

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-Jonah 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. 15-10.



'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 fisher'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. 1 Disc. 42.

CALENDAR.

FEB. 20—Sunday—Sexagesima Semid.
28—Monday—St Margaret of Cortona sem.
29—Tuesday—Comm of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ Great Doubt Sup.
MARCH 1—Wednesday—Office of the day Simp.
2—Thursday—S Simplicus P & Conf.
3—Friday—Office of the day Simp.
4—Saturday—S Lucius I P M Doubt Sub.

[From the New York Freeman's Journal.]

LETTERS

By the Right Rev. JOHN HUGHES, D. D., Bishop of New York, on the importance of being in Communion with Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolical Church.

LETTER IV.

DEAR READER—

36. In what I have said in my last letter, you must not understand me as denying that there are many things in the Holy Scriptures, which private reason is, by its own light, competent to understand. Our Blessed Saviour condescended to appeal to it, in certain cases. When He refuted the charge made against Him, of casting out devils in the name of Beelzebub—when He appealed to the knowledge his hearers had of the ancient Scriptures, respecting the signs of His coming—when He directed their attention to His works, as bearing testimony to Him, the appeal was, in every instance, to their private reason. You perceive, however, that in all this, He addresses persons not yet aggregated to the Society of His disciples—not yet fully convinced of the Divinity of His mission and character. But in revealing those doctrines which he communicated to His disciples, already convinced that He is the true Teacher from God, there is not a solitary instance of an appeal to the private reason of any one. We have a remarkable example of this, in the case of the Sceders at Capernaum. The Private Reasoners found the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist a hard saying, but Christ made not a single remark to render it, what they would call, more rational. He seemed prepared to witness the departure of the others, as appears by the question He put to them, "will you also go away? Simon Peter answered in the name of the rest, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Here, then, is the first striking instance of the difference between faith and opinion—between the Church of Christ, and those whom we have designated as Private Reasoners on the doctrine of Revelation.

37. We may illustrate the principle of this difference by analogies derived from the exercise of ordinary prudence, in the concerns of life:—taking care, however, to remember that no human comparison will be a complete illustration. If a man is sick, he will use the best information within his reach, and the best light of his private reason, in selecting a good physician. But when he has found him, he will not subject the prescriptions to his private reason, rejecting some altogether, taking only parts of others; and so, making the doctor's science subordinate to his own opinion. In like manner, if a man has an important suit at law, he will exercise his private judgment and reason in selecting his advocate—but having selected him, he will act under his advice, and be guided by him. Now such comparisons are defective, inasmuch as both the lawyer and the physician are fallible, and liable to be mistaken; whereas Christ, the true Advocate and true Physician, is essential and infallible. And you perceive accordingly, that in the system of religion all that goes to indicate and determine His character when He was on earth, and His Church, as representing Him, after His ascension into heaven, comes within the province of

private reason, until men are brought into the light of faith, the community of discipleship, and the unity of the Church. There, they are under God's teaching—there, they learn the doctrines which Christ revealed—there, they ascertain what are the true Scriptures, and what is their true meaning—there, in fine, they are taught in the language of our Saviour himself, "to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded" the Apostles, under the promise that He would be with them all days, even to the consummation of the world. The Church has not revealed the doctrines—this was not her office. She was and is the witness, and teacher, extending through all days, filling up the whole period of time between the individual believer, and the Divine Author of Christianity. She bears testimony to the fact, that such and such doctrines were revealed by Him. If Private Reasoners pervert the doctrine by erroneous explanation, she bears testimony to the true meaning, and against the error. Every doctrine thus proposed as a matter of fact, revealed by Jesus Christ, is held by her children as infallibly true. This is Divine faith, because the motive of it is the veracity of God.

38. The Private Reasoners, that is, persons out of the Church, profess equally to found their belief on the veracity of God. But instead of appealing to the Church, as the witness appointed by God to attest what doctrines Christ revealed, they appeal to their own private opinions, as founded on what seems to them the sense of Scripture. The immediate object of their belief is their own opinion. They seek for Divine truth within themselves, for the Bible has no meaning, for them, until its supposed sense is ascertained and approved by the tribunal within. Hence, although every doctrine revealed by our Saviour is a fact, and to be proved by competent testimony, as other facts are, it is essentially changed by the Private Reasoners into an opinion, before they can appropriate it, as an article of belief, in their own minds. In the abstract, they profess to believe what He taught. But in practice, they deny any competent provision for determining what He really did teach, and assume, as a matter of opinion, that every one must "search the Scriptures," guess at their meaning, and so form a kind of religion for himself, as if Christ had left his work a blank, as to all certain means for its divine attestation, until the Bible should fall under the individual perusal and interpretation of each separate Private Reasoner. For the truth of this, I appeal, dear Reader, to your own experience. The Private Reasoners tell you to read the Scriptures and judge for yourself. Now as a test, take the text "I and my Father are One," and the other text—"The Father is greater than I." Here appears to be a contradiction. Now, judging for yourself, will you lean to one or the other of these two—and when you have decided in favour of that which establishes the Divine Equality of the Son with the Father, or in favour of the other, what will be the nature of the conclusion to which you will have come in your own mind? Evidently it will be an opinion, and this opinion will be the object and matter of your belief.

39. If, then, according to this mode of ascertaining the truths of revelation you come to this conclusion that Christ is not God, what is the direct thing which you believe? Something that Christ has revealed on the subject? No: it is simply your own opinion. If, by the same process, you arrive at the opposite conclusion, what is it you believe? Your own opinion again! But in neither case can you say that you believe in it on the authority of God revealing it, but simply on the approval of your own private rea-

son. Can there be, then, such a thing as Divine faith among believers out of the Church? Impossible!

