

There is. A spot meeting all the requirements of the test still exists, and bears the very name (in its Arabic form of Beit Dejân) which was given in ages long gone by. Beit Dejân is now a hamlet (and probably never was much more than this), with a few ruins, situated in the Plain of Salîm, seven miles east-south-east of Nablus, about twenty-two miles south of Jelbôn, and about thirty miles north of Aphek.

These identifications will, it is hoped, help to give reality and life to an obscure period of Israel's history; a period not without importance and interest for us (as what portion of Bible history can be?), albeit that period of anarchy and confusion with which a national apostasy was visited.

And in Beit Dejân we have another monument discovered to us of the widespread idolatry of ancient Palestine, and another token of its influence among an energetic race, if not of their missionary zeal in promoting it. The terrible fascination of this sin held, as we know,<sup>1</sup> many of the Chosen People in its thrall; and at this very shrine, doubtless many a heart, straying from Jehovah, bowed down and worshipped. The Nemesis was sure. They who had been their teachers in a false religion, marched against and utterly defeated them in battle, and on the very walls of this temple of their god they transfixed the gory head of the first hapless king of Israel, once the pride of his people, but now forsaken of God and man.

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### THE STONE AND THE ROCK.

Two very interesting papers in the December number of *THE EXPOSITOR* bearing the above title prompt me to attempt another and very different exposition of the words recorded in Matthew xvi. 18 as spoken by Christ. Our task

<sup>1</sup> Judges. x. 6; 1 Sam. vii. 3 and 4, and xii. 10.

is, to search for such thought as, in the mind of Christ, would suitably clothe itself in his recorded words. The method of research must be a grammatical investigation of these words, and of any other words, from Him or from others, bearing upon the same matter.

Somewhere in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, probably in the wild solitudes at the foot of Hermon, Christ asked his disciples generally, "Who say ye that I am?" While others were thinking, Peter replied at once, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" To the ready speaker Christ turned immediately, and proclaimed him "Blessed;" for his quick reply proved that he had been taught by the Heavenly Father of the Incarnate Son. But the Saviour has yet more to say. Placing Himself in conspicuous contrast (*καγώ*) to Peter who has just spoken, and singling him out (*σοι λέγω*) from the band of apostles by whom he was surrounded, Christ takes up Peter's own words *Thou art*, and applies them to the speaker: "*Thou art Peter.*"

We are at once reminded of words recorded in John i. 43 as spoken by Christ when Simon was first brought to Him: "Thou shalt be called Cephas." This name the writer of the fourth Gospel explains by adding that it "is interpreted Peter;" meaning probably that this was its current Greek equivalent. The Aramaic name suggests that Christ spoke in that language. Its Hebrew equivalent is found in Jeremiah iv. 29; Job xxx. 6, in the sense of *rock*. And in each of these places it is rendered in the LXX. *πέτρα*; in the former case, however, the distinction between *πέτρα* and *πέτρος* being marked only by the accent. The Aramaic word denotes, I believe, usually a *rock*, sometimes a *stone*. The Greek *πέτρα*<sup>1</sup> is always *rock*: *πέτρος* denotes a *stone*; rarely a *rock*, e.g. Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, l. 272; *Oedipus at Colonus*, ll. 19, 1595. But, since *πέτρα* is feminine, the only

<sup>1</sup> See Rost and Palm's *Lexicon*.

Greek equivalent of פֶּטְרוֹ available for a man's name was Πέτρος. This last rendering is the more suitable because it is not found in the LXX. or New Testament; and only twice<sup>1</sup> in the Apocrypha; and was therefore an almost vacant word waiting for use.

We feel at once that the words of Christ, *Thou art Peter*, (*Rock* or *Piece-of-Rock*), were designed to announce some great honour awaiting the disciple who had so readily and nobly confessed his Master. And, if so, these words need explanation. For Πέτρος is not, in itself, a title of honour. Indeed, it is used sometimes (*e.g.* Sophocles, *King Oedipus*, l. 334; Euripides, *Medea*, l. 28) to denote stolid indifference. Even in Mr. Burton's paper<sup>2</sup> the name is expounded in a sense which makes it by no means a title of honour. His exposition proves how greatly the name given by Christ to Simon needs authoritative explanation. We wait, therefore, to hear in what sense Simon is a Rock or Piece-of-Rock.

