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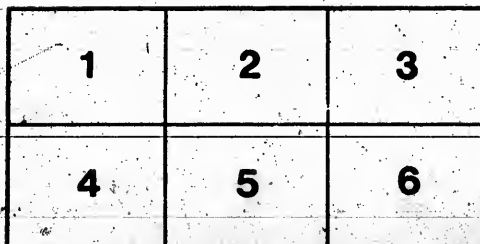
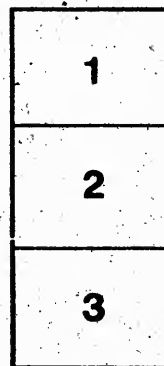
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JESUS CHRIST THE SUPREME GOVERNOR
AND ONLY FOUNDATION
OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

A
SERMON

ON
MATTHEW xvi.—13—19.

PREACHED AT THE
METHODIST CHAPEL,
SAINT JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND:

By GEORGE CUBIT,
METHODIST MISSIONARY.

Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and inquire for
the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall
find rest to your souls.

JEREMIAH.

SAINT JOHN'S:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY JOHN RYAN, PRINTER
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PREFACE.

THE fundamental principles of Protestantism, are so essentially different from those assumed by Roman Catholics, that it is impossible that any controversy can be usefully carried on betwixt the parties, on any of the minor points of dispute. As in Mathematics, so in Polemic Theology, unless the disputants agree to certain data, they will only irritate each other's feelings, and by losing Christian temper, increase the difficulty of acquaintance with Christian truth. Now as the supremacy of Peter, is by persons professing the Roman Catholic Religion, considered as a fundamental truth, and as this is the point against which Protestants particularly object, a part of the controversy is thus placed before us, to which the attention may be profitably directed.

INDEED, it behoves all persons (but chiefly those whose duty it is to feed their flocks, not with human inventions, but with

the bread of life) carefully to examine the ground on which they stand; that so their faith may be the result of that conviction, which an impartial examination will seldom fail of producing.

If it be asked why the author publishes the following Sermon, he replies—because he is firmly persuaded that truth loses nothing by investigation. Error loves concealment, and Ignorance is her bosom friend, Knowledge her most dreaded foe. The author is a Protestant, and Protestantism courts examination of its principles. The injunctions of Scripture—“Judge nothing before the time,” and—“Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you with all malice,” cannot be too well understood, too rigidly practised.—The author therefore has carefully avoided all railing accusations. He says nothing of heresy or schism. He calls no one who differs from him, a heretic or schismatic. This indeed would be an easy way of avoiding the force of a conclusive argument, but it is not the way prescribed by truth, it is not the way prescribed by the

Scripture—The command, * “ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good ;” is issued from the highest authority, and cannot safely be slighted.

It is not improbable, but that most of the readers of the following discourse will be Protestants—To these, the author requests permission to offer a few words of advice, before they proceed any further. These ought to recollect, that their favourite maxim respecting the right of private judgment in matters of religion, implies something more than that it *may* be exercised by them. The right they ~~they~~ possess is a talent entrusted to their care by the great Lord of all, and of every talent an account shall be required. If those neglect to think for themselves, who believe that they can give up their talent, and the responsibility attached to it, without becoming wicked and slothful servants ; surely those who are persuaded that personal responsibility cannot be

* Prove (*dokimazete*)—try, prove, assay—as refiners do metals by fire, in order to know how pure they are from all heterogeneous mixture. Vide Parkhurst's Gr. Lex. on *Dokimazo*.—Try diligently whatever is proposed to you—expose all things to a severe scrutiny. Hence, Arias Montanus renders the passage—*Omnia explorate ; bonum tenete.*

removed from men, but that each one must give an account of himself to God, ought to be consistent with their own principles, and to hide the word of God in their hearts, that they may not sin against him.

THE author will not have written in vain, if any of his Protestant readers find the following remarks useful, in confirming their faith in the unmix'd Gospel of JESUS, the unadulterated word of God.

READER, recollect that word of Scripture—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."—Lift up thy heart to God, and using the excellent language of the Church of England, say—"Bless'd LORD, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Amen."

JESUS CHRIST

THE SUPREME GOVERNOR AND ONLY

FOUNDATION

OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

A

SERMON.

MATTHEW XVI.—13—19. 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 O-
THERS JEREMIAS, OR ONE OF THE PRO-
PHETS. HE SAITH UNTO THEM, BUT
WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM? AND SIMON
PETER ANSWERED AND SAID, THOU
ART 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 BIND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN; AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN.

BEFORE we enter upon the direct consideration of this most important and interesting declaration of our Lord Jesus, it will be necessary to remark, that there is one rule to which we must attend in every attempt to interpret the Scriptures, if we wish to avoid darkening counsel by words without knowledge. The rule is, that no one passage of the word of God must be so explained, as that the explanation shall contradict the general tenor of the inspired writings. The reason of this is obvious.

