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*THE STONE AND THE ROCK.*<sup>1</sup>

ST. MATTHEW xvi. 13-19.

WHEN the constables were sent to apprehend Jesus, they were themselves apprehended, fairly taken captive by his speech, and they came back, saying, "Never man spake like this man." It was true. Jesus spake with an authority the scribes did not possess. He was wisdom, truth, justice, equity, in one. There was a broadness, too, about his words. Whatever there might be about the speech of Peter, there was no flavour of a Galilean dialect, nothing local or provincial, in the speech of the Son of Man. He spake for all times, and for all climes. Nor were his words the cold reflections and repetitions of an earlier age; the truth as it came from his lips was sunlight, clear and first-hand, not moonlight nor lamplight. Then, too, there was a profound depth about the words of Jesus. He spake in parables, often in enigmas; hiding within the outer superficial meaning, some deeper meaning of his own, so that the literalists of his day were constantly misinterpreting Him. They touched the sparkling surface with their thought, as a sea-gull tips its wing in the wave; but, like the sea-bird, they were all unconscious of the depths that lay beneath; deeps where leviathan may play, and which our thought vainly seeks to fathom.

The passage before us is one of these enigmatic sayings of our Lord. It is the passage of the Rock; which, like another "Rock," stands at a place where two seas meet, facing opposite currents; and which, too, has been completely honeycombed by the transverse lines and parallels

<sup>1</sup> Singularly enough, both the following articles reached me in the same week. Based on the same view of the passage of which they treat, they nevertheless complement each other in a curious way, the one supplying exactly what the other lacks; and I have therefore thought it well to print both in the same Number.—EDITOR.

of its would-be defenders. Measuring from our base-line of historical facts, and intercepting the sunlight that plays around it, let us take the bearings of this great Rock, and see whether it be a kind of no-man's-land, some neutral zone open to all, whether it belongs to the apostle Peter, or to Peter's Lord and Christ.

It was in "the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi," whatever that vague expression may mean. Jesus cared little as to what men thought or said of Him. He moved on calmly, steadily, "amid the fierce light that beat" upon Him, nor could either threats or hosannahs divert Him from his chosen path. Now, however, He breaks his life-long rule, and throws up a tentative question, that He may see the drift and eddies of popular rumour: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" This question, however, was simply a forerunner, or an outrider, for another. He wishes to draw from their lips their personal confession and declaration, that He may see how far they have advanced. He wishes to mark the high-water line of their growing faith, and so asks: "But whom say *ye* that I am?" Peter, the sharp speaker, replies at once, while the rest are thinking: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answers with a benediction; and taking up the words "Son of the living God," He says that this new truth has dawned upon Peter's soul not in a natural kind of way; it has not come of any worldly wisdom or carnal knowledge; it is an apocalypse, given him of "My Father which is in heaven." Then, still speaking in Peter's key-tone (*σὺ εἶ*), He adds, "And I also say unto thee that thou art Peter," repeating the surname He had given him at one of the earlier interviews. So far there is no difficulty; but the next clause has been for centuries the arena of hot logomachies, loud with the din of party shibboleths, "Upon this rock will I build my church."

Grouping together minor differences, there are three

modes of interpretation, which we may characterize as the Romanesque, the Protestant, and the Christian—using this word in its etymological, and not in its acquired, meaning. The Romanesque, or Simonian, school take the words in their bald literalness, referring them at once to their patron apostle, Peter, in his own person; and afterwards, by their laws of spiritual entail, to his successor, the so-called Vicar Apostolic. The Protestant school, driven from this interpretation by the assumptions and errors to which it naturally gave rise, and yet clinging to a Petrine solution of the problem, affirm that this foundation-rock is not Peter, in his own person, pre-eminence, and authority, but the *faith* of Peter, or the *confession* he was enabled to make. Or they interpret the metaphor as referring to the part Peter took in the founding of the Church at the Pentecost, and to the ingathering of the first Gentiles at Cæsarea. But to say that the Church of to-day is built on the faith of Peter, is building a pyramid on its apex surely; for Peter's faith as yet was sand, not rock, loose, inchoate. It disappeared entirely on the dark night of the betrayal; and never before the Ascension did Peter reach those sublime heights of faith which the feet of Thomas had reached at one exultant bound as he cried, "My Lord and my God!" Nor can any more be said of Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ;" for where was this confession when he swore he did not know the man? It stands neutralized, reduced to zero, by his repeated denials. It was indeed a great truth to which he gave utterance, a fundamental truth, on which all the teaching of the Church was, and is, based, the Sonship, the Divinity of Christ; but between a truth and a chance declaration of that truth, there is a vast difference. It is true that the name of Peter is prominent in the earlier pages of the Acts of the Apostles. He was, doubtless, the foremost speaker at the Pentecost, as he was the first to bring in the wave-sheaf of the Gentile world; but, as a

