

THE CHURCH,
THE FOUNDATION,

AND

THE KEYS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

THREE DISCOURSES

PREACHED

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IN THE

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SERMON I.

THE CHURCH.

And I say 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.

MATTHEW, xvi. 18.

POPERY as it now exists, and as it has existed for centuries, would require a foundation broad, and deep, on which to build its pretensions, and to rest its claims. Its head is the Bishop of Rome, who is called the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, God's Vicegerent, Most Holy Father, and sometimes has been addressed as Our Lord God the Pope. He is a Prince possessed of sovereign power, dwelling in regal magnificence, and having armies at his command. Frequently has he attempted to depose kings from their thrones, and to exalt others in their place: thus claiming an authority superior to that of earthly monarchs. His spiritual kingdom is still more extensive and arbitrary, embracing within its jurisdiction the minds and the consciences of men. His decisions, either with or without the assistance of his Council, are infallible, and are to be received as such by those who submit to his rule. The sins of men may be forgiven by him; for a certain price pardons are granted to persons who have been guilty of certain crimes; while Indulgences for many years to come are bestowed upon such as attend upon particular festivals, or undertake some specified pilgrimage, in honour of that system of religion of which he is the earthly head. From him has sprung the College of Cardinals, and by him are sanctioned, if not created, Archbishops and Bishops, the various orders of priests, monks, and friars. By his command, or through his influence, was the Inquisition established, and multitudes of human beings murdered—men, women, and children—because they differed from him in opinion, and refused to submit to his laws! Even now his influence, because of the assumed divine authority by which he acts, extends over large portions of the globe, and numerous families of mankind. We say that for the assumption and exercise of all this state and power there ought to

be a broad, and deep, and immoveable foundation. Who would have supposed that the passage of Scripture which I have read as my text, and the verse following, formed the whole, or at least the principal part, of that foundation? What person, sitting down to the perusal of this passage, ignorant of the existence or history of Popery, would ever think of interpreting it as an intimation that Peter, or any in his name, should become a Prince, a Ruler over the consciences of men, a persecutor unto death, or imprisonment, or torture, of those who opposed his views; should claim dominion over kings and princes, and exercise the right of excommunicating such as did not choose to submit to his spiritual rule? No one. And yet for all the vast, and gigantic, and tyrannical claims of the Pope this passage is continually reiterated in our ears as undeniable authority. We are perfectly satisfied that Popery would have existed had no such declaration as this ever been made. It was not in attempting to work out its meaning fairly that Romanism became that monstrous thing which at last terrified the nations, and led to its partial overthrow. No; it was in the love of power, natural to the human heart, of tyrannical priestly power, that its corruptions had their source, and which growing in might and vigour, as men sunk in ignorance and sensualism, at last reached such a height as could no longer be endured by those upon whose minds the light of truth and science had begun to shine. Popery is not now what it was in the first ages of its existence: it was then but a little thing comparatively; it was but the first shoots of seed which men under the name of religion had cast into the earth. It is now a great tree;—it was greater a few centuries ago, but some of its branches were then lopped off;—still however it stands high, and covers a large space of ground with its boughs, under which many millions of the human race lie in a state of dangerous stupefaction. As a proof of its right to occupy that ground, our text, as already stated, is constantly produced. Had there been no such text, we have no doubt that some other authority (of equal validity) would have been sought for and found. Most certainly, great as is the confidence that is placed in it, it forms but a slender foundation for the superstructure that has been built upon it—so slender, that had not secular power, and the influence of prejudice and superstitious feeling been called to its assistance and support, the whole edifice would long ere now have fallen to the ground.

Some of you may wonder why I deviate from my usual practice, and take up so controversial a subject on which to discourse this evening. The reason is this: In the course of my Monday evening Expositions this passage lately came under consideration. Some of those who were present urged me to bring forward the same subject, and to preach on it from the pulpit on the Sabbath day, under the idea that in the present state of the public mind it

might be interesting and useful to many. At first I hesitated, but after serious thought felt compelled, from a sense of duty, to comply with their request. Much excitement, you are aware, has recently been produced by two clergymen of the Church of England, resigning their license and their standing in that church, and going over to the Church of Rome. Many remarks have been made, both in public and in private; many statements have been published in the shape of address, and reply, and otherwise; many things have been assumed as certain which at the best are doubtful, and principles laid down as sound which we conceive to be false and unscriptural. While therefore I have no fear that any of you will ever be seduced by the errors of Popery, I think it right that you should be soundly and scripturally informed on the subject in dispute, and thus be able, not only to hold fast that which is good, but also to convince gainsayers, wherever you may meet with them. In the remarks which I intend to make, I trust that I shall keep in view but one object—the elucidation of divine truth; and while differing from both parties, Romish and Anglican, I sincerely pray that I may be preserved from saying any thing that will be unjust, untrue, or unkind.

The first point which demands our attention, and which furnishes a key to the right understanding of the whole passage, is the “*Church*” against which the Saviour declares “the gates of hell shall not prevail.” “Upon this rock I will build *my Church*.” What Church does he mean by the expression *my Church*? Does he mean the Church of Rome, or the Greek Church, or the Church of England, or the church of any one country, or district, or creed? Most assuredly not. If he meant any one of those churches alone, then would all other churches be excluded. If he meant the Church of Rome only, then would the Church of Jerusalem be excluded; or if he meant the Church of England alone, then would the Church of Scotland, and the reformed churches of Germany and Switzerland be excluded. What then does Christ mean by the terms *my Church*? It is of importance in this enquiry that you should remember that there are but two senses in which the word *Church* is employed in the New Testament. The first is, that in which it is applied to the entire family of the redeemed from among mankind, all who either have been, or shall be, saved by the grace of Christ; all of every nation and of every age who through faith in the great atonement, and by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, are redeemed from sin and hell, and prepared for the services and the delights of heaven. In this sense the word occurs in Ephesians, v. 23, 25, 27. Colossians, i. 18. Hebrews, xii. 23. The spirit of these passages is most happily given by the great Lord Bacon in his definition of the General Church:—“There is a universal Catholic Church of God, dispersed over the face of the earth,

which is Christ's spouse and Christ's body, being gathered of the fathers of the old world, of the Church of the Jews, of the spirits of the faithful dissolved, and the spirits of the faithful militant, and of the names yet to be born which are already written in the book of life." The only other sense in which the word *Church* is used in Scripture, is when it is applied to a single congregation of the disciples of Jesus Christ, with their Bishops or Presbyters, and Deacons. Accordingly we read of the churches in Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria; the churches of Asia, the church of the Thessalonians, the church of the Laodiceans, the church of Ephesus, the church in Antioch, in Jerusalem; we read of the *whole church* coming together in one place. 1 Corinthians, xiv. 23. These churches are each of them separate and distinct from one another; from them are taken the members of the universal church, but most certainly no one of them is that general and universal church. The late Rev. Dr. Campbell, a minister of the Church of Scotland, and one of the professors in the University of Aberdeen, in his Ecclesiastical Lectures, says:—"But in an intermediate sense, between a single congregation and the whole community of Christians, not one instance can be brought of the application of the word in Sacred Writ. We speak now indeed (and this has been the manner for ages) of the Gallican Church, the Greek Church, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, as of societies independent and complete in themselves. Such a phraseology was never adopted in the days of the apostles. They did not say the Church of Asia, or the Church of Macedonia, or the Church of Achaia, but the churches of God in Asia, the churches in Macedonia, the churches in Achaia. The plural number is invariably used when more congregations than one are spoken of, unless the subject be the whole commonwealth of Christ. Nor is this the manner of the penman of Sacred Writ only: it is the constant usage of the term in the writings of ecclesiastical authors for the two first centuries." To the same effect Lord King, once Lord Chancellor of England, in his learned enquiry into the constitution of the primitive churches, writes:—"I find the word *Church* once used by Cyprian for a collection of many particular churches, who mentions in the singular number '*the Church of God in Africa and Numidia*:' else I do not remember that ever I met with it in this sense in any writings, either of this or the rest of the Fathers; but whenever they would speak of the Christians in any kingdom or province, they always said in the plural—the *churches*, never in the singular—the church of such a kingdom or province." Seeing then that the word church has but these two meanings in Scripture, which is the meaning to be attached to it here—the general or particular—the church universal, or the church of a certain locality, city, or creed? Surely there is no room for hesitation—there can be no difficulty in de-

ciding this point; for several reasons, most obvious to all who will take the trouble seriously to investigate the subject, we must believe that when Jesus Christ spoke of *His* Church—"upon this rock will I build *my* Church"—he meant the church universal, and not any particular church.

