

Christ had not yet openly disclosed either to the public, or to his disciples, who he really was. When Simon, by the inspiration of heaven, declared him to be the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus immediately pronounced him blessed, for having been thus selected to announce this important truth to mankind and in return for the declaration which he had made, appointed him the Cephas, or rock, on which the church should be built, promised to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and engaged that whatsoever he should bind or loose on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven. Simon had said, "thou art the Christ," a word expressing the office of him, who was the Redeemer of the world. Jesus answered, "and I say also unto thee, that thou art the rock, a word expressive of the office to which Simon was called, of being, after Christ, the rock on which the church was to be founded. Then in consequence of his elevation to this office, a promise was made to him of the keys, the symbols of pre-eminence and authority; and a declaration was added, that in the exercise of that authority, his decision on earth should be ratified in heaven.

In this exposition of the words, "thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," there is nothing forced or unnatural. It is what first offers itself to the mind on the perusal of the passage. It is the sense in which it was generally understood by the ancient writers; and, I am happy to add, the sense which has been given to it by the more candid of the Protestant expositors; who, though they may not admit the papal supremacy, yet acknowledge that St. Peter was appointed by Christ to be the rock of the christian church. Dr. Whitby thus paraphrases the passage: "As a suitable return for thy confession, I say also unto thee, that thou art by name Peter, that is a rock: and upon thee, who art this rock, I will build my church.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power of making laws to govern my church."* It is explained in the same manner by Dr. Hammond. "Seeing thou hast so freely confessed me before men, I will also confess thee. Thou art Peter, &c. that is, the name by which thou art styled and known by me, is that which signifies a stone or rock, and accordingly my church shall be so built on thee, founded in thee, that it shall never be destroyed.—What is here meant by the keys, is best understood by Is. xxii. 22. where they signify ruling the whole family or house of the king, and this being by Christ accommodated to the church, denotes the power of governing in it."† To these I will only add the testimony of Dr. Tomline, the present bishop of Lincoln, who in his elements of christian theology, repeatedly supposes that by the words, "this rock," was meant Peter himself. Thus after telling us, that the many remarkable circumstances recorded concerning Peter in the gospels, and acts

seem to point him out as the chief of the twelve apostles, he adds. "our Savior said to him in explanation of the name, which he himself had given him. thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church;" and again he informs us, that by being the first who preached to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles, Peter may be said to have founded the universal church; which is supposed to have been the meaning of our Lord's words, "upon this rock will I build my church."

To this exposition, however, the Bishop of St. David's has opposed three feeble and evasive answers. 1st. He tells us that the rock on which Christ promised to build his church, was the profession of faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. Now that such profession was the immediate cause, why Christ pronounced St. Peter to be the rock, will be granted; but if the learned Prelate meant to disjoin the faith from the person of Peter, and to confine to it alone the promise of our Savior, he both violates the propriety of language, and contradicts the obvious meaning of the speaker. "I also say to thee that thou art the rock, and on this rock I will build my church;" are words perfectly intelligible, and mutually illustrative of each other. It points out why Simon was originally called Peter, and shows that on him, as on a rock, the church was to be built. But if, instead of this, you substitute the exposition of the bishop, the whole passage will become unnatural, involved and incoherent. "And I say unto thee that thou art the rock, and on the confession of my Messiahship, as on a rock, I will build my church." It must, moreover, be evident to the reader, that Jesus, in his answer to Peter, meant to confer on him some reward in return for his confession. Yet where could have been this reward, if Christ had only told him that the church would be built upon faith, and that he, no less than his colleagues, should be instrumental in raising it on that foundation.

2. Dr Burgess observes, that as Christ addressed the question to all, and St. Peter answered in the name of all, so the reply of our Savior was intended for all. Now supposing the premises to be true, yet I see not how the conclusion can be maintained. As well might it be pretended, that when a sheriff, for example, is knighted for presenting an address, the same honor is intended to be conferred on all the freeholders of the country in whose names he is commissioned to act. In effect, if it be possible for language to confine the meaning of an answer to one individual, it is so in the present instance. The evangelist declares that the words of Christ were addressed to Peter: "Jesus answering, said unto him," and the words themselves are exclusive of all other persons: "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona—I say unto thee—thou art Peter—and I will give unto thee—whatsoever thou shalt bind," &c.

3. But, says the Bishop of St. David's, "there is a change of the terms in the words of our Savior. Thou art Petros (Peter) and on this petra (rock) I will build my church. If our Savior had meant that St. Peter should be the rock, the same term might have been repeated thou art Petrus and on this petrus I will build my church. He was not the foundation on which the church was to be built, but a part of it. He was not petra but petrus;" that is, he was not the rock, but one of the stones to be employed in the building on the rock. This is one of the luminous and important distinctions for which we are indebted to the genius of the reformation. As long as Christendom was enveloped in the darkness of popery, it was not given to man to discover the true meaning of that elegant discourse, which we are now told, took place between Christ and the apostle:

Christ. Whom do ye say, that I, the Son of Man, am?

Simon. Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.

Christ. And I say also unto thee, thou art a stone, (Petrus) and on this rock (petra) I will build my church.

But the Right Rev. Prelate should recollect, that *petrus* and *petra* are not the words of Christ, but of the translator. Christ did not speak in Greek, but in Syrochaldæic. If for the same word *cephas*, the translator employed both *Petrus* and *petra*, it is not difficult to assign the reason. He adopted *Petrus* in the first instance, because a masculine termination was more proper for the name of a man, and *petra* the second, because it was more analogous to the metaphor of building an edifice. †

At the close of this part of his publication, the bishop lays down the three following propositions; that "the first christian church was the church of Jerusalem; that the president of the first christian council was not St. Peter, but St. James; and that the first christian bishop was St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem." ‡ These

* Bish. of St. David's; p. 5.

† Dr. Burgess will not allow St. Peter to be the rock, because there is a change of terms, *Petrus* and *Petra*. Would he then acknowledge him to be the rock, if there were no change of terms? That there was none in the original discourse of Christ, is certain. He must have used *Cephas* in both places. The same word is also used in both places, in the Syriac, Arabic, and the other oriental versions.

‡ Ib. p. 10. Another extraordinary assertion, hazarded by the learned Prelate, is, that "St. Paul was the first founder of the church of Rome." From what ancient writer this information has been derived, we are not told; nor is it possible to conjecture. It could not be from St. Paul himself, for he wrote a long epistle to that church some years before it could have been in his power to found it. But may I ask the Bishop of St. David's one question? If he knows any thing of ecclesiastical antiquity, he must know that the See of Rome was always called the See of Peter, *sedes* or *cathedra Petri*. Now if St. Paul was the first founder of that church, how came it not to be called the See of Paul instead of the See of Peter? Even supposing that, according to the discovery of the bishop, St. Peter afterwards assisted St. Paul in preaching the Gospel at Rome, yet why should that church derive its distinguishing appellation from the assistant rather than the principal? Truly, I think he must surrender one of his two favorite opinions. He must acknowledge that either St. Paul was not the first founder of the church of Rome, or that the name of Peter superseded that of Paul, on account of the superior dignity of the former.

* Whitby, in Matt. xvi. 16. Tom. I. p. 143.

† Hammond, *ibid.*, p. 92.

* Elements of Christian Theology, par. II. c. 25. p. 470—479.