

life? Again, if so, how was it possible for an immortal life to be touched by the blighting hand of mortality and die?

Questions arise in the mind of childhood, nor will they permit themselves to be stilled by the superior wisdom of manhood. They may be supposed to come somewhat in this form: Suppose everything had gone the other way; that Eve had not been tempted, or, had not yielded; if those who are now called our first parents had not sinned, what would this earth have been? What would have been the history of the race? Would there have been a human race, and if so, what would have been its nature? What its development? What its destiny? Or, would the first pair have remained in the Garden of Eden, solitary and alone, with an everlasting existence, knowing not good from evil, nor understanding even their own nature?

It appears to me that to suppose anything in the arrangement, different from just what we have, would spoil the whole arrangement. It would rob man of his experience, which is of some value, although that experience causes his joys to be sometimes touched by sorrows.

Therefore, I have long since come to the conclusion that man is of the earth, earthy. He is in keeping with his environments—in harmony with all his surroundings.

Look around, then, on the animal and vegetable world. In your observation what do you behold? You see life. You also see death. In both the animal and vegetable worlds we see something corresponding to, "first the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear." But look a little longer, after the corn is full in the ear, and what do you see? You see death. In every instance where growth ceases, death begins. Therefore, all around you there is the bud, development, maturity and then—death. Find an exception to this rule if you can. Is man an exception? You must surely answer: No! Just as soon as the bones reach their highest point of hardness, the process begins of returning to the dust from which they were taken. "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." "The first man is of the earth, earthy." Instead then, of supposing it unnatural for man to die, as some do, I have long ago come to the conclusion that it is just as natural for man to die as it is for "a corn of wheat," or a mushroom; that when created if left to the natural course of events, his body, under the withering hand of time, would "wax old," and droop and die; and if kept alive beyond a natural development, ripening and then fading; it would not be by any arrangement in his nature, but rather by the supernatural, or by the interference of a higher power. The foregoing thoughts will doubtless conflict with much of the current thought of the "religious world," and also the graphic description by Milton of the fruit of that forbidden tree, "whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe." O. B. EMERY.

(To be continued.)

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM.

MATT. XVI. 18, 19.

BY H. E. COOKE.

Notwithstanding all that was spoken by the prophets previous to the incarnation of "Jesus of Nazareth," there were various ideas entertained by various classes of the human family (especially by the Jewish nation) concerning His Messianic mission. From the time the tidings of His arrival was first announced by the angelic host to the eastern sages, "that in the city of David a Saviour was born, which was Christ the Messiah," from that very night inquiry and investigation began concerning Him. The Jewish nation was indeed looking for the Messiah, but they greatly erred in their expectations of Him. Various ideas were entertained by them concerning His appearing. They were looking forward to the

time when He would arrive in kingly pomp and prestige and take the reins of ecclesiastical and political sway, and by His rule the subjugation of all nations would be inevitable. But when their anticipations were frustrated, they were in a state of chaos over the matter. They seemed to be unable to arrive at a definite conclusion. But, after learning some of the facts concerning the birth of Him who was reported to be the king of the Jews, and when it was made sufficiently known to reach the ears of Herod the King, the fear of a rival stimulated him to unsheath his sword. But heaven protects the newborn king. God's plans were not to be thwarted by the petty decree of the blood-thirsty Herod. God had sent His Son to be known, that those who were willing to know and receive Him might be saved, and thus He protects Him from the murderous attack of the king. We pass over a few of the eventful years in the life of the "Son of God," while the commotion aroused among the Jews at His birth was beginning to assuage, only to arise with augmenting intensity. The time was fast approaching when He who was the object of contempt and derision would walk the streets of Jerusalem and Judea, and not only reprove them of their hard-heartedness, but by mighty signs and wonders convince them of His Messiahship. From that eventful night in Bethlehem's manger, until He was announced by "John the Baptist," there is nothing of note in the life of Christ, save His interview with the "doctors in the temple." Still the Jewish nation slept on regardless of their best interests. But as soon as John enters the borders of "Judea" and announces the reign of heaven is at hand, all the region around about "Judea and Jerusalem" was again in commotion. Some rushing with anxious, hopeful hearts to receive the message with joy; others in rage and derision, pronouncing anathema upon him who would insult Cæsar by making himself king. Again the inquiry began, and from mouth to mouth it flew. But notwithstanding their clamour, John fills his mission and proclaims Him the "Lamb of God," the King of the kingdom of heaven. Shortly a striking scene is enacted from the banks of the Jordan, when the stranger, king of the kingdom of heaven, goes slowly down from the river bank, led by John, His messenger, and there in the crystal tide He sets forth the action and institution of Christian baptism. And coming up out of the water in the presence of a vast multitude, the divinity of Christ and His Sonship to God the Father is demonstrated by the descension of the "Holy Spirit" and the voice of the "Most High," "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Notwithstanding the many infallible proofs manifested to convince the populace of His Messiahship, still their hatred and curiosity was not appeased. Still they haunted Him with all manner of unnecessary questions; oftentimes sought to insnare Him by their subtle knavery, little thinking that their hearts were an open page under the scrutiny of His divine eye. Yet all this did not retard the progress of His mission. He went from town to town, from city to city, and by mighty works convinced the people of His mission as the "Son of God." At the time He propounded the words that furnish the foundation for our remarks (Matt. xvi. 18, 19), He had been teaching on the coast of Magdala. He had, while there, encountered strong opposition with the Sadducees and Pharisees. Though He did among them things none other did, or could do, they still requested a sign of His Messiahship. But knowing their intentions, He did not satisfy their request. When He had come into the coast of Cæsarea, Phillipi, He said to His disciples, "Whom do men say I am?" Not that He did not know just what men thought of Him, but for the purpose, no doubt, of trying the faith of His disciples. The Sadducees and Pharisees had been doubtless tampering with the disciples, seeing they were illiterate men, and Jesus, knowing the influence had been to darken their minds, He desired to try them on this account. We noticed when He asked the first question they were all ready to answer. But when He put them to personal test, "Whom say ye that I, the Son of Man, am?" it was a general question, put to the twelve as one. But as far as we know they were all quiet, with the exception of Peter. As far as we know Jesus only received one confession from the twelve disciples. Peter alone answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus commended him, and it was a personal commendation, proving it a personal confession. Jesus said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My church." Not on "Simon Bar-Jona," but upon Him—the heaven-born object of Peter's confession. My church, says the Saviour. No where else in the four Gospels can we find the repetition of these words. He continues: "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The powers of death, or the unseen world, shall not overthrow it, for it shall rest on "Christ," the rock of Peter's confession. "The rock

