

the book in which the article Sir William Ramsay refers to is being republished before I read his article ; and it was, therefore, impossible for me to deal with his reply to my statements there. This omission in the book where it appears is not to be regarded as any discourtesy to an author, for whose contributions to New Testament scholarship I feel so great an admiration and gratitude that I regret to have to persist in a difference of opinion from him.

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*ST. MATTHEW XVI. 18.*

In the Greek version of our Lord's words a distinction seems to be drawn between Peter, which is by interpretation "a stone," and the Rock on which Christ would build His Church. The probability that our Lord intended such a distinction is apparently strengthened by the fact that the term "Rock," when used metaphorically, in the Old Testament always refers to God and in the New Testament to Christ. Accordingly a large number of writers consider that our Lord in this passage uses the expression "Rock" as a paraphrase for Himself. "On this Rock, that is, on Me." Indeed, Zwingli declared himself unable to understand how there could be any doubt on the point : "There is no doubt He is speaking of Himself, and there is not the least ambiguity."

Many, however, have entertained considerable doubts. It has been pointed out that elsewhere, where our Lord refers to Himself in this indirect manner (as e.g. in John ii. 19), the context makes His meaning perfectly clear. We find similar expressions in classical authors, but in no case is any name introduced which would render the allusion at all doubtful. Moreover, in the passage before us our Lord is plainly promising St. Peter something in return for his profession of faith, and we expect a statement about Peter

and not about Christ. It is an additional argument that in similar instances in the Old Testament the speaker goes on to point out that the character or position of the person referred to corresponds to his name: "Thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee"; "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." We should, therefore, expect this passage to run in the same way, "Thou art Peter, because on thee I will build My Church."

These objections seem fatal to the identification of the Rock with Christ, and suggest that it must be connected in some way with St. Peter. Accordingly many writers, desirous of maintaining the obvious reference to the apostle, and also of preserving the distinction between Peter (a stone) and the Rock on which the Church was to be built, regard the Rock as the confession made by St. Peter. We may unhesitatingly admit that this explanation contains an element of the true solution, that this belief is the very foundation of the Christian Church. Still it cannot be the idea in the passage before us. Wherever in the New Testament the erection of the Church is spoken of, the stones of which it is composed and the foundation on which it rests are represented as men and not as doctrines. Even 1 Cor. iii. 10-12 (a passage which we shall consider presently) is no exception to the rule.

In all probability the distinction drawn between "stone" and "rock," which has occasioned all the difficulty, is based on a mistake. If our Lord, as is probable, spoke in Aramaic, the word used, Cephas, would denote either rock or stone. In this case, whichever of the two renderings we adopt, we evidently cannot give the word two different meanings in the same verse. We have accordingly two explanations to choose from; either "Thou art Cephas, a rock, and on this rock"; or "Thou art Cephas, a stone, and on this

stone." Both translations are equally possible as renderings of the Aramaic original, and our choice between them will have to be decided by other considerations.

It is the opinion of many commentators that the former alternative is correct, "Thou art Cephas, a rock, and on this rock (i.e. on thee) I will build My Church." Nor is this exegesis confined to Romanist theologians; Protestant writers are equally explicit. Moreover, it is possible to meet the objection that Rock is a Divine title. It is argued that our Lord here regards St. Peter as His vicar and deputy, and states that His Church will be built on him as a secondary foundation. The question, how far this is a valid answer, evidently depends on other considerations. It certainly offers a consistent explanation of the passage.

Still, plausible as this explanation seems at first sight, there are decisive objections to it. It would appear obvious that when St. Matthew speaks of the Church as built on St. Peter, when St. John represents it as built on the twelve apostles, and St. Paul writes that it is built on the apostles and prophets, the phrase must have the same meaning in all three passages. We are compelled to prefer the explanation which equally suits them all, to the explanation which is only applicable to one of them. Moreover, the figure used is that of a building, and we should expect the component parts to be stones rather than rocks. Morison feels the difficulty and tries to meet it, but his explanation appears far-fetched. He thinks our Lord used the phrase "pieces of rock," because He spoke at Caesarea Philippi: "It was in the midst of this scenery of cliff, and rock . . . and cyclopean pieces of rock . . . fit for foundation stones . . . that our Lord uttered the language we are considering." It will be noticed that our Lord did not use the phrase "pieces of rock," but "on this rock." Morison indeed is endeavouring to retain the word "rock," and to explain it as "a gigantic foundation stone."

Consequently we turn to the other rendering, "Thou art Cephas, a stone, and on this stone I will build My Church." It is a perfectly allowable translation of the Aramaic word and agrees with the explanation of the name, Cephas, given in the Gospel of St. John, "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone." It is an interpretation which exactly suits the figure, which is that of a building made up of many stones and of which St. Peter is the foundation stone. Accordingly it only remains to consider in what sense, and for what reason, this title is here given to the apostle.

