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LECTURES

EXPLANATORY OF

THE DIATESSARON.

LECTURES

EXPLANATORY OF

THE DIATESSARON,

OR

THE HISTORY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST,

COLLECTED FROM THE FOUR GOSPELS,

IN THE FORM OF A CONTINUOUS NARRATIVE.



Sint castæ deliciæ meæ Scripturæ tuæ ; nec fallar in eis, nec fallem ex eis.

Augustini Confess. xi. 2.

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P R E F A C E.



THESE Lectures being designed for Students, who have neither leisure nor opportunity to consult many Commentaries, the Author has selected from some of them, and from other works, such observations as he conceives will facilitate their understanding the Diatessaron, that is, a continuous narrative of our Saviour's life in the words of the four Evangelists. He has not scrupled to adopt the remarks of others, and, when it suited his purpose, their expressions; but he feels it to be his duty to make this acknowledgment of his obligations. Scott's Commentary, which also embodies much of what is valuable in Hammond, Whitby, and other standard expositors, and Mac-knight's Harmony, may be regarded as the basis of this work; and the Compiler is greatly indebted to Dr. Hales's New Analysis of Chronology, and to Blomfield's Critical Digest, from which he has derived much information which he might not otherwise have obtained. Other works, both ancient and modern,

have been examined, but they are generally expressly cited. The remarks, it will be observed, are more frequently explanatory than devotional; but the Compiler trusts, that he shall not therefore be supposed to undervalue the latter; for he firmly believes, that the holy Scriptures were not written, like the compositions of uninspired men, to gratify curiosity by the communication of knowledge, but to make the reader “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus;” and he is persuaded, that they have been justly characterised by the Apostle, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) as “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Still he has considered, that the text must be accurately understood before it can be judiciously applied; and he has introduced no moral and spiritual improvements of it which would have enlarged the volume, without increasing in proportion its value, since he does not aspire to equal in excellence, or usefulness, those contained in the many edifying works in which our language happily abounds. He would refer the Student, who seeks through their assistance to be “built up in our most holy faith,” (Jude 20.) to works which have been long familiar to the devout believer, and which will not disappoint him; to Bishop Hall’s

Contemplations, Matthew Henry's Bible, and Doddridge's Family Expositor ; and he would add, that a valuable accession has been made lately to this department of Christian literature, by the present Bishop of Chester, in his Exposition of the Gospels, and by the Rev. Charles Girdlestone, in his Commentary on the New Testament, which are intended, and particularly adapted, for family worship.

Oxford, July 27, 1835.



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INTRODUCTORY DISSERTATION.

SECTION I.

On the number, origin, authors, and qualities, of the Gospels.

ST. PAUL, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, contrasting the Christian with the Mosaic dispensation, calls it *Kainé Diatheké*, *New Covenant*; and the term has been transferred in time from the Covenant itself, to the writings in which it is contained. The period when it was first so applied is unknown; but we know of no author who uses it earlier than Origen, who wrote in the beginning of the third century. The Latin translator, understanding *Diatheké* as used by the Classics, and not in the sense invariably assigned to it in the Septuagint as representing the Hebrew *Berith*, *covenant*, rendered it *Testamentum*^a; and in consequence, in the modern European languages, the volume of the Christian Scriptures is entitled the *New Testament*. Use has long reconciled us to the title, but it is to be regretted that it was adopted, as it introduces a new idea which obscures the subject; for a testament, or will, is inapplicable to the Mosaic covenant, in which no contracting party died; and though with respect to the Christian covenant, the meri-

^a If it should be asked, says Campbell, why *Testamentum* was chosen in preference to *fœdus*, the answer is, that in the popular though not in the classical Latin the former word bore the meaning of covenant. Thus in the old Italic it is used of the covenant made with Noah; *Hoc est signum testamenti æterni inter me et inter terram*. Gen. ix. 17. And St. Jerome in his correction of that version, though he sometimes for precision substitutes *pactum*, often retains it, and even in his own translation of the New, from which the Western Church has derived it. Campbell, vol. i. p. 214.

torious death of our Saviour may seem to justify the term, it is incorrect, and draws off the mind to a doctrine, which no doubt is edifying, but is not that on which he designed to fix our thoughts when, instituting the Eucharist, he said, “ This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” The word *new* shows that he designed to contrast, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has done more at length, the blood of goats and of calves with his own, by which he obtained eternal redemption ^b.

The volume consists of twenty-seven independent works, by eight authors, arranged in three parts. 1. The history of our Lord and Saviour, and of the rise and early progress of his Church. 2. The Epistles of five of his Apostles, to different branches of that Church, to individuals, and to believers in general: and, 3. a prophecy revealed to his beloved and last surviving Apostle, which, though none have hitherto succeeded in interpreting it, affords even to the most ignorant of his followers the assurance of the continuance and final triumph of his religion. Our present enquiry is limited to the first four books, to which the significant title of *Gospel* has been long restricted.

The Apostle to the Romans, says Theodoret, calls his preaching *Εὐαγγέλιον*, *Evangelium*, that is, a good message, because it announces the reconciliation of God to man, the overthrow of Satan, the remission of sins, the abolition of death, the resurrection of the dead, eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven; and the term is applied with peculiar propriety to the happiest intelligence that ever reached, or can reach, the fallen posterity of Adam. The term which we,

^b Throughout the whole of the eighth chapter, and the first half of the ninth, of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *Diatheké* is rendered by *Covenant*; but throughout the second half of the ninth chapter, the same word is rendered by *Testament*, in our authorized version, which in the tenth returns to *Covenant*: thus it has, ix. 15. mediator of the new testament; and, xii. 24. mediator of the new covenant. This variation, says Faber, is wholly unwarranted by the original; and I conclude, unhesitatingly, with Whitby, Doddridge, &c. that the Apostle must needs have employed *Diatheké* in one and the same sense throughout the entire passage. *Treatise on the Three Dispensations*, vol. ii. p. 331.

borrowing from the speech of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, render *Gospel*, was transferred by ecclesiastical writers from the good news itself, to those portions of the sacred volume which more especially contained it, that is, to the narratives of the ministry, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, who was not merely, like his Apostles, the messenger, but was the author of all these blessings; and the writers received the title of Evangelist, which originally meant the preachers of the Gospel. The secondary sense does not occur in the Scriptures, and modern critics are agreed that there is no reason to suppose, that when St. Paul mentions the brother whose praise is in the Gospel, 2 Cor. viii. 18. he refers, as was formerly supposed^c, to the written Gospel of Luke.