Our Lord continues, "*And upon this Rock I will build My Church.*" He thus declares that He is about to call together out of the world a community for Himself, representing this community as a building, Himself its builder; and declares further that in some worthy sense *Upon this Rock*, as a building upon its foundation, the new community shall rest. These words can be no other than Christ's own explanation of the honour conferred on Simon in the foregoing declaration, *Thou art a Piece-of-Rock*. And, that He is still thinking of Peter, is proved by the further words of honour which follow; "*I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever thou mayst bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.*"

Looking at the sentence as it stands, and without thought of the difficulties involved, our first idea is that ταύτη τῇ πέτρῃ refers to Simon, who has just been solemnly declared to be Πέτρος. This suggestion is in no wise weakened by

<sup>1</sup> 2 Macc. i. 16, iv. 41.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. vi. page 434.

the different ending of the two words. For *πέτρα* is the usual term for a *rock*, e.g. Matthew vii. 24; Exodus xvii. 6; Numbers xx. 8; and *Πέτρος* is its nearest masculine equivalent, a form rarely used as an independent substantive.

The only serious objection to the above exposition is the difficulty of conceiving that in any sense the Church of Christ was built on Simon Peter. In view of this difficulty it has been suggested that our Lord intended to say that He is Himself the Rock on which He will build his Church. It has been further suggested (see Vol. vi. p. 436) that the transition from Simon to Christ is indicated by the change from *Πέτρος* to *πέτρα*; and this change is compared to the difference between *lightning* and *light*. But both in form and meaning these English words stand much further apart than the Greek words before us. And, as I have just shewn, of these last, the transition from one to the other is easily accounted for without supposing any change of subject. That Christ indicated the transition to Himself as The Rock, by a gesture, is conceivable. But, had there been such, a truthful narrator would have been bound to note it in some way: for, to pass over in silence a gesture which changes completely the reference of the recorded words, is to misrepresent the speaker. A good example of the need of explanation in such cases is found in John ii. 21; where, after recording words of Christ very liable to be misunderstood, the writer adds, "But he spake of the temple of his body." Yet, strange to say, this is quoted (on page 438) as a "complete parallel" to the passage before us; and as "a key which will unlock that other enigma." The comment which the Sacred Writer felt it needful to add, destroys all parallel between the two passages. If the words *Upon this Rock* refer to Christ and not to Simon, about whom emphatically Christ speaks both before and afterwards, they have, as liable to be seriously misunderstood, so far as I know, no parallel in the New Testament.

Again, the infinite difference between Christ and Simon demands that transition from one to the other be marked in some indisputable and conspicuous manner. We should have expected *σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ γὰρ Πέτρα*, or the like. Nor can I allow any weight to Dr. Morison's suggestion (see his Commentary *in loco*) that had Christ referred to Simon He would probably have said, "Upon thee I will build my Church"; for the eloquence of repetition we all recognize. Moreover, if Christ spoke in Aramaic, which is very likely, there would be no distinction between the words. Whereas, if He spoke in Greek, the change would still be significant; even referring both words to Simon. Christ declares that he whom men call Piece-of-Rock is really a solid Rock, on which He will build his Church. In any case, the change of termination does not indicate a change of subject, and thus render needless other indication of this all-important transition.

The suggestion that *πέτρα* explains *Πέτρος* by asserting that Simon is related to Christ, as a Piece-of-Rock to the living Rock, does not help us. For, to call Simon a loose piece of rock,<sup>1</sup> falls far below the honour which Christ evidently designed these solemn words to convey.