matter of fact, the Church already existed, not simply as a Divine thought and purpose, but as an actual realization. The twelve Apostles, called out and chosen as well as "sent," were its twelve foundation-stones, and the rapid ingathering of post-Pentecostal times was simply an adding to the already-formed Church.

If the Protestant view is somewhat forced and misty, scarcely in harmony with the spirit of a true exigesis, the Romanesque is just as foreign to the logic of facts. Nothing would be easier than to shew that the apostle Peter enjoyed no singular pre-eminence, such as their interpretation demands. It is true that to Peter were given "the keys of the kingdom," whatever that may mean; but these "keys" were given also to the other Apostles.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the Lord "appeared to Simon," giving to him, by himself, one of those early Resurrection appearances; but this high honour Peter shares with the Magdalene. It is true that he opened the door of the Church to Cornelius and his Gentile household: but it is also true that as the Apostle of the Gentiles he steps aside, to make way for his "beloved brother Paul." It is true that he was the chief speaker at the Pentecost, and that he was one of the three who "seemed to be pillars" of the Church at Jerusalem; but it is equally true that James, and not Peter, was the presiding officer in that mother-church; while, later, the name of Peter almost disappears from the sacred narrative, making way for that other Apostle, who, last in time, became first in influence. However the words of Christ may be interpreted now by that section of the Church which is more Roman than Catholic, it is evident that they were not so understood by those who heard them. It was an after-thought; and one of those cases, too, where the thought is fathered by the wish, the dream. Indeed more has been made of the surname Peter, than perhaps the facts of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 18.

case warrant. The *πέτρος* and the *πέτρα* are not synonyms, though they have often been regarded as such. The *πέτρα* is the *living* rock, if we may use that expression, the unbroken rock that lifts itself up in some tall cliff or mountain; the *πέτρος* is a diminutive, a loose, detached piece of rock, a fragment. This was the surname given to Simon, at the same time as James and John were called Boanerges, or sons of thunder. What the special appropriateness might be in giving the name to Simon we cannot say; but the very name, instead of being suggestive of strength, is suggestive of the weakness that results from separation. Instead of massiveness, solidity, it speaks rather of instability, off-handedness, by-himself-ness, the very characteristics that appear again and again, as he essays to walk on the sea, or as he plunges headlong into the water to go to Jesus. But whatever the name may signify—and it would mean more to the disciples than to us—even that was not his common name. It grew upon him gradually; Simon—Simon Peter—Peter, being its successive developments. That Peter was not the recognized name up to the Resurrection or Ascension days, is evident; for when the Emmaus travellers return to Jerusalem, their new wonder is met by another, how “the Lord hath appeared to Simon;” and when the risen Christ hails the disappointed fishermen, and invites them to breakfast around his beach-fire, this was the lead with which He sounded the depths of a great, but hitherto unstable, soul—“Simon, Simon, Simon, . . . lovest thou me?”<sup>1</sup> The angel,<sup>2</sup> and the after ages, may call him “Peter;” but to Christ he is still, as at the first, “Simon.”

Again, we must not overlook the fact that Peter himself did not understand the *πέτρα* as applying to himself. He was naturally quick, mobile, a front-man; and to these qualities is owing very much of his prominence and for-

<sup>1</sup> Only once does Jesus address him as “Peter” (Luke xxii. 34).