The number of these narratives are four; and they have been uniformly attributed, by the uninterrupted tradition of the Church, to Matthew and John, Apostles, and to Mark and Luke, the companions of the Apostles Peter and Paul. These four, and these alone, we learn from Eusebius, have been universally acknowledged; but many other have formerly existed, some of which were published before that of Luke, the imperfection or defects of which appear to have induced him to compose his own. He does not seem to condemn them as heretical, but writes in order to supersede them by a more correct statement. Origen considers the word he uses, many have *attempted*, as implying a tacit censure of these uninspired authors; for, he says, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not attempt to write, but, being full of the Holy Ghost, they wrote Gospels. The neglect and the loss of such compositions was the natural, and probably one of the intended, consequences of the writing of him, and the other received Evangelists; for though some learned men have supposed that he had in view that called the Gospel of the Egyptians, it appears from Lardner, that there is no evidence

^c In this, and several other passages, translators, by retaining what has become a technical term, mislead the reader; and, good news of peace, Eph. vi. 15. of salvation, i. 13. and of the grace of God, Acts xx. 24. is much more perspicuous than Gospel.

for the existence of any apocryphal or spurious books of the New Testament in the first century, since none are quoted by the Apostolical Fathers. The wish to support erroneous opinions, or to gratify an idle and unprofitable curiosity, desirous of knowing more of our Lord's private life than it has pleased the Holy Spirit to reveal, easily accounts for the subsequent composition of several gospels, of some of which considerable fragments are extant. As these passed under the name of Apostles or their associates, modern infidels have insidiously availed themselves of them, for the purpose of undermining the credit of the genuine ones; and a suspicion may accordingly be excited in the minds of those who know them only by name, that their rejection, and the admission of the four into the Canon of Scripture, was an arbitrary choice. A very cursory inspection of them, however, will satisfy any candid person of the futility of their pretensions; for they abound in frivolous and absurd details, and useless and improbable miracles; they advocate corruptions of doctrine, which originated long after the Apostolic age, as the sanctity of relics, and an extravagant and unjustifiable reverence for the Virgin Mary; they contain studied imitations of passages in the genuine Scriptures; their statements are at variance with the known character and principles of the inspired authors^d; and they sometimes mention events later than the time of the reputed writers, and contradict authentic history. External evidence is no less unfavourable to them, for they were never admitted into the Canon; and so satisfied are our earliest writers of the invalidity of their pretensions, and of the authenticity of those which we receive, that they have argued from several fanciful analogies, as of the elements and

^d Thus in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, St. Paul is made to utter a deliberate lie. The few apocryphal pieces which are still extant have been published, together with notices of the lost pieces, by Fabricius, in his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*. The greater part of which has been translated by Jones, in his "New and full Method of settling the canonical Authority of the New Testament," who gives an alphabetical catalogue of them, with references to the Fathers by whom they were first mentioned.

of the points of the wind, that there could not be more than four; and of these, Irenæus's comparison of the Evangelists to the four mystical animals described in Ezekiel's vision is the most remarkable, because it has occasioned the application to them of their well-known symbols, the man, the lion, the bull, and the eagle. No one in the present age will allow any weight to such arguments; but they are valuable as evidence to the *fact* of the whole Church under heaven having received only four Gospels without dispute, as we are assured by Origen, and even by the still more important testimony of Irenæus, which, coming from one who derived his information from Polycarp the disciple of St. John, is decisive. We may then dismiss the consideration of these apocryphal gospels, with the remark, that they undesignedly serve the cause of Christianity; for not only do their puerilities and absurdities, as contrasted with the contents of the four, satisfy us of the inspiration of the latter, which would have resembled them in their defects, if like them forgeries, but they also confirm the truth of the authentic Scriptures, being written in the name of the Apostles and their associates, and all assume the divinity of our Lord, and both his own power of working miracles, and of conferring that power on others. Their accounts do not contradict the canonical Gospels, they only consist of unauthorized additions. The same principal facts are assumed, the principal agents are the same, a proof that these points were too firmly established to be denied or altered.

There is also a general consent of antiquity to the order in which the Gospels were written; and their present arrangement, which occurs in most of the Latin MSS., and in all the Greek but one—that of Cambridge, which, being a Greek and Latin one, is hardly an exception—seems to be designed as chronological, since, in any other, we may presume that precedence would be given to the beloved disciple over Mark and Luke, and we know that his is the last in point of time. Luke's preface has been cited to shew that his was the first canonical Gospel; but it proves no more at most, than that those of Matthew and Mark were not known to him; and some argue

that it was not expedient for him to mention theirs, while speaking of defective ones. The supplemental character of St. John's is universally allowed, yet he does not name those of his predecessors, though he had evidently read them; consequently no argument can be urged against Luke's knowledge of the other two from his silence. Griesbach is thought by some critics to have proved from internal evidence, that, contrary to the general notion, Luke wrote before Mark; but the only ancient authority he can bring to support it is Clement of Alexandria. Such reasoning is very fallacious, for Mills maintains the opposite opinion, which Townson and Greswell have substantiated by the examination of their respective texts to the satisfaction of others. The relative dates of those of the two Apostles are generally allowed, and Hug seems to me to prove the priority of Mark to Luke; for the Gospel of the latter, he says, is distinguished by a number of events untouched by Matthew, in only two of which does Mark coincide. Now supposing Luke to have written before him, it seems incredible that he should take his incidents almost exclusively from Matthew.

The order then in which the Evangelists wrote may be regarded as settled, but the dates and places of their publication have always been subjects of discussion, and we have not now the means of deciding the question; the first three, however, were, we may venture to determine, composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fourth after that event, A.D. 70. We may easily believe with Eusebius, that while the Apostles were preaching in Judæa to those who were acquainted with the leading facts of the Gospel history, they would not think of committing them to writing; but when they were about to disperse, it was natural for them to draw up an account as a substitute for their oral instruction; and it is not an improbable conjecture, that St. Matthew undertook the office with the approbation of the rest. Some fix as early a period as eight years after the Ascension for his Gospel, while others date it as late as thirty years, about the same time as is generally assigned to those of Mark and Luke.

