

# The Christian.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY,

By Barnes & Co., under the auspices of the Home Mission Board of the Disciples of Christ of the Maritime Provinces.

TERMS: - 50 Cents Per Annum in Advance.

All questions and communications, business or otherwise, intended for publication, to be addressed:

"THE CHRISTIAN,"

P. O. Box 83,  
St. John, N. B.

EDITOR:

DONALD CRAWFORD, --- NEW GLASGOW, P. E. I.

CO-EDITOR:

T. H. CAPP, - - - - - St. John, N. B.

SAINT JOHN, N. B., AUGUST, 1885.

## EDITORIAL.

### THE ROCK FOUNDATION AND THE GATES OF HADES.

BY B. U. WATKINS.

PART II.—The proper rendition of Matt. xvi. 18 is this, "I say unto thee thou art Peter, and I will build my church upon this rock and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." In this translation the true antecedent to the *it* against which the gates of hades shall not prevail is placed in such position as suggests to the English reader the exact meaning of the text. For it was the rock foundation, the Divine Sonship, against which the gates of hades should not prevail. The great malignant forces were to be arrayed against the noun represented by *it* in the text. And as such forces might be expected to rise against the Church it has been taken for granted that it was the Church that had the promise of unfailing immunity in this regard. But a careful investigation of this word will show that it is never used in a malignant sense in all the Bible. *Hades* simply means the state of the dead—the world of disembodied spirits which will cease to exist after the general resurrection. With this definition we can couple the words of the learned Dr. George Campbell, "The gates of hades is, therefore, a very natural periphrasis for death, inasmuch that without any positive evidence we should naturally conclude this to be the meaning of the phrase. But we have sufficient evidence, both sacred and profane, that this is the meaning. The phrase occurs in the Septuagint in the thanksgiving of Hezekiah after recovery from that mortal sickness. I said, *I shall go to the gates of the grave (en pulvis hadou.)* It follows, *I am deprived of the remnant of my days.* . . . But our translators did not like to make Hezekiah, who was a good man, speak as if he was going to hell, and have, therefore, rendered it grave." (Isa. xxxviii. 10). The Doctor also goes on to give an example from the Apocrypha, "Thou hast the power of life and death, thou leadest to the gates of hades and bringest up again." He also quotes an example from Flower to the same intent. So there is not the slightest doubt but the act of dying is the exact meaning of the gates of hades.

The next word to be defined is *Katiskuo*, *prevail against*, which occurs but twice in the New Testament—once here and in Luke xxiii. 23. "And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed." They were too hard for Pilate.

So also it is used in Josephus (Ant. B. xvi. Sec. 8). But the contrivance of Salome was too hard for them, i. e., for Aristobulus and his brother. The words in *italics* are the representatives of *Katiskuo* in the original.

There is also an example of this word in the Apocryphal book Wisdom vii. 30. Speaking of Wisdom the author says, "She is more beautiful than the sun and beyond all the order of the stars. When compared with light she is found preferable for to this night succeeds. But vice is not too hard for wisdom or does not prevail against wisdom." With these examples and the definitions, together with the definitions furnished by Robinson we may begin to enquire how far they will apply to the church. If Christ had intended to say the church shall never become extinct, would He have said death will not be too hard for it? Or to apply Robinson's definition, it would sound unnatural, if not harsh, to say that death shall not be strong against the church. But any of them will apply to the Rock of Divinity. If we apply too hard as the definition it will exactly suit the exigencies of the case, if we remember that the Divine Sonship was the *tried* stone which was laid in Zion. And when tests are applied which prove the unworthiness of the subject of ordeal, we are apt to say they were too hard for him. But His death was understood to be the tests of His Messiahship. The Jews put Him to death to falsify the Rock of His Divinity. But it was not too hard a test. On the contrary, it was the means of demonstrating it with a power not to be gainsaid. So we can truly say that death was not too hard for Peter's confession. So also we can apply Robinson's definition. The gates of hades did not grow strong against that confession. On the contrary, death has grown weaker ever since his encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. So the literal meaning of *Katiskuo* *invalens* is highly appropriate when applied to the confession, but very unsuitable when applied to the church.

