

CHAPTER II.

THE POSITION, RESPECTIVELY, OF THE ROMANIST
AND OF THE REFORMED, AS PRODUCED BY THE
TENOR OF CHRIST'S PROMISES.

The promises of our Lord to his Church place both the Romanist and the Reformed in a situation of some difficulty or at least of some delicacy: for, upon each party alike, they impose the necessity of shewing, in some Visible Church or Churches from the primitive ages down to the present, a perpetuity of sound doctrine and of sound dependent practice such as may warrant the belief of Christ's continual approving spiritual presence.

I. On this point, the Romanist usually displays a considerable measure of triumphant confidence.

1. His own Church, he urges, has stood forth, confessedly and notoriously, as a Visible Church, from the time of the Apostles down to the present time.

Now, to this Church was promised, specially and peculiarly, an exemption from any taint of

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heresy, when Christ declared that he would build his Church upon a Rock. For the Rock in question, is *Peter himself*, in the first instance: but, in the second instance, it is *Peter viewed as transmitting his high prerogative to his canonical Successors the Bishops of Rome*.

The Church of Rome, thus divinely constituted as the centre of unity and as the standard of orthodoxy, has always sincerely professed the genuine truth of the Gospel, both in its influential faith and in its dependent practice: and, through the promised superintending agency of Christ, has never been permitted to depart from soundness, either doctrinal or practical.

Hence the very position, undeniably occupied by the Church of Rome, is in itself a direct proof: that *Both her faith and her practice exhibit the real mind of the Gospel*. For, if her faith and her practice be contrary to the Gospel: then the promise of Christ, made to Peter and his successors, will have failed of its accomplishment.

2. Such is the case of perpetuity, as respects soundness of faith and of practice, which is made out by the Romanist on behalf of his Church. With it, no doubt, he himself is perfectly satisfied: but, to the Reformed, it appears in no better light, than that of a mere string of inconsistencies suspended from a purely gratuitous assumption.

That the Roman Church has been a Visible Church from the apostolic age to the present, is

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readily admitted: for, in truth, it is a simple fact of History.

But the assumption, on which is constructed the entire argument in favour of her complete purity both doctrinal and practical, I mean the wholly gratuitous assumption, that *The Rock on which Christ promised to build his Church, is Peter conjointly with his Successors the Bishops of Rome*: this assumption is positively disallowed; because, when examined, it rests upon no evidential foundation.

We have already seen: that, according to the oldest extant interpretation of the text, I mean that of Justin Martyr, the Rock denotes *Peter's Confession of Christ's human Messiahship and proper Divinity*. In this interpretation, he is followed by Chrysostom and Hilary: and, though Athanasius and Jerome and Augustine pronounce the Rock to be *Christ himself*; their exposition, proceeding on the principle that *Christ is at once both true God and true Man*, is still virtually the same as the more ancient exposition preserved by Justin*. Some of the early Fathers, no doubt, such as Tertullian and Cyprian and Chrysostom himself in another passage of his writings, suppose

* Chrysost. Sermon. de Pentecost. Oper. vol. vi. p. 233. Hilary. de Trin. lib. vi. Oper. p. 903. Athanasius. Unum esse Christum. Orat. Oper. vol. i. p. 519, 520. Hieron. Comment. in Matt. xvi. 18. lib. iii. Oper. vol. vi. p. 33. August. Expos. in Evan. Johan. Tract. cxv. Oper. vol. ix. p. 206.

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Peter to have been intended by the Rock*. But absolutely *not one* of the *most* ancient ecclesiastics, by which expression I mean those who flourished during the three first centuries, ever imagines the Rock to be *Peter conjointly with his Successors at Rome*. Nay, (what is altogether fatal to the common Popish assumption), when, toward the end of the second century or the beginning of the third, the then Roman Bishop ventured to apply the text to *himself* as the successor of Peter, Tertullian plainly told him: that, in advancing such a groundless pretence, he was a palpable usurper; inasmuch as, if *Peter* were the Rock on which Christ would build his Church, the promise was addressed to *Peter personally*, and not to *Peter conjointly, either with him or with any other in the line of the Apostle's alleged Successors*†.

* Cyprian. de Unit. Eccles. Oper. vol. i. p. 106—108. Tertull. de Pudic. Oper. p. 767, 768. Chrysost. Homil. lxi. in Petr. Apost. et Eliam Prophet. Oper. vol. i. p. 856.

† De tua nunc sententia, quero, unde hoc jus Ecclesie usurpes? Si, quia dixerit Petro Dominus; Super hanc petram edificabo Ecclesiam meam, tibi dedi claves regni coelestis; vel Quaecunque alligaveritis vel solaveritis in terra, erunt alligata vel soluta in coelis: idcirco praesumis, et ad te derivasse solvendi et alligandi potestatem, id est, ad omnem Ecclesiam Petri propinquam: qualis es, evertens atque commutans manifestam Domini intentionem PERSONALITER hoc Petro conferentem? Super TE, inquit, edificabo Ecclesiam meam. Tertull. de Pudic. Oper. p. 767, 768.