After a full consideration of what has been written by Lardner, Jones, and others, I am disposed to think, that we may assume as established, as well as the nature of the case admits, that St. Matthew wrote early in Judæa, and probably before the dispersion of the Apostles, for the use of the original converts; that St. Mark's Gospel was revised, or even dictated, by St. Peter, for a mixed society of Jewish and Gentile converts in Italy; that Luke published his in Achaia, with a peculiar view to the establishment in the faith of Gentile converts, and especially of one of high rank; and that long after, St. John, who was probably the last surviving Apostle, and the only person who could then do it with authority, at the request of the Bishops of the lesser Asia, wrote his, both to supply their omissions, and to counteract the Gnostic heresy concerning the nature of the Saviour, which was then spreading. It is allowed by all, that he had read the three others, and designed his own as a supplement, saying that there was only wanting an account of what was done by Christ in the early part of his ministry. He observed, says Clement of Alexandria, that those things which concern the humanity of Christ had been related by them, and being persuaded by his friends, and also moved by the Spirit of God, he wrote a spiritual Gospel. In the judgment of this inspired author, a sufficient account had been recorded of what Jesus had taught and done and suffered, to satisfy the reader that he was the Messiah; and this judgment is the best answer to the question, why the Church receives neither more nor fewer Gospels than four. He is at the same time careful to remark, that what we read even of his miracles is only a very small sample; but it was important to keep the narratives within moderate dimensions, and we cannot doubt that the overruling Spirit of God influenced all the Evangelists to select such facts and discourses as were best adapted for the conviction and edification of believers of those and subsequent ages. It may appear extraordinary, that instead of one complete account of our Lord's ministry, we are left to collect it for ourselves out of four; but as he, while on earth, revealed the scheme of

salvation by degrees, so there was no doubt a fitness in the progressive development of it in writing; and the study it requires to compare the particulars in which they agree or differ has a tendency to impress them more strongly on the memory. How then, asks Chrysostom, was not one Evangelist sufficient? Certainly one might have sufficed; but as there are four such authors, who did not write at one and the same time, nor in the same place, who did not act in concert, and nevertheless speak as it were out of one mouth, hence arises a stronger proof of their credibility. But it is replied, many passages convict them of dissimilarity. But this is a greater proof of their credibility; for if they agreed minutely in all things, their opponents would never have believed that they had not written by agreement; but now the apparent contradiction in minor matters frees them from such a suspicion. If their narratives had no variations, they would have been equivalent to no more than one; but now our belief is confirmed in facts, which rest upon the testimony of four independent witnesses; for though we should allow with the German critics, that the first three had access to some common documents, which form the basis of their works, or that each succeeding Evangelist derived much matter from those preceding him; still even in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, which most closely resemble each other, there is a sufficient variation in the addition or omission of particulars, to show that none was a servile copyist, who did not exercise his own judgment.

It is satisfactory to observe, in how great a degree the Gospels authenticate themselves. Taking from ancient and credible authors the fact, that they were written by the Evangelists, we shall find them answer so completely to the idea of what we might respectively expect from them, that we cannot doubt that we have them as they were originally published. In St. Matthew's we find marks that he wrote in Judæa and for Jews, and in the others that they wrote in countries in which the Jews and their customs were but imperfectly known. Three bear tokens of being written or

approved by Apostles; but in that of Luke we distinguish the character of one, who, though fully acquainted with his subject, was not an eye-witness, or an Apostle; for he treats their failings with more tenderness than they themselves do, and calls them by this name of pre-eminence, which they themselves do not assume; and when he makes mention of Christ as from himself, he substitutes the title of Lord, which Matthew never uses, John seldom, and Mark only once.

The thinking reader cannot fail to be struck with the great resemblance between the first three Gospels. He finds, with few exceptions, that, with some variation of minute particulars, they generally record the same events, and report the same speeches; and when he reads them in the original language, he finds a more striking verbal resemblance than any version can exhibit. It is still, I believe, the common opinion, and has been supported by divines of eminence, that three writers, recording in the same language the same events, might fall repeatedly into the same expressions, without any knowledge of each other's work. Lardner maintains it; and even after the Bishop of Peterborough's elaborate investigation of this phænomenon, and most ingenious attempt to explain it, Bishop Randolph observes, that, "with respect to our Lord's discourses, it should be recollected, that the sacred historians are anxious to report with accuracy, and in such a case even ordinary historians would endeavour to preserve the same words. In seeking to do this, it is not to be wondered at, that two or three writers should often fall upon verbal agreement; nor, on the contrary, if they write independently, that they should often miss of it; because their memory would sometimes fail them. It is natural to suppose the Evangelists studious of this very circumstance; and we have also reason to think, that they had assistance from above; and yet it is not necessary to suppose, that either their natural faculty, or the extraordinary assistance vouchsafed them, or both, should have brought them to a perfect identity throughout; because it was not necessary for the purposes of Providence, and because it would have affected their character of original

independent witnesses. Let me add, that these discourses, before they were committed to writing, must have been often repeated amongst the Apostles in teaching others, and in calling them to remembrance among themselves. Matthew had probably often heard and known how his fellow-labourers recollected the same discourses which he had selected for his own preaching and writing; and we know not how much intercourse they had with each other, but probably much before they finally dispersed themselves. Mark and Luke, though not eye-witnesses, would have in a degree the same opportunities. I admit then of a common document, but that document was no other than the preaching of our blessed Lord himself. In looking up to him, the Author of their faith and mission, and to the very words in which he was wont to dictate to them, (which not only yet sounded in their ears, but were also recalled by the aid of his Holy Spirit, promised for that very purpose,) they have given us three Gospels, often agreeing in words, (though not without much diversification,) and always in sense." The Bishop has forgotten, that though our Saviour's discourses are *recorded* in Greek, they were *spoken* in another language, and that this greatly weakens his argument. But without dwelling upon this oversight, I am convinced, that no one will think his hypothesis tenable, who will make the experiment suggested by Bishop Marsh, of translating a page from any language, and of comparing his own version with those of others. The differences he will find will satisfy him, that three texts so closely allied, could not have been formed independently of each other; and the difficulty would be still greater in an original composition. The argument is strengthened, if we find these three authors not only making choice of the same common words, but employing such as are unusual, and which do not occur in other parts of their own writings. Two and sometimes three use the same expressions for several verses together, they then differ, and again return to the same.