1. We are furnished with one such reason in the fact, that *all* who belong to Christ's universal church are *saved*,—are washed in his blood, are sanctified by his Spirit, are glorified in heaven after death. But can this be said of all who belong to particular or local churches? Can this be said of all who belong to those churches which are mentioned in the New Testament, where none were received as members but such as professed to be saints—to be converted men? Yet among them, even in those days of miracles, sundry persons of unworthy character crept in, notwithstanding all the care taken to exclude them. See 1 Timothy, i. 19, 20. Jude, 4. And with regard to those religious associations that are called churches in the present day—the Roman Catholic Church for instance—is every Roman Catholic saved, all that profess to belong to her communion? Will any man pretend it? Are all belonging to the Anglican Church saved? No one will assert it in the face of ten thousand staring facts by which such an assertion would be contradicted. And so we might declare of any local church existing in any part of the world. The expression here, then, cannot refer to a particular church existing either in the first ages of Christianity or in the present day, because in all of them there ever have been and are individuals who, in varying numbers, were hypocrites, impenitent and unconverted men. Whereas, all who belong to Christ's Church, *his* universal Church—the Church which he hath purchased with his own blood—shall be saved, without one single exception. Hear him, (John, vi. 54), "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life*; and I will raise him up at the last day." Again hear him, (John, x. 27, 28), "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." See also 1 John, v. 11, 12, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. *He that hath the Son, hath life*; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." In Christ's Church, then, all are saved; in local and particular churches, all are not saved. More of the members of one of these churches may be saved than those of another,—but in none of them are all saved: so none of them can be *His* church in the sense in which he employs that expression in the text.

2. That this Church is the universal Church ought to be evident to all, from this circumstance, that no one particular Christian church had then been formed. Nor did any exist until after our

Lord's ascension to heaven, when Jerusalem was honoured to be the first seat of a Christian church: so that, if any one is entitled to be called the mother of all the churches it is she—but this pre-eminence she never claimed. We have no evidence that the Church of Rome existed until several years afterwards; and between the formation of the church at Jerusalem and that at Rome, many others were formed by the Apostles and Evangelists. These other, the Apostles recognised as churches, visited as churches, corresponded with as churches—while that at Rome had as yet no existence. So that if our Saviour referred in the text to the Romish Church alone, then those other churches who had nothing to do with Rome, in any sense, or with Peter more than the other Apostles, were no true churches at all, although founded by Apostolic men, and had no interest in Christ's promise—for most assuredly these divine messengers of the Son of God built not upon Peter as their foundation. Do you say that Christ referred to Peter's future Church at Rome—passing over all the events that intervened between his own death and his servant's assumed residence in that city; then, in that case, we must conclude that all the first churches formed during that period had no solid foundation whatever, nor those which were afterwards gathered together in different parts of the world, without any connexion with or sanction of the Apostle Peter. The thing is utterly incredible. It is a fact not to be disputed, except in the presence of ignorant men, that for centuries after Christ's death, the Romish Church never claimed to be considered as the universal church, beyond whose fold there is no salvation. It existed as one church on a level with the other churches, deriving secular importance and securing extended influence from its being situated in the capital of the world, but in no other respect superior to them. The Church of the text, then, is not the Romish Church, or he must of necessity have excluded the churches founded by the other Apostles, but it is Christ's universal Church, embracing within its ample fold all his pious and devout followers, whatever the local churches with which they may have been connected, and by whomsoever those churches may have originally been formed.

3. That it is the universal church is evident from the promise here made,—that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In ancient times, the gate of a fortified city was a place of importance, as there the princes met in counsel and formed their plans; there also justice was administered, and there were exhibited the emblems of power. The language of our Saviour has therefore been interpreted as signifying, that the machinations and counsels and efforts of the Devil, and of wicked men under his influence, shall never prevail against the Church of Christ. But it is doubtful whether this interpretation is quite correct. You are aware, that although

in common conversation the word Hell generally means the place of future punishment, the word *Hades*, of which it is here a translation, always means, not the place of punishment, but the place of departed spirits—the regions in which those who have died dwell, without reference to the happiness or the misery of those regions—the invisible mansions of the dead. The gates of Hades—the portals by which the children of men enter into those regions, is death. Viewing the figure in this light, the words of our Saviour contain a declaration that death shall never prevail against his church; that his church shall be perpetuated upon earth, though men in successive generations die and are removed from it; and that those who die belonging to *his* church, shall live for ever in his presence and in the enjoyment of his love. Take the passage in either of these senses, and we shall find that it cannot, that it does not apply to any mere local churches. In the first sense, we know that the efforts and counsels of devils and wicked men have prevailed against many local churches to destroy them—they have ceased to exist. Churches planted by the Apostles, visited and recognised by them—where are they now? Where is the Church of Jerusalem, or Damascus, or the Churches of Asia? The same machinations and counsels have prevailed against the Greek and Romish Churches to corrupt them, to adulterate the truths of the gospel as announced by them, and to substitute for the commandments of God the precepts and traditions of men. If you take the declaration in the second of the senses proposed, do we not find that death has prevailed against multitudes of local churches which have ceased to exist? In all these churches, there can be no doubt that there are many who remain impenitent and unbelieving; against such persons the gates of Hades prevail, for they die—and die for ever. Alas! alas! from among the people of every creed, of every denomination, how many sink into the grave unsanctified and unsaved—die the second death. But in Christ's Church not one member is lost; over them the second death has no power. Each as he passes through the gate, is conducted to the land of immortality, and in the presence of his Redeemer and his King, commences the services and the felicity of an existence that will never terminate. No; against Christ's Church neither Death nor Devil will ever prevail—against the Romish Church and other Churches they are frequently making the most successful assaults.

4. That it is the Universal Church of which Christ here speaks is evident from the conditions he imposes upon all who would belong to it, as contrasted with the conditions required by local and particular Churches in order to belong to them. Let us confine our attention to the Romish Church—for it is with that Church our chief controversy at present lies. What does Christ require? Repent-

ance—"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Faith—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Love—"Whoso loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." The spirit of obedience to his laws, or holiness of heart and life.—"Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Spiritual worship—"God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Such are the requirements which Christ makes of all who would belong to *his* Church. What are those which the Romish Church makes? Listen to what is called the Creed of Pope Pius IV., issued by him in 1564, and which was immediately received throughout the whole of the Church of Rome. Non Catholics, on their admission into the Roman Catholic Church, publicly repeat and testify their assent to it without restriction or qualification. Omitting the Nicene Creed with which it commences, it is as follows:—

THE CREED OF PIUS THE FOURTH.

1. The apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions, and other observances and constitutions of the Church do I firmly admit and embrace.
2. Also the Sacred Scripture, according to that sense which our holy mother the Church hath holden and doth hold (whose office it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures,) do I admit; neither will I ever receive and expound it but according to the uniform consent of the Fathers.
3. I do also profess that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the new law, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, and necessary to the salvation of mankind, though all be not necessary for every man: that is to say, baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and marriage; and that they confer grace, and that among them baptism, confirmation, and orders cannot be reiterated without sacrilege. Also the revived and approved rites of the Catholic Church used in the solemn administration of all the aforesaid sacraments, I receive and admit.
4. All and every the things which, concerning original sin and justification, were defined and declared in the holy Council of Trent, I embrace and receive.
5. Also, I confess, that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiary sacrifice for the quick and dead. And that in the most holy Eucharist is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into his body, and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation.
6. I confess also, that under one kind only, whole and entire, Christ and a true sacrament, is received.
7. I do constantly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful.
8. And likewise that the Saints reigning with Christ are to be worshipped and prayed unto. And that they offer their prayers unto God for us, and that their relics are to be worshipped.
9. And most firmly I avouch, that the images of Christ, and of the Mother of God, always a virgin, and of other Saints, are to be had and retained, and that to them due honour and veneration is to be given.
10. Also that the power of indulgences was left by Christ in the Church, and I affirm the use thereof to be most wholesome to Christians.

11. That the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church is the mother and mistress of all Churches I acknowledge; and I vow and swear true obedience to the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the Vicar of Jesus Christ.
12. And all other things likewise do I undoubtedly receive and confess, which are delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred canons, and general councils, and especially the holy Council of Trent. And withal, I condemn, reject, and accurse all things that are contrary hereunto, and all heresies whatsoever, condemned, rejected, and accursed by the Church: and I will be careful that this true Catholic Church (out of which no man can be saved, which at this time I willingly profess and truly hold) be constantly (with God's help) retained and confessed, whole and inviolate, to the last gasp; and by those that are under me, or such as I shall have charge over in my calling, to be holden, taught, and preached to the uttermost of my power; I the said N. promise, vow, and swear, so God help me, and his holy gospels.

Our pleasure is, that these present letters, according to custom, be read in our Apostolic Chancery: and that they may be the more easily known unto all men, that they be there copied and imprinted.

It shall not be lawful, therefore, for any man to infringe this our will and commandment, or by audacious boldness to contradict the same.

Which, if any man shall presume to attempt, let him know that he shall incur the indignation of Almighty God, and of St. Peter and St. Paul his blessed apostles.

Dated, at Rome, in the year of the incarnation of our Lord, 1564. 1 November: the fifth year of our Papacy.

To all these Articles the members of the Romish Church must subscribe,—and if they would be saved they must believe them. They are thus required to shut up their understanding and to deliver over their intellects, bound as by adamant chains, to the guidance of their Church. There must be no doubting. Every proselyte must repeat each Article without the slightest modification. Now without saying whether this creed be true or false, I would ask you to compare it with the requirements of Jesus Christ—Repentance, Faith, Love, Holiness. He demands not that we shall be bound by ceremonies of human invention—He requires not that we should believe that bread and wine used in the Ordinance commemorative of his death are actually changed into the substance of his own flesh and blood—He issues no precept that we shall confess our sins to sinners instead of himself, or look to them for absolution—He gives no hint that we must invoke the saints, and that the *images* of himself and his mother are to have due honours and veneration given to them. No: all that He requires is that we believe in his name, and by the pathway of holiness travel to the skies. We are therefore brought to the necessary conclusion, that the Church referred to in the text is not the Church of Rome, and if not the Church of Rome, neither is it the Greek Church, nor the Church of England, nor any other local Church—but *his own Holy and Universal Church*.