The Scriptures do not contradict themselves. It is impossible they should do so, for the word of God is truth; and it is the grand property of truth to be ever consistent with itself, as it is of error to be contradictory. If it were possible to prove that the books we possess, and which profess to be given by inspiration of God, do actually contain real contradictions, the certain inference would be, that the Scriptures are altogether false, and therefore altogether useless; and if so, we can neither rely upon them, nor derive from them any authority whatever. To illustrate this rule, which cannot be too well understood, let us suppose that in a work, of which it was the professed design to explain the nature and motions of the heavenly bodies, we found in one place the assertion that the Sun was the grand source of light and heat to the solar system, and in another, that the Sun was incapable either of emitting light, or of emitting, or exciting heat. Suppose that in one place we found it said that the Sun was immoveably fixed in the centre of the system, and that around this centre our earth and all the planets revolved; and that in another we were inform-

ed, that not the Sun but the earth was the centre, around which not only the planets revolved, but the Sun itself. If we found such contradictions, what opinion could we form of the work but that it was erroneous; of the author what could we think but that he was ignorant, or that he intended to confuse or mislead. Either his judgment or veracity, or both, would be liable to strong, and far from unjustly founded suspicion. So with the Scriptures. If by fair argument it can be proved that they contain contradictions, they can no longer be received as the word of God, for they will in that case have lost the essential characteristic of truth.

DIFFICULTIES they may have; and if their origin be divine, if they proceed from the Incomprehensible Jehovah, difficulties they must have: but if they have been given to us by Him who neither can deceive nor be deceived, who is truth itself in its most perfect immutability, contradictions they cannot have.

THE use to be made of this rule is, that if of any given text there are two or more opposing interpretations, that which most

agrees with the plain declarations of other parts of Scripture, with the general tenor of the word of God, is to be received as the true one, or at least as having the strongest probability of its being so. The use which on the present occasion we must make of this rule, is to endeavour to discover what is that meaning of the passage before us, which has the most perfect agreement with the Scriptures in general. The inference will then be, (and in proportion to the closeness of the agreement, will be the strength and justice of the inference) that all opposing interpretations are false.

THESE observations are laid before you that you may recollect the design and perceive the tendency of the remarks that may be made on this passage of Scripture.—Let it never be forgotten, that the establishment of truth is the most certain conviction of error—Darkness is dispelled by light. Destroy the foundation, and the building must fall. If we can find the true interpretation of this, or indeed of any other passage of Scripture, the false ones may be left to themselves.—As the dangers of ignorance are best

removed by the communication of instruction, so the only way of preventing men from wresting hard passages of Scripture to their own destruction, is to make them well acquainted with that word, which was given expressly for the regulation of our faith and practice. Wherewithal is a man to cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto according to the Scriptures.

WHILST our Lord was on earth, various opinions were entertained concerning him. Such was his conduct, such the miracles he wrought, such the divine power that attended his words, that the generality of the Jews regarded him as an extraordinary person; and in the minds of many, strong suspicions were excited that he was indeed the Christ. In reference to this variety of opinion, on the occasion noted in the text, he asked his disciples—"Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Their reply justifies the observation we have made—"Some, John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets." He then requires a confession of their own faith on this most important subject—

“Whom say ye that I am?”—“And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art Christ, (o *Christos*—*the Christ*) the Son of the living God.’” If it be asked why this reply was made by Peter, the answer is not at all difficult.

HE well knew what were the sentiments of the rest of the disciples, and promptly replied in their name. The reason is evident. The natural character of Peter, is clearly set before us in the New Testament. Bashfulness made no part of it. Warmth of feeling, unchastened by humility, uncontrolled by discretion, is its distinguishing feature. This, which when properly directed became the most useful energy, on many occasions degenerated into rashness, and often operated so as to prevent firmness and decision. He trusted to his own strength, and Peter, the affectionate yet presumptuous Peter, denied his master with oaths and cursing. During the transfiguration of Jesus, an instance was afforded of the existence of this ruling passion, for such with the Apostle it too frequently was. Peter said—mark this well—PETER said

unto Jesus, "Lord it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."* Unthinking man! Ah, had the Saviour hearkened to him, and continued in that state of glory—had he refused the bitter cup of suffering, what would have become of the sons of men? Who, oh who, would have undertaken their cause, if the Son of God, mighty as he was to save, had declined the arduous task?—Peter spoke first, and he spoke most rashly. The Evangelist Luke adds with the strictest propriety—"Not knowing what he said." † In the chapter before us, we have another and a not less striking instance. "Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Peter could not bear to hear of this. Hurried onwards he knew not whither, by the impetuosity of his feelings, he took Jesus and began to rebuke him "Be it far from thee O Lord; this shall not be unto thee."—Extremity of

* Matthew 17—4.

† Luke 9—32.

rashness ! To dictate to unerring wisdom ! To censure him, who was fulfilling the most benevolent purposes of God ! Mark the severe language of the justly offended Saviour—" But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence unto me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."—The former confession of the Apostle was from heaven : this latter was earthly and Satanic. Peter did not always speak right by speaking first.

But was not a peculiar revelation here made to Peter ? Did not our Lord say, " Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Undoubtedly our Lord did thus address Peter ; but that it was a revelation exclusively granted to him, will appear more than dubious from the following considerations : Weak as was the faith of the disciples of our Lord before the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and imperfect as till then was their knowledge, still the supposition is inadmissible, that there

were not any amongst them who did not fear God and work righteousness so as to be accepted of him, and "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."* It is the language of Jesus, "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself;"† And as we may be certain that although there might be many who only called Jesus, Lord, yet there were some who did the will of God, even all his genuine disciples, it follows that they all knew of the doctrine which Jesus preached, that it was of God: they were acquainted with its divine origin. Again. They not only knew that the doctrine of Jesus was of God, but they were acquainted with its general nature.—"Unto you (said he to them) it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."‡ Once more.—It is a positive declaration of Scripture, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."§ But as among the disciples of Jesus there were many who truly called him Lord, it follows

* Psal. 25—14. † John 7—17. ‡ Mat. 13, 11—16. § 1 Cor. 12—3.

that all these were thus taught to speak by the Spirit of God. We must admit the first part of this argument in its application to the present case, unless we suppose that before the ascension of Jesus, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost, men could discover as much of religious truth without divine aid, as afterwards, with it. This supposition is absurd, and therefore false.—The second part we must admit, unless we suppose that all the disciples of Jesus with the exception of Peter, were hypocrites; but this must be false, as it contradicts notorious fact.—The consequence therefore remains firm, that although none of the disciples, not even Peter, had received the influences of the Spirit of God, as afterwards on the day of Pentecost, they did, yet they had so far been made partakers of his grace, as to be enabled with true faith to call Jesus, Lord. This will further appear by considering the words of the Saviour on another occasion. “It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God; Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” Now as it is certain that many

did sincerely come to Jesus, it is equally certain that these came to him because they were taught of God: they had heard and learned of the Father.