Now there appears to be only two modes of explaining this coincidence of words and phrases. One, that the

Evangelists copied from one another, appears to have been first suggested by Augustine; and has been advocated by Grotius, Mills, Wetstein, Townson, Hug, and Greswell. Others, however, think, that the discrepancies and seeming contradictions are unfavourable to this conjecture, and prefer a more recent one, which appears to them to solve all difficulties, namely, that all three being unacquainted with the words of one another, compiled their Gospels from some earlier notes, which had been taken of the acts and discourses of our Lord. This idea first occurred to Leclerk; but lay dormant upwards of sixty years, when it was revived by the German critics, but excited little attention in this country, till the publication of the Bishop of Peterborough's dissertation on the origin of the first three Gospels, appended to his translation of Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament. Eichhorn, by a very ingenious analysis, has investigated the contents of the original Hebrew document, which he conceives was used by all the three Evangelists, and that both as it existed in its primitive state, and with the various additions made to it in the copies which he supposes respectively used by them. I transcribe the titles of his forty-two sections, containing the facts common to all: John the Baptist;—baptism of Christ;—temptation;—his return to Galilee, and arrival at Capernaum;—cure of Peter's mother-in-law,—of a leper,—and of a paralytic man;—Matthew's call;—Christ goes through the corn-fields;—cure of a man with a withered hand;—preparation for the sermon on the mount;—confutation of the opinion of Beelzebub's assisting him;—arrival of Christ's mother and brethren;—parable of the sower;—Christ crosses the lake, and a storm;—transactions in the country of the Gadarenes;—restoration of Jairus's daughter;—twelve apostles sent out;—fame of Christ reaches Herod;—five thousand fed;—Jesus acknowledged by the Apostles as the Messiah;—transfiguration;—cures the demoniac whom his disciples could not;—foretels his own death;—dispute of the Apostles about precedence;—blesses children;—again foretels his death;—blind men at Jericho

restored to sight;—Christ's public entry into Jerusalem;—expels the sellers from the temple,—discourse arising out of this, and a parable;—on tribute, and marriage with a brother's widow;—question of David's meaning in calling the Messiah, his Lord;—the Pharisees censured;—the destruction of Jerusalem foretold;—prelude to the Passion;—bribery of Judas, and celebration of the passover;—Christ goes to the mount of Olives;—seized by the chief priests' guards;—Peter's denial;—Christ's crucifixion and death,—and resurrection. Throughout these sections, Mark and Luke have precisely the same order; but Matthew, though he agrees in this order from the nineteenth section to the end, that is, from the feeding the five thousand, differs in the former part. This document (as will appear to any one who will pick it out of any one of the three, by omitting the additional and peculiar matter) contains a short but well-connected representation of leading transactions; they are such as might be expected in a first sketch of our Saviour's ministry; and it is very remarkable that Lardner observed, in his history of the Evangelists, that if all the sections common to the three were separated from the other matter in their Gospels, they would contain a history of Christ: he then enumerates the principal materials, and concludes with saying, "Here are all the integrals of a Gospel;" though the thought that these integrals *might have* existed by themselves in a separate work did not occur to him. I should add, that where the three Evangelists relate the same fact, they are not all equally diffuse, nor are they always even consistent in the concomitant circumstances. This scheme has been modified and improved by Bishop Marsh with great ingenuity and ability, but it is so complicated, that it would hardly be understood by a simple statement of it; as he supposes in Hebrew and Greek no less than *ten* separate documents or modifications of them. His hypothesis has been controverted by the late Bishops Randolph, Middleton, and Gleig; and it may be observed in general, that granting him that no particular step in the process may be in itself improbable, yet

the discovery, without any historical authority, from an analysis of their contents alone, of *ten* different sources to certain works, is in the highest degree improbable, and the total silence of ecclesiastical antiquity is a strong presumption against the existence of this assumed document. Mr. Veysie proposes, what he conceives an improvement of this hypothesis; that is, he would explain the verbal similarities, not by one, but by a plurality of common documents; but this scheme, if less complicated, is open to the same principal objections. I prefer, therefore, the other scheme, the difficulties of which appear to me to be magnified by those who advocate the German hypothesis; but for their removal, I must refer to Townson, Greswell, and Hug, the force of whose remarks would suffer from any attempt to abridge them. Lardner rejects this explanation, because he thinks, as indeed will most who have not given the subject full consideration, that the Evangelists transcribing from one another, without giving any hint of their so doing, diminishes the value of their testimony; but the real question is, what solution can be offered of a difficulty that must be allowed to exist; and unless a third be offered, we seem only to have to choose between these two. Our unwillingness to admit certain consequences, can never justify our rejection of any opinion, against which we have nothing of more weight to urge; it may even happen, that, upon more mature consideration, this very unwillingness may appear unreasonable, and I think it has been shewn to be so in this instance, by Greswell and Townson. I observe with the former, that St. John's having seen the Gospels of his predecessors, has never been objected to his credibility in those passages in which he goes along with them; and I would enquire of those who feel any alarm on that score, whether, if they knew that St. Mark had repeatedly heard and conversed with St. Matthew, they would think him on that account less competent to write a Gospel. Surely they would answer, that he would be more so. I would enquire again, what difference there could be between hearing and conversing with him, and reading his

work. It is also not easy to conceive, unless they were published about the same time, how the Evangelists could be ignorant of the works of one another, which would soon be generally read by Christians every where. It is also to be considered, that they are not mere transcribers; there are verbal differences as well as a verbal agreement; and also, while facts are substantially the same, some new beauty, force, or propriety are introduced by some additional circumstance, that shews that each has other sources of information.