And yet it is no uncommon thing, nay it is the most common thing in the world, to hear the members of these particular churches apply this passage each to his own church, to the exclusion of all the rest—appropriating to themselves also the promises which have

been made to the Church universal, and allowing no Christians but those of their own Church to have an interest in them. Pamphlets and Tracts are written calling upon men to "hear the Church," to "believe in the Church," as if their party alone constituted *the* Church. They use the word sometimes in a general and sometimes in a particular sense, as it suits their purpose. If defects or errors are pointed out in their community, you are charged with speaking against the Church; or if some reformatory measures are proposed in reference to the institutions connected with them, the cry is instantly raised—"the Church is in danger!" thus throwing a veil over the eyes of the public to prevent them from perceiving that in reality it is not *the Church*, but only the peculiarities of their own sect or denomination, that are in danger. Allow me to reiterate the important truth, that it was not the Romish Church, nor the Greek Church, nor the Anglican Church, to which Christ referred in this text, and therefore none of them has a right to appropriate the promises exclusively to itself; but that it was the Church of the redeemed of all ages and countries, whatever may have been the individual congregations with which they were connected, which Christ called HIS, which he builds upon a rock, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

And what a glorious Church that is! Just contemplate it for a moment. Bring before your view that large portion of it which has already passed from the earth and taken up its abode in heaven; consisting of the saints that lived before the incarnation of the Saviour, and of the saints that have lived since then; up to the last redeemed soul who has exchanged corruption for incorruption, and mortality for immortality—what a magnificent army! Travel over the length and breadth of this world's surface—collect together all the wise and the good—the humble and the meek—the penitent and the believing—the benevolent and the merciful—the men who have been enabled to conquer their passions, to resist the powers of wickedness, to trample on their selfishness, and to seek by a variety of means to promote the present and everlasting well-being of their fellow-creatures—and all this in the exercise of principles and under the influence of motives derived from a living faith in the atoning sacrifice and meritorious death of the Son of God. These are the men who constitute another part of *His* universal Church, now dwelling in the world. Is not the sight one that is pleasant to the eyes and cheering to the heart? Again, look through the long vista of future ages. Behold in succession the men of piety and of faith, who in their day and generation shall be the salt of the earth and the lights of the world—see the beauties of holiness in which they shall shine, and the inestimable benefits which, as they move along the stage of life, they shall confer upon their fellow-creatures—

and each one as he disappears from the terrestrial scene, springing into glory and lighting upon some bright spot in the celestial world. Is not the spectacle transporting? These constitute another part of the Church universal. And then the time for the restitution of all things having arrived, fix your gaze upon these three branches of it as having met and united, and become one in the world of purity, in the home of the blessed, of every kindred and tongue and nation, whose robes have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Traverse with them the streets of the celestial city—listen to their anthems and songs of praise—mark the services in which their perfected faculties are enabled to engage—see the brightness of their crowns—the splendour of their garments, and the joy of their hearts. They hunger no more, they thirst no more, they weep no more. “The Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.” That is the Church universal and triumphant.

Excuse me if by reiteration I endeavour to press it upon your consciences, that in order to be a member of Christ’s Church it is essential that a man be possessed of a certain *character*—that he be a penitent, believing, holy man—not formally and ceremonially, but really and truly so. While in order to be a member of the Romish and other particular churches, it is necessary only that he profess a certain *creed*. If a Romanist is a penitent, and believing, and holy man, he belongs to Christ’s universal church. If an English Episcopalian, if a Scotch Presbyterian, be converted, and believing, and holy men, they one and all belong to Christ’s universal church. But, on the contrary, if not, if there is no real penitence, no living faith, no heart holiness, then not even the Pope himself, not even the Archbishop of Canterbury and all his suffragans, nor Presbyterian minister, nor Wesleyan preacher, nor Baptist and Independent pastors, have any connection with, or any title to, the blessings and the hopes of Christ’s universal church. They are all, notwithstanding the official position they occupy, still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

Oh my brethren, let it be your earnest, your persevering desire to be members of this glorious church, whatever may be the local or particular churches to which you may consider it your duty to belong. Connect yourselves with such local churches as you in your consciences are convinced are the most scriptural: but never allow your connection with any particular church to be a substitute for your belonging to the church universal. In that case you may glory in the name of a true Churchman or a true Catholic—but you at the same expose yourselves to the fearful condemnation that will assuredly come upon the faithless and the unbelieving.

The next question for consideration is, on what foundation is such a Church to rest; what is the foundation on which alone it

can be built; what foundation is sufficiently strong to sustain it. To this point, God willing, I shall invite your attention next Sabbath evening.

But ere I conclude, allow me to suggest how delightful is the thought that in the heavenly world we shall find no sects, no dominant parties; that its inhabitants shall not be exclusively Independents, or Baptists, Wesleyans, or Presbyterians, Anglicans, or Romanists; but that the really good and pious of all parties shall be there, stripped of those peculiarities which distinguished them from each other on earth, shining in the robes of righteousness with which the Saviour has adorned them, and reflecting upon each other the image of his likeness: when all hearts will be united to each other by the love which binds them individually to Christ, and where no jarring note will be heard to disturb the harmony of that song in which all will rapturously join,—“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

SERMON II.

THE FOUNDATION.

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock will I build my Church.

MATTHEW, xvi. 18.

LAST Sabbath evening we were engaged in the enquiry what is the Church referred to in the text? Is it the Romish Church, or the Greek Church, or the Anglican Church, or the church of any country, district, or creed? The result of our investigation was that it is not; but the general and universal church of the redeemed from among mankind, of every kindred, and tribe, and people, and nation: of all who have been, or shall be, saved by the grace of Christ. Various considerations were then adduced by which to render it certain that this is the church which Christ calls *my Church*, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

This church, Christ says, he will build upon a rock. What is that rock? One thing every one will admit as certain, that there must be a correspondence between the superstructure and the basis on which it rests: if the building is to be a material building so must the foundation; if a spiritual building, so must the foundation. If one would form a system of chemistry, it must be founded, not on the facts of astronomy or geology, but upon the experiments made in the laboratory of the chemist, so as to discover the various elements of which different substances are composed, the relation which those elements bear to each other, and the laws which regulate their varied combinations. And so with regard to astronomy: its system can alone be reared upon the observations of the heavenly bodies, and the intricate calculations by which their movements and distances are measured. In like manner, if Christ's church is to consist of penitent, believing, and holy men upon earth, afterwards to be glorified men in heaven, the foundation on which it rests must be of such a nature as to be able to sustain their penitence and faith, the purity of their character, and their ultimate felicity: such a foundation, that were it

taken away, none of these graces and blessings could be possessed or enjoyed. Conceive then, if you can, the immense solidity, the vast depth, the perpetual durability, of that rock on which the religious intelligence and christian piety, not of one or a few, but of innumerable multitudes, must rest. Say what must be the nature of that foundation, standing on which, myriads and myriads of human beings shall be enabled from amid the surrounding darkness of earth to penetrate into the light of heaven; and in opposition to the most formidable powers of Satan and of wicked men, shall maintain an unceasing warfare until it ends in glorious triumph; and, rising above the pride and selfishness of their own depraved nature, shall become like God in the purity of their character, and earnestly seek as his children to bless their fellow-creatures as the messengers of his benevolence. The foundation itself must be holy—must consist of such truth as shall enlighten the mind, and affect the heart and generate motives for the conduct; must communicate such an influence as shall enable those who build upon it to sustain all the shocks they may receive from falsehood and error and superstition; and withstand every assault that may be made upon them by the world, the devil and the flesh. We ask then who or what is the rock that is to form this foundation—the holy foundation of Christ's universal Church? The Romanists answer—It is the Apostle Peter; and they say so upon the authority of this text. But does the text furnish them with authority to make this assertion? We say—No; and we say No, upon several grounds.

In the first place, we say No, because of the *utter impossibility* of Peter's being the foundation of the Church universal. Who was Peter? A fisherman of Galilee—a simple, and unlearned man, with nothing to distinguish him from the great mass of ordinary men—like them a sinner—labouring with his hands for the support of his family, and indebted for all that he afterwards became as an apostle, to the friendship and favour of his Divine Master. In what conceivable sense can it be said that this Peter is the foundation on which Christ lays his Church? Is Peter possessed of any qualities, mental or moral so infinitely surpassing those of other men, that from him are to spring up all the enlightened intelligence, all the Christian holiness, all the felicity of the redeemed, in all ages and throughout eternity? The idea is utterly and inexpressibly absurd. What is there in or about Peter more than the other Apostles and inspired men to induce sinners to repent—to abandon sin—to become pure and holy? Nothing; absolutely nothing. You may indeed say that he derives importance from the fact that he was a regenerated man—that the Holy Ghost dwelt within him, and that he was commissioned by the Lord Jesus to carry his message of mercy to the various nations of the earth.