<sup>2</sup> Mark xvi. 7.

wardness—if we may use that word in a good sense. But nowhere, either in his actions or in his writings, can we find any trace of those presumptions and assumptions which naturally would have shewn themselves had Peter attributed to himself the strange metaphor of the Lord. But he claims no supremacy. He assumes no *ex cathedra* tones of speech. He is content to be one-twelfth of the apostleship, or one-thirteenth, as it became afterwards. Nay, instead of making use of the *πέτρα* as his password to pre-eminence and authority, setting himself first, he is but *primus inter pares*; and scarcely that, for the premiership comes to James; Peter is the Speaker, not the Ruler. Neither can we find any trace or shadow of the *πέτρα* in his addresses or letters. His memory was very tenacious of words. They fell into his heart as in a matrix, becoming a kind of stereotype, to reappear, after the lapse of years, in his own speech. We find the *σκηνή* of the Holy Mount reappearing in his epistle as the *σκηνωμα*, or “tabernacle” of his flesh; while the new word of the celestials, the *ἔξοδος*, Peter refers to his own decease (2 Pet. i. 15). But he does not play upon the *πέτρα* fondly, as a word peculiarly his own. He only makes use of it once, and then he does not apply it to himself; his “Rock,” though now it be a “rock of offence,” is Christ (1 Pet. ii. 8).

If then both the Protestant and the Romanesque interpretations fail to explain these enigmatical words; leading, on the one hand, to confusion of thought, and, on the other, to serious practical errors, let us see if the third mode will not make all clear and simple. In the problem before us, let the unknown quantity *πέτρα*=Christ, and the solution is found at once; all objections are met and contradictions harmonized.

We cannot, perhaps, lay much stress on the terminal differences of the two words, *πέτρος* and *πέτρα*, since it is an open question whether Christ spake in Greek or in

Aramaic. All we can do here is to claim for our interpretation the "benefit of the doubt." Let us suppose that He spoke in the Greek language—which is at any rate a possibility, if not a probability—and then we have two cognate, but not synonymous, words, indicating a difference at the same time as they mark a similarity; just as "light" and "lightning" are two correlated, but widely different things. It is true it is only the difference of an affix, but then the affix is the helm of the word, giving it its direction, its peculiar meaning; and if the two affixes do not prove that there are two objective points, they certainly indicate it. They lead out our mind in divers ways, so that if the *πέτρος* is applied to Peter, the *πέτρα* should look to something, or some one else; while the demonstrative *ταύτη* (this) brings the mind forward, nearer to the Speaker.

It may be said that this mode of interpretation makes Jesus speak in sentences obscure and involved, putting into his words double meanings, unworthy of Him who dealt in eternal verities. But not so. The words of Jesus were never misleading, though very often they were misunderstood. The fact was, they were too clear and too deep, and so even the disciples mistook them. They grasped at the shadow that was playing on the surface, and altogether failed to lay hold of the deep thought that was hiding there. So between his meaning and theirs there was often a wide difference and distance. They read things from their lower level; they did not allow for the Divine elevations, and so could not follow those wide-sweeping parabolas of Divine thought. Hence their frequent mistakes and uncertainties, and those private questionings when they asked that the parable might be explained, and the problem solved. In this case, however, they did not misunderstand their Lord's true meaning. No jealousies were awoke against Peter because of undue favouritism, for the simple reason that they did not understand the "foundation-rock"



as applied to him. There might have been something in the tone of the voice, which the written words fail to give us, some peculiar inflection (and how the meaning of a sentence may be completely changed by the inflection!) or there might have been some Divine emphasis laid upon the *ταύτη*, "*this* Rock." At any rate the disciples understood perfectly its meaning, even without the gesture that Stier lays down as a necessity.<sup>1</sup>

But let us interpret these words by other words of Christ, measuring them from a given base-line whose bearings are accurately determined. In St. John (Chap. ii.) we have the account of the cleansing of the temple at the feast of the passover. The tables of the money-changers are overturned; the oxen, sheep, and doves are driven, or hastily carried, out; while the grasping traders fly and quail before the avenging scourge as if it were a quiver of lightnings, rather than a handful of small cords. The spectators look on with wonder and surprise, that one man, and he the gentle and unostentatious Galilean, should create all this excitement, and awake all this fear; and coming up to Him they ask, "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" Jesus replies calmly—for the storm of indignation has subsided rapidly as it arose—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Singular words! They are still within the temple, treading its sacred courts. Its marble walls tower high around and above them; hard by them is the altar whose fire is never quenched, while close upon them presses a line of excited questioning priests. Amid such surroundings He utters words which are sure to be misunderstood, and which will never be forgotten or forgiven. "Destroy this temple," says Jesus; and of course their thought flies to this magni-