This hypothesis, instead of supposed compilations by unknown disciples, of whose character we know nothing, offers us, in fact, in the Gospel of Matthew, an inspired work, a document which was made use of by Mark and Luke; and whoever will study with this view any harmony, must, I think, satisfy himself, that as Mark improved Matthew's narrative, so did Luke that of Mark. Neither, however, wished to supersede the work of their predecessors, and therefore, instead of altering, left Gospels of their own, thus at the same time authenticating what was already received, and imparting additional information. Suppose, for instance, Peter, desirous of leaving his testimony with the Church to the authenticity of Matthew's Gospel. He might have mentioned it with respect, and classed it with the Scriptures, as he does St. Paul's Epistles; but if a question should arise, not whether Matthew had composed a true Gospel, but which was his Gospel, such testimony could no more decide it, than the former would the authenticity of the Epistle to the Hebrews. If then a Gospel was afterwards to appear under the title of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which might be mistaken, and afterwards was mistaken by some, for that of Matthew, how could Peter deposit with the Church a better touchstone, by which to detect its falsity, than by incorporating so much of the genuine one into his own? Again, if Luke transcribed several passages from both Matthew and Mark, we have the attestation to both, not only of himself, but of St. Paul. If we rightly esteem a few

sentences of Matthew's Gospel found in the Apostolical Fathers an argument for its authenticity, the many passages of it transferred into the two other Gospels, which are not only earlier, but inspired compositions, carry with them much higher authority, and their own credit is not diminished in consequence; because by enlarging on his account, as they frequently do in relating the same thing, they shew that they might have written their Gospels, if they had thought fit, without reading his. This supposition has the advantage over that of a common document, that it will likewise explain what that altogether overlooks, the supplemental arrangement of facts. This arrangement has been thoroughly examined by Greswell; and he observes, that it would be a moral impossibility that Mark, compiling an independent Gospel from any document, though the same might have been used by Matthew, should be found in the choice and collocation of his facts to be thus entirely accommodated to him, or that Luke, doing the same, should be thus critically accommodated to either; the use of common materials could account for no instance of agreement of matter which was not absolute.

I will now consider each Gospel separately, and preface my remarks with a celebrated passage of Irenæus, iii. 1. the earliest in which the four are mentioned together. "Now Matthew among the Hebrews published a written Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching, and founding the Church at Rome. After their departure, (meaning probably out of life,) Mark himself, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also delivered to us in writing what had been preached by Peter; and Luke, the follower of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leant upon his breast, himself also residing at Ephesus, set forth a Gospel." The date, however, of none can be ascertained. There is the greatest difference of opinion concerning the first, which is placed by some as early as A. D. 37, and by others as late as A. D. 64. The Evangelist's remarks, that Aceldama is so called unto this day, and that the Jews then believed the

report spread by the guard concerning the Saviour's body, suit better the supposition of a later date, as well as this passage of Irenæus, unless we adopt what appears to me to be the erroneous translation of Townson, who thinks with Wall, that Irenæus is speaking in a general way, not minding any chronological matter.

The language in which Matthew wrote has been no less a subject of discussion. The ancients unanimously declare that it was Hebrew, and Erasmus is the first who argued against their testimony. He has been followed principally by Protestant critics, and Campbell supposes their judgment to have been biassed by party feelings. The Council of Trent having decided in favour of the Vulgate, the then received translation of the Scriptures, the Protestants, who appealed to the original text as the standard, were aware, that the Romanists would retort, that in the instance of Matthew's Gospel, they must depart from their own principles; and he concludes, that to silence this objection, they maintained that this Evangelist wrote in Greek. Modern critics reconcile the two opinions by the supposition, that Matthew wrote his Gospel in both languages, the consent of antiquity pleading strongly for a Hebrew original, and the internal evidence for the Greek. This determination of the discussion is not unreasonable. Josephus, we know, wrote his history first in Hebrew, and then in Greek. Eusebius informs us, that Matthew, when about to leave his country, wrote a Gospel in Hebrew; and we can easily conceive that he was willing to translate it at a subsequent period, for the benefit of Gentile converts. The disappearance of the Hebrew text is explained, by its being so interpolated and corrupted by the Ebionites, as to lose its authority, and also by the increasing disuse of the language after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Matthew was a Galilean, a publican, that is a tax-gatherer, who collected the customs upon the imports and exports at Capernaum. While employed in his profession, Jesus invites him to become his disciple. Mark and Luke, in the parallel passages, call him Levi; Matthew, therefore, was

probably a name which he assumed according to a practice common, it should seem, in his age, with Jews, who had much intercourse with Gentiles. Thus we find John, Barnabas's relation, called Mark, and Saul called Paul. Of Matthew's subsequent history we are ignorant; Socrates, an historian of the fifth century, relates, that he preached the Gospel and suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia; but from an earlier account he appears to have died a natural death, but when or where is unknown. When he has occasion to speak of himself, it is with humility. He leaves to the other Evangelists to record the feast he made for our Lord, and that he left all to follow him; and when he enumerates the twelve Apostles, whose preeminence to the other disciples he suppresses, he places himself after Thomas, contrary to the order in Mark and Luke. As one of that chosen band of confidential followers, he needed no prototype, either in Hebrew or Greek, but was an original author, and none could be better qualified; for after his call, he constantly attended upon his Master, and was an eye-witness of every fact which he records, except two, which, as he himself tells us, he gives on the authority of the more favoured three.

We have the strongest internal evidence of what the ancients assert, that his Gospel was composed by a Jew, for the use of his countrymen; for every circumstance that has a tendency to conciliate them is pointed out, and none is introduced that would obstruct its reception by them. He begins, therefore, with a genealogy; and those passages in the prophets which foretel the birth of the Messiah, or describe his actions, are carefully noticed, because the fulfilment of prophecy was the most convincing argument that could be addressed to the Jews. As his object was not a circumstantial biography, he writes not in the order of events, but of things, and his Gospel resembles in this respect the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon.

Matthew is distinguished for the clearness with which he narrates parables and moral discourses. Of these, the sermon on the mount, and his illustrations of the nature of the

kingdom of heaven, are examples. The matter peculiar to him is, his history of our Saviour's infancy; John's reluctance to baptize him; the observation, that Galilee was to be the chief theatre of his miracles, in fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction; his first circuit of Galilee; the sermon on the mount; the miracles of the two blind and one dumb man; Peter's walking on the lake; the miraculous payment of the tribute money; the parable of the labourers in the vineyard; and of the two sons; the account of Judas's death; Pilate's washing his hands; his wife's dream; the dead rising out of their graves after the resurrection; and the history of the guard at the tomb.

