

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., JULY, 1885.

EDITORIAL.

THE ROCK FOUNDATION AND THE GATES OF HADES.

B. C. WATKINS IN "THE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST."

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.—Matt. xvi: 13-20.

PART I.—It seems like presumption to reinvestigate a text which has been a subject of criticism for centuries. But such investigation is not inadmissible, for first principles are always present entities and constantly challenging recension. And especially is this true when such examination relates to the foundation of the church, which should be the pillar and the ground of the truth.

And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. This, to the mind of a Romanist, implies that the church was to be built upon Peter. They assume that Peter is the exact synonym of rock; so the text reads to them much as if Christ had said, "Thou art Peter and on this Peter I will build my church." And were this the true meaning of the passage the question would at first blush seem to be settled that Peter was the real foundation of the church. But the misfortune of this seeming soon begins to appear in passages of adverse bearing upon this very question. In 1 Cor. iii: 11, we have these very remarkable words, "For other foundations can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ." This is hard to reconcile with the notion that Peter is the foundation.

Now we are prepared for criticism on the text in question. We may safely admit that had Christ said unto Peter, "Thou art rock, and on this rock I will build my church," the case in favor of Romanism would be strong. But how is it? To make their point the Romanists themselves refer to the original text. They think they find a large rock in the name of Peter. So it will not be taking them at disadvantage to follow them in their system of proof. Here let us quote the original text only in the words in controversy, "Thou art *Petros*, and upon this *petra* I will build my church." The first observable difference in the words in question is in that of *Petros* and *petra*. And scholars will not be slow to observe that *Petros* is masculine

while *petra* is feminine. This alone, if there were nothing else to assist us, plainly shows us that *Petros* is not a synonym with *petra*. And if these words are not synonymous there is no such promise in the text made to Peter as the Romanists claim. This ought to be enough to dissipate forever such a gratuitous assumption.

But this is not all nor yet the most potent argument in the premises. There is a wide difference between the classical meanings of *Petros* and *petra*. *Petros* as a common noun means a fragment of rock or stone; but *petra* means, as the lexicons express it, a living rock in connection with the earth—what we call bed-rock. And Liddell and Scott, whose lexicon is the best exponent of classic Greek we have, says: "There is no example in good authors of *petra* in the sense of *petros* for a single stone." It is very plain that the fragment of a rock would be a very inadequate basis for an important superstructure, while bed-rock is the very best that can be found. So Peter would be an entirely insufficient foundation for the church. But the confession which he made of the Sonship and Christhood was the very best that he imagined. But inasmuch as the church could not be founded upon Peter personally and materially, the allegation must be taken metonymically of the assertion that Peter had just then made, that is the Christly Sonship of Jesus. And this is the rock on which the church is certainly built. As an accessory to this argument we know that the New Testament converts to Christ made this confession, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God. But we hear nothing of Peter's name being thus made the burden of confession, which would certainly have been necessary had his name been the foundation of the church.

The Divine Sonship of Jesus is a befitting foundation-creed for the church which was to play such a prominent part in the then nascent Kingdom of Heaven. But neither the person of Peter nor his administration of the kingdom would answer for a creed or a rallying cry. So if the church was built on that foundation other than which "no man can lay" we have the name of Christ and his Sonship, the very thing confessed by Peter in the coasts of Cesarea Philippi.

To recapitulate in few words, Peter cannot be the church-foundation, because the words Peter and rock are not synonymous either in gender or signification. And not only are these immovable barriers in the way of the Roman explanation, but there is also a marked incongruity in the persons of these two important words. If Christ had intended to build upon Peter this would have been the form of his address: "I say unto thee thou art Peter, and upon thee will I build my church." In this there would be no incongruity of persons. But when he says, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build," &c., Peter whose attention had been caught by this address in the second person, had his attention immediately turned from himself to a rock in the third person upon which the church was to be built, and not upon himself. If we make Peter the foundation of the church we have an irreconcilable difficulty in the New Testament Scriptures—one passage making Peter the foundation, and another giving us Christ as the only foundation that can be laid. There is no harmonizing these passages if the Roman exposition be adopted. But if we reject it, the whole New Testament is consistent on this question.

So there are three inseparable objections to the Roman theory:

1. The nouns *petros* and *petra* do not agree in gender.
2. They do not agree in person.
3. They do not agree in signification. They are not synonyms. Hence they cannot be the representatives of the only foundation of the church.

So we are restricted to the confession of the Divine Sonship of Jesus as the foundation other than which no man can lay. But some one may ask, Is the church built upon the confession or upon Christ personally? We answer decidedly upon the confession. For the truth of this confession is the bond and foundation of Christian love. Where this confession is rejected the living love of Christ languishes and dies. So the good confession carries with it the love of God for the world, the love of Christ for sinners, and his authority to command and rule over those for whom he has exhibited the highest proof of his personal love. And if love be the parent of all legitimate authority, well might he who laid down his life for the world be invested with all authority in heaven and on earth.

But if the reader would put the true foundation beyond question, so far as Peter is concerned, let him examine Rom. ix: 32-33, and 1 Peter, ii: 4-9, where we have the words stone and rock used several times, always applied to Christ and to Peter never. It is true that Christ named him *Cephas*, a Syriac word which John translates *Petros*. (John i: 42).

When all the passages are examined in connection with the foregoing considerations, the notion that Peter was the rock-foundation of the church is simply an impossibility. Christ alone without Peter would be a better foundation than a thousand Peters without Christ. Peter has his place in the foundation with the other apostles, as the fragment of a rock may have in any substratum; but building upon Peter as such is severely rebuked by Paul in 1 Cor. i: 1-14.

[Part 2 will take the place of editorial in our next issue.] D. C.

THAT THE SCOTT ACT is not a failure may be inferred at least from—(1) the strenuous efforts and money spent by the rum-sellers and their allies to make the Act inoperative; (2) from the resolutions passed in its favor by the following ecclesiastical bodies:—

Montreal Diocesan Synod of the Church of England, June 16th:

That we, the members of this Synod, * * * express our gratitude to God for the legislation which has restricted the sale of intoxicating liquors, and that we hereby express the earnest hope that the House of Commons will preserve intact the character of the Canada Temperance Act.

Presbyterian General Assembly convened at Montreal, during last month:

That we reassert our approval of the principle of the Canada Temperance Act of 1878, and recommend the adoption of the said Act as the best available means for the legal suppression of the traffic, and record our emphatic protest against the recent action of the Senate of Canada in passing amendments to the Canada Temperance Act, calculated to destroy its usefulness, and that in the face of the popular will previously expressed in the manner provided by constitutional government.

The N. B. and P. E. I. Methodist Conference at Charlottetown, June 23rd:

We deeply deplore the action of the Senate in regard to proposed amendments, so called, of the Scott Act, and trust that the influence sought to be gained by that body on the subject of temperance, may never prevail, and warn our people to be ever on the alert lest their privileges and interests be subverted by the subtle plans of those who seek their own and not their country's good.

DIVIDING LINES fast fading away. At Caledonia Corner, Queen's Co., N. S., quite a sensation was created by the announcement from the Baptist pulpit that, on the coming Lord's day (June 14th), will be held in THIS CHURCH A UNION COMMUNION of the Baptist and Free-Will Baptist churches. On the morning of the 14th, there being candidates for baptism into each church, by common consent the two congregations met at the same place, same hour, having but one service, each preacher leading in and out by turn their respective candidates. Afterwards all met in the one house and partook of the communion. It was thought by some that the Baptist preacher may yet be called to an account for his liberality in this matter.