A view, which is met with in many writers, is that St. Peter is here called the foundation stone because of his energy in founding the Church. In the same way St. John speaks of the twelve apostles as foundation stones because of their zeal and ability; and for the same reason St. Paul extends the metaphor to the prophets also. Still, though so widely supported, this explanation is absolutely impossible. The foundation does not erect the building, but is itself part of the building erected. Moreover, in the passage before us our Lord expressly states that the Church will be built by Himself, and the idea that St. Peter was to be the builder is excluded.

These objections are avoided by the explanation that the apostle was called the foundation stone because it was through his instrumentality that both Jews and Gentiles were to enter the Christian Church. It was owing to his preaching that 3,000 men were converted on the first Whit-Sunday. It was St. Peter who, before the appointment of St. Paul, was taught to call no one common or unclean. The facts are undeniable, but they in no way account for the metaphor. Men do not enter a building through the foundation stone. We should expect, and we actually find, quite a different metaphor to express that idea. "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." It is per-

fectly legitimate exegesis to explain that the promise of the keys meant that St. Peter would open by his preaching the door of admission to the Church ; but different metaphors mean different things.

Nor is it any more correct to state that our Lord here makes St. Peter the principal stone in the building, or, in other words, assigns to him the chief position in the Church. Yet this view has been extensively held, by Anglicans and Protestants as well as by Romanists. Their view of what the primacy consisted in may vary, but they all agree that St. Peter is here regarded as the chief stone in the future building. This, however, is to confuse ancient with modern ideas of the relative importance of stones in a building. In the Bible the most important stone is, not the foundation stone, but the corner stone. Here our Lord is represented as separate from the building, for He is its Builder ; just as elsewhere He is regarded apart from the Body, for He is its Saviour. Yet He is also a stone in the building and a part of the Body ; and in either case He is, He cannot but be, chief and first. Thus St. Paul represents our Lord as the Head, part of the Body but the principal part, while we are merely the members. Elsewhere he represents Him as the corner stone, one stone in the building but the chief stone, while the apostles and prophets are only foundation stones. The same idea is brought before us in the Old Testament in Psalm cxviii. 22, where we read that " the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." We imagine that few would be found to dispute the exegesis of De Wette, " A stone, rejected by the builders as useless, has been chosen and set in the place of chief importance." The same fact comes out in another way. In Isaiah xxviii. 16 the writer wished to point out that the stone laid for a foundation was also to be the principal stone in the building. There was a simple way in which he could state this fact, and accordingly he adopted that method. He described

it as the corner stone, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone."

On the other hand, we must not evacuate the term "foundation stone" of all meaning and make it merely one of the stones in the building. Yet this view also, with various modifications, has been extensively held. It has been maintained that all the apostles, or even all true believers, were the Rock of which Christ spoke; "It was said to Peter and to every Peter." This explanation ultimately rests on the opinion that St. Peter was only giving expression to what was common knowledge; that the other apostles knew, only St. Peter replied before them. Such exegesis flatly contradicts our Lord's express declaration that it was a special and personal revelation made to St. Peter by God. Equally was the promise personal to St. Peter. No mention was made by our Lord of any other apostle.

The foundation stone was not the principal stone nor was it merely an ordinary stone. It was the stone first laid. St. Peter was the *first* to realise that the man Jesus was in very truth the Son of the living God. Our Lord's statement leaves no possible room for doubt on the point, and the two passages in which others are apparently represented as anticipating St. Peter's confession must be otherwise explained. Nathanael used very similar language at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, but the meaning of his words must be different, for he received no praise on account of his confession. Moreover, so far from his acknowledgment being regarded as anything extraordinary, he was promised that a greater revelation would be granted him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." A little later the A.V. represents St. Peter himself as employing after the Feeding of the Five Thousand the same language he used at Caesarea Philippi: "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." The R.V., however,

informs us that on the former occasion he merely declared that our Lord was "the Holy One of God." Such an acknowledgment involved no departure from the ordinary Jewish standpoint, and scarcely differed in kind from the statement of Nicodemus. On the other hand, the confession made at Caesarea Philippi contained the essential principle by which a member of the Christian society was distinguished from a heathen or a Jew. Consequently St. Peter, who *first* made it, became the foundation stone of the new Church. We find the same idea in every passage where the same metaphor occurs. In Revelation xxi. 14 St. John speaks of the twelve apostles as the foundation stones of the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem, in other words, as the first believers in Christ from the members of the Jewish Church. In Ephesians ii. 20 St. Paul writing to Gentiles speaks of "the apostles (not necessarily the Twelve) and prophets" as the foundation, that is, as those from among the heathen to whom first came the revelation of God and of Christ. In 1 Corinthians iii. 10-15 St. Paul is speaking of doctrines, not of men, but the idea is precisely similar. The foundation is the teaching first given: the superstructure is the teaching imparted later. If the doctrine was to be Christian at all, and not Jewish or heathen, the initial teaching must contain an account of the life and work, the death and resurrection of our Lord. Lastly, it is probable that St. Peter was thinking of the promise made to himself, when he wrote ii. 4, 5 of his First Epistle, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." The context makes it clear that by "coming" he meant believing in Christ as the corner stone, the chief stone, of the spiritual house. Those who believe in Christ, as St. Peter did, though they may not be foundation stones, will yet in their proper order be built up as living stones in the Church of Christ.