<sup>1</sup> "In order to take from the *ταύτη* the necessary reference to what goes before, Christ must suddenly have pointed to Himself with his finger!"—*Words of the Lord Jesus*.

cent structure, *their* temple, which they daily enwreath with curling clouds of incense and ascending psalms; *their* temple, which to their minds and hearts was the jewelled pivot around which the world revolved. But Jesus speaks not of this. "This temple" is not the temple of their thoughts. It is something nearer to Him than that. It is "this temple" of his own flesh, the temple which in their insane frenzy they will shortly destroy, razing it to the ground, and covering with the stone of Joseph's sepulchre. Here, then, we find a key which will unlock that other enigma, for the parallel is complete. The *τοῦτον ναὸν*—*ταύτη πέτρα*; and when He says, "Upon *this* rock will I build my church," He calls away their mind from the more remote, to the nearer, object; from the shadow to the substance; and He proclaims a truth which bears the signature of all the Scriptures, and of all the ages, that Jesus Christ, in his own person, is the Church's foundation; the "Rock" from which the Church in the wilderness drank, and against which the gates and powers of hell shall all dash in vain.

HENRY BURTON.

Innumerable and most bitter are the controversies which have been waged round these words—controversies which could never have arisen had the Church but mastered that first rudiment of Biblical Science which bids men read the Scriptures, not in the letter that killeth, but in the spirit that giveth life. Even from a literal and exegetical point of view, it is easy, I think, to disprove the assumption on which the Roman Church bases its claim to primacy and authority; for the words on which she mainly grounds that claim can hardly mean anything else or more than, "Thou art *petros*, a stone, a detached piece of the *petra*, or living and massive rock, on which I will build my church." In fine, what the words, reasonably and fairly interpreted,

mean is, that *Christ Himself*, as the Son of the Living God, is the Rock, or Foundation, other than which no man can lay; and that Simon Peter, by recognizing Him as the Son of the Living God, proved Himself to be a living Stone of that living Rock,—in other words, a partaker in the nature and spirit of Christ.

But why should we strive about letter and word? We have only to rise from this lower sphere of minute criticism and literal interpretation, to a height from which we can take in the general spirit of our Lord's teaching as interpreted by his other sayings and by the providence of God, in order to see how little ground there is for the arrogant pretensions and interminable controversies which have been based on this passage. We need not climb very high nor look very far to ascertain, first of all, that, as matter of fact, the shaping and controlling mind in the history of the whole Western Church has been that of St. Paul, and not that of St. Peter; or to discover, secondly, that the very promise here made to Cephas was afterward made to the whole body of Christian disciples; that, to them also, Christ gave authority to bind and to loose (Matt. xviii. 18): while we have only to turn to an Epistle written by St. Peter himself (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5) in order to learn how *he* read and applied the promise, not limiting it to himself alone or to his brother-apostles, but extending it to all who should afterward share his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God; for in this Epistle he says of *all* who came to Christ as to the living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but elect and precious with God, that *they* thereby became living stones, and are built up into a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, in which there may be offered up the spiritual sacrifices that are alone acceptable to God.

If, then, we wanted arguments against those who claim an infallible authority over our faith, and who base imposing priestly pretensions on a very questionable succession

to the position and gifts of the Apostles, *these* surely are the arguments which would most commend themselves to reasonable and fair-minded men, and not the arguments which depend on verbal ingenuities or dubious interpretations; for, by these arguments, we deny the ecclesiastical primacy of one of the Apostles only by asserting the spiritual primacy of all the Apostles, and refute the pretensions of a priestly caste only by affirming the spiritual priesthood, the right to offer spiritual sacrifices, of all who accept Christ as the one Mediator between God and man.

But, if we are wise, we shall be far more eagerly set to find what blessings Christ has conferred on *us* in these gracious words than to turn them to any polemical use. It will give us a deeper joy to learn what ground we have for believing that what He promised to Peter He has done for us, than to gain any logical victory or to silence any opponent. And we have this ground in the two facts to which I have already referred: (1) That our Lord Himself gave to all who follow Him the very authority which He conferred on St. Peter; and (2) That St. Peter himself applies the promise, made first to him, to all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to all who are being saved by Him according to the will of God.