Another consideration also goes to show that the church was not the subject of this asservation, for its stability was not then the imminent question. The disciples were not then asked what men were saying about His future church, but who do they say I am? And who do you say? The labors of His whole public life had been to prove the Divinity of His mission. It is true that the immobility of the foundation argues the stability of the superstructure. But the importance of the immobility is not lost sight of by an abrupt reference to something in the infinite future.

And as further evidence that the death-test applies to the foundation and not the church, Jesus began immediately from "that time forth" to show them that He must be killed and rise again. To give this observation due weight let us suppose that He began from that time to speak to them more definitely about the organization of the church, would not such instruction be taken as a strong argument in favor of the death-test belonging to the church? So, *mutatis mutandis*, the fact of His taking this occasion to enunciate the necessity of His own death proves that the test applies to His Messiahship but with no other reference to the Church. The fact that death did not gain a victory over Christ is as good a proof of His Divine nature as could be desired. But as a criterion of the true Church it is hard to apply and inconclusive under the most favorable circumstances. For before we can make a satisfactory argument for the identity of the Church out of the hypothesis that it shall never be extinct, we will have not only to prove that the Church has come down unchanged from the days of the Apostles, but that it will continue so to the end of time. Neither of these positions can be proved. So, as a criterion of the church it is simply useless. But as applied to the truth of Peter's confession its utility and wisdom cannot be over-estimated.

There is a marked distinction between the Church and the Kingdom. The Kingdom of Christ was to break in pieces all those ancient

universal empires and stand forever (Dan. ii. 44, and Isa. ix. 7). But to the Church no such guarantee was given. When we speak of a kingdom we refer more to the king than to his subjects. But when the church claims attention we think almost exclusively of the loyal subjects of the kingdom. With the king there should be no variableness nor shadow of turning. But of the human subjects of his reign we can but expect change and intermission. The territory of the Kingdom of Heaven is the world (John xvii. 2 and Matt. xiii. 38). And all men are either loyal or disloyal subjects of the heavenly reign—for Christ is King over all the earth. The territory of the United States lies under many a disloyal subject. And every kingdom known to history has been beset with similar disobedience and disloyalty. And yet this fact is not taken as conclusive evidence that there are no kingdoms among the governments of earth. Then why should the disobedience of wicked men be taken as evidence that Christ has no Kingdom in the world?

Now, as Christ has power over all flesh, and as He is the same to-day, yesterday and forever, there is no intermission in His authority. It is as continuous as time, and endless as eternity. But this continuity and unchanging identity belong not to the Church. The church is a part of the kingdom and a very important part too, but the word church is never used for the kingdom. But kingdom by Synecdoche is sometimes used for church, the most noted example of which use is John iii. 5. Here *kingdom* undoubtedly means church, the text meaning. You cannot take your place as loyal subjects of the incoming reign without the process of regeneration. For the church is a society of loyal subjects under the heavenly reign who love Christ not only as King but as a Priest, a Saviour who has taken away their sins.

But the question may arise: What is gained by all this criticism? The answer is this: It will save us and our neighbors an immense amount of useless labor in looking up a church succession from Pentecost downwards. There is no such thing to be found—no such thing is mooted in the text. And it is well for us that it is not, for it would cast doubt upon the whole question of Christianity.

It is painful to see men of sterling intellect striving to find where the church was when she fled into the wilderness! A wilderness is an uninhabited country and in such country locations are hard to find. But so long as we know where the foundation is, and what it is, we can build upon it in truth and righteousness; if there had not been a church on earth for a thousand years Christ cannot deny Himself.

But if Peter and his successors in office are to be built upon, nothing can be conceived of more uncertain than the very existence of the church. See what the law of succession has done for the monarchies of Europe! And if such terrific uncertainty attend a succession which takes place in the presence of a single generation, what prospect have we of untangling a succession that has run through eighteen hundred years, complicated with all the priest-craft and king-craft of the dark ages? To talk of the necessity of churchly succession is to invalidate the evidences of Christianity. And so long as men of talent keep chasing this *ignis fatuus* no one need wonder that there are infidels in the world. The difficulties which throng ordination succession are multitudinous, and so great that they imply impossibility. So, as the question now stands it is, shall we take religion from the Bible or from a church which pretends to have descended from the Apostles of which, however, they are unable to give any satisfactory proof? And if the ordinances of the church are essential to salvation and these ordinances are invalid except