We grant it : but were not all the other Apostles in the same position ? Were they not all equally honoured and blessed in these respects ? In taking this ground, do you not perceive that you remove Peter from being the foundation of the church ? You convert him into the missionary—the preacher, an office which we are willing to acknowledge was honourably sustained by him. In the duties of this office he becomes a builder, but he does not build upon himself :—he ceases to be the foundation—he cannot be both builder and foundation. In the whole of his career he did nothing but preach Christ crucified, form churches, work miracles, and suffer for the truth ; but all this bears nothing upon it of the character of a foundation—a foundation of the universal church. He proclaimed that it was laid—he proclaimed the truth ; but he did not discover the truth, he did not invent the truth—his bosom was not its source or centre—he merely published what he received from another ; and what he did as an apostle the other apostles did likewise.

The Romanists have made Peter the foundation of their church, but their conduct and the events that have marked their history, are such as shew that in their estimation he is not a sufficiently strong foundation even for their own church—how much more insufficient for the general church of the redeemed. There are *three* classes of facts to which I may advert for the purpose of illustrating this assertion.

1. The church of Christ is a spiritual church ; individuals are qualified for belonging to it by the reception of revealed truth, and by that truth producing its legitimate effects in the formation of religious conduct and character. The only means by which it can be supported or defended, or enlarged, is the communication of the truth ; its very existence, its essential welfare, its freedom from error, all depend upon its possession of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Now, is truth the only weapon which Romanism has employed in support of what *it* calls the church ? I would not hurt the feelings of any class of my fellow-citizens if I could avoid it consistently with duty ; but I must speak plainly, and will do it in the most inoffensive manner of which I am capable. What *mean* the establishment of its inquisitions—its murderous wars against the Waldenses—the butcheries of men, women, and children, perpetrated in the mountains and valleys of Piedmont ? How are we to account for the imprisonments and tortures and burnings of good and holy men, called heretics, which mark a long period of its history ? Do they not mean this, that Peter was not a foundation sufficiently strong to sustain their church, and that it was necessary to employ these carnal weapons in order to make up for what was wanting in Peter ? I know it may be said ; for the purpose of turning away the edge of these remarks—have not Protestants

also been guilty of persecuting those who differed from them in creed and ceremony? I admit it—some of them, not all, have done so. But what has that to do with the present argument—it does not in the slightest degree affect it. We would heap upon the head of every persecutor, be he who he may, the burning indignation he deserves—only let it never be forgotten that Protestants persecuted chiefly when emerging from Popery, from which they caught this diabolical spirit—and that the persecutions in support of Peter's foundation are ten thousand times more severe than ever were perpetrated by Protestants of any name, or altogether. All persecution for religion's sake, wherever employed and by whomsoever, is absurd as well as cruel, is ever a sign of weakness and a substitute for truth. You cannot coerce the soul of man, however you may coerce the body; you cannot subdue the mind of a child even by the most severe application of the rod or other means of punishment. You cannot force what you may conceive to be truth into the conviction of any human being, or oblige him to adopt your sentiments as his own. You may as well attempt to build a cathedral by the mere exercise of thought, without the use of material substances and appropriate tools, as to enlighten the understanding, or convince the judgment, or rectify the conscience, by the thumbscrew or the rack, the faggot or the sword. We maintain then that the employment of persecution in any form, the infliction of fines and penalties and civil disqualifications in support of any church, is an acknowledgment on the part of those who use them, that the religious foundation on which it rests, is weak, and imperfect, and insufficient. Men are not naturally cruel, and if the Romish Church could have been supported by other means, we believe that its priests and its princes would never have had recourse to cruelty and torture in order to enforce submission; but they felt that they did not possess those other means, and therefore did they employ those physical powers, and that political influence which they did possess, and which were brought to bear so fatally upon the bodies of multitudes. By doing so they have proclaimed that their cherished foundation, even Peter, is unable to support the superstructure they have professed to raise upon him: and if unable to support their own church, how utterly feeble, how absolutely incompetent to be the foundation of that vast edifice which is to contain within it the whole multitude of the redeemed of all countries and of all ages.

2. But there is another fact which points to the same conclusion. If Peter is the foundation of the Church of Rome, how is it that large portions of that church have fallen off from that foundation—that it has crumbled away from beneath the weight of the building which Romanists have raised upon it? There was a time when the Church of England, and the Church of Scotland, and the re-

formed churches of Germany and Switzerland, formed a part of the Church of Rome; they stood upon the same rock; that rock being Peter—what has become of them?—where are they now? Did their being built upon that apostle secure their infallibility—did it sustain them in all their integrity?—No; it gave way from beneath them, they are now unconnected with it, and are among the number of those who repudiate the claims which have been put forth in its behalf. If Peter, as the foundation, was unable to secure the continuance and the perpetuity of those churches as integral parts of the Romish Church, what reason is there to suppose that it will be able to secure the perpetuity of those who are now building upon it? What is there in it of energy and power to prevent Spain, and Portugal, and Italy, from falling away from its creed, and renouncing its spiritual claims now, which was not in it to preserve in subjection those other churches? There is no security whatever for the permanent subjection of its present adherents and votaries. What has been may be, nay, we have no doubt will be; and if all who now belong to the Church of Rome should break off their connexion with it, what would become of its human foundation? If it remained, would it not remain as a perpetual monument of the folly or the wickedness of those who had attempted to build upon it?

3. Let us look for a moment at the kind of church which the Romanists have attempted to build upon Peter, and you will be at once satisfied, that if Peter could be the foundation of such a church, it was utterly impossible he could also be the foundation of that which Christ calls *my* church. At the head of their church they have placed a succession of men called Popes, *some* of them men of the most detestable character, the history of whose career is but one long sickening narrative of crimes the most monstrous, and vices the most odious. Under them they have placed cardinals of various sorts, and archbishops, and bishops, and priests, and monks of a variety of orders, and nuns of different classes and rules. For all these a great amount of spiritual authority is claimed—to their persons a high degree of mysterious and official sanctity is attached, whatever their moral character may be—for their opinions great deference, the most abject submission, must be cherished; while the people, called—in distinction from themselves—the laity, are treated as if they were far beneath them, and had nothing to do but deliver up their souls and bodies be dealt with by them, in so far as regards religion, as by a race of superior beings. All power is accumulated in the hands of the clergy—all obedience, the most passive, is to be yielded by the laity. Look, again, at the decrees and the creed of this Roman Church—what it requires that those who belong to it shall believe, and believe under the penalty of excommunication and condemnation. They require that a man

should not read the Word of God without the permission of the priest or bishop ; that when he reads it he shall not interpret it for himself, but receive the interpretation of the Church. So, that if his understanding should lead him to receive it one sense, and the church says he must receive it another, he must without proof or conviction abandon the dictates of his own understanding, and submit to the church, however absurd, however false, its decision may be. They require that a man shall believe that the bread and the wine used in the Lord's Supper are actually changed, *by a priest*, into the substance of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ ; so that when, celebrating that divine ordinance, he literally and without a figure eats the body that was crucified, and was buried, and is now living gloriously in heaven ; that he shall consider it his duty to pray to saints, to adore the Virgin Mary, to confess his sins to man, and to seek absolution from him ; that he shall believe there is a purgatory after death, out of which the souls of men may be prayed by masses said upon earth—the more numerous the masses the more speedy the deliverance,—the number of masses however being regulated by the riches or the poverty of the relations who remain behind, the poorest thus being kept longest in the fire of purification, and poverty being thus made indirectly to bear all the penalty of a crime. Such are some of the requirements made by the Church of Rome : and those who comply with these requirements are the members of that church. Again.—Look at the actual results of this system, called *a church*, as they appear in the character, and customs, and manners, of those who are under its full power. I do not ask you to look at the Romish Church as it is seen in England, or in Protestant countries : there it appears in a modified condition ; there it is imperfect ; there it cannot exhibit its true features, and put forth its extravagant, its tyrannical, power. They would persuade us that it has changed. Its most earnest supporters would fain have it believed, for their own purposes, among Protestants, that many things in it of the most offensive and faulty nature are altered. Altered ! How ? Is she not infallible ?—if so, how can she change ? Are the decrees of the Council of Trent changed ?—by what authority ? Is the creed of Pope Pius IV. changed ?—show me the authority. Show me the decrees of any Council, show me the briefs of any of the Popes, with or without his Council, altering the offensive, the irrational, the unscriptural parts of Romanism,—and to that extent I will believe they are changed ; but until then, notwithstanding all the smooth speeches to gain unwary souls, I must remain firm in the belief that essentially Popery is unaltered. That it is so, look at Spain ; look at Portugal ; look at Italy, in which she comes abroad undisguised, where she puts forth all her power, where she exhibits naked and bare all the essential elements of her character, and

what do you find?—the grossest superstition, the most deplorable ignorance, the most degraded state of morals, in the vast mass of the population. These are the lands of assassination, of banditti, of impurity; these are the lands where gorgeous religious festivals break through the monotony of indolence and poverty, of mendicancy and crime; where all are professedly religious, but where pure Christian morality is almost unknown. Yet these are the nations where pure Romanism exists; there is their church in its perfection. Take this church then, with all its powers and greatness, with all its princes and bishops, with all its cathedrals, and palaces, and monasteries, and place it beside the church of Christ. Contrast the simple requirements of the one—penitence, faith, love, and holiness—with the decrees, and ceremonies, and superstitious forms of the other, and I ask whether it is possible they can both be the same; whether they can rest upon the same foundation; whether Peter can be the foundation of the church in Italy, and Spain, and Portugal, and the foundation of that pure and holy assembly of the first born whose names are written in heaven, which is Christ's Church? Impossible. We maintain, then, from the history of Popery itself, its persecutions, its defections, its unscriptural requirements, that Peter never was considered a sufficient foundation on which to rest *its* claims; while from the nature of Christ's universal church, it is utterly impossible that Peter can be the rock on which it is built. But we stop not here.