If these things be considered with the attention they deserve, it will appear evident, First—That all sincere disciples of Jesus were convinced that the doctrines he taught were divine. Second—That they had a general acquaintance with those doctrines. Third—That they derived this knowledge from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. “Flesh and blood had not revealed it unto them.” Perhaps it may be necessary to state the reason, that in speaking of that knowledge of our Lord Jesus which the Disciples possessed while he dwelt among them, we have used the expression, ‘general acquaintance.’ Their knowledge was very imperfect. We include Peter in the application of this remark. Would he have rebuked Jesus for speaking of his approaching sufferings, if he had fully entered into the meaning of his own confession? The knowledge of Peter and of the rest of the disciples, was but as the first dawning

of day.—It was not till the Sun of Righteousness arose in all his glory on the day of Pentecost, that they were confirmed in the knowledge of Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour. The result of the whole is, that the revelation which Peter received, and by which he was enabled to make so important a confession, was given him in his individual capacity as a man, and not in his character as an apostle. He received it as *he* was a Christian, and as *this* was a Christian privilege, not as a peculiar favour conferred on him above Christians in general.

THE eighteenth verse must now be made the subject of our most serious consideration. “And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter; and on this rock will I build my Church.” The allusion, pointed as it is in the original, does not appear in the translation. Peter, signifies a rock; and it has hence been supposed, that on him as the foundation, the Church of Christ is built, and that consequently by him it is supported and governed. On the other hand it has been thought, that whilst Jesus alluded to the signification of the name, his

meaning was that the truth contained in the confession made by Peter, was the grand foundation of the Christian Church. That the Saviour did frequently make transitions, sudden and even abrupt transitions from surrounding objects to spiritual subjects, is too obvious to be denied, too clear to require any comment.—One instance of this however is so remarkable as to deserve particular notice. Our Lord, being on one occasion in the temple, and finding there those who sold oxen and doves, and the changers of money sitting, made a small scourge, and drove away these profane intruders who were thus making the temple of God, a house of merchandise. Struck with astonishment at this, the Jews demanded—“What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things?—Jesus answered, Destroy THIS TEMPLE and in three days I will raise it up.”* The reply of the Jews discovers how grossly they mistook his meaning.—“He spoke of the temple of his body.”—This the Jews did destroy, and this, in three days the Saviour did raise up. In the verse before us, is it not reasonable

* John 2.

to suppose that a similar, and not less abrupt nor less natural transition is made? —‘Thou art a rock—and on this rock, this most important truth which thou hast confessed, will I build my Church.’ Here then we have two interpretations of this passage. Interpretations so different, so completely contradictory to each other, that they cannot both be true. The question to be answered is, “Whether Peter, or Jesus Christ, be the foundation of the Christian Church.” For let it be distinctly noted, that nothing is said in the text of a *secondary foundation*.—The expression is absolute—“On **THIS** rock I will build my Church.” It is not in this text as in that of St. Paul to the Ephesians (ch. 2. v. 20, 21, 22) where the allusion is evident to the *Apostles and Prophets*—mark this well—not *to one apostle*—but to the apostles and prophets—*all of them*; the chief Corner Stone, the connecting medium being expressly declared to be our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Nothing of this is to be found in this text: and it ought to be noted too, that nothing of this is by those who understand that Peter is the rock on which the Church is built, claimed for the

Apostle.—They do not suppose that the text gives nothing to Peter but what the Apostles had with him, and the Prophets had before him. If nothing else were meant by this interpretation of the text than that Peter was what we acknowledge Apostles and Prophets to have been, *secondary foundations*, it would not be worth while to attempt to contradict it. A little consideration would shew, that as all the prophets and apostles give testimony to Jesus, so to regard *them* as secondary foundations, is to lead us to Jesus Christ as the Chief Corner Stone; and therefore that the difference between the two interpretations would be rather in words than in meaning. We repeat it, that the point in dispute is no less than whether Christ or Peter be the foundation of the Christian Church.

LET us take that interpretation of the text which supposes Jesus to refer to the confession which Peter made; and apply to this, the rule we have already laid down. Let us see whether this agrees with, or contradicts the general tenor of the word of God. In doing this, let us consider, I.

The confession which Peter made. II. Whether we are warranted by Scripture to conclude, that the truth thus confessed is the foundation of the Christian Church.

I. THE confession made by Peter. "Thou art the Christ; the son of the living God." It may be necessary here again to observe, that some of the opinions which the apostles entertained respecting Jesus were very erroneous, partaking of the nature of those which at that time generally prevailed among the Jews. It does not even appear that when their views were most correct, they were very comprehensive.—They seem often to have had some glimpses of the majesty of the Lord Jesus and then again to have relapsed into their former darkness.—Sometimes they viewed him as having power to work the most stupendous miracles; at others they marvelled that even the winds and the seas obeyed him. After that Jesus was glorified and the Holy Ghost given, this obscurity was removed; and the truth with all its evidence and in all its effulgence burst on their view. Their mistakes were at once rectified and all their

doubts removed ; and ever after this, they expressed themselves on the subject of their Master's person and character, with the most exact precision. They err, not knowing the Scriptures, who think that any thing like inconclusive reasoning is to be found in the writings of the apostles.