Moreover, the exposition we are discussing involves an unparalleled confusion of metaphor. In the same words Christ would be represented as both the rock-foundation, and the builder, of the Church. The foundation would build something upon itself. As matter of fact, this is true. But the image is most incongruous. When Christ is mentioned as the foundation, God is the builder; as in 1 Peter ii. 6. In the Bible we frequently find rapid transition from one metaphor to another; and frequently a writer quickly

<sup>1</sup> Most frequently, *πέτρος* denotes a rough piece of rock capable of being thrown. Hence *πέτροισιν ἠπάσσοντο* in Aeschylus, *Persians*, l. 460, Euripides, *Iphigenia at Tauri*, l. 327; *πέτροις λευθῆσαι* in Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* l. 435; *καταφουεθῆναι πέτροις* in Euripides, *Orestes*, l. 625; also Xenophon, *Anabasis*, bk. iv. 7. 12; *Greek History*, bk. iii. 5. 20, ii. 4. 14.

forsakes his metaphor because it fails him in some important point. But I do not know a passage in which one short clause contains two incompatible metaphors, as would be the case here if the exposition before us were correct.

The insuperable difficulties which surround this explanation therefore drive us back to the simple reference of the words, as they would certainly be understood if we had nothing to guide us but the grammatical form of the sentence. Can we find a meaning which would justify the use of these strange words, and give them a worthy import?

The first thought suggested by these words, to us and probably to the other apostles who heard them, is that Simon was to occupy a unique place in the founding of the Church Christ was about to erect. Upon him in some sense the Church was to rest: and to him were given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our thoughts go forward to Luke xxii. 31, where our Lord is recorded to say: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for *you* (the apostles as a whole) that he may sift *you* as wheat: but I have made supplication about *thee* (for Simon specially) that *thy* faith fail not: and do *thou* (καὶ σύ, very emphatic), when once thou hast turned again, *establish* (στήρισον) *thy* brethren." These words give to Peter a unique position as an element of stability to his colleagues, as a rock on which they are to rest firmly. The word ἐπιστρέψας suggests that Christ had in view Peter's fall, and wished to signify that even this temporary unfaithfulness should not exclude him from the leadership of the apostles. It is also worthy of note that in all lists of the apostles, Peter is mentioned first: so Matthew x. 2; Mark iii. 16; Luke vi. 14; Acts i. 13; and even in the smaller circle noted in Mark v. 37; Matthew xvii. 1, xxvi. 37. All this taken together compels us to look upon Peter as in some sense the leader of the sacred band. We wait to see the position he will occupy when the Master is no longer Himself present.

After the Ascension, it is Peter who rises and suggests the election of another apostle. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, speaking<sup>1</sup> as a mouthpiece of "the Eleven" gives the inaugural address of the Christian Church. To him specially<sup>2</sup> the inquirers spoke and from him received answer.<sup>3</sup> It was Peter<sup>4</sup> who healed the lame man at the Temple gate and preached to the gathered crowd. And it was Peter who, the next day, with unflinching courage refused to be silenced by the threats of the highest court of the Jews. To Peter was made<sup>5</sup> the special revelation that no longer valid were the Mosaic distinctions of meat, and therefore the Mosaic Covenant, of which these distinctions are an essential and conspicuous element. And he first, by the special choice<sup>6</sup> of God, proclaimed the Gospel to Gentiles.

The sermons at Pentecost and to Cornelius introduced the two chief eras in the founding of the Church. By them, certainly, Peter threw open, first to Jews and then to Gentiles, the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. In them therefore we see fulfilled the commission implied in the gift of the keys.

That "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" are explained in the words which follow, "Whatever thou mayst bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," we have no proof or hint. For, unlike the words "Thou art Peter," the words "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven" are, without further explanation, a mark of infinite honour. Consequently the explanation of them might well be left to events. Nor, again, does the repetition<sup>7</sup> to all the apostles of the following words detract from the unique honour implied in their being first spoken to Peter alone, along with other words spoken only to him.

Let us now return to Peter standing before the Sanhe-

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 14.      <sup>2</sup> Verse 37.      <sup>3</sup> Verse 38.      <sup>4</sup> Acts iii. 6, 7, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Acts x. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Acts xv. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew xviii. 18.

drin, as recorded in Acts iv. 8-22. It seems to me that upon Peter's immoveable firmness in that day rested the very existence of the infant Church. Peter's daring accusation that his judges, who were the most powerful of the Jews, had murdered the one Hope of Israel, his confident assertion that the murdered One had risen from the dead, and the powerlessness of the threats of his enemies to extract from him a promise of silence, were probably the most potent means of the early and rapid spread of Christianity in Jerusalem. And, assuredly, had Peter's faith failed in that tremendous trial, no other voice would have dared openly to proclaim the good news of a Saviour risen from the dead. In other words, there would have been no Gospel, no Church, no Christianity. The existence of the Church in all future ages rested upon the courage of a single man. But the prayer of Christ, who foresaw the storm, for that one man was answered. Like a broad rock he stood unmoved by the fury of the raging ocean. And the place of unique honour given to him by Christ in that day, Peter still holds, and will for ever hold in the memory of the Church triumphant.