of ages," hewn out of the mountain of "God's eternal power." He still continues His address to Peter. "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," or church. We understand the keys represent authority delegated to Peter. Christ was to receive "all authority in heaven and in earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18). The keys simply mean Christ's endorsement to Peter the right to work for Him. And thus authorized, " whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." From these passages of Scripture many ideas have generated. Some of our friends tell us that Peter received superior authority over his fellow disciples, but in the light of revelation it is fruitless to argue from such a standpoint. Peter was the only one of the twelve that confessed the Saviour. As far as revelation goes, the rest were silent. Jesus never commends until He is confessed. It is incumbent upon those who would be acknowledged by the "Lord Christ" to confess His name and His authority. Even so it was in the case of Peter. Christ addressed him personally on that account. He assures Peter that he should have a part in the great work, in spreading the claims of heaven and establishing the "church of Christ" on earth. The descension of God, in placing divine power in men to do His work: "We have this power, or treasure, in earthen vessels," says the Apostle Paul, that the glory might be of God and not of men. God conferred the power to the Son; the Son to the Apostles. (Isa. xxii. 22). "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder. So He shall open and none shall shut, and shut and none shall open." Christ was to handle the keys, or have the right to give them to whom He chose. He chose more workmen than Peter. (Isa. ix. 6). For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. So the keys promised to Peter previous to the death and resurrection of our Lord was taken from the ring and distributed to each of the Apostles, for the commission was addressed to all of them that were on the mount with Him. A key is for the purpose to lock or unlock, to loose or to bind. The disciples were endowed with divine authority, or the "keys of the kingdom." At Pentecost the "Holy Spirit" made a key of Peter's tongue, by which to open the door of Judaism, and liberated (loosed) three thousand souls one day; loosed them from the power of sin and darkness and bound them to Christ. Philip's tongue was a key controlled by the "Holy Spirit" when he opened up the light of the Gospel, which liberated the Ethiopian Eunuch from the prison house of darkness, error and superstition. Loosed from sin and darkness and bound to Christ and heaven. Again, the tongue of Peter was a key possessed by the hand of the "Spirit of God," that unlocked the prison doors of sin and broke down the middle wall of partition and made the Gentiles free. (Acts x.) Loosed on earth from sin and bound to Christ. "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." (Luke xi. 2). Whatsoever work ye perform on earth, through the Holy Spirit, it shall be acknowledged in heaven. Hence, "Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Paul's tongue was the key by the spirit power of God to open the door (of salvation through Christ) to the Gentiles. "To turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God." To bind them to Christ and the church on earth, and to write their names on the "Lamb's book of life" in heaven. Loosed on earth, loosed in heaven; bound on earth, bound in heaven. What ye do on earth shall be done in heaven. What ye do on earth shall stand approved before God the Father in heaven. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." (John xx. 21). Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto My Father." (John xiv. 12). The firm of J. R. Brocklebank, London, England, send an agent to "Nova Scotia." What business that agent transacts in "Nova Scotia" will stand legitimately approved in the office of "J. R. Brocklebank, in London." Why? Because he is legally authorized by the firm so to do. Jesus Christ after He came from among the dead, became the leading member and manager of the great firm composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "All authority is given unto Me," said Jesus, "in heaven and in earth." Even so He has sent His agents (the Apostles) into the world to do the business of heaven's great banking company. Therefore, what you do in the world shall stand approved in heaven. Every deposit you make on earth, in the church or kingdom, shall be credited upon the pages of God's eternal ledger in heaven.

H. E. COOKE.

Westport, N. S., January, 1892.