

said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you ; as my Father sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this he breathed on them and saith unto them Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." If this view be correct Peter had the precedence of *seniority*. This will explain Mat. x. 2, " Now the names of the twelve apostles are these, the first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother," &c. Does not this also throw light upon other facts in the future history of the apostles, such as the *precedence* accorded to Peter at certain times, and the *perfect equality* which is asserted at other times. Does it not give to this passage which is under consideration its own distinctive force and peculiarity, and at the same time show it to be in perfect harmony with those later passages, which are parallel to it?

One clause remains for consideration. " And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." This is the explanation or the amplification of " I will give thee the Keys." Whatever it does signify, it expresses privileges and powers given to all the apostles, for they were all addressed in the same terms. These expressions were somewhat common among the Jews, *to bind* being to *prohibit*, and *to loose* being to *permit*. It was a power to change or to annul institutions already existing, and to establish new ones—a general power of administration and of government.

The power of " remitting and retaining sins" was something different, and signified the right and authority of publishing Christ's law and its conditions, to declare the conditions of forgiveness and of condemnation, and to exercise discipline in the Church. Binding and loosing have reference to *laws, institutions and rites* ; remitting and retaining have reference to *persons*.

The apostles were to carry out the work which the Lord Jesus had begun. His commission to them was, " As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." They were to complete the establishment of the Christian Church. They were to abrogate or to declare abrogated the requisitions of the Mosaic ritual, as the apostles did at the council of Jerusalem (see Acts 15th), and as the apostle Paul did in his epistles, and Peter, at his visit to Cornelius. They were to establish the institutions of the christian dispensation, to make customs, (1 Cor. xi. 16) to punish offenders, to use authority. All things which were not in harmony with the design of christianity, they were to remove, and whatsoever would advance the interests of Christ's kingdom, they were to authorize and to appoint. They were to fix the institutions of the Christian Church, and to arrange and to enforce its discipline just as their Master would have done had He remained on earth. And whatsoever they would do in harmony with their great commission, and according to its terms, was to be approved and authorized in Heaven, and to have authority as an appointment from God. They were to act for Christ, and therefore were clothed with Christ's authority ; and the Father who sent Him would also sanction and seal them as His representatives.

It is well known that the passage on which we have been commenting is the great proof text urged by the Church of Rome to prove the supremacy of the Pope or Roman Pontiffs, whom they regard as the successors of St. Peter. Against their assumptions we subjoin the following considerations :

*First.* We have shewn that it *does not give to Peter any supremacy* over the other apostles. The privileges and powers granted to him were also granted to them. At the farthest he was no more than the first among equals, being the *senior* by appointment. On two separate occasions our Lord gave to the other apostles, in the same words or in words of corres-