It is not necessary to suppose that Peter understood the full meaning of his own confession. It is not likely that he did—In explaining therefore these words, we are not so much to consider the opinions then held by the Apostles, as those afterwards possessed by them. It is evident that the words of Peter contain an explicit acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Jesus ; *Christ* being the Greek translation of the Hebrew word, *Messiah*, and both signifying, *the Anointed*. It is worthy of notice, that the High Priest uses similar language, in endeavouring to extort from the dignified sufferer before him, a confession of what he deemed his blasphemous pretensions—"I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."*—Here then is the truth contained

* Matthew 26—63.

in the confession before us. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, anointed of the Lord to save his people from their Sins. This is he to whom are applicable all the sublime descriptions of the Messiah, his works and his kingdom which the Prophets delivered, and which the Apostles explained.

THIS IS JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; he who said "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire—burnt offerings and sin offerings hast thou not required—then said I, lo I come"—This is he who tabernacled among us, and made his Soul an offering, that he might put away Sin by the sacrifice of himself. Short as is this confession of Peter, it is most expressive, for by attributing to Jesus the Messiahship, it attributes to him all that the Scriptures whether of the old or new testament, have declared on the subject.—Let us proceed to inquire—II. whether we are warranted by Scripture to conclude, that the confession thus made by Peter, includes the fundamental truth of the Christian Church.

I. ON THE TRUTH OF THIS IMPORTANT

DECLARATION, DEPENDS THE GENERAL
TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.—

IF Jesus be not what Peter here confesses him to be, he is an impostor, in describing whose character language fails us. The religion founded by him is an imposture of no common malignity; a diabolical delusion. Instead of being a light to lighten the Gentiles, he has rolled thick clouds over the nations, and placed them in the midst of darkness that may be felt. But let this important truth be confirmed, and the Gospel of Jesus becomes established on a foundation no less sure than the word of God which endureth for ever; and with the utmost confidence we may exclaim with Peter, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables.”* John, in his first Epistle frequently uses language which fully confirms the views we are taking of the subject.—Mark the strength of his expressions—“Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ.”† “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; Every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God;

* 2 Peter, 1—16.

† 1 John, 2—22.

and every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* “Whoso shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”† “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”‡ “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”§ Now where in the whole word of God, do we find one passage which fairly interpreted, attaches—we will not say fundamental importance—but any importance at all, to what has been asserted to be the scriptural doctrine of the supremacy of Peter?—Does not the very silence of Scripture speak here, and bear the most unequivocal testimony to the truth of the interpretation we are now supporting.

2. THIS TRUTH IS THE SUPPORT OF ALL THE DOCTRINES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THIS is the centre from which all the lines issue, and the point to which they all converge. This is as the Sun in the firmament, not only shining with incomparably

* 1 John, 4, 3-3. † 1 John, 4-15. ‡ 1 John, 5-1. § 1 John, 5-5

the greatest splendour, but itself the source of light to all the attendant planets. Whatever doctrine shines with light not borrowed from this, belongs not to the system; and we know that the blackness of eternal darkness is reserved for wandering stars. What doctrine is there which will possess any strength, if it be denied that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? When St. Paul would give a summary of his own preaching and that of his brethren, it was in language such as this. "*We preach—we Apostles—we preach CHRIST JESUS THE LORD—and ourselves, your Servants for Jesus's Sake.*"* "*We preach Christ crucified.*"† The same Apostle, complaining of some who preached the Gospel from impure motives, bears testimony to what we are now proposing. "Some indeed preach CHRIST even of envy and strife.—The one preach CHRIST of contention—What then, notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, CHRIST is preached, and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice."‡ Can this be asserted of the supremacy of Peter?—What truth shines with less lustre if this

* 2 Cor. 4—5. † 1 Cor. 1—23. ‡ Phil. 1—15. &c.

be removed? From the denial of this, what doctrine becomes more obscure in its meaning, or less pointed in its application?

3. ALL THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL ARE DERIVED FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS TRUTH.

WHENCE is it but from this, that pardon is promised to the guilty, and purity to the unholy? It is as possessed of the character of the Anointed Saviour, that Jesus commands repentance and remission of Sins to be preached in his name in all nations. Of this Peter himself seems to have been fully aware, when on the day of Pentecost, he preached his most admirable sermon to the astonished people. The conclusion he draws from his powerful argumentation is, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ."* The Jews heard this, and many of them were convinced of its truth. They saw that their expected Messiah had been among them, and that they had wickedly rejected him.

* Acts 1-36. &c.

Their hopes were cut off. Their fears of the tremendous judgments of God were excited. They were "pricked to the heart;" and from the fulness of their agonizing feelings, touched with keenest remorse, they exclaimed, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the *remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."—On the other hand, what spiritual blessing is said in the Scripture to be derived from the supremacy of Peter? It is impossible to prove that the least doctrine of the Gospel is at all connected with this supposed doctrine of Scripture, except by using the most fallacious of all sophisms, the taking for granted the thing to be proved, and then again arguing from this assumption, to prove its truth.