Without further preface, then, without entering on any detailed exposition of a passage which is full of charm and happy suggestion, let us take the promise of Christ in its broad spiritual sense, take it as made to *us*, and learn from it how much we owe to Him.

Whatever else it may teach, it undoubtedly teaches this: that, when Christ came and dwelt among us, He came to found an *ecclesia*, *i.e.* a congregation which should also be a community—not a mere fortuitous concourse of persons, nor simply a society of men having some taste or pursuit in common, but a society of kinsmen, a confraternity of kindred souls, animated by one spirit and sharing a common

life. To this confraternity, or church, all were to be welcome, to this communion all belong, who believe in a "living God;" not a God who once made the world perhaps, but long since retired from it or abandoned it to its own devices; not a God who once shewed Himself to men, but no longer walks with them or cares for them; but a God who sustains the world He made, and who now manifests Himself to us in the Person of Christ, and in the ministry of his Spirit, as He could never before manifest Himself to the sons of men. All who, like Peter, recognize in Christ the Son of the living God, all who heartily believe Him to be the supreme and constant revelation of the Divine Righteousness and Love, are members of the ecclesia which Christ came to found on the living and everlasting Rock.

For such a faith in God and in his Son *proves* Him to be a living God. It does not spring from "flesh and blood," *i.e.* from human teaching and impulse—"flesh and blood," being a Jewish synonym for all in man that makes him less than spirit; but, like all our deepest intuitions and purest emotions, it comes from God, the Father of our spirits, and shews that He is even now at work upon us and within us. This faith, this saving faith, may indeed come to us through human teaching and influence; but in the last resort, it comes straight from God Himself, to whom we owe both the revelation which commands our belief, and the human ministries through which it reaches us; to whom we owe no less the power to grasp that revelation and the impulse which effectually moves us to commit ourselves to it. It is *He* who made us what we are, He who taught us what we know; and it is He who impels us to the adventure by which we cast ourselves on the unseen and eternal truths which can alone redeem us from our self-imposed bondage to the things which are seen and temporal. By this living faith we become one with Christ, living

stones in the living Rock, integral parts in the vital structure of that Church which He came to build up, and still continues to build up, on a foundation which can never be moved.

To *us*, then, to each one of us, if indeed we are members of the body or Church of Christ, there comes this word of grace, so full of consolation and promise. What, for example, can more happily confirm our hearts, or lend more strength and courage to our hopes, than the assurance with which our Promise opens, that "the gates of Hades" shall never prevail against the Church in which our spirits have found their home and refuge. Sooner or later all things else succumb to the powers of change, decay, death, and sink into the world of shadows. The customs of men, their thoughts, their creeds, their institutions and polities, the kingdoms they have founded, all pass away. Life itself draws to an end, and the very world which we inhabit is to be no more. Well, therefore, may we conceive of these powers of change and death as a vast and irresistible autocracy, entrenched in an impregnable fortress, from whose "gates" they sally forth to seize and destroy all that we hold dear, threatening and seeming to imperil the very Church itself. Which of us does not so conceive of them at times, and fear lest even the creed which Christ has taught us, and the kingdom which He has founded, should share the fate of all other societies and creeds? Whether we mark the growing scepticism or indifference of the age, stealthily undermining the forms of thought once most surely believed and the moral habits once most fondly cherished among us, or consider the narrow dogmas and gross superstitions which still obtain in many sections of the Church itself, and so contract and degrade it that, instead of being the natural home of every free and generous spirit, it dreads the very name of Reason and prefers a self-imposed bondage to its native liberty, we are alike tempted

to doubt whether even the faith and fellowship of Christ may not one day fall before the powers of Change and Death. The progress of science breeds fear in the hearts of some, though in itself science is a handmaid of Religion. The growing power of the world, and its subtle influence on the hearts of the very servants and friends of Christ, breed fear in others, though the world is but the field in which the Church is to labour and to conquer. The errors and defects in the creed and spirit of the Church itself breed fear in the hearts of still others, who forget that the living Christ is still incarnate in his Church, and is gradually redeeming it from all error and defects. Insomuch that many profess either to have found, or to be waiting for, a faith of larger and more generous scope than that of Christ, and a principle of spiritual organization and fellowship better adapted to the condition and wants of men; while many more are in a strait betwixt two, and, if they hope that the faith and fellowship of Christ may prove to be immortal, nevertheless doubt whether even these may not be outworn and cast aside as the world grows wiser.

