rivers that wind through woodlands and rich yellow meadows, show no fear of man, but keep close hovering over the blowns who with stones and staves assail them, so these innocent souls coming first amidst the crowded haunts of life, are ignorant of evil, and of all danger unsuspecting.

The stranger lived with children who had never heard of Protestants till after they had enjoyed eight summers. They used to cross themselves devoutly as they passed before the poor old desecrated churches in England, thinking they were still their own. In Salisbury,

and of them declared that he thought it in so ruined a state, that it would require a year's labour at least before the holy mass could be said in it again. Here had been much secrecy observed; but how many matters were to be told to them, meet and agreeing with their infancy! how many sympathies were to be directed well, which afterwards might impel the man, like a loving child, to shed at times some small drops as from a tender spring, because kind nature doth require it so. But how, you ask, can these have any especial affinity to truth whose fascination seems to arise from their very weakness? like her described in the sweet lines,

'Loving she is, and tractable, though wild:
And innocency hath privilege in her
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes;
And feats of cunning, and the pretty round
Of trespasses, affected to provoke
Mock-chastisement, and partnership in play*.'

The mystic voice of cloistered sanctity will assure you that it may be so. St. Gertrude, speaking of the faults of her own childhood, would lead one to suppose that God regarded the slight nervous little sister as the father of a family would dote upon her, though rejoicing in the gracious elegance of many children amongst whom this child was the least promising to a strange eye, having not the strength or beauty of the rest: for on such a child she says a father will have so much paternal compassion that he will cherish it more than all the others, and give her many little presents, as if especially prizing her from the sense she entertained of her own infirmity.† And so will God draw nearer and nearer to the feeble, to whom with all humility we may ascribe the words, 'Congratulamini mihi omnes qui diligitis Dominum, qui cum essem parvula, placui Altissimo.'

O how like in all this, the stranger said, to my Leitia, and the rest that follow her, the prettiest that ever ran on the green sward—gentle radiant forms, from custom's evil taint exempt and pure, that bloom on mossy banks and darksome glens, lighting the green wood with their sunny smile. Oh! that all such may ever prove what Shakespeare's Gloucester feigns to be, 'too childish, foolish for this world.'

Now the stranger could understand the poet when he says,

'She was all I had
To love in human life—this playmate sweet,
This child of seven years old—so she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wander'd with mine.'

For albeit, endowed with no magic girdle as that the songster of Jerusalem describes—'tender disdains were her's, and repulses that attracted, and levities that endeared, and contentments full of joy, and stores of smiles, and little words, glad some, arch, and often deep, and drops of delicious tears, and short coming sighs, and soft kisses;' and what another poet calls, without remarking that the Catholic religion will secure them ever, 'pure thoughts, fashioned to her Maker's mind.' O childhood of the human heart that never grows old! how dear to thee is such society! Who could tell through how many sweet bright vistas does truth appear to such children in all they see or hear

'Amid the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams.'

Oh! if all men's thoughts were like their thoughts ere yet endowed with music and with light to make their fountains flow in poetry, how lovely were the world! how quick and un-

posed the passage through it to the light, and peace and joy of Paradise!

Such children trained to love and reverence, having never heard the tongues of men reproving what is of faith and holy discipline, furnish a most important study to philosophers themselves, for never can men estimate the intensity of bitterness presented to the world's lips in the cup of heresy which raises up clouds to prevent the eyes from looking up these avenues, until they consider what must be its action upon the intelligence and sensibilities of a child.

Never does the great Lutheran schism, combining all earlier errors, appear so hideous as when we consider the impressions which its withering doctrines must produce upon the infant mind. What shall we say of the courage of the man who would venture to repeat before a Catholic child any of these propositions, which so early as in the thirteenth century had been advanced by the Cathari, the Vandois, and the Albigenies, teaching men to show contempt for the cross, contempt for pictures of our Lord, and of his blessed Mother, contempt for images of Apostles and Martyrs, teaching them to scorn sacred vestments, to mock the shorn Priest, to revile the solemn procession, to scout the pilgrimage, the lighted shrine, the sacred bones, and the sepulchre of the holy? Our Lord, for those who would tempt or scandalize a believing child, has only the appalling image of the immortal worm and the everlasting fire. Si quis scandalizaverit unum ex pusillis istis qui in me credunt, expedit ei ut suspendatur mota asinaria in collo ejus et demergatur in profundum maris. Can we wonder that ineffable goodness should pronounce such words! But let us suppose the tempter at his work. What were he best to say? The Church had failed for eight hundred years and more! or shall he say those saints whose names you bear were false? Under what title shall he woo for heresy, that it may seem pleasing to their tender years? Well might a later poet say, that unconsciously the child aims stern lightnings when he resists such cavils against the Church of our Lord, and what his saints have judged.