We read in the New Testament, that Mark was the son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem, at whose house the Apostles often assembled, (Acts xii. 12.) and that she was sister to Barnabas, (Col. iv. 10.) His Hebrew name was John, and he probably assumed that of Mark, when he left Judæa as a missionary. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas upon their first mission to the Gentiles, but left them abruptly in Pamphylia, and returned home. He afterwards went to Cyprus with Barnabas, (Acts xv. 37.) and subsequently came with Timothy to Rome, (2 Epist. iv. 11.) at the express desire of St. Paul, whence he sent his salutation to Philemon, (ver. 24.) and to the church at Colosse, (iv. 10.) From Rome he probably went into Asia, where he found St. Peter, and returned with him to Rome; he is said to have afterwards founded the church at Alexandria, and to have died there in the eighth year of the reign of Nero. We also read of a Mark, whom Peter calls his son, (1 Epist. v. 13.) probably because his convert, and he is generally supposed to be the same. Epiphanius, without referring to earlier writers, calls him, one of the Seventy. In his account of our Lord's apprehension in the garden he introduces the fact, which does not seem to have any connection with it, of a young man who followed him, when his disciples had forsaken him, but who afterwards fled, leaving his linen garment in the hands of the soldiers who attempted to seize him. Townson conjectures,

that this was the Evangelist himself. It best explains the introduction of the incident, and if it could be verified, would make him, in part at least, an original witness: but this is not material, since his Gospel may be considered as that of Peter.

Papias, our earliest authority, A. D. 110, informs us, that Mark, being Peter's interpreter, wrote whatever he remembered, but not in the order of time; because he was not himself a follower of our Lord. The reason does not seem to be a valid one, and the fact is by most not reckoned true. Jerome tells us, that, being requested by the brethren at Rome, he wrote a short Gospel, according to what he had heard Peter relate, who approved it, and delivered it to be read in the Church; but this is inconsistent with the passage of Irenæus cited already, if we take the exodus or departure of Peter to mean his death, as it does in his own second Epistle. Chrysostom speaks of its being written in Egypt, but the general consent of antiquity, even of the Egyptian writers, decides in favour of Rome; and it may be remarked in corroboration, that mentioning Simon the Cyrenian, (xv. 21.) he adds, that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, a fact, which would be interesting only where they were known; and we learn from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, (xv. 1.) that they were members of the church there. Internal evidence confirms the tradition, that Mark wrote under the direction of St. Peter; for scarcely any action or conversation is mentioned by him, at which Peter was not present; the weaknesses and fall of that apostle are brought into full view, while whatever redounds to his honour is slightly touched, or wholly omitted; less is said of his speedy repentance and bitter tears, than by Matthew and Luke; the benedictions and promises made to him are left out; and it hath an introduction of only fifteen verses before it comes to his call.

From the Hebraisms of his style, which is the least classical of any of the inspired authors, we conclude that he was a Jew, and from his Latinisms, that he lived among the Romans. Cardinal Baronius maintains that he wrote in Latin, and that

the Greek is a translation; but this opinion derives no support from history; and those who advocate it forget that the Roman Christians were principally Jews, and consequently more conversant with Greek than Latin, and that the former was generally understood by most persons of Gentile extraction, who had had any education. If St. Paul addressed a letter to them in the former language, it was not necessary that Mark should write a Gospel for their use in the latter. The Gospel itself shows that it was written out of Judæa, and for the use of Gentiles; for terms intelligible only to Jews it either avoids or explains; thus instead of *Mammon*, he uses the common word "riches," *χρήματα*; to *Jordan*, he adds "river;" and to *defiled*, or *common hands*, "unwashen," (vii. 2.) To *Corban*, (vii. 11.) he subjoins the interpretation, "that is, a gift." *Gehenna*, which we translate "hell," is literally *the valley of Hinnom*, where infants had been burnt to death in honour of Moloch, and where afterwards a perpetual fire was kept up to consume the filth of Jerusalem. As this application of the term would not have been understood by a foreigner, he adds to it, "unquenchable fire."

From the striking coincidence of Mark's Gospel with that of Matthew, Augustine asserted that he was his epitomizer; but this hypothesis, contradictory, as we have seen, to the most ancient testimony, though supported by some eminent moderns, is untenable; for Mark deviates from Matthew no less than thirteen times in his arrangement of facts, and has twenty-three additions: he has likewise omissions which it would be difficult to account for on this theory. A mere abridger would also have avoided every appearance of contradiction; but Mark calls Matthew, Levi; speaks (x. 46.) of one blind man, where the other mentions two; and makes Peter twice interrogated by the same maid, (xiv. 69.) instead of once by two, (Matt. xxvi. 71.) According to Matthew, Christ crossed the lake the day after the sermon on the mount, but according to Mark, he then retired to a desert, (Matt. viii. 28—35. Mark i. 35.) His Gospel is, in fact, a critical revision of Matthew's. He adds many circumstances

from the personal knowledge of Peter, and abridges where his predecessor had been sufficiently diffuse. He has also much matter in common with Luke, and his order of events is generally the same, though his verbal resemblance to Matthew is greater. What is exclusively his own is comprised in twenty-four verses; but a minute examination will shew, that he has added particulars to the narratives of both. Thus he alone mentions, that during the temptation Christ was with wild beasts; the surname given to the sons of Zebedee; our Lord's anger and grief at the obduracy of the Jews; and the declaration of his unbelieving friends, He is beside himself.

Simplicity and conciseness are his characteristics; he relates facts more circumstantially than Matthew, and abridges discourses. The only parable peculiar to him is that of the imperceptible growth of corn; and he has two miracles, recorded by no other Evangelist, of a deaf and dumb man, (vii. 32.) and of a blind one, (viii. 22.) cured, not instantaneously, but gradually, and by the use of means, though these were in themselves inadequate to the effect produced. His own concluding words show, that he did not write till after the Apostles had dispersed themselves among the Gentiles, and we may probably date it between A. D. 60 and 63.