2. We argue from the language employed by the Saviour, that he did not mean Peter at all when he said, "upon *this rock* will I build my church." When Jesus first saw Peter at his entrance upon his public ministry, he changed his name from Simon to Cephas, which, in the Syriac language, means a stone, and in the Greek language Petros, or as we pronounce it, Peter. John, i. 42. By this name he is generally called in the New Testament. In the text Jesus addresses him by this name, originally given to him as indicative of character, for the purpose of adding emphasis to the declaration he was about to make. "Thou art Peter," a stone; "and upon *this rock*," not upon this *stone*, but upon this *rock* "I will build my church." The word rock is here different from the word Peter—Greek scholars tell us that the word Petros or Peter, means a stone that you can take up in your hand, or put in a sling and throw away; but that the word Petra, here translated rock, means a solid rock, such as we see rising out of the sea—a large mass of rock—a rock on which you can build a house. It occurs in Matthew, vii. 24. It is used for the rock in which Christ was entombed, and also in Matthew, xxvii. 51; Luke viii. 6, 13; Revelations, vi. 15, 16. Peter then means a stone which you may lift out of the street and cast from you. Petra, a rock against which the billows of ten thousand tempests may dash

themselves in vain. Peter he addresses as a stone. The foundation on which He builds His church He calls a rock. He meant two different things by two different words. He addresses Peter by name, and at the same time informs him that He intended to build upon a rock. What that rock is we shall see afterwards; all that I am anxious to prove now is that it is not Peter. Besides, if he had meant Peter, would it not have been the simplest thing in the world to have said, "*upon thee* will I build, &c."? here there would have been no ambiguity; but He did not mean that. He says not upon thee, but upon *this rock*; not upon thee—a stone, that may be tossed about, but upon this rock, something firm and durable as the everlasting hills,—upon this confession which thou hast made will I build.

3. Go over the whole of Peter's history from the hour in which the words of the text were uttered until the day on which he died, and you will not meet with the slightest indication that Peter understood our Saviour to mean that he (Peter) was the *rock* of which he spoke. The apostle never, on any one occasion acts or speaks as if he believed himself to be the foundation of the church. He went everywhere preaching the gospel, he associated with the other apostles, he wrote two letters which are preserved, and yet we do not meet with a single incident, or a single expression, which indicates his consciousness of possessing any kind of superiority over the other apostles. On the contrary, when addressing the elders of the church to whom he wrote, he calls himself an elder or presbyter also. In everything he acts as if he were on a level with the rest of the apostles. Is it likely, is it at all probable, that for the space of about thirty years—the time he lived after Christ's death—he was the chief among his brethren and the foundation of Christ's Church, and yet never betrayed the slightest consciousness of such inferiority, never acted upon it, never exercised the semblance of authority over them?—the idea is utterly improbable.

4. None of the other apostles ever acted towards Peter as if he were the foundation of the church, and as such superior to them. If he had been appointed by the Saviour to any kind of supremacy, their regard for the authority of their Divine Master would have induced submission on their part; but did they thus submit? Did they look to him for direction and instruction how to act? No. If he had been constituted the foundation, they must have gone and preached Peter instead of Christ, or along with Christ, everywhere: Did they do so? As members of the church they must have built upon their fellow-apostle their own penitence, faith, and holiness, and hope of heaven. Did they? No. Instead of looking up to him as in any respect their superior, they treated him precisely as they treated one another—as their companion. He was sent by them on a mission to Samaria: see Acts,

viii. 14. Is the Pope ever sent on a mission by his cardinals? At the meeting of the Church of Jerusalem on a very important occasion, does Peter appear as chief of the apostles? No; if pre-eminence is to be assigned to any one at that assembly it must be assigned to James. See Acts, xv. Paul speaks of some who seemed to be pillars of the church in Jerusalem. Who were they? Not Peter alone, but James and John equally with Peter. Galatians, ii. 9. At Antioch Peter was rebuked by Paul for his dissimulation. Galatians, ii. 11. In the 8th verse, Paul declares that he was commissioned to be an apostle to the Gentiles, as fully as Peter was to the Jews. While in 2 Corinthians, xi. 5, he declares that "he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." Who with these facts staring him in the face can believe for a single moment that Peter was either the Prince of the Apostles or the foundation of Christ's Church?

5. Jesus Christ, after the occurrence recorded in the text, never treated Peter as if possessed of the superiority claimed for him. On the contrary, he on more occasions than one endeavoured to impress it powerfully upon the minds of the apostles that they were all upon a level. See Luke, xxii. 24; John, xiii. 1—17. Indeed, immediately after uttering the words of blessing, he rebukes him in terms of severity such as he had never applied to any of the rest of his disciples. "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me." Who excepting Judas acted more shamefully than Peter, when repeatedly, and with oaths and curses, he in the hour of danger denied that he ever knew Christ, and in the most cowardly manner abandoned him, after having promised, with reiterated asseveration, that rather than forsake he would die with him? But you say, did not Christ give him the power of the keys? Yes; but what that means we purpose to explain in another Discourse, and to show that it involves no supremacy. Did he not, after his resurrection, command him three times to feed his sheep? Yes: but did that give Peter alone authority to perform the duties of that important office? Were the other apostles thenceforth to be silent, or were they to derive all their authority from Peter? Such an idea is one of the veriest freaks of which the fancy of a perverted mind is capable. The fact is Peter had fallen—had fallen very low: the Saviour in mercy raises him up, reinstates him in his original office, and sends him forth with the rest of the apostles fully commissioned to discharge the same duties in the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature,—for to the whole of the eleven apostles was that parting command of our Saviour addressed, and by the whole of them was it obeyed. See Matthew, xxviii. 16—20.

There is nothing, then, in Scripture to justify the idea that

Christ meant Peter to be the foundation of the church, and the Prince of the Apostles. We ask again, who is this rock? We reply, Jesus Christ himself, the Son of the Living God. This was the confession of Peter, when asked who the Son of man was, and the subject of that confession is the foundation of the universal Christian church. "Thou art a stone," the boldness and distinctness of thy confession corresponds with and justifies the name I have given thee, "and upon this rock," upon the confession, or upon the truth contained in the confession, thou hast made, "I will build my church." That this interpretation is correct is supported

1st. By the unanimous consent both of the Old Testament and the New. In the 118th Psalm, v. 22, Jesus Christ is referred to in the following language:—"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." Still more distinctly does the Prophet Isaiah, xxviii. 16, speak of Him under this figure:—"Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." The Apostle Peter himself, in one of his first addresses to the chief men of the Jews, after the ascension of Christ, refers to these passages, and declares that they speak of Jesus as the foundation-stone of the church. Acts, iv. 11. See also 1 Corinthians, iii. 11, and 1 Peter, ii. 6, where he again refers to the same subject, and pleads for his divine master against the impious assumptions of the Church of Rome.

2. We maintain that Jesus Christ is the rock, because He is a foundation sufficiently broad, and deep, and strong, to support the superstructure that is raised upon it. He is Divine, the Son of God, equal with the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and therefore possessed of unbounded power, and infinite wisdom and essential truth. He is also man, humbled, suffering, dying man; and by his obedience and sufferings has atoned for human guilt, magnified the law, satisfied divine justice, and thereby made provision for the restoration of sinners to the divine favour, and for their purity and happiness beyond the skies. A Divine Saviour in all the varied offices he sustains as God Man, once humbled, but now glorified, is the only foundation of the universal church. What sinner may not build upon Him his hope of pardon? What sinner may not obtain peace and purity from Him? What sinner may not be raised from death and perdition to life and immortal happiness by Him? He is indeed mighty to save—to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In accordance with these sentiments does He not announce himself to be the "light of the world," the only source of spiritual intelligence, the alone fountain of truth? As "the bread of life," who alone can

supply all the wants of the human soul, and nourish it up unto eternal life? Does He not say, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." "He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live." "I am the good shepherd and lay down my life for the sheep." Does he not say "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is not this the only foundation for hope to dying men? Shall we ever be disappointed if we apply to him for sacred teaching, for divine principle, for the regeneration of the soul, power to resist temptation, help in all our struggles with sin, joy amidst the gloom of dissolution and immortality beyond the grave? Oh no. How many souls have been justified and sanctified, and saved by Him, without the knowledge or intervention of Peter?

