

to reply, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was natural, therefore, for our Saviour to direct his answer to Peter, who was the spokesman on the occasion; but he does not give the slightest ground to believe that the promise which was made to Peter, was made to him alone. As well might it be alleged that, when he said, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona," that the blessing was to be confined exclusively to him. Peter was blessed, but the other Apostles were blessed also, and so authority to teach and rule in the Church was conferred upon Peter, but the very same authority was also conferred upon all the other Apostles.

Some Protestant writers are of opinion that the words, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," imply that a sort of honour, or precedence, was conferred on Peter, and that they intimated that he would be made the instrument of opening the door of faith to the world, the first to preach the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. And this promise, it is alleged, was fulfilled when Peter first preached the Gospel to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost; and afterwards to the Gentiles, when he not only preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his friends, but, when he saw the Holy Ghost poured out upon them, received them into the Church by baptism. Those Protestants who take this view, hold that, though there was a preeminence conferred upon Peter, it amounted only to his having had the honour of first opening the doors of the Gospel to the world. It is alleged that the promise to Peter was, that he would be selected to be the first instrument in a great work of Providence, which was of such a nature as to be done once for all; and, being done, it cannot be repeated. The germ of this interpretation is as old as the time of Tertullian, who brought forward something very like it about the close of the second century. The idea, however, is more plausible than substantial. I have already shown that the words, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," confer no precedence or peculiar honour upon Peter. And the giving of the keys to Peter conferred upon him the authority not merely to perform one or two acts of admitting persons into the Church, but permanently the power, along with the other Apostles, to open up the meaning of God's word, to receive persons into the Church, and exclude them from it; and generally to administer the affairs of Christ's Church on earth; and the admission of the Jews into the Church on the day of Pentecost, and of Cornelius and his friends, at a subsequent period, were but particular exercises of that authority, with which, in common with the other Apostles, he was invested.

Having thus endeavoured to show the fallacy of the Roman Catholic view of this passage, from an examination of its grammatical meaning, let me now endeavour to deepen the impression, which I hope has been produced, by pointing out its inconsistency with other passages of Scripture, and plain historical facts. Christ is represented as the foundation of his Church, the tried stone, the precious corner stone, the sure foundation. And Paul tells us distinctly, that other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if Peter be the rock mentioned in our text, he is the foundation on which the Church is built, which is inconsistent with the statement of the Apostle Paul, and repugnant to the most enlightened ideas of the nature of Christ's Church, and of the character of Peter himself. It is true we read of the Church being built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. (Ephes. ii. 20.) But then, whilst Christ in that passage is represented as the chief corner, or main foundation stone, no precedence is given to any one of the Apostles, they are all foundation stones, in subordination to Christ, who is the chief corner stone. It is very remarkable that, in a subsequent verse of the chapter from which our text is taken, Christ terms Peter Satan—"Get thee behind me, Satan," said he, "thou art an offence (or stumbling block) to me." If Peter, then, was such a stumbling stone to Christ, that he termed him Satan, he would have been a