There is no authority earlier than the fourteenth century for the report, that Luke was a painter: Paul calls him the "beloved physician;" and suitably to his profession, when he has occasion to speak of diseases, his language is more appropriate than that of the other Evangelists. Thus instead of *παραλυτικὸς* employed by Matthew and Mark, but unknown to the ancient Greek writers, he uses the classical term *παραλελύμενος*; and for the *δισώθησαν* of the first and the *ἑσώζοντο* of the second, he has *ἰᾶτο*.^a Eusebius writes, that he was a native of Antioch. We know, from himself, that he was not an eye-witness of our Saviour's actions, and he seems to have been descended from Gentile parents, a proselyte to Judaism, and afterwards to Christianity. This conjecture, for it is no

^a Freind's History of Physic, vol. i. p. 224.

more, is founded upon Acts xxi. 27. where it is said, that the Asiatic Jews stirred up the people, because Paul had introduced Gentiles, as they supposed, into the temple; and Trophimus is mentioned, but not Luke, though (xxi. 15, 17.) then with the Apostle. Hence we infer that he was reckoned among the Jews, which if then a proselyte he would be; and in the Epistle to the Colossians, (iv. 11, 14.) he is evidently classed with those of Gentile descent; for the Apostle, after sending the salutation of those of the circumcision, names Demas and Luke. The first time he appears is in the Acts (xvi. 11.) at Troas, A. D. 54, where he joins Paul, at least he then begins in his narrative to use the first person plural. He accompanied him to Philippi, and we conclude from the change of person, that he remained there when Paul proceeded to Thessalonica, (xvii.) He joins him once more at Troas, A. D. 61, supposed by some on that account to have been his home, and leaves him no more till the conclusion of his narrative. Of the rest of his history we know nothing, except that he was faithful to the end; for Paul, in his second Epistle to Timothy, writes, "only Luke is with me." Some conclude, from the abrupt termination of the Acts, that Paul had not then been liberated; and as Luke's Gospel is avowedly the first part of the same work, and is dedicated to the same Theophilus, they maintain that it was written at Rome, during the Apostle's confinement; but the time and place of writing are conjectural, and Jerome and Gregory of Nazianzen assign it to Achaia. His Gospel is said to have been written for the benefit of Gentile converts, and therefore he explains various matters relative to the Jewish worship and customs; he traces the real lineage of the Messiah up to Adam, to shew that he was the seed of the woman who was promised for the redemption of the whole world; and he marks the æra of his birth, and of the Baptist's announcing the Gospel, by the reigns of the Roman emperors; he likewise inserts examples of kindness shewn to Gentiles, and introduces events and parables to encourage them to embrace the Gospel. His knowledge of Jewish usages shews him to be a Jew in

religion, while the superiority of his style, which bears a considerable resemblance to that of his companion Paul, confirms the opinions of his Gentile descent. Many of his expressions are to be found in the best classical authors; and Campbell observes, in proof of his copiousness, that his list of peculiar words is greater than that of the other three Evangelists taken together, and that many of them are long and compound ones. He has also more of composition in his sentences, of which his first period is an eminent example. He approaches nearer the manner of profane historians, by giving his own opinion; for the other Evangelists abstain altogether from praise or censure, as he himself does likewise far more than uninspired authors. For example, on one occasion he says, that "the people were filled with madness;" he calls the Pharisees, (xvi. 14.) "lovers of money;" and Judas, in one place, *προδότης*, "traitor," while Matthew and Mark only use the neutral term, "delivered up," *παραδούς*. He supplies several interesting particulars omitted by his predecessors; as, the birth of the Baptist; a narrative of Christ's infancy; the miraculous draught of fishes; the restoration to life of the widow's son: and he has a long section peculiar to himself, (x. xviii. 14.) containing the appointment of the Seventy; the parables of the Samaritan; the rich fool; the prodigal son; the unjust steward; the rich man and Lazarus; the barren fig-tree; the importunate widow; and the Pharisee and the Publican. The conversion of Zaccheus; the cure of the woman who had been bowed down eighteen years; and of the dropsical man; the repulse Jesus met with on entering a Samaritan city; and his affecting interview with two of his disciples at Emmaus, after his resurrection, are also recorded only by Luke. He is generally considered to have made a classification of events; but he informs Theophilus, that he meant to write in order; and as he does this in the Acts, we conclude that he would be equally methodical in the first part of the same work. Matthew is Luke's guide for our Lord's speeches, but he adopts the order of Mark.

John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and had an elder brother, James, also an Apostle, whom Herod Agrippa beheaded, (Acts xii.) He is reported by Theophylact to have been a relation of our Saviour; and this tradition, if true, would render their mother's request in their behalf less extravagant, and give an additional reason for his leaving the Virgin to his care. His father, though a fisherman, appears to have been in good circumstances, being owner of a vessel, and having hired servants, (Mark i. 27.) As there is no subsequent mention of him, and Salome was one of the women in attendance upon Jesus, he probably died soon after his sons were chosen to be Apostles. We need not imagine, therefore, that they were altogether illiterate, with some critics, from a misinterpretation of (Acts iv. 13.) the terms *ἀγράμματοι* and *ἰδιῶται*, rendered in our version "unlearned" and "ignorant," but denoting no more than persons in private life, who had not been brought up in the schools, and were therefore not learned in the traditions. His circumstantial account (i. 37—41.) of the two disciples of the Baptist, who followed the Saviour to his lodging, and stayed the day with him, one of whom he tells us was Andrew, makes it probable that he himself was the other. We find him with him at the performance of his first miracle at Cana, and he was afterwards called to a regular attendance on him, at the same time as Peter and Andrew, while he was with his father mending his nets. His age at this period cannot be ascertained, but it is generally supposed that he was the youngest of the twelve. He was so eminently the object of our Lord's regard and confidence, that he characterises himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," (xiii. 23.) Hence we find him at scenes to which only his brother and Peter were admitted; at the resurrection of Jairus's daughter; at his Master's only earthly glorification, on the mount; and at his deepest humiliation, the agony in the garden. Though like the rest he "forsook him and fled," he is thought to have been the disciple known to the high-priest, (xviii. 15.) who followed him to the palace: and it is certain that he stood near his dying

