

God's Spirit. The excellence of this confession is, that it brings out both the human and the divine nature of the Lord." (Alford.) The Jews expected the Messiah to be a man selected for the office on account of his preeminent virtues. It was indeed a noble confession—an epitome of the Christian faith. It soared far above the narrow, carnal views of the rabbis. Spoken in a gentile district, with idol temples all around them, it was a ringing defiance of the powers of heathenism (John 6: 69; Acts 8: 37; Heb. 1: 2-5). "As his inner life manifested itself to the disciples, they saw in him an exalted nature above their own, and felt that he came to them, not as a mere messenger, but as a son, of God,—not a son, in the sense that others might be sons of God, but the Son of the living God, the one who came forth from God himself, and was in the inmost union with God." (Dwight.)

17. Blessed art thou—Since Peter spoke for the others he receives the blessing for the others. It is pronounced on him no more than on the others who were at one with him in his adoring faith. **Simon Bar-Jona**—*Bar* is the Syrian word for "son." His father's name was Jonah, or, according to John 1: 42; 21: 15, 16, 17 (R. V.), John Meyer calls this "a solemnly circumstantial style of address." Others find an allegorical meaning in Jonah (a dove) "Son of the Holy Spirit," whose emblem is a dove. Dr. Schaff finds in "Son of Jonah" an antithesis to "Son of Man." "That I, the Son of man, am at the same time the Messiah and the eternal Son of God, is as true as that thou, Simon, art the son of Jona; and as thou hast thus confessed me as the Messiah, I will now confess thee as Peter, etc." Alford and others say that "son of Jonah" is used as indicating his fleshly state and extraction, and forming the greater contrast to his spiritual state, name and blessing which follow. We would prefer Meyer's view as being the most natural. Jesus spoke impressively, and so called him by his full name. **Flesh and blood**—"The natural, carnal descent, as contrasted with spiritual generation." (Lange.) (John 1: 13.) The concise and comprehensive terms of this confession, as well as the truth they contained, were due to no mere flash of genius, nor were they derived from any human source, but they were directly revealed to Peter and the rest of the apostles by God himself. (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10.)

18. I say also—that is, in response to his confession. Peter confessed Christ, now Christ confesses Peter, and through him all equally believing disciples. **Thou art Peter**—Gr. *Petros*, "a stone," a fragment of a rock. **Upon this rock**—Gr. *petra*, "a rock," a mass of rock. Upon this famous passage we must dwell but briefly. **First**—The Romish interpretation, that herein a personal primacy is conferred upon Peter, and that this was transmitted to his successors, and that these successors are the popes, is manifestly incorrect. (1) It ignores the distinction between *petros* and *petra*. (2) It bases the church upon a

changing foundation, thus destroying the architectural figure. (3) It makes the apostolate a permanent not a temporary office. (4) It makes Christ bestow an invidious honor on Peter, who had no more faith than the others, but merely forwardness. (5) Peter himself never claimed any preeminence (1 Peter 5: 1). (6) The assumption that the bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter and holds this primacy, is disproved by history. We remark, *Secondly*, that Peter is addressed as the representative of the Twelve, and no personal honor is intended to be conferred on him. (1) In Matt. 18: 18, the power of "binding and loosing," which is part of the blessing here, is conferred equally upon the others, and in John 20: 23 the power of remitting and retaining sins is bestowed upon "the disciples," which in all probability included more than the Twelve. (2) The mere fact that Peter spoke first would afford no just ground for singling him out for such a distinguished position as "primate." The only prominence given to Peter in the Acts of the Apostles is such as was due to the strength and energy of his character. (3) The foundation of the church is distinctly stated to be "the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. 2: 20.) Compare 1 Cor. 3: 9, 10; Rev. 21: 14; Isa. 28: 16; Ps. 118: 22; Matt. 21: 42; Acts 4: 11; Rom. 9: 33. Our Lord's meaning is, "Upon that in you which entitles you to be called *Peter*—the fearless confession of me as the One Saviour of Sinners—I will build my church." "Three times after this the dispute arises among them which shall be the greatest—a dispute which never could have arisen had Jesus already openly and distinctly assigned the primacy to Peter—and a dispute, we may add, which never would have been settled, as Jesus in each case settled it, had any such primacy been ever intended to be conveyed by him." (Hanna.) **Gates of hell**—R. V. "hades." Eastern rulers held their courts at the gates of their cities. Here was the place of public concourse. (Gen. 22: 17; Ruth 4: 1; Lam. 5: 4.) So we speak of the Turkish power as "The Sublime Porte" (or gate). "Hades" means the unseen world, the realm of death. Here it stands for "the powers of darkness," all the forces of evil.

19. The keys—the power of admitting and excluding. Authority to govern and exercise discipline in the church ("the kingdom of heaven"). This they did under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who inspired them. Christ here speaks to Peter as the representative of the Twelve. (See Matt. 18: 18, 19; John 20: 19-23.) **Shalt bind**—declare to be forbidden. **Shalt loose**—declare to be permitted. In so far as special powers were conferred upon the apostles they were dependent upon the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the establishment of the church they were inspired to define doctrine and exercise discipline. Their authority is still wielded by the appointed officers of the church, but only in accordance with the New Testament, as given to us by them.