Sinners! Christ is the only foundation and support and life of His universal church! There He is, within reach of every voice, of every struggling penitent, of every perishing soul! He is here when you would worship Him, He is in your closet when you would call upon Him, He is in your family when with united hearts you would offer up to Him the evening and the morning sacrifice. He is now inviting us all to come and believe and live. Shall any body of men calling themselves a church dare to step between Christ and my soul and say, "you cannot approach the Saviour but through our creed, and forms, and ceremonies?" Will any pope, or bishop, or priest, dare to block up the way and keep me back from the Son of God when I want his help, when I am pressing to him for salvation? Shall the Church of Rome or the Church of England, or any church formed by men, call it by what name you choose, dare to say "you cannot speak to Christ, or receive any blessing from Christ but through us?" Oh monstrous perversion of divine truth; oh fearful usurpation of spiritual power! I deny their power; I trample under foot their pretensions to keep me away from the Saviour, unless by the road they have formed. I enter the pathway He has opened; I move on fearlessly to the presence of my redeeming God, and if He welcome me, I care not for the frowns or the threats of the most powerful or the most malignant. Oh yes, sinners, the poorest and the vilest of you have as good a right to approach the Saviour direct and at once, as Peter himself had—as all the saints in heaven have—as good a right as any pope or bishop has—the right his own invitation gives. He is the source of life and peace, and purity and joy everlasting—the only source. Go to him, trust in him, rest upon him and you shall be safe; and the piety of the Christian will be yours—and the consolation of the Christian will be yours—and the triumphs of the Christian will be yours.

If Christ is the foundation and not Peter, then the assumed supremacy of Peter is without scriptural support; and all the mysterious power supposed to descend from him to others in consequence of that supremacy is equally unsupported; and all exclusive systems, whether existing under the name of Romanism or Puseyism, or any other name, fall to the ground.

SERMON III.

THE KEYS.

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 :

MATTHEW, xvi. 19.

THIS passage, along with another contained in the Gospel by John, chapter xx. and 23rd verse, " Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained," has been made the foundation of one of the most gigantic systems of spiritual assumption and religious despotism, that ever tyrannised over the souls and bodies of the children of men. That which was intended for freedom, for moral health, for virtue and happiness, has been converted into the means of slavery, and degradation, and wickedness. You will observe that the only commission given to Peter, and not to the other apostles, is that of the keys : " I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The power of binding and loosing is indeed conveyed to Peter in the first instance alone, but in the 18th chapter of Matthew's Gospel and the 18th verse, we find the same power conferred upon the whole of the apostles, as well as Peter ; whilst the authority to remit and retain sins was conveyed to all the apostles after Christ's resurrection ; so that although Peter had the keys committed to him exclusively, he did not possess exclusively the power of loosing and binding, but only shared in that power *equally* with the rest of the apostles. Now what is the system which the Romish Church has raised upon the authority which it assumes was conveyed to Peter, either alone or in connection with others ? They say that Peter, and the popes as his successors, can open and shut the gates of Paradise as they please—that no one can obtain admission into the heavenly country but through them—that, in fact, there is no salvation beyond the pale of their church. They further maintain that the popes, as the successors of St. Peter, have the power of binding the consciences of men by their decisions upon a great variety of subjects, moral, religious, and ceremonial ;

which decisions they are bound to receive as infallibly true and certain; that they have the power of pardoning and retaining sins, of granting absolution, nay even of conveying this power to the priests belonging to their church; and in the exercise of these powers, supposed to have been conveyed to Peter, and from Peter to have descended to his favoured successors, the popes, has there been gradually formed that vast system of tyranny and delusion by which so many nations of the earth have been enthralled.

And here I feel deep regret in being obliged to remark, that some Protestants, misunderstanding the meaning of the commissions to Peter and the apostles, or blinded by high church prejudice, have adopted as their belief some of the worst parts of Romanism, and endeavoured, like it, to bring into bondage the minds of those who attend upon their ministrations. They have fancied, that to their Protestant clergy have been committed some very extraordinary spiritual power, especially the power of pardoning sin. It is with grief that I feel myself bound to refer to one portion of the service of the Church of England, and to exhibit it as containing in itself one of the most deadly errors of Popery. In the service for the visitation of the sick, the priest is instructed to address the person who is diseased, if he humbly and heartily desire it, in these words:—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy, forgive thee thine offences." Here let us pause. I demand proof—clear and distinct proof of this assertion. I ask, in what part of the New Testament has Christ left this power to his church? I can find it nowhere: nowhere is there a single passage that can with the slightest degree of probability be construed as supporting this assertion. If you refer me to John, xx. 23, I answer that whatever that passage may mean, it was addressed *not to the church*, but to the apostles, Judas having hanged himself, and Thomas being absent; surely they were not the church, but only a part of it. If to the church, who is the church? Is it the whole body of the redeemed, or is it the *whole* of the persons, *laity* as well as clergy, who constitute any national church?—then how can they possibly exercise this authority? Where can the church universal meet to exercise it? or when or where can the Anglican Church meet to exercise it? Have they ever so met—is such a meeting in their case possible? My brethren, the clergy are not the church; the archbishops and bishops, with all the array of their deans, and archdeacons, and rectors, vicars, and curates, are not the church; their meetings, and their consultations, and their decisions, are not those of the church. In whatever sense the word church in this service may be used, it is not true that Christ hath left with it any power to absolve sinners. But it is urged that this power is only conditional, that it can be exercised only when the person is

penitent and believes. Again I ask, where is authority for this—authority given to the church to absolve from sins, even under these conditions? Nowhere. In vain we ask for Scripture proof. Christ hath given no power to his church to absolve from sin, even if men repent and believe. It is not a mere declaration that if a sinner repent and believe his sins shall be forgiven, that is made in this part of the service; any man may make such a declaration, any child may repeat it, it requires no special commission to empower the individual to do this. The sentence in the Prayer Book means more than this, it means that Christ has left to the church power *authoritatively*, and in a *judicial* character, to absolve sin, which is most certainly false. If it means not this, it means nothing, and must operate as a delusion. But this is not the worst part of the service, startling though it be. The priest goes on to say—“And by his authority *committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” *I absolve thee!* I, a weak, dying, sinful man, who need forgiveness myself, I absolve thee from all thy sins! Presumptuous mortal; darest thou assume a power which belongs to the Most High God only? Who pretends to have committed this authority to thee? Was it a man holding the office of a bishop? Who conferred upon him such powers? Where is his warrant signed and sealed? Who can forgive sins but God only? And yet at the bedside of a dying sinner, a man called a priest, himself a sinner, dares to assume the prerogative of the Almighty, and to say “*I absolve thee from all thy sins in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*” I deny that any such power has been committed to any man, whatever his office in any church, and I challenge the whole world to produce the slightest vestige of scriptural warrant for such an assumption. Does he say that he absolves upon the supposition of the existence of faith and repentance? Even in that case who authorises him? Even in that case he assumes that he is able to judge of the *sincerity* of that faith and penitence, and therefore judicially pardons him. How melancholy the delusion! How fearful the thought that a lie should be thus solemnly uttered by a minister of religion at the bedside of a dying man. “The blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin.” In the Church of Rome, where so many strange things are to be found, we are not surprised at meeting with such a doctrine; but that it should exist in the Church of England, so often boastingly called the bulwark of Protestantism, is enough to make one weep tears of blood. It is the usurpation of a divine right, and he who does so, be he bishop or priest, is guilty of a grievous sin, and exposes himself to a terrible condemnation.

Let us now return to the Saviour’s address to Peter, and enquire,

In the *first place* what He meant when He said "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven." Keep in mind that by the expression "the kingdom of Heaven," Jesus meant the same thing as his "church" mentioned in the preceding verse. Christ's Church is the kingdom of Heaven, and the kingdom of heaven is Christ's Church. It does not mean exclusively the heavenly world, the seat of final happiness for the saints; no, but the reign of Christ upon earth also. Accordingly the theme of John the Baptist's preaching was "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand;" and wherever the Saviour himself came at the outset of His public ministry, He addressed to His hearers the same exhortation. Every member of Christ's universal church is a subject of Christ's kingdom, because in the heart of every such member He reigns, over them all He exercises sovereign authority, by His divine laws they are guided and ruled. The kingdom of heaven, the true church, does not consist of unconverted, impenitent, unbelieving men, of merely nominal Christians, although they may belong to some one or other of the outward or visible churches. In order then to belong to this kingdom, what must we do—how are we to find admission into it? In precisely the same manner as we find admission into the church—by faith. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" but in order to our possessing faith, one thing is essentially necessary, and that is knowledge, knowledge of the great truths of Christianity; where there is ignorance of God and of Christ and of the way of salvation, there can be no saving faith. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." Knowledge then is the key by which the doors of ignorance are unlocked, and by which the mind gains admittance to those truths by which it may be enlightened and saved; the Pharisees are rebuked by the Saviour for taking away the "key of knowledge" from the people. The Jews were ignorant of the way of salvation, the Gentiles were equally so. So long as they remained in ignorance, their situation resembled that of persons who were standing outside the walls of a vast city, and into which it was impossible to enter until its massive gates were unlocked, and the bolts withdrawn. To Peter were given the keys by which those gates might be unlocked and a free opening made, so that all might enter in. In other words he was commissioned to preach the gospel to Jew and Gentile, and thereby destroy their ignorance, and thereby enlighten their minds, and thus prepare them for the privileges and the enjoyment of Christ's subjects,—and he did so. He preached to Jews and Gentiles, addressed both invitations and entreaties to them, communicated the knowledge of divine truth, and thus used the *keys* with which he was entrusted.