To us, therefore, if we have any real faith in Christ and his Word, it cannot but be good tidings of great joy to learn that He Himself foresaw the very conflict in which we are engaged, foresaw also that the ultimate victory would rest with us; and bids us take new heart for the strife from his own most gracious words. Let the gates of Hades lift themselves never so proudly against us, and whatever the doubts and apprehensions with which they inspire us, they are not to prevail against us. The Christian faith is *not* to be superseded as the world grows wiser; the Christian fellowship is *not* to succumb to the powers of change and death. They are to outlive all changes, outface all perils. They are to pass through death itself unharmed, untouched. They are to be our stay and joy in the world beyond the grave. And in so far as we cherish

this hope, and live and walk in its light, we are helping to build up a Church which can never fail or die, let who will rise up against it. Its stability, its victory, is assured; and all that remains for us to determine is whether or not *we* will share in the triumph of that great victory.

Yet even this is only part of the good tidings. For our promise—the promise made to Peter, and which Peter himself passes on to us—goes on to assure us that, if we believe in Christ and in that revelation of the living God which He came to be and to give, He has placed in our hands the power of the keys—the keys not *of heaven*, but of “*the kingdom of heaven*,” *i.e.* of heaven on earth, of the Church, of that sacred and happy fellowship in which men catch and breathe a heavenly spirit, a spirit of righteousness and peace and love.

Every Jewish scribe, when duly trained and authorized to teach his brethren, received from his tutors and superiors a key, to symbolize the knowledge of the Divine Will which he possessed and was about to dedicate to the service of his brethren; many of them either carried a key at their girdle, or had it woven into their robe, as an open sign of the profession to which they had been set apart. There can be no doubt, therefore, that when our Lord put “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” into the hands of his disciples, they would understand that they were to become *scribes* in his kingdom, teachers of the truth, expounders of the law, they had learned from Him, witnesses and exemplars of the life they had seen Him live. And it is precisely in this sense that the promise is made, that the keys are given, to us. *We* are to teach, we have authority to teach, what we know of the truth as it is in Jesus; and thus we are both to open the gates of his kingdom to our less-instructed neighbours, and to invite them into it. The keys entrusted to us are many—keys of righteousness and charity, *i.e.* keys of kindness and good



living, as well as keys of wisdom and knowledge. By our daily conduct, and by the spirit of our whole conduct, no less than by our words, we are saying to our fellows, "*This*, so far as we understand Him, is how Christ would have men live; you have only to live *so*, and *you* will be in his kingdom, under his rule and benediction." By our good words, and our good works, we are to constitute ourselves door-keepers in the House of the Lord, and to open the doors to all who would enter in.

That this power to teach men what we know of Christ, and to lead them into his service, is the true "power of the keys" is evident from the words which follow: "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"; words which were afterward spoken—not to all the Apostles only, but—to every member of his Church, to all the disciples (Matt. xviii. 17, 18). For here again our Lord is using a Jewish formula, referring to a Jewish practice. In the language of the Jewish schools "to bind" and "to loose" meant to prohibit and to permit, to determine what was wrong and must not be done, and what was right and ought to be done. Rabbi Shammai, for example, *bound* all heathen learning, *i.e.* he forbade his disciples to acquire it, declared what we should call "classical studies" to be wrong; while Rabbi Hillel *loosed* these studies—declared them to be right, that is, and encouraged his disciples to take them up. In addressing this promise to his first disciples, therefore, Christ meant to say that, humble and unlearned as they were, yet, in virtue of the new spiritual life and insight which He had conferred upon them, they should become "masters of sentences," and their decisions as to what was right and what wrong, should carry no less authority than they had once attached to the decisions of their rabbis and scribes.