Lord, when he consigned his mother to his care. After the day of Pentecost, he and Peter seem to take the lead as Apostles, and we have St. Paul's testimony, that fourteen years (Gal. ii.) after his first visit to Jerusalem, they were then both there, and looked upon as pillars of the church. When he retired from Judæa is uncertain, probably after the Virgin Mary's death, on the commencement of hostilities. His recollection of his Master's warning and prediction would induce him to depart, and he withdrew to Asia Minor, where he presided over seven cities, living chiefly at Ephesus the capital. When he settled there is unknown, but from the silence both of Luke and Paul, we conclude that it was at a period later than the visits or Epistle of the latter. John had no doubt his full share of suffering, intimated in the assurance that he should drink of the same cup as his Master; he calls himself (Rev. i. 9.) a "companion in tribulation;" and he was banished on account of his religion to the isle of Patmos, where he was comforted by a vision of his Lord, and had revealed to him in emblems the future history of the Church, at times suffering, but never overcome, and in the end triumphant. He died a natural death at Ephesus, it is said, in his hundredth year; and as his life had been so long protracted, it was rumoured among the brethren that he was not to die. Tradition states his Gospel to be his latest work, and critics observe in corroboration of it, that it is written in better Greek than the Apocalypse. "Still," says Campbell, "it is very full of Hebraisms;" but he adds, "the language is no more than the case: let not its homeliness discourage any one from examining its invaluable contents, for the treasure itself is heavenly committed to earthly vessels, that to the conviction of the soberminded the excellence of the power may appear to be not of man but of God," (2 Cor. iv. 7.) While it bears more signal marks than the other Gospels of being the work of a Jew, the whole strain of it shews that it must have been published in a time and country where Jewish manners were unknown. It was probably written in A. D. 97 or 98, more than thirty years after the latest date assigned

to any of the others. He seems to write of Peter's martyrdom, A.D. 68, as over, and omits the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, which had been then accomplished; for I attach no importance to the argument drawn from there *is*, instead of there *was*, a pool, since that might outlast the city, and probably had. His naming Peter as the disciple who cut off Malchus's ear, when no harm could ensue to him from publishing the fact, is a presumption in favour of the late date. It is obvious that he has little matter in common with the other Evangelists. The miraculous feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle he repeats, and this was done for the sake of the discourse to which it gave birth. The supper at Bethany, Christ's anointing by Mary, and his entry into Jerusalem, had been previously related; but he adds the important circumstance, that Lazarus, whose resurrection they had passed over, sat at table, and by thus publicly bearing witness to this striking miracle, contributed greatly to the glory of his triumph, and to the determination of the Pharisees to seize him, contrary to their original design, during the feast. He records neither the institution of the Lord's Supper, nor the Ascension; and as a proof that he did not mean his work to supersede the other Gospels, his would in parts be very obscure to one not acquainted with them. From several examples of this given by Michaelis it will be sufficient to observe, that he has not related a word of what our Saviour said or did before Caiaphas, nor does he mention his accusation or sentence, or even the account of the false witnesses, though (xi. 20.) he had prepared his readers to expect it. It appears then that ancient writers are correct in maintaining, that he had read them, and designed his own as a supplement. Accordingly, he chiefly treats of occurrences either preceding the commencement of them, or which happened at Jerusalem, for the other Evangelists almost wholly confine their narratives to Galilee.

It is from John that we learn, that our Saviour cleansed the temple at his first visit to Jerusalem, as well as at his last; and he supplies us with his actions previous to the Baptist's

imprisonment, as the wedding at Cana, with the cure of the man born blind, the restoration to life of Lazarus, Judas's indignation at the pouring out of the ointment, the visit of the Greeks to Jesus, his washing the Apostles' feet, his farewell discourse, and his intercessory prayer. In short, while this Gospel, published long after by the only surviving Apostle, illustrates and establishes the authority of the others, it is an independent work, and was not only designed as a supplement to supply their omissions, but to establish against heretics the proper divinity and humanity of his Lord. Irenæus informs us, that the object of John, in the publication of his Gospel, was to eradicate the errors that had been sown in men's minds by the Gnostic Cerinthus. Lampe, Lardner, and other moderns of note, not finding in it the formal confutation of those tenets which they expected, discredit this statement; yet Irenæus's nearness to the Apostle's age, and his acquaintance with his disciple Polycarp and with Gnosticism, render it incredible that he should be mistaken; and though the heresy is not combated in a manner that will hand down a knowledge of it to posterity, yet one who is instructed in its technical terms will at once perceive, that they are employed by the Evangelist for the purpose of confirming the truth. Thus he opens his Gospel with a description of the nature and office of the Logos, which, in opposition to the Gnostics, he announces not as an inferior emanation, but as the Deity himself; and Ζωή, Μονογενής, Ἀληθεία, Χάρις, life, only-begotten, truth, grace, the names of their most important æons, he applies to him, in whom dwells the whole pleroma or fullness of the Godhead bodily. He declares him to be the creator, the enlightener, and the life of the world. Having stated the rejection of this true light both by the world in general and by his own peculiar people, he declares the blessedness of those who receive him, and who become his children, not like the Jews through the rite of circumcision, nor by carnal descent, nor by man's adoption, but by the favour of God; and in the next verse, in the course of which are applied to the Logos the names of no less than three of the

æons, grace, truth, and only-begotten, he shows how he was manifested to the world, not, as the Gnostics maintained, united with a man, but made man, and pitched his tabernacle among us; and as from that raised by Moses, so from the tabernacle of his flesh, a glory shone, declaring him to be the true Monogenes, or first-born.

It is requisite for a full understanding of St. John's Gospel, and of some passages in the Epistles, to have a general notion of Gnosticism; and as I know no one who has sketched it so briefly and yet so clearly as our present learned and judicious Professor of Divinity, I abridge an account of it from his Bampton Lectures. The system originated with Simon Magus, and was completed by Valentinus, who came to Rome in the former part of the second century; and what we know of it is taken principally from the writers that opposed him. It was no new and distinct philosophy, but made up of selections from almost every system. Thus we find in it the Platonic doctrine of ideas, and the notion that every thing in this lower world has a celestial and immaterial archetype; and evident traces of that mystical and cabalistical jargon, which after their return from captivity deformed the religion of the Jews, many of whom adopted the oriental scheme of two independent coeternal principles, the one the author of good, the other of evil. Lastly, we find the Gnostic theology full of ideas and terms which must have been taken from the Gospel, and Jesus Christ, under some form or other, enters into all their systems, and is the means of freeing the souls of men from the corruption of matter, and of communicating that knowledge, *γνώσις*, which entitles those who possess it to their peculiar name of Gