



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 Proscrip. 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. 42 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. l.

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COMPITUM;

OR,

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

Continued

The stranger knew a boy, of tender age, who literally was enamoured of the church in which he served a voluntary acolyte. When walking out with him, this little companion would cunningly propose to return by some way that would lead past it, that he might at least salute it from the portal. How lovely was religion to his mind, occupying him thus in his diversions, as well as in his serious moments. Of the juvenile imitation of holy things St. Athanasius, with some other little boys of Alexandria furnishes a memorable instance, when the bishop of that see recognised the validity of the rites which they had enacted in their simplicity, as Sozomen in his history relates. Antonio de Escobar mentions that when St. Peter Nolasco was a little boy of eight years he had such love for blessed Mary, that in all the palaces of the Viscountess of Narbonne, his aunt, where he was educated by the monk Gaufred, he had made little alters, on which he placed her image. But what shall we say of the holy joy of children on the festivals, when they witness or assist at the procession? The amiable writer of ‘Letters from Belgium,’ most charmingly describes the little representatives of angels who assisted at the solemnities of Corpus Christi in a village of Flanders. ‘You would so love Catholic children,’ she exclaims; ‘they carry one back to the days when mothers took them to Jesus that He should bless them; for they are ever speaking of Him with the same childish affection as that which we may suppose those children felt and expressed when just fresh from his maternal arms.’ Truly, it is of children, as yielding to the influences his Church supplies, that our Divine Redeemer says, ‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ No one who has ever compared young minds and hearts under the two directions of the Church and her antagonist will be able to controvert this assertion.

Again, what attestation of the truth and what manifestation of the love of Catholicity are seen in the minds of children when they are first instructed for the sacraments by holy priests, when they are accosted familiarly or solemnly blessed by them? How was that young maiden Genevieve sweetly moved when the holy German of Auxerre, being on his journey to the sea with St. Loup Bishop of Troyes, travelling on foot, on coming to Nanterre, singled her out of the crowd of children, kissed her forehead, saying to her parents, happy was the day of her birth, for it was a festival not only in their hearts and in their house, but also in heaven, and then, giving her a medal, bestowed upon her his parting benediction! St. Peter of Alcantara, when a child, being missed from home at dinner-time, his parents sent to look for him, and he was found in the church absorbed in contemplation. St. Martin was only ten-years old when he fled to the church, against the wish of his parents, to become a catechumen. La Febyre, one of the first companions of St. Ignatius of Loyola, when a child of six years, used to mount on a great stone and preach on the mysteries of faith on festivals to the country people, who listened to him with admiration. Marina

de Escobar beheld in a vision, among spirits glorified, Marina Hernandez of Valladolid, who died in her fifth year, saying with her last breath, ‘I am going to heaven to bless and praise God in the choir of angels.’ ‘Ah, my little darling, how well I know you,’ she exclaimed now, on seeing her in ecstasy; to whom the child replied, ‘Dear aunt, my occupation here is what I said it would be as I expired.’—The admirable and affecting history of the holy child Mary Theresa of Jesus, of the town of San Lucan de Baramede, who died in 1637, aged five years, one month, and seventeen days, a prodigy of sanctity in the third order of our Lady of Mercy, is related by the reverend fathers of that order. Her charity to the poor, which was so great that she used to give them a portion of her own dinner, her reverence in the church, her sweetness at home, and her wonderful perception of the mysteries of faith, furnish matter for some delightful pages in their history.

The Church received the homage of children on earth in the spirit which a poet supposes that the choirs above hearken to them, ‘Distinguishing in the deep song of millions round the faltering tongue, and storing every lowly word even by the utterer’s self unheard.’ And we may observe, too, that, in proportion as persons were imbued with the spirit of the Catholic religion, did they lovingly minister to children, to guide them on to truth. ‘It used to happen sometimes,’ says Marina de Escobar, ‘that while walking in the streets, and meeting little boys, I could not restrain the desire I felt of accosting them, through a desire of inducing them to love God; and I used to interrogate them, saying, ‘Little ones, do you know the angelic salutation and our Lord’s Prayer?’ and when they used to reply that they knew them well, I would add, ‘Pray thus, my pupils, daily, and beseech the blessed Virgin that God may make you his servants and give you a great love for Himself.’ They used to look at me while I spoke, and say, ‘So we will do, Lady!’ The same spirit was evinced by the gravest men towards the young who crossed their path. Don Lopez de Vega thus treated his little son Carlos with a Christian gravity. Having finished his poem of ‘The shepherds of Bethlehem,’ he dedicated that sacred pastoral to him. ‘This prose,’ says he, ‘and these verses, addressed to the child god, are suitable to thy age. Begin to study in Christ in reading of his childhood. He will instruct thee how thou shouldst conduct thyself in thy childhood. May He protect thee!’ In the first dialogue of Palmeri the venerable Angelo Pandolfini begins by observing, that great things should be discussed before many auditors, and, unlike Milton, who promises one day to edify his readers with the beauty of philosophy ‘when there shall be no children present,’ he proposes that the little boys of the house should be called in. Accordingly, in they come; when one of them requests that nothing may be said but what they can all understand Pandolfini then assures him that he will utter nothing but what will be intelligible to the least little head amongst them all. ‘Sometimes when we speak of grave high matters,’ says a poet, ‘a child comes in, farewell then the dark or intricate theme.’ The disputants stop short and smile—

‘Tis as the dawn that puts to flight  
The melancholy reveries of a troubled night.’  
The Church, moreover, invested some children with a dignity that history itself is obliged to

adult and chronic. A humble child of seven years, a shepherdess, admitted to the presence of the most illustrious strangers, becoming the patroness of Paris, and St. Benozet, a shepherd lad on the banks of the Rhone, patron of the ancient papal city. How many children, again, were conducted to the church literally as to a mother’s eye in regard to solicitude for their material nourishment! Brother Bartholemey Garriga, one of the greatest men that Montserrat ever produced, was thus offered in his childhood by his father, who was very poor, and who came leading an ass with panniers, having in one his son, and in the other a kid. The sacristan took the kid, but declined the boy. The father refusing to take him back, the monks carried him to the abbot, Brother Peter of Burgos, who placed him in the seminary. After nine years he received the habit, and became twice abbot of the monastery. It was he who built the new church, as he predicted when a boy, lamenting that the church of our Lady was then so small. He died in the hermitage of St. Dymas, which he had chosen for his retreat. He ordered the following notice of his life to be inscribed in the list of the deceased monks:—‘Fr. Bart. Garriga ex rusticana progenie or-us, ad presens cœnobium Divæ Virginis Mariæ de Monte Serrato anno 1511 octava in natis matris Patre suo adductus et obitus fuit, cum infans septem annorum et parvis utilis pro servitio tantæ domus esset; sed per admodum Rev. Patrem abbatem nullo alio prætextu nisi solo amore Dei receptus in collegio aliorum scholarum coram Capitulo imaginem cœniventium aggregatus fuit.’ Here we find but an ancient track now overspread with weeds, and all but choked with rank plants, through which few can hope to follow it. Yet it was once well beaten; and at least, as historical, it claims our notice; for among the openings to truth presented on his part of the road of childhood, we must not overlook the provision made by the Catholic society of the middle ages to conduct it from the first by the action of what may be styled circumstance to a love for eternal things. All doubt being excluded by faith, the Church certainly evinced only her maternal solicitude by permitting such arrangements, as long as the evil passions of men did not turn what was innocent to abuse. And, after all, how many might now, in a joyless time, bereft of holiest privileges, desire such a reception as that of Garrigan at Montserrat; since, as a poet says,  
Man is

— amidst a world of ills,  
That may entice him, and to outward look  
The merest thing of circumstance, and framed  
By parents and instructors, at a chance,  
Into a demon’s or an angel’s mould†.

So true, as far as it extends, is the Virgilian line:

— ad in teneris consuescere multum est†.

It would be a curious research, following Antonio de Yepes, monk of Montserrat, through his general chronicle of the Benedictine order, to note the multitude of holy children who in the monasteries of the middle ages were thus directed to truth and happiness by smooth short roads, the childhood showing the man, as morning shows the day; not left to wander till death through a labyrinth which had no egress, like some of the ill-fated children of the Athenians, or like others of them, to be devoured by some monster, as the minotaur, half brute, half man. As we now see children soldiers, whom Mars

dotes on for his novices, offered, as it were, by their parents to the god of war; so were for many ages boys of tender years initiated in the service and planners of the Prince of Peace.—St. Maur in his eleventh, St. Placidus in his seventh year, Fructus at the same age, St. Boniface in his fifth, Venerable Bede in his seventh, St. Hildegard in her eighth, St. Mechthild in her seventh, Panormitanus in his thirteenth, Petrus Diaconus in his fifth year, were clad in the religious habit without a voice being heard proclaiming that innocence was wronged. This custom was so common in Spain, that St. Fructuosus, Archbishop of Bracara, provided for the maintenance of nurses to take charge of the children until they should grow up. Down to much more recent times extreme youth was not an insuperable obstacle to reception into monasteries. St. Peter of Alcantara offered himself to the Franciscans at the age of sixteen. This yoke, thus early taken or imposed, appears to our age as a horrible and prodigious phenomenon; but without referring to the sacred words, that it is good for man to bear a yoke from his youth,—and it is hard to discover what yoke the moderns would approve of,—think you, supposing no constraint,—for in some cases at least, as that of St. Benedict, the will existed in the child,—was there no attraction felt by the young heart when submitted to the holy influence of a religious community? However, I am not going to dwell upon a discipline often forbidden, as to the Benedictine abbots of England, by the statutes of the Legate Otho in 1238, that was no doubt liable to be abused by the passions of self-interested men in secular life. Let us only observe here, how the whole theory and practice of the first education in the Catholic Church opens a wide avenue to truth almost irresistibly inviting to children, owing to the happy exemption of their age from any internal antagonism. ‘Qui aime bien, chaste bien,’ was the proverb; but chaster, says the commentator, meant not punir, but clever, instruire; an interpretation which will perhaps excuse the stipulation of the Earl of Warwick, on becoming tutor to the young Prince Henry VI., insisting on the droit de chatier. Catholicity requires that from mothers’ exquisite skill the first rules for instructing children should be derived; and, in fact, within the Church we find admirable principles indicating that origin laid down by Catholic guides for ensuring a kind, gentle, and yet firm government, avoiding those incessant complaints which are so contrary to the joyous mood in which the first innocent age should pass. Then, if we view him advanced a few steps further, what child would not prefer the sweet, mild, but austere instructions of a priest, proceeding by the rules of Gerason, expressed in his treatise ‘De Parvulis ad Christum trahendis,’ to the harsh, imperious, though in regard to licentiousness indulgent lessons of one of those brutal and pedantic professors who now in France so burn to supersede him? though, like the Gentiles of old, declaring all the while that the office of teaching is like the torture of the cross, and explaining their misery by saying with Cicero, ‘Nam quo quisque est sollicitior et ingeniosior, hoc docti iracundius et laboriosius.’

The instruction of children appears in a very

\* Antonio de Yepes, Chronic Gen S. Bon 120 633.

† Le Roux de-Lincy, Le Livre des Proverbes. † Reglement donne par une dame de haute qualite a sa petite fille pour sa conduite et pour celle de sa maison. Art. ix.

‡ Gers Op t ii 27. § P. Rousin

\* De Legibus. i 17.

† In Evang Com Paneg tom vii 201.

‡ La Pere Marcheseo, Vie de S Pierre d’A 13.

§ Bartoli Hist de S Ignaci de L lib ii.

\* Vit Ven Virg Marime, P ii lib i c 21.

† Hist de l’Ordre de la Mercy, 818—823.

‡ Vit Ven Verg Marime, lib i c 23.

§ La Vita Civile.

\* Dom Louis Montegut Hist de Notre-Dame du Montserrat, 183.

† Morris.

‡ George ii 272