'God gives the frail and feeble tongue
A doom to speak on sin and wrong!'

Their words may be as nothing, yet the unshaped use of them can move the hearers to collection, and accomplish the marvel which the Church commemorates on the day of Holy Innocents, exclaiming, Ex oro infantum, Deus et lactentium perfectisti laudem, propter inimicos tuos. What think you would be the answer of the child to each proud negation! to each fierce Tolle of the crowd! Truly its astonishment and sorrow would be a sufficient refutation, a sufficient resistance perhaps; for as poets say,

'truth its radiant stamp
Has fix'd, as an invulnerable charm
Upon our children's brow, dark falsehood to disarm.'

Or, as Shakespeare expresses it, 'The silence often of pure innocence persuades, when speaking fails.'

The Fathers of the Order of Mercy remark in their great history, that St. Peter Nolasco, when a boy, held the heretics of that age in horror.—Whenever he saw one at the table of the Count of Toulouse, he left it immediately, regardless of all remonstrances. Truth was before him in all its loveliness. Hear how a modern poet describes a Catholic child in an unhappy land, where he could speak of the Catholic religion as fallen:

Early in years, and yet more infantine
In figure, she had something of sublime
In eyes which such sadly chose, as in passion
All youth—but with an aspect beyond the
Radiant and grave, as pitying man's decline,
Mournful—but mournful of another's crime,
She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door,
And grieved for those who could not return no
more,

She was a Catholic too, sincere, austere
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd,
And deem'd that fallen worship far more
dear
Perhaps because 't was fallen, her sire's
were proud

Of deeds, and days when they had fill'd the
air
Of nations, and had never bent or bow'd
To novel power, and, as she was the last,
She held their old faith and old feelings fast,
She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
As asking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
And kept her heart serene within its zone,
There was awe in the homage which she
drew;
Her spirit seem'd as seated on a throne
Apart from the surrounding world, and
strong
In its own strength—most strange in one so
young*!

To those of the household of faith the strange-
ness disappears; for clear and short they know
must be the way to truth before the steps of
those whom Truth itself in an especial manner
loves. While yet He was on earth, to show
how dear was this first sweet age to our Re-
deemer,

'Whose arms eternal are young children's
home,'

little need be said; nor to cite instances of his
gracious familiarity with it are we driven to
borrow ideal images, as from the book ascribed
in early days to St. Thomas, in which our Lord
is represented at play with other children, and
already exposed to reprehension from some
Jews, who complained of profanation on the
ground of his amusing playmates on the sabbath
day. Doubtless, in a direct manner the great
God communicates himself often to the mind of
children, and in secret visions to their unconsci-
ous thoughts discloses home at their first steps
towards it:

'Youth, says the proverb, has no truth;
But that is a peevish error:
Ingenuous Youth, he dwells with Truth,
And they travel the same path together.
Youth, in the joyful home of Truth,
Must ay and for ever abide;
And merrily Truth will go forth with Youth,
And march with him, side by side †!'

But it is through the Church that the ordinary
guidance is supplied, and here we may well
pause to admire and adore.

'I came to the place of my birth,' says an
Arabic poet, 'and cried, the friends of my youth,
where are they? And an echo answered, Where
are they?' There were sweeter echoes for the
Christian at his return. The Church was those
the Church which had blessed and sanctified the
pure smiles of his infant playfulness; which had
watched his first deep glances of awe, and won
his steadfast eye by showing him a path of light,
a glorious way to guide his soul on high. St.
Germain of Auxerre, we read, preceded to the
country of Autun, which he had never revisited
since the time of his early youth, and he trav-
ersed it in all directions, seeking to recall the
emotions which he had felt there [when a boy,
and pleased without regrets at their remem-
brances.

* Byron.
† Lyra In.
‡ De la Motte Fouquet.

* Mrs. Hemans.
† S. Thom Vill Serm do Div Mich Ang ii.

* Wordsworth.
† Incinationes div pict S Gertrud App lib ii 18.

* Vido Hunter Geschichte, tom. iii. lib. xiv.
† Lyra In. ‡ Hist del'Ordre de la Meroy, 80.