

This whole passage expresses one class of ideas, the different clauses to be taken in connection, and the latter viewed as exegetical of the former.

By the kingdom of heaven is meant the Church, which Christ was then establishing on earth, with all its privileges and means of grace, to prepare his people for the Church triumphant, the kingdom of heaven above.

The giving of the keys of the kingdom denotes the imparting of authority. In Rev. i. 18, the Redeemer says, "I have the keys of hell and of death," that is, I have authority over hades and death. In the Old Testament, in Isaiah xxii. 22, the key of the house of David is used to denote authority or government over the house of David, or the authority of the Royal Family over Israel. It is a figurative way of expressing *right to govern*. As the key is the instrument which locks and unlocks the door, it is employed as the symbol of power. He who has the keys of a house has an ownership, or the right of control over the house; so in the common usage of men, founded upon this ancient and universal symbol, to give the keys is to yield possession or to impart authority. The power of the keys then doubtless is, government over the Church, the power of controlling and regulating its affairs.—The explanatory phrases binding and loosing, and the retaining and remitting of sins, which shall be referred to more particularly in a little, express the effect which the possession of the power in question would have.

Admitting then the truthfulness of this general representation, and it is generally admitted, does it confer any peculiar prerogative or privilege on Peter? Is it not a prediction, real, though somewhat obscure, that he should be the first to open the doors of the Church to men as the reward of his faith and noble confession? It is at all events a fact that his Master gave him this peculiar honour. On the day of Pentecost the doors of the Church were fully thrown open to the Jews by this apostle; and in the conversion of the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his household by the preaching of the apostle Peter, at which time he was baptized, the doors of the Church were thrown open to the Gentiles. It is highly probable then that the words of our Lord did include these transactions, and, being general promises, included this power of opening the doors of the Church by preaching and the administration of divine ordinances. So far as Peter was distinguished from the other apostles it is highly probable that this was the honour which was given to him, for it was evidently a gift or honour in which the others could not share.

The honour or power delegated to Peter appears for the time being to have been given to him exclusively. It was afterwards extended to all the apostles as recorded in Mat. 18th ch. v. 18, "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," &c. These words are precisely the same as those spoken to Peter in the text, with the exception of the first clause, containing the giving of the keys. But as this clause is substantially the same in meaning with those which follow, and which are applied to all the apostles, we may safely and surely conclude that they were invested with the same powers.

This act of the Saviour here recorded may be the appointment of Peter to the apostleship, thus making him the first and giving him this priority as the reward of his zeal and faith; and the later act of our Saviour, already referred to, in which he addressed all, may have been *their* appointment to the same office of apostleship. And since these gifts of office were, as it were, held in abeyance till after Christ's resurrection; when the time at length came at which they were to be exercised, the Lord Jesus solemnly reaffirms the previous appointments equally to all. John ch. 20th v. 21st, 23rd, "Then