On this very important passage I may remark, that, to make out a decent case of identifying the Rock even personally with

To argue, therefore, that the truth of the Gospel has always been professed by the whole Society of the Roman Church, on the ground, that *Our Lord, in his address to Peter, constituted that particular Church the centre of unity and the standard of orthodoxy*, is plainly nothing more, than to assert its doctrinal and practical soundness on the strength of a mere gratuitous assumption.

Peter, Tertullian, when he repeats his citation of the famous text, in Matt. xvi. 18, gives the words of our Lord inaccurately.

Christ NO WHERE says: *Super TE edificabo Ecclesiam meam*.

The inserted TE may, indeed, express Tertullian's view of the text: but he ought not to have introduced it with an *inquit*; when, all the while Christ says no such thing.

My quotation, however, from this ancient Father, is amply sufficient for the purpose, on account of which it has been made. It distinctly shews: both that *The Primitive Church knew nothing of the modern romish interpretation of the text*; and also that, *As soon as ever that interpretation was started by an ambitious Prelate of Rome, it was promptly rejected as a groundless and unheard-of and unscriptural novelty*.

With the primitive exposition before him, the reader will perhaps be amused to see the exordium of an epistle, written in the year 1178 by Pope Alexander III., to the celebrated individual of the middle ages familiarly denominated *Priester John*: such epistle, with the delicate charge of discovering the local habitation of the said Christian monarch of India, being entrusted to the Pope's own friend and physician *Prudent Master Philip*; who had heard, that John wished to have a church and altar at Jerusalem for the better apostolical institution of his subjects who might piously resort thither.

Alexander Episcopus, servus servorum Dei, charissimo in Christo filio, illustri et magnifico Indorum regi, sacerdotum

Accordingly, the assertions of Bossuet, that *The truth of the Gospel has always been professed by the whole Society of which the Roman Church claims to be the head*, and that *This Society has never been permitted to fall away from sound doctrine which is a virtual conferring upon it of the privilege of Infallibility*; assertions which he attempts to link in what he calls an *inviolable chain*: these assertions are contradicted by absolute matter of fact*. For,

sanctissimo, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Apostolica Sedes, cui licet immeriti præsident, omnium in Christo credentium caput est et magistra: Domino attestante, qui ait beato Petro, cui licet indigni successimus, *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram edificabo Ecclesiam meam*. Hanc siquidem petram Christus esse voluit in Ecclesie fundamentum, quam præconat nullis ventorum turbinibus ullisque tempestatibus quatendam. Et ideo non immerito beatus Petrus, super quem fundavit Ecclesiam, ligandi atque solvendi specialiter et præcipue inter Apostolos alios meruit accipere potestatem. Cui dictum est a Domino: *Tibi dabo claves regni coelorum, et porta inferi non prævalent adversus eam; et Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in coelis; et, quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in coelis*. Audiveramus utique jampridem, referentibus multis, et in fama communi, quomodo, cum sis Christianum nomen professus, piis vel operibus indesinenter intendere, et circa ea tuum animum geras quæ Deo grata sunt et accepta. Epist. Alex. Papæ ad Johannem Regem Indor. in Roger. Hoveden. Annal. par. post. in A.D. 1178. fol. 331, 332.

Whether Master Philip succeeded in discovering Priester John and in duly executing his commission, does not appear.

* Hist. des Variat. livr. xv. § 3. The whole of Bossuet's inviolable chain depends upon that *Petitio Principii*, in which the Romanists have always specially rejoiced.

in numerous instances both of faith and of practice the Roman Church, which may be characterized by its love of innovation much more fitly than by its pretended immutability, has apostatized from the Primitive Church: and both the nature and the amount of this apostasy may readily be ascertained by any one, who will take the trouble to examine the yet extant works of the early ecclesiastical writers*.

Hence, when it is found, that the Romanists, by introducing the groundless novelty of Transubstantiation, have thence, by a sort of necessary consequence, fallen into the rank idolatry of worshipping, as God, the merely symbolical creatures of bread and wine; when it is further found, that, in their addresses to the Virgin and the Saints, they have repeatedly besought them to grant gifts and graces which God alone can bestow, even turning, with blasphemous impiety, the whole book of Psalms into a series of prayers and thanksgivings to the mother of our Lord, by changing throughout, the name *Jehovah* into the name *Mary*, and the compellation *Lord* into the compellation *Lady*; when it is also found, that they have subverted the very foundation of evangelical faith, by alleging, in the way of justification, not only the meritoriousness of human works, but the possibility that frail man can assist

* See my Difficult. of Roman. 2d edit.

his fellow by placing to his account an imagined surplus of supererogatory deserts: when it is found, in short, that these and many other matters, both doctrinal and practical, which might easily be named, now characterise and have long characterised the Roman Church and the Churches in communion with her; the Reformed deem it morally impossible, if there be any truth and consistency in Scripture, that Christ approvingly should have always been present with a Society, while it was thus teaching, and while it was thus practising. Were the adoption of any such monstrous notion rendered imperative in Holy Writ; a circumstance, which would make the Bible contradict the Bible: they would be driven into inevitable infidelity.

