

Apostle of the Gentiles began, at once, to build up the Church; "immediately in the synagogue he preached Jesus, that he is the Son of God."

Without pretending to settle the question which has been discussed, whether the phrases "the Son of God," or "the Messiah," or its Greek equivalent, "the Christ," be exactly synonymous in the phraseology of the New Testament. this at least appears to admit of no doubt, that they were both understood by the Jews to be applicable to the same person. So that if either dignity were predicated of any one, the other was considered also to belong to him; while sometimes, for the sake of certainty or emphasis, we find both applied in succession. (Compare Math. xxvi. 63, Mark xiv. 61, and Luke xxii. 17, John xx. 31, &c.) And thus when Paul preached in the synagogue of Damascus that Jesus is the son of God, whatever more he might intend, he proclaimed, or was understood to proclaim, this as his grand proposition, that Jesus was the Messiah.

Paul himself has told us so, in a passage so distinct and emphatic, that had the New Testament been as destitute of other intimations as it abounds with them, this would have sufficed to establish our position. What renders the passage about to be quoted peculiarly illustrative of this into the meaning of which we are enquiring is, that in both the same metaphor is employed. "We (apostles) are fellow-workers with God; ye are the tillage of God—the building of God. By the grace of God, given to me, as a wise master builder I laid the foundation, but another buildeth upon it. But let every one look how he builds upon it. For no one can lay another foundation beside that which is laid, which is Jesus, the Christ, or Messiah." (Cor. iii.) Paul, then, affirms that the Gospel, or the Church, is so built upon the doctrine that "Jesus is the Christ," that it can stand on no other. If so, we must conclude that our Lord referred to Peter's confession of this very doctrine, when he said, "Upon this rock will I build my Church;" unless we will venture the audacious supposition that what he predicted it should be built upon was something different from what we find it was actually built upon, and what Paul informs us categorically is the only thing which does or ever can form its foundation.

If so clear a point required further proof or illustration, both may be found abundantly in St. John's first Epistle. There, we are informed that they are victorious over the world, sons of God, and his temple, who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, or the Son of God. "Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." Chap. iv. 15. Further, to render it indisputable that this is the grand foundation and turning point of the whole Christian system, St. John lays it down as the test where- by divine inspiration and true teachers may

be distinguished from impostors; "Every spirit (teacher) that acknowledges that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh) is of God."

As the asserter of this is the true teacher, so that the denier of it is the seducer, the false prophet, the Antichrist, "Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ; he is the Antichrist, and denies the Father and the Son." Chap. ii. 22. "Every spirit (teacher) that acknowledgeth not Jesus (Christ come in the flesh) is not of God, but is that which pertains to the Antichrist," &c. Chap. iv. 3. The words marked in brackets, though probably spurious, are yet necessary to complete the sense; for which reason probably they had in so many copies been supplied from the previous clause.

John sums up the whole matter in this Epistle, as he does in his Gospel, by referring to the same grand doctrine as the rock on which all stood, and the touchstone by which all must be tried. "We know that we (who acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ) are of God; and that the whole world (Jews and Gentiles, who deny that Jesus is the Christ) lieth in the wicked one; and (for) we know that the Son of God, or the Messiah, is come," &c., chap. v. 20. This affirmation is parallel with that of Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 3, "We know that no man, speaking in the Spirit of God, says, 'Anathema, Jesus,' and no one can say 'Lord Jesus,' except (one speaking) in the Holy Spirit." The purpose of Paul in this passage, as of John in his first Epistle, is to furnish a criterion by which the Christians might distinguish among the manifold pretenders to inspiration who assailed them, which they should listen to as men taught of God. They, he says, who build upon the true foundation are they who acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, Messiah, or the Son of God; for such are divinely inspired; they have the Spirit of God.

Having now found, in all parts of the New Testament, clear, repeated, and unanswerable proofs, that the grand doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine on which the Church collectively, and every individual member of it rests, is this—Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; common sense, surely, and common candor, alike demand that we carry this information back to the passage under consideration; and assuming only that that of which Christ actually built his Church was the same as that on which he predicted he should build it, &c., taking for granted that our Lord's prophecy corresponds with the fact which his apostles have recorded, we cannot but conclude that the truth contained in Peter's confession was the rock on which Jesus said he would build his Church; and that Simon was surnamed Peter, not because he himself, much less his pretended successors, was that rock, but because he first strue upon it, and distinctly announced that it was the true foundation.