

UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH.

"Jesus asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, *that thou art Peter*. And upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:13-18.

The Church of Rome has taken advantage of this language of our Lord to Peter, and attempted to base upon it authority for her Popes, the claimed successors of Peter through the laying on of hands. As her history dates back to the days of the Apostles – for even then the Mystery of Iniquity began to work, as the Apostle testifies 2 Thes. 2:7: – she had but little difficulty in establishing her claim of succession, the influence of which is powerful among an ignorant and credulous people. The practice of laying on of hands was quite common in the early Church, both the Apostles and other disciples did it (Acts 6:6; 13:3). At such times special gifts were sometimes imparted and sometimes not (Acts 19:6; 13:3); and the Apostles never intimated that by this means or any other *they* conferred upon any one *authority* to preach the gospel, or serve the Church. That authority comes to *all* the Church through the anointing of the Spirit of truth.

Nay more, none can be of that anointed body except they be preachers to the extent of their ability or talent. Those who use not the anointing, given for that very purpose (Isa. 61:1), are reckoned unfit for the kingdom honors. Matt. 25:25-30.

This far-sighted stroke of policy on the part of the Church of Rome, needed only another to make it permanent, and that was, the denial of the right of private judgment to individuals in interpreting the Scriptures. The Church of Rome claims the sole right and ability to do this, and her faithful must abide by her decisions. Nor has Protestantism (so-called) been slow to reap what advantage she could from these deceptive and ensnaring claims. Though it could not openly claim with any show of possibility, an apostolic succession, it endeavors to create an impression that its clergy is a special class, endowed with power, authority and ability to interpret the Scriptures, which other Christians do not possess. As the people had so long been under this deception with regard to the Roman clergy, it was only necessary that the superstition be fostered a little – as it was when Protestant preachers began to assume an air of authority and superior wisdom – and that the *truth on the subject* be left in the back-ground. And now that the growing intelligence of Christian people is beginning to demand a scriptural foundation for the authority claimed, strenuous efforts are being put forth by Protestantism to discourage on the part of the people, all *independent* thought in Bible study, and to restrict investigation to the *conclusions* of approved sectarians. To this end the S.S. Lessons are guardedly arranged so as under a guise of liberty to fetter thought so far as possible without seeming to do so.

That no such idea as that Peter was the rock on which the Church should be built, was intended by our Lord, or gathered from his words by Peter, to us is evident. Jesus had asked, "Whom do men say that I am"? Then bringing the question home more closely, "But whom say *ye* that I am"? Peter's loving devotion found quick and strong expression – "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus as quickly and warmly responded, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter – a rock or stone. And on this rock I will build my Church," etc. His name previously was Simon, henceforth it is to have the name rock or stone added, for Peter signifies rock. Because Simon was first to express the grand foundation doctrine

upon which [R813 : page 6] the Church of Christ was to be built, viz., that Jesus is the Messiah, Jehovah's anointed one; therefore he was honored by the name Rock, or Peter, as a memorial of his being the first to recognize the great Rock, Christ Jesus.

The Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation harmoniously teach that *Jesus Christ the Son of the living God*, is the Solid Rock Foundation on which his Church was to be, and now is being built. Christ Jesus, not Peter, was the stone of stumbling and rock of offence which Jehovah laid in Zion, and over which both the houses of Israel stumbled as predicted – Isa. 8:14. When Peter, instructed by Isaiah, declared that the *nominal* Gospel Church, like the Jewish Church, should stumble over Christ the "*foundation corner stone*" of the *true* Church, he had little idea that the apostacy would claim him as the stone on which the Church is built.

Peter's own words to the Church are, "Draw near to him [Christ], the living stone, rejected by men, but by God chosen, honorable; be yourselves also built up as living stones, a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, to offer sacrifices, well pleasing to God *through Jesus Christ*, because it is contained in the Scripture, "Behold I place in Zion a *Foundation-corner Stone* [Christ], chosen, honorable, and he who confides IN IT shall not be ashamed....This Stone which the builders [of the Nominal Church] rejected [substituting the name of Peter, Peter himself declares], is made the Head of the corner." 1 Pet. 2:4-7. – Comp. Diaglott.

In an ordinary building there is no chief or head corner stone; but the idea in the mind of the Apostle seems to be that of a pyramid whose chief corner stone is the top stone which is a perfect pyramid in itself. The top stone is also the foundation stone of this wonderful building of God. The foundation is laid in the heavens, and all that is built thereon must be built in conformity to the lines of the heavenly architecture. As the invisible power of earthly attraction holds an earthly building to its earthly foundation, so the invisible power of the heavenly attraction

will secure the building of God on its firm foundation laid in the heavens. Jesus, Jehovah's Anointed – the Rock of Ages. 1 Cor. 3:11.

"On this Rock I will build *my Church*." All the members, Peter included, will be built on *that same rock* – not on Peter, nor on any system which either directly or indirectly claims Peter as its rock, but on Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, our Redeemer and our Lord. Those who plant themselves on any other foundation will never be built in to the glorious spiritual temple – the true Church of Christ.

While the Lord declares his purpose to establish his Church on the enduring Rock of Ages, and to clothe it with power and glory, he shows us that before the realization of our hopes, we must all die – the head and every member of the Church must die, but he also gives us the comforting assurance that "the gates of hell [hades, the grave] shall not prevail against it." Through sacrifice, *even unto death*, the victory over death is gained. Death cannot prevail against Divine power and hold the Church captive. Though death swallows up every member of the Church, all shall come forth to victory: a victory foreshadowed by the resurrection of the great Head of the Church. 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thes. 4:14.

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