That Peter denied Christ does not lessen this honour. It only proves how thorough was his repentance, and how complete the change wrought in him by the Spirit under whose influence<sup>1</sup> he spoke before the Sanhedrin. We admit that in later years Paul took a more conspicuous place. But had Peter yielded to the pressure of his foes, probably Paul had never been converted.

Looking back now in the light of subsequent history upon Christ's solemn words near Cæsarea Philippi, we cannot doubt that they refer to this unique place and work destined by God for Peter; and that Christ intended by his words to direct the apostles to Peter as their recognized leader, thus giving to them a unity which otherwise might have

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 8.



been wanting, and to prepare Peter himself for his great and difficult task as leader of the Twelve. We all feel that

In seasons of great peril,  
'Tis good that one bear sway.

And our Lord, in order that his disciples in the day of their peril might not need to question among themselves who should take the lead, spoke to Peter in the presence of the other apostles the astounding words now before us. The grandeur of the work and honour thus given to Peter justify the words; and are, in my view, the only conceivable explanation of them.

Doubtless our Lord's choice of Peter as a leader was in harmony with a natural fitness. And the readiness with which, in contrast to the unbelieving or doubting<sup>1</sup> world, he at once confessed the true dignity of Christ, was the quality most needed by one whose chief work was to bear witness about Christ.

To say, as on p. 434, that "Peter did not understand the *πέτρα* as applying to himself," and to call this a "fact," is simply assertion unproved and incapable of proof. He may, like the Virgin Mother, have "kept all these things in" his "heart." To say "that presumptions and assumptions would naturally have shewn themselves had Peter attributed to himself the strange metaphor of the Lord," assumes that the Holy Spirit given to Peter was not a spirit of humility.

It is quite true that the explanation here suggested does not remove all difficulties. Christ used words which, in the sense expounded above, we should never have chosen. Even in the sense indicated, Peter is not, to our Western thought, a rock on which the Church is built. But the very strangeness of the words would rivet the attention of the apostles to Peter, and of Peter to himself, as the divinely appointed leader of the band, and thus prepare

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xvi. 14.

him to lead and them to follow. Moreover, whatever difficulties surround this explanation seem to me immeasurably less than the insuperable obstacles in the way of the other solutions.

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### BRIEF NOTICE.

THE last addition to the Pulpit Commentary is *Archdeacon Farrar's* exposition of 1 CORINTHIANS (London: Kegan Paul and Co.). On this Epistle so many admirable commentaries had already been published—*e.g.* Mr. Beet's, Dean Stanley's, and, above all, Canon Evans's in the Speaker's Commentary—that Dr. Farrar has wisely contented himself with an exposition of the most moderate dimensions, while all that he gives in the way of Introduction is compressed into four or five pages. Brief as it is, however, no point of importance is left unnoticed; and his solution of the many difficult problems started by this familiar Scripture is, as a rule, the best that can yet be attained.

His slender rill of exegesis is swollen and well-nigh lost in a flood of baser matter. No less than eight homilists have been let loose on this single Epistle, and for one page that will prove useful to the student there are at least ten in this ponderous volume that he will turn over with a sigh. The value of some of these homiletical effusions will at once reveal itself to any Greek scholar who observes that the moral drawn from St. Paul's injunction on the *debitum tori* in chapter vii. verse 3, is that marriage involves "mutual benevolence," and that this benevolence is defined as "a hearty well-wishing, each wishing the well-being of the other"; while the corresponding phrase in verse 5, *Defraud ye not one the other*, is amplified into "Deception is inimical to the true union of souls. Nothing cuts united hearts asunder so easily and effectively as artfulness and deception."

It is to be hoped that Dr. Farrar will let us have his exposition in a detached and separate form.

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