Did not the other apostles do the same thing? Yes, the only difference between them and Peter is this—that he was honoured to be the first apostle who used the keys; he preached the *first* sermon to the Jews on the day of Pentecost; he preached the *first* sermon to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion; and thus fulfilled the commission with which he was entrusted. After which he laboured and preached along with the other apostles in the same character and upon the same level. His only superiority consisted in his being appointed to use the keys first; he first unlocked the gates; this is all that is meant, this is all that can be meant. From those days down to this the gates have been left open for Jew and Gentile, and none can shut them.

In the *second place*, with regard to the power of binding and loosing, the meaning lies upon the very surface of the passage. Peter and the other apostles were commissioned to make known to all the nations of the earth the way of salvation, through Christ; in doing so they loosed men from the bondage of the Mosaic economy, and from the errors of superstition and idolatry; while at the same time they declared what was to be binding upon their consciences as matters of faith and duty. Remember that there were no written records of Christianity then; how was the world to know it, but by their preaching? How was the knowledge of it to descend to future generations, but by their writing? They were commissioned therefore both to preach and to write, and that they might do so without error, they acted in both capacities under the inspiration of the Almighty; what they did under his inspiration they did by his authority; and what they thus did he confirmed. What they have declared in the New Testament as binding upon men's consciences, He binds; what they have declared as not binding, from that He looses them: not because it is their act—not on their authority, but because in thus acting they were guided by His spirit, and revealed His will. The apostles in thus binding and loosing, originated nothing, acted not upon their own judgment, exercised no independent authority. No; they were the mere instruments of Jesus Christ, by which He chose to reveal the laws of His kingdom to mankind, laws which the apostles themselves were bound to obey, and which will remain permanent and unchanged until the heavens and the earth pass away.

In the *third place*, turn to the passage in John, xx. 23—"Whose soever sins ye remit," &c. There would have been no difficulty in understanding it aright had not men determined to convert it into a mean of promoting the interests of spiritual despotism. We never read of any of the apostles pardoning sin, or retaining it. When, on the day of Pentecost, the multitude were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, "men and brethren what shall we do? Peter answered not "I absolve

you from all your sins—I remit all your transgressions.” No; he immediately directs them to another: “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.” See Acts, ii. 38. Again, when trembling and astonished the jailor of Philippi sprang in and fell at the feet of Paul and Silas, and cried out “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” What was the answer? Did Paul say “I absolve thee from all thy sins?” No! he directed him to Jesus, saying—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Acts, xvi. 30. Simon Magus having grievously mistaken the nature of the gospel, by supposing that the gift of God might be purchased with money, Peter, instead of claiming the power of forgiving sin, indignantly rebuked him, and said “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” Thus did they ever point the eyes of sinners to the Lamb of God, who alone taketh away the sins of the world. For any one to assume the power of pardoning sin is to assume the right of exercising one of the prerogatives of the Most High—he makes himself known as a God that pardons. “Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity.” Micah, vii. 18. In the words we are now examining, all that our Saviour did was to empower his apostles to tell the world upon what condition sin would be pardoned; and under what circumstances sins would be retained or remain unpardoned. Under his inspection and guidance they went forth and did so, and it is entirely from what they published in fulfilment of the duties of their office that we know how our sins may be forgiven—that “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin”—that “if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ the righteous, and that he is the propitiation for our sins.” Whilst on the other hand we learn from the same source that “the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Such we conceive to be the meaning of those portions of the Word of God which have been so much abused for the nourishment of superstition and the upholding of tyrannical power. But let us for a few moments admit that we are wrong in our interpretation—that Romanists are right in theirs—and that a large portion of spiritual power was actually conferred upon Peter and the other apostles: what advantage can they derive from this admission in support of the claims of the pope and other branches of the hierarchy? The language we have been considering was addressed to Peter *alone*, to the apostles *alone*, and to nobody else—there is not the slightest reference to any one else. “Thou art Peter, and I give

unto *thee* the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," is Christ's address to Peter. "Whatsoever *ye* shall bind on earth," &c. "Whose soever sins *ye* retain," &c., is Christ's address to the apostles. Whatever power, and honour, and authority were conferred by these words; were conferred upon *them alone*, and when they died *died with them*. They were placed in peculiar circumstances, they were endowed for a certain work, they possessed certain qualifications and occupied a certain position, and as each died off the stage, he left no successor behind him, left no one to succeed him with the same endowments, occupying the same position, and filling the same office. Whatever the special power of the apostles may have been, it ceased with their existence. It never has been possessed by any individual, or classes of individuals, from that hour down to the present day. Whatever was meant by the *keys, loosing and binding, remitting and retaining sins*, belongs to no one now, neither to pope, nor council, nor convocation, nor conference, nor general assembly; it belonged only to the individuals to whom Jesus spake, and with their removal out of the world it expired. Still the dogma of Apostolical Succession is maintained, and upon it are founded the exclusive claims of the Romish Church, and a large portion of the Anglican clergy. Let us therefore examine it a little more narrowly.

Surely it will be granted, that if it was the intention of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Peter, or any of the other apostles, should have successors until the end of time—successors upon whose office so much is made to depend, whose existence is declared necessary to give validity to his own institutions, and efficacy to his own ordinances, and power to his own truth—without whom there can be no salvation to the human soul, and in fact no true religion in the world: surely it will be granted, that we have a right to expect some intimation from Christ, or from men inspired by him, upon the subject; some distinct, and un mistakeable, and unambiguous announcement; not in the shape of a figure, or by way of inference, but in a way which all men might understand, and which would leave them without excuse if they disbelieved it. My brethren, I do solemnly declare that in the whole of the Word of God there is no such announcement made, neither by Christ himself, nor by his apostles, nor by any inspired writer. You will admit that if this authority and despotic power were to be handed down, that if the apostle Peter were to have successors such as the popes claim to be considered, we have a right to expect that some marks would be laid down, by which to discover who the persons were from among whom such successors should be chosen, the qualities by which they ought to be distinguished, the position they occupied in the church, the kind of fitness necessary. In the Old Testament the strictest rules are laid down in reference to the persons who should fill the

—office of high priest. The pope claims a higher office and superior power; and yet I do solemnly declare that there are no such marks, no such rules, nothing said upon the subject in the Scriptures; on the contrary, the most perfect silence is maintained. The necessary qualifications of bishops, or presbyters, and deacons, are clearly defined, but these are never once referred to either as successors of the apostles, or as constituting a class of men from whom the pope was to be chosen. Again we maintain that, if it was intended there should be a pope, we have a right to expect a clear inspired statement of the rules by which the election should be regulated, the forms to be observed, and which is still more important, the parties in whom the right of election should be vested; in short, how or in what manner he was to be appointed to the high office of God's vicegerent upon earth. I do solemnly declare that there is not a word about it in the whole of the Scriptures, and the Romanists themselves do not pretend that there is; there is not to be found a single syllable on record as uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ on the subject, no nor by Peter himself, although we have several speeches or discourses delivered by him, and two letters which he wrote; in one of which he even mentions that his object in writing was, that they might have certain things always in remembrance, see 2 Peter, i. 15; and yet among these things he makes not the slightest reference to a successor, or the mode of his election; neither do the other apostles make any such reference.

Still, however, in the absence of all these necessary documents, it is said that the apostles, and especially Peter, had successors—we confine our attention to Peter. It is said the bishops of Rome, now called popes, are Peter's successors, because, as is asserted, Peter before he died became Bishop of Rome. We therefore enquire whether the pope claims to be the successor of Peter, in his office of *Apostle* or of *Bishop of Rome*? If the pope is the successor of Peter *in his apostolic office*, how is it that *he* is so more than any other bishop, more than the bishops of those churches which Peter visited and taught, and where he ordained elders. Any bishop of any Christian Church existing in those days, had just as good a right to consider himself a successor of the Apostle Peter or of any of the other apostles as the Bishop of Rome, but we see no rational or scriptural ground for this claim on the part of any bishop. If the pope claims to be the successor of Peter as an apostle, then we again ask, why does he not perform apostolic duties? These duties were those of a missionary—for the Greek name apostle corresponds precisely to the Latin name missionary—who was bound to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to form churches, to bear testimony as an eye-witness to the fact of Christ's resurrection, and to perform

miracles in proof of the truth of his statements. Why does not the pope discharge these duties if he be an apostle's successor? He surely cannot succeed him in any other sense; nothing is more certain, however, than that the pope never pretends to imitate either the character or conduct of an apostle. He lives in splendour, is surrounded by his guards, and seldom leaves Rome or its vicinity. Look on Peter in his labours, in his sufferings and his poverty—look on the pope; who could ever fancy that the one was the representative of the other? The fact is, that it is utterly impossible for any man now to occupy the place of an apostle, or to be his successor, and the claims of the Church of Rome in this respect in favour of her earthly head are unfounded and worthless.