Now, every Catholic believes in the Divinity of Christ as a positive fact of Divine Revelation. And why does he believe? Because God has revealed it. He believes it therefore on the authority of God, and believing it on God's authority, he holds it as a matter of Divine faith and not as a matter of opinion. The fact is proved to him by the testimony of the Church, which has always believed, and always taught this doctrine. And so with regard to every dogma that enters into the deposit of Christ's revelation.—When one of the Private Reasoners says he believes in the Divinity of Christ, he cannot consistently say that he does so because God has revealed it, for this would be believing it as a fact, which as such must necessarily depend on outward testimony, for its proof, but he must believe it because he has searched the Scripture for himself, and has come to the conclusion, in his own mind, that the text which says, "I and my Father are One," ought to prevail over the other text which says, "The Father is greater than I." In other words, he believes it his own opinion.

40. Neither is it of any use to say that God speaks to us in the Scriptures. This statement is not true—it is one of those piously fraudulent phrases, which the Private Reasoners employ to impose on the simple minded, and to cover the delusiveness of their own principle, under reverence for the divine book. It is not true that the Bible has been given to us for the purpose to which they adapt it, that of degrading the revelations of Christ into a class of human opinions, mutually contradicting each other. But even if this were true, it would still be fallacious to say that God speaks to us in the sacred volume. It would merely be true that He writes to us; and between writing to us, and speaking to us, there is a great difference. On the side of God, the Scriptures are all they were intended to be—an inspired collection of historical and biographical incidents, connected with the lives of our blessed Saviour and His Apostles, including, however, a written attestation of many, if not all the doctrines of Divine revelation. In so far as doctrines are concerned, the Scriptures are but an outward and I might say, a duplicate form of the living faith which Christ had implanted, as the life-pulse, in the heart of His Church, before the books of the new testament had been committed to writing. They emanated from the Church herself. Their authors were inspired to write, but the manuscript was intended for her use, to be preserved as a part of her faith and teaching; and under the light of the spirit of truth which she received from her founder, to be perfectly understood, and infallibly expounded by her alone. It is manifest that if God had authorized the abuse which the Private Reasoners make of his written word, He would have authorized thereby the overthrow of what is most valuable in the teachings of our Divine Redeemer, viz, their intrinsic infallibility, and the certainty of the faith which that infallibility inspires. He would have been then allowing His Son to lay the everlasting foundations of His Church, to authorize his apostles to build it up, whilst He would be, at the same time, authorizing others, by private reasonings on the Scriptures, to pull down the edifice, remodel its form, and reconstruct it, according to the dictates of their private opinion. He would be authorizing some to preach, that Christ is God; and others, that Christ is not God;—some, that Bishops are of Divine institution; others, that they are not; some, that there is a hell;—other,

that there is not; and so on through all the multitudinous errors of sects into which the Private Reasoners are divided.

41. If God had appointed the Scriptures to be the guide of the human mind, through the medium of private interpretation, He would have provided the reader with measure of Divine inspiration corresponding with that of the writer.—But, although they were thus written, they are not thus read—and among all the schools which have grown out of the principle of private reasoning, there is not one whose system provides for this moral deficiency, except that of the Society of Friends. They assume that God will give His Holy Spirit to open the interior eye of the soul, to the true meaning of the inspired written word. This idea also prevailed among some of the earlier Private Reasoners of other denominations, and is still clung to, by individuals of a morose, or enthusiastic temperament. But its fallacy is palpable from the fact, that the interpretations arrived at through the Spirit of God, in the reader, would be uniform, whereas their interpretations are as diversified and contradictory, as the individual opinions on which they are founded.

I have dwelt longer on the subject than may have seemed to you necessary. But I deem it important, that I should do so, in order to give you a clear and distinct idea of the difference between authority and reason—between faith and opinion—between the Church of God and the Private Reasoners who are now, or have been at any time separated from her communion. This distinction is a dividing line between the truth of Christ, and the heresies that have opposed it, from the days of the Apostles. The Church comes down to us through the succession of intermediate generations, continuously, as one and the same society—the successors of the other Apostles, succeeding under the title of Bishops, surrounding, as their common centre, and revering as their common visible head, the Successor of Peter, on whom the Church was built—around the Bishops, the clergy of the second order, with the faithful people, teaching and believing perpetually, unanimously, and universally the same truths down to the present day.

Coeval with the commencement of the Church you had the Private Reasoners in the seceders of Capernaum, and then, following the stream of time downwards, you find their successors in Cerinthus and Ebion, Marcion, Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Pelagius, Beaugenus (for a time), Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Knox, Cranmer, Socinus, Wesley, Swedenburg, Joanna Southcott, Mother Ann Lee, Joe Smith, Father Miller and Kirwan.

42. In this enumeration, dear reader, I do not mean to say that the several errors into which private reasoning has betrayed the different persons, whose names are mentioned, were of equal enormity, or of equal estrangement from the truth. They all agree in two things, and it is by their agreement only that I classify them in the same catalogue,—they agreed in opposing the Church of God, and in asserting the right of private reason to determine the meaning of what is written in the Scriptures. Their systems of doctrine were mutually opposed and repugnant to each other—the errors of some were far more enormous than those of others, all of them contained some truth, and even much precious truth, but truth, unfortunately, transferred from the basis of revelation as a fact, to that of their opinion; and by a singular law which pursues the work of Private Reasoners through all the wanderings of their errors, the school, (that of Socinus, for instance,) which has most consistency with their