4. ALL THE PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL, TOGETHER WITH THE THREATENINGS BY WHICH THEY ARE ENFORCED, DERIVE THEIR AUTHORITY FROM THIS SOURCE.

IN the second Psalm, reference to this is so distinctly made, that it will be suffi-

cient to quote its emphatic language to explain that part of the subject which is now before us: referring to the whole of the New Testament for proof more at large. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers thereof take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his *Anointed*, (CHRIST) saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.* I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my SON, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel; Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish

from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."—Now here all is plain and explicit. The King in Zion is distinctly declared to be the Son of God. From him, thus possessed of regal authority, laws are issued. By this supreme legislator, this King of Kings and Lord of Lords, this Word of God,* are threatenings denounced, and by him will they be at last fully executed. But where is Peter called King in Zion? Where does God say of HIM, Thou art my Son? Where is the promise made to HIM, that the heathen shall be his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession?—Where is HE authorized to denounce threatenings and anathemas against those who should become the objects of his displeasure? Is this dignity imparted to him? Then where is the patent by which it is created? Let us be shewn the declaration of the will of God on the subject. Not from the writings of allegorizing and ambitious Fathers; not from the thundering decretals of the Vatican; BUT FROM THE ONLY AUTHORITATIVE RECORDS OF THE DI-

* Rev. 19. 13—16.

VINE WILL. But no ; this is a doctrine of which the Scriptures know nothing ; and to the law and the testimony * is it that we appeal.

5. ALL CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE REFERS TO THIS.

IN the New Testament, true religion is not only enforced by precepts, but illustrated and recommended by examples. In the writings of the Apostles especially, do we find the most striking delineations of Christian character. The excellence of these delineations consists in this, that the character is placed before us, not only in its leading features, but in its constituent parts. Reference is made, to principles, as well as to actions ; and not only is the conduct noticed, but the state of mind, the religious views and feelings of Christians. We are even carried beyond the limits of the world, and are permitted to hear the language of the departed faithful servants of God, who dwell in his presence, receiving fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore. We find the saints of God in earth and heaven, with the

* Isaiah 8-20.

sweetest harmony, consentaneously ascribing their salvation to the same source. A few quotations will serve to shew the accuracy of this remark. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." * "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." † "In whom (Christ Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." ‡ "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." § Such is the language of genuine Christians on earth; and in heaven, where their views are perfectly rectified, where they stand as in the Sun, in the full splendour of surrounding light, where shadows can never be formed, in heaven their language is exactly similar. Angels exclaim—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain;" || and Saints are enabled to add—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." ¶ Indeed so intimately connected with the confession made by Pe-

* 1 Cor. 1—30.

† Eph. 1—3.

‡ Col. 1—14.

§ Gal. 2—20.

|| Rev. 5—12.

¶ Rev. 5—9.

ter when explained in its scriptural latitude, is the religious experience of pious Christians, that it is deserving of our notice, that wherever the grand truths comprised in that confession are denied, there genuine experience, saving acquaintance with the divine mercy and power, is not only unpossessed, but too frequently made the subject of ridicule. Now this cannot be said of the supremacy of Peter. We mean not to say—far be the very thought from us—that none can have this evangelical piety who believe in this tenet. We would say, “Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity;” and many who have differed from us in opinion respecting this supremacy, have feared God, they have loved the ever blessed Redeemer, and have been made partakers of the influences of the Holy Ghost, and their lives have manifested the communion of their hearts with God. Neither do we mean to say, that all who believe that the truth confessed by Peter, is the foundation of the Christian Church, are spiritually minded, having their treasure and their heart and their conversation in heaven. Peter believed what he confessed, but for

some time after this, worldly affections too much influenced his mind. So with many. They believe the truth, but because they do not love it, they hold it in unrighteousness. What we would say is, that he, who believing in the supremacy of Peter, enjoys Christian experience, enjoys it not in reference to that supremacy, but to the doctrine of Christ, as the appointed Saviour; and that he, who rejecting this supposed supremacy, yet has his understanding enlightened to see the riches of the grace of God, and his affections sanctified, and the obstinacy of his will subdued, and the irregularities of his life reformed, enjoys these blessings with reference to the same source. Jesus Christ, appointed of God to be the Saviour of sinners, is in religious experience all in all, the Alpha and Omega. He is the object of saving faith and holy knowledge, the source of comfort and purity, the author, the sole author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. No man truly runs the Christian race, unless he runs looking most steadfastly (*aphorontes*) unto Jesus.*

* Heb. 12—1, 2.

6. THIS REPRESENTATION ACCORDS WITH THE GENERAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE, WHICH BOTH IN EXPRESSION AND MEANING, REPRESENTS JESUS AS THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH.

LET us here most seriously inquire, 'What saith the Scripture?'—In Isaiah we read—"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation."* In the Psalms, "The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." †

To these important passages, reference is frequently made in the New Testament. By noticing the principal of these references, and attending to their application, we shall at once discover who, according to the inspired writers, is the foundation of the Christian Church. In doing this, it will be necessary to do little more than cite the different passages, permitting them to speak for themselves. In Matthew xxi. 42—44, we read, "Jesus saith unto them, did ye

* Isaiah 28—16.

† Psalm 118—22, 23.

never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes?—And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”—Again—in 1 Cor. iii. 11, “Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, *which is Jesus Christ.*” It is particularly worthy of notice, that to this subject Peter himself makes the most pointed reference—Acts iv. 8—12. “Then Peter, *filled with the Holy Ghost*, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined, of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. **THIS IS THE STONE WHICH WAS SET AT NOUGHT OF YOU BUILDERS, WHICH IS BECOME THE HEAD OF THE CORNER. NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER: FOR THERE IS NONE**

OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN, WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED." Indeed it is most strange that if the text be supposed to allude to any superiority over his brethren conferred on Peter, we find not the most distant allusion made to it, after the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles to lead them into *all truth*.* Peter himself seems to have been altogether unconscious that he possessed the honor which has been claimed for him. He never mentions it in his epistles, never in the sermons he preached. We have seen that on one occasion, when preaching under the plenary influence of the Holy Ghost, he most unequivocally points to Jesus as the only Foundation; in his epistles he does not contradict his sermon—1 Epis. ii. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8—"If so be ye have tasted that the *Lord* is gracious—To *whom* coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious—Wherefore it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confound-

* John 16—13.

ed. Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." Is it asked, whether this might not proceed from excess of humility in Peter? Well then—let us inquire what others thought on the subject. Did the rest of the Apostles acknowledge him as their chief? Did the truly humble Apostle to the Gentiles? Let us hear what he says in his epistle to the Galatians.*—

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews (*synpekrithesan*) DISSEMBLED LIKEWISE WITH HIM; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their (*ΥΠΟΚΡΙΣΕΙ*—HYPOCRISY) dissimulation—But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, accor-

* Gal. 2=11, &c.

ding to the truth of the gospel." We here see that Peter so far forgot himself, and neglected to watch and pray, that he became involved in criminal hypocrisy—We say criminal hypocrisy; for he led others into the same evil line of conduct, and that too on a most important subject. When it is recollected that Peter's conduct had reference to one of the most important subjects of the Gospel, which he endangered, that he was leading men from Jesus Christ to human inventions, that this conduct of Peter was most contrary to his own judgment, the term 'criminal hypocrisy' will not appear too strong. Peter's conduct was a *real Sin*, not a *certain imprudence*.^{*} In Acts 11, we find some of the circumcision contending with Peter for his going among the Gentiles, and preaching to them. The Apostle justified himself, by entering into a full explanation both of his conduct, and of the motives by which he was influenced; and it is particularly observable that he rests his defence, NOT ON ANY AUTHORITY THAT HE POSSESSED—though this, had he possessed such authority as the text gives him, if it gives him any thing, would have been

^F
* The expression used in the Dorsey Test
note on the passage - p. 10.

an unanswerable argument—but no; he resolved the whole into the divine appointment, and then they HELD THEIR PEACE,* and glorified God.

WE have now carefully examined that part of the text which is at present before us. We have seen that the interpretation of it which makes Peter the foundation of the church, not only stands unsupported by any other passage of Scripture, but that it is in fact contradictory to the general tenor of the inspired writings. We have seen, that the interpretation which supposes the truth confessed by Peter, in its reference to Jesus, to be the foundation, is supported by numerous, and express passages of holy writ, and harmonizes with the most perfect concord with the whole word of God. The inference then is undeniable, that this latter interpretation is most certainly true, and that the former is most certainly false.

THE next part of the text which comes before us, relates to the security of the Church. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against

* Gr. They were satisfied, quieted, they acquiesced.

it." But what is the Church of Christ? Observe the exact import of the question; it is not, what is a Christian Church, but what is *the* Church of Christ? On this rock will I build *my* Church. We reply, it is the whole Congregation of real Christian believers in heaven and in earth. Those who compose this Church on earth believe in the Lord Jesus with their hearts unto righteousness, with a faith which working by love purifies the heart, and consequently, as it must reform the life, is evinced by an universal obedience to the commands of God. They are 'living stones,' builded on that foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Each individual is a temple of the Holy Ghost; and the whole company are "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom, all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy temple in the Lord."* Those who compose this Church in heaven, are the Spirits of just men made perfect; those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb. These

* Eph. 2—20, 21.

serve God day and night in his temple, and experience the blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord. You will easily perceive that this Church, even that part of it on earth (and of this we now principally speak) is holy, not nominally, but really so, for it is composed of holy members. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." Rest assured of this, THAT HE WHO LOVES SIN, AND LIVES IN IT, IS NO MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. This Church is Catholic—or to use the better term, because better understood, and less liable to misconstruction—it is universal. It is composed of pious believers of all places, and of all ages, those who are redeemed to God by the merits and grace of Jesus Christ out of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues. Let it likewise be distinctly noted, that this Church must by no means be identified with either any particular Church, or with any number, or with even the whole collection of particular Churches. The vast Congregation of professing Christians is not the Church of Christ. To this latter a man cannot possibly belong unless he have personal piety; to the former he may belong

without it. A man may be a member of any particular Church, and though he have thus a name to live, be dead; but all the members of the Church of Christ are a live from the dead, by virtue of the quickening power of the Spirit of God who dwells in their hearts.* The Church, is the body of Christ; † and if it be undeniably true that “he who committeth Sin is of the devil,” ‡ Can such a one be at the same time, a member of this sacred body? It matters not how excellent the discipline may be, or how true the doctrine of any particular Church; a man may be surrounded by piety of which he is not a partaker; and if he be not a partaker of it, it will only serve to aggravate his crime in the great day of accounts, that though he knew to do good, yet he did it not.

AGAINST the Church of Christ, the gates of hell shall not prevail. This does not mean that particular Churches may not become extinct. Our Lord threatened certain lukewarm Christians, that if they repented not, the Candlestick should be removed from its place. § Particular Churches

* Eph. 2—1, &c. † Eph. 1—23. ‡ 1 John 3—8. § Rev. 2—5.

have become extinct, and may again become extinct, and yet this promise remain unbroken. Where is now the first Christian Church that ever was formed, that at Jerusalem? Where the Church at Antioch? The simple meaning of this promise is, that even in times of the greatest defection, the world shall not become as Sodom, destitute of righteousness and righteous men. A remnant shall be always left, worshipping God in spirit and in truth; and so long as there are in the earth, those who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, so long does this promise remain accomplished.

We may here take occasion to reply to a question, often proposed as if it had never received its answer.—Where was the Protestant Church before the days of Luther? An argument is couched under this question, the fallacy of which will at once be perceived, when all ambiguity of expression is cleared away. ‘If any particular Church commenced its existence since the days of the Apostles, it is a new, and consequently a *alse* Church.’ Recollect the distinction just made between the church of Christ, and

any particular church, and you will see that the question to be of any force, ought not to be, at what period did that particular church receive its existence, but according to what rules was it originally founded, and by what laws is it still governed. Where was the Protestant Church before the days of Luther? Does the question mean, where before the time of this celebrated man, were persons to be found believing the essential principles of Protestantism? If the question be possessed of any force, this is its meaning; and if this be its meaning we reply, they were to be found in the members of the churches planted by the apostles. In the word of God are protestant principles recorded, and from this source will all true protestants derive their ecclesiastical regulations. The truth of the matter is, a man is not saved as he is a member of either a Protestant, or Roman Catholic society; but as he is a member of the **ONE, HOLY, AND UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, OUT OF WHICH THERE IS NO SALVATION.** He who lives in sin, whether he be Protestant or Roman Catholic, is no child of God, no heir of heaven.

THE next expression requiring explanation is—"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

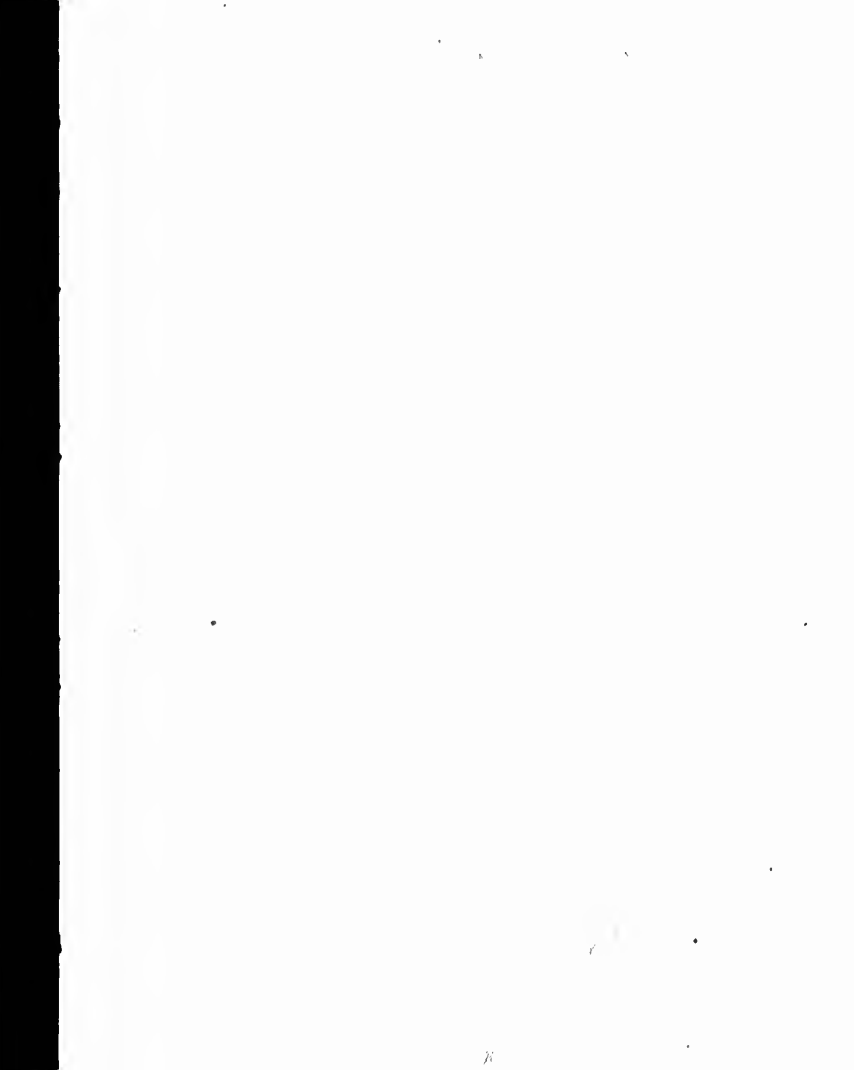
By the phrase 'kingdom of heaven,' we cannot here understand the kingdom of glory, for of this we have several representations given to us; and though of the salvation of Peter we do not entertain a doubt, yet his name enters into no description of heaven, no account of the solemnities of the day of judgment. We are indeed most expressly informed, that he who shall say "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;"* and "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;"† that he who shall "take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel,"‡ is none other than our Lord Jesus himself. It remains therefore that the allusion is to the kingdom of grace on earth. Now whatever is signified by the gift of the keys, it cannot be meant that Peter alone was authorized and assisted to lay down rules for

* Mat. 25—21.

† Mat. 25—34.

‡ 2 Thess. 1—7, 8.

the government of the Christian church, for this, and that by the aid of the Holy Ghost was done by Paul, and James, and Jude, and John, as well as by Peter.—Neither can it mean that this apostle should have the sole power of admitting and excluding members—not into the church of Christ, for he that truly believed, received the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul—not into the visible church, for Paul both admitted, and excluded, and re-admitted members. What then does this gift imply? We shall discover its meaning if we compare it with two other passages of Scripture. Luke c. 11. v. 52.—“Woe unto you lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.” Observe here, that to possess the power of illustrating important truth is to have the key of knowledge, and that to prevent the ignorant from receiving instruction, is to take away that key. Compare this again, with Matthew 23. 13.—“Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye SHUT UP THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN against men: for ye neither go in your-



selves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." From the comparison together of these two last passages, we learn, that to take away the key of knowledge, and to shut up the kingdom of heaven are equivalent terms ; the key of knowledge is evidently the power to instruct, for those therefore who have this power, to neglect to use it, is to shut up the kingdom of heaven, to neglect making men wise unto salvation. Now Peter had given unto him the keys of the kingdom of heaven—He was called of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Apostleship.—A dispensation of the gospel was committed to him that he might preach the gospel, and that by preaching it, he might throw open the gates of the Church, that all who would be saved according to the will of God, might enter in and experience the inestimable advantages of the "Communion of Saints."—And it is remarkable that Peter was the first who did this.—He first of all, before any of the other apostles, preached the Gospel, both to the Jews and Gentiles, so that afterwards (to use the expressive language of Paul) * "a great door, and effec-

* 1 Cor. 16—9.

tual, was opened." In fact, this expression is not uncommon. Thus—"When I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, (*eis. ad.* in order to—'preach,' must evidently be inserted) and a door was opened unto me of the Lord."*—"Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ."† But note more particularly, Acts 14, 27, in connection with what has been just said, respecting Peter first preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. "They (Paul and Barnabas) rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had OPENED THE DOOR OF FAITH UNTO THE GENTILES." Let it however be recollected, that not to Peter only was authority given to preach the Gospel, but likewise to all the other apostles. † Paul speaks of himself as preaching the Gospel, (and consequently as being the instrument in opening the door of faith) where Christ was not named, lest he should build on another man's foundation."‡

WE now come to the power of binding and loosing. "And whatsoever thou shalt

* 2 Cor. 2—12. † Col. 4—3. ‡ Rom. 15—20.

bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." First. The power must be noticed, binding and loosing. This is both declarative, and absolute. It is a power of *declaring* the will of God; of pronouncing the precepts, and promises and threatenings of the Gospel. A similar mode of expression occurs in Jeremiah, 1 c. 9, 10, v. "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have set thee this day over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." Now can we for a moment suppose that this was to be accomplished in a literal sense? — We know that Jeremiah by the Spirit of God, prophesied of the exaltation and depression of nations; and by a strong, but far from unusual figure of speech, he is said to do that which he declared should be done. This power is likewise *absolute*, when taken in its reference to ecclesiastical discipline. The inspired apostles had power given them to give directions, both as to the terms of church-membership, and as to the conduct to be pursued to improper members,

and to backsliders wishing to return to the communion of the church. It must not be forgotten that this power of binding and loosing is not confined to Peter. On another occasion, our Lord applies the same remark to the disciples, saying, "Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* But we must notice, Secondly, The confirmation of this power when exercised. As to the declarative part of it, no doubt can for a moment be entertained, but that he that believeth, experiences the commencement, and looks for the completion of Salvation; while he that believeth not, is condemned already, and shall hereafter be damned. As to the absolute part of this power, no one who examines the New Testament will deny that Communion with the visible Church, is of prime importance, and that excommunication, exclusion from such communion, WHEN PROPERLY PERFORMED ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, is more awful than is perhaps generally imagined. God confirms the exercise of the

* Mat. 18-18.

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power himself has given; when its exercise is regulated by his own directions. It was not an arbitrary power—a power to do as they pleased, that was given to the Apostles, consequently not to their legitimate successors, pious Christian Ministers, truly called of God, in all ages. It was power to declare the rules, by which it was the will of Christ that themselves, their Churches and successors should be governed, and to see that those rules, so far as it respected their own time should be observed. According to these rules the Apostles acted, but farther they went not; nor do we find in any of their writings, the most distant allusion to any other method of explaining the passage before us. Ministers of the Gospel may see that the laws of Jesus are observed in their congregations: and they may—it is a part of their office to do it, and in the proper exercise of it they may not be hindered—so apply general rules to particular cases, that all things may be done decently, and in order; but farther than this they may not go. They are not Sovereigns in the Church, and no one of them, not all of them together, no Christian congregation, nor assemblage

of Christian congregations, no, not even the whole body of professing Christians, could they all meet together, have any authority to make new laws binding on mens' consciences. **JESUS CHRIST IS THE SUPREME GOVERNOR, AND SOLB FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.**

CHRISTIAN Brethren, let us not forget the practical tendency of the passage before us. It is not enough that you see its meaning, that you guard against mistaken opinions. You are most unequivocally pointed by it to Jesus as the only rock of Salvation. Every encouragement is given you to build upon it. If on this you repose your confidence, you shall remain unshaken even though the world be dissolved. On the other hand, recollect this Stone may be to you a Stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; you may fall on it and be broken, it may fall on you and grind you to powder. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap. With whatever body of professing Christians we may be connected, though their doctrine be pure and their discipline correct as in the

very age of the Apostles, yet this connection, useful as it may be, will not of itself save us. If we believe that we possess advantages, let us not trust in them, but conscientiously improve them, having this truth indelibly impressed on our mind—"WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD."

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