If however the pope claims to be the successor of Peter, *in his office of Bishop of Rome*, then we ask what has he to do with the special privileges, and authority, and honours of an apostle? The two offices are not identical. A bishop, according to our interpretation of Scripture, is the pastor of a single congregation; according to the Romanists, he is the spiritual overseer of a district, of a diocese, of a number of churches with their officers. Give them their own interpretation; if Peter was the Bishop of Rome, he was the spiritual overseer of that city alone: beyond its boundaries he could have no power, no authority. If he was a bishop, other apostles may have been bishops of churches also; but Peter had no authority over *them*. After Peter's death, the Apostle John lived for many years; we cannot suppose that the successor of Peter, as Bishop of Rome, could have authority over the venerable disciple whom Jesus loved; and yet if the Bishop of Rome had authority beyond Rome, and was the universal bishop, John the Apostle must have been inferior to Linus, or any other person who is said to have succeeded Peter in that See: but the fact is, that the title of universal bishop was not assumed until the time of Boniface III., in the year 606; so offensive was it, that Pope Gregory, called the Great, only a few years before, declared that it was a blasphemous title. If then the pope is Peter's successor as Bishop of Rome, he can only exercise authority over what constituted the Church of Rome originally in Peter's days; and can have no right to the authority and privileges of the apostolic office.

It may indeed be replied that he succeeded Peter in both of these offices. We deny that this is possible; an apostle could not be a bishop, a bishop could not be an apostle; the duties of these offices are incompatible with each other: the one required perpetual movement and travelling, the other required that the person should, to a considerable extent, be stationary; none of the apostles are ever called bishops in the New Testament, and there is not a particle of evidence to prove that

any of them ever engaged in the duties of a bishop. But besides all this, it is strenuously denied that Peter ever was at Rome at all; the evidence that he was is strongly controverted by opposing evidence; and it certainly is unwise to build so large a superstructure as Romanism is upon a disputed fact. We grant that it is possible he may have visited Rome; nay, that it is probable he did, that he may have suffered martyrdom there; but that he was ever the bishop of the church there formed we think we may most emphatically deny,—there is no substantial proof in its support. We are therefore brought to the conclusion that the pope cannot be the successor of Peter as an apostle; that he is not his successor as bishop, for he never was bishop; or if it is still maintained that he was, what possible right can the bishop of one diocese have, to exercise authority over all the other dioceses of the world, when the original bishop himself never attempted so monstrous a usurpation?

But this doctrine of apostolical succession is a monster which is not easily slain. Although we think we have given him his death blow, we will still pursue him to his darkest retreat, and leave him without hope of life. We have seen that there are no rules laid down in Scripture for choosing the successors of Peter, either as to the particular class of persons from among whom they are to be selected, or as to those by whom the election is to be made. Let us look into the page of history and examine the characters of many who have actually been chosen to fill that high office. We will make no statement upon this subject but what is sustained by the clearest evidence, and that chiefly borne by Romish writers. From their statements it would appear that men have been chosen to the office of universal bishop, who were possessed of characters the most infamous and execrable that ever disgraced humanity. I do not mean to say that all were of this kind, God forbid, but that many of them were. And if only one, much more a few, it is destructive of the whole figment of apostolical succession. Baronius, a Roman Catholic writer, calls Pope John XV., “a thief and a robber,” and speaking of the ninth and tenth centuries, he says, “what then was the face of the Roman Church? How most foul, when powerful and vile strumpets domineered in Rome, by whose will the sees were changed, and bishoprics given away; and what is most horrible, and scarcely to be related, their lovers, pseudo popes were thrust violently into Peter’s chair.” One bishop describes the Court of Rome in 1090, thus:—“In the forum they are Scythians; in the chamber, vipers; at the banquet, buffoons; in their exactions, harpies.” One pope is described “as the slave of every vice, and the most wicked of men.” Another, it is said, turned the Lateran into a den of wickedness and depravity. Another murdered several of the cardinals. John XXIII. was charged

with murder, atheism, and other crimes of an infamous nature. One died from accidentally taking the poison he had prepared for another ; —but I stop, I will not proceed further with this catalogue of depravity. I ask, can any man believe that these were the successors of the Apostle Peter? That these are the representatives of the pure and Holy Jesus; the vicegerents of God upon earth, to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were committed, with power to remit and retain sins? If not, how was it possible that apostolical succession could be continued? Did they not make large gaps in that succession without any materials from which they could possibly be filled up? Will any man say that these wicked popes were possessed of the Holy Ghost, and capable of conveying him to others? Can a man be an atheist, a murderer, a debauchee, and yet have the spirit of Christ, and yet enjoy the favour of God, and yet be an heir of Heaven's glory? If so, then the Christian religion is a lie, and the character of the true God is yet unknown. Can such men be the successors of saints, who were distinguished chiefly by the strength of their faith, the holiness of their lives, and the zealousness of their efforts to promote the interests of truth and righteousness in the earth? Oh most monstrous of all monstrous perversions! The wonder is how any decent man in the present day can acknowledge such abandoned characters as their spiritual ancestors, and boast of their descent from them. Talk not of wicked high priests, and wicked kings of Judah, there were many such, but how does that affect this question? Was their position, and office, and authority, such as can be compared with that of a pope? Will Romanists declare that such is the nature of the papal office that moral character is unnecessary, that holiness is unnecessary, that faith and piety are unnecessary for him that holds it; that the veriest villain may be as really the head of the church as the most eminent saint? If they make this admission, their whole system is condemned by themselves as a system of iniquity. If the pope may be a wicked man and yet be no less the vicar of Christ, so may cardinals, bishops, monks, and priests be wicked men, and the whole body of the people be wicked, and yet the Romish Church stand erect in all its integrity and efficiency. From such a church the good Lord deliver the souls and the bodies of men! Talk of Judas—as soon as his wickedness exhibited itself, he ceased to be an apostle, he went and hanged himself.

And then consider how these popes have been elected, and by whom. The popedom has been gained by political intrigue, by fraud, by force, by bribery. A man has become a pope through a cabal among cardinals, the influence of Italian princes, of a king of Spain, or France, or Austria; through deception, by an army, by the influence of a mistress; they have become popes in all these ways. Can we suppose that Jesus Christ would confer spiritual

authority upon such persons, or sanction such means of electing His Representative upon earth, or recognise the acts of such persons as lawful? Must they not in his sight be not only null and void, but absolutely hateful?

My brethren, I am sure you must be as tired in listening, as I am in speaking at so great length upon, this subject; and we would not have done it had not Romish priests and Anglican bishops actually built upon a foundation formed out of such worthless materials, their exclusive rights, and that high tone of contempt with which they treat every other section of the Church of Christ; a foundation which cannot be trusted to without overturning all the principles of truth and holiness. The apostles have no successors, they need none, we recognise no one as such—why should we? We have the *apostles themselves among us*; we have their inspired writings, and in their writings we have all of them that we can have. In these Scriptures we may at any time meet with John, or Peter, or Paul, or James, or Jude. If I want to consult the opinions of either of these holy men must I go to the pope in order to discover them? Can any bishop, or council of bishops, give me a single piece of authentic information in addition to what the apostolic writings give me? For what good purpose do we need successors to the apostles?—we have in the Scriptures all the truth of Christ that ever has been revealed, or that ever can be known: and were all the pretended successors of Peter to meet in conclave, they could not add one word to what we have in the New Testament without deteriorating it, nor give importance to one sentence, more than is originally attached to it. We conclude, therefore, that there is not one man, or any body of men, now living that have the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed to their keeping, or possess the power of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining sin, as these were originally conferred upon Peter and the apostles, and intended to be confined to them. Who then, it may be asked, are the ministers of religion—what their duty? The true ministers of Christ are those who have the spirit of Christ, who have embraced the doctrines which Christ and his apostles taught, and who are qualified by their piety and talents, and have been set apart by the churches to which they respectively belong, for the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of Divine ordinances. They differ from other sincere Christians only in this, that while those others are obliged to engage in the ordinary business of life, they have been set apart for the purpose of devoting the whole of their time to the edification of the church, and the conversion of the world; and in proportion as they imitate the zeal and the piety, the humility and the self-denial, the ardour and benevolence, of the apostles, they give evidence that they are the true ministers of the Son of God. There is nothing peculiar

about them, they have no mysterious qualities, nothing but what any man may acquire by study and prayer.

How delightful is the thought, that no man has the power of opening and shutting the gates of heaven, of binding or loosing the conscience, of pardoning or retaining sin; but that the Great God and Saviour retains all this power in his own hand! How delightful that we have to do with that glorious Being alone in all that pertains to our moral, and spiritual, and eternal interests; that to Him alone we are responsible for our faith and our character; that it is at *His* Judgment seat we must all stand, and by *His* final decision our everlasting destiny will be fixed. If so, then I will not strive to reach heaven and eternal blessedness through the long line of the pretended successors of the apostles, through the filth, and the crimes, and the pollution of Romish popes. I will not strive to reach heaven through the confessional, and the worship of images, and prayers to the saints, or the sacrifice of the mass, or the acknowledgment of transubstantiation. No; I abandon them all; I avoid them all. I know of no way but by the cross, the blood-besprinkled path trodden by the Son of God. Let men call me heretic if they choose—from their accusation I appeal to the God of Holiness and of Truth. Let men call me latitudinarian and schismatic if they choose,—from their sentence I appeal to that God whom I serve in the Gospel of his Son, if I strive not to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. It is a very small thing with me that I should be judged of man's judgment—he that judgeth me is the Lord. I place all my confidence in Him; I believe what He assures me is true; I receive the instructions of His inspired servants as from Himself; and whatever men may think or say, I doubt not that by following their example I shall ere long dwell where they dwell, and be permitted to join with them in the services, and to enjoy the felicity of that world where there will be no falsehood, no error, no delusion, but where all shall bask for ever in the sunshine of eternal truth.