As addressed to us, the promise cannot mean less than

this: that, besides being called by our faith in Christ to teach the general truths we have learned from Him, we are also authorized to make those practical applications of truth to the conditions and needs of the hour by which the moral life and tone of men will be raised and purified. Just as the primitive disciples pronounced a thousand Gentile customs, which the Jews thought sinful, to be innocent or laudable, and a thousand acts of both Jews and Pagans to be sinful, which they had thought to be virtuous or indifferent, so we, their successors, have received authority from Christ to apply the general principles of his kingdom to every department and every detail of human life. And just as what they bound on earth was bound in heaven, and what they loosed on earth was loosed in heaven; just that is, as most of their decisions about the right and wrong of human life and duty were proved to be true decisions, were ratified and proved to be true by the course of history and the providence of God, so we may also say that the decisions of the modern Church, the practical applications of the truth of Christ to modern conditions and needs, have in like manner been ratified and approved by God and man. It is our decisions, and those of our immediate fathers, which have abolished slavery, raised the status of woman, secured the education of children, advanced the cause of temperance, thrift, industry, promoted the growth of freedom and the fraternity of men and nations. In these and similar decisions we and they have applied the general teaching of Christ to the social and moral conditions of men, bringing out new bearings of familiar principles on human conduct and duty, and so proving ourselves to be scribes instructed in the kingdom of heaven. And who can doubt that what we have thus bound or forbidden on earth has also been bound in heaven, or that what we have thus loosed or sanctioned on earth has also been loosed in heaven?

How much, then, do we owe to Christ, if we believe in Him as the Son of the Living God, and have taken Him for our Master and Lord! He has drawn us into the one community over which time and change and death have no power, the one community which endures for ever and carries forward its work, its acquisitions and honours, into the world beyond the grave; and He has thus assured us both of the final conquest of good over evil, and of an immortality of service and joy. He has conferred on us the privilege and responsibility of opening the gates of this eternal home and refuge of the soul to all whom our influence can reach, bidding us let our light so shine before men that they may come and walk in the light which we have received from heaven. He has called us so to interpret and apply his commandments to the needs and conditions of the time in which we live as that every good cause—social, educational, political—may find in us helpers and friends, as that we may lead the van in the march and progress of the world. And He has promised us that, in so far as we catch his spirit and truly interpret his mind, what we forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and what we approve on earth shall be approved in heaven.

If, then, we can say, "Lo, this is our Lord; we have waited for Him, and He will save us," we may well "rejoice and be glad in his salvation." For it is no merely personal salvation, no merely future and distant heaven, no merely selfish and ignoble task, for which we look and to which we are summoned. We are called to a present and a noble task, the task of teaching men all we know of Him, of opening and keeping open those gates of wisdom, righteousness, and charity by which alone they can approach Him, the task of being fellow-workers with Him in every cause by which the well-being of man is in any measure promoted and secured. We are looking for no distant heaven merely, and for no merely selfish salvation;

but for the heaven of being now and always in tune with the will of God, at one with the very spirit of heaven, and for a salvation which embraces the whole nature of man and extends to every race and kindred and tribe.

ALMONI PELONI.

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### THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS.

EXODUS xiii. 17-xiv. 4.

IN the papers contributed by Miss Weld to the EXPOSITOR of last September, and to the Quarterly Statement for July of the Palestine Exploration Fund, the impossible theory of Canon Scarth is abandoned for another constructed by the author herself. This, however, amounts to little more than an approximation to the famous hypothesis of Brugsch. It is even *less* possible, by reason of its violent assumption of a junction between the Menzaleh and Sirbonian lakes.

Hypotheses are manifestly necessary to the advancement of our knowledge. No science, whether of History, Language, or Physics, can make one step of progress without them. But hypotheses sometimes hinder as well as help. The theory advocated by Brugsch with so much wealth of illustration in 1874-5 has had its brief reign. It is now finally extinct. The researches recently conducted in the Wady Tumulât have their signal reward in disproving a very alluring conjecture, and in furnishing us with at least one definite clue.

This essay is intended to be supplementary to the remarks contained in my brief article of last June. I propose to examine carefully the text of Exodus xiii. 17-xiv. 4, and also to cite evidence which must render Brugsch's hypothesis of a Northern Route altogether untenable. The