On these perfectly intelligible grounds, they admit, indeed, the perpetuity of the Roman Church, as a visible Society, professing to be christian by that maintenance of Peter's Confession without which a Church would cease to be even externally a Church: but they cannot admit its sound theological and spiritual perpetuity; because they cannot believe, unless they cease to believe the unambiguous declarations of Scripture itself, that Christ has been always present with it, sanctioning and approving, doctrines fundamentally heretical, and practices essentially idolatrous*.

* On this point let us hear the sound decision of the apostolic Irenæus in the second century.

	<p>CHAP. II.] AND ALBIGENSES. 27</p> <p>Thus, so far as respects the tenor of Christ's <i>second</i> promise, they deny the perpetuity of the Roman Church, inasmuch as it has notoriously and flagrantly departed from the well recorded faith and practice of the Primitive Church: nor do they perceive, how the justice of their denial can be disproved, so long as Scripture and Ecclesiastical History lie open to the perusal of mankind.</p> <p>Ubi Ecclesia, ibi et Spiritus: et, ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia et omnis gratia. Spiritus autem veritas. Iren. adv. hæ. lib. iii. c. 40. p. 226.</p> <p>Irenæus, we see, in strict accordance with the purport of our Lord's second promise, lays it down, as a ruled case, that the presence of God's Spirit, or the spiritual presence of Christ, is essential to the character of the true Church, and thence, of course, essential to that legitimate ecclesiastical perpetuity which is expressed in the words, <i>Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.</i> The conclusion is inevitable. What sane person can believe, that Christ never ceased to be spiritually and approvingly present with a Church, of which he spake by his Spirit, <i>Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues,</i> and which he described by the voice of his angel, as <i>the habitation of demons and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird?</i></p> <p>It is not unimportant to remark, that the language of Irenæus is that of a strict correlativeness. He not only says, <i>Where the Church is, there is the Spirit:</i> but he also says, <i>Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace.</i> He acts, therefore, as a guide to us, under a two-fold aspect. We learn from him, both where we are not to seek the true Catholic Church, and where we are to seek it.</p>		<p>28 THE VALLENSES [BOOK I.]</p> <p>II. But, while the Reformed, under this aspect, deny the perpetuity of Christ's presence with the Church of Rome, they may fairly be called upon to establish the perpetuity of a Church or Churches, which, by the maintenance of their own doctrine in all grand essentials, shall connect them with the Primitive Church, and thus shew, that, in their case, neither of the two promises of Christ has failed of its accomplishment.</p> <p>1. This call they answer, by the adduction of the two ancient protesting Churches of Southern France and Piedmont: the members of which, at least in comparatively modern times, have generally borne the names, respectively, of <i>Albigenses</i> and <i>Vallenses</i>: the former title being derived from the town of Albi in Languedoc, the latter from the Valleys of the Cotian Alps.</p> <p>Through these Churches, either severally or concurrently or unitedly, they suppose the succession of a pure Church to have been preserved: and thus, either, in this country or in that country, in this Church, or in that Church, they maintain, that Christ's promise of his perpetual spiritual presence with some one or other visible Church has been amply and exactly fulfilled.</p> <p>2. But here an objection is made.</p> <p>According to the ingenious and acute Bossuet, the Albigenes were the theological and in a measure also the natural descendants of the Paulicians of Armenia; Manichæans themselves,</p>	
	<p>CHAP. II.] AND ALBIGENSES. 29</p> <p>sprung from an old stock of Manichæans: while the Vallenses or Valdenses were a body of mere comparatively modern sectaries; who, about the year 1160 or 1170, owed alike both their name and their origin to Peter Valdo of Lyons; and who, in doctrine, differed originally but little from the Church of Rome, being, at first, a Community of Donatistical Schismatics, rather than a synagogue of Heretical Speculatists*.</p> <p>If, then, the Albigenes were Manichæans; and if the Vallenses were but a sort of modern Popish Schismatics: it is quite clear, on the doctrinal principles of the Reformed Churches, that <i>their</i> Communions could not have preserved the required perpetuity of Christ's spiritual presence in some Visible Church, between the early uncorrupted ages of Primitive Christianity and the later age of the great Reformation from Popery.</p> <p>But, if the doctrinal perpetuity of the Reformed cannot be established; then they are forthwith brought to the somewhat formidable dilemma; either that their system of faith and practice must be deemed erroneous; or else that in <i>their</i> case at least, whatever may be the case of the Romanists, the promise of Christ has failed to be accomplished.</p> <p>Hence it must be inquired: <i>Whether, in point of fact, there is as much reason to deny the perpe-</i></p> <p>* See Bossuet's Hist. des Variat. livr. xi. § 1—148.</p>		<p>30 THE VALLENSES AND ALBIGENSES. [BOOK I.]</p> <p><i>tuity of a line which shall doctrinally connect the Reformed Churches with the Primitive Church; as there is to deny the perpetuity of the Roman Church, in regard to the promised continual presence of Christ with some one or other Branch of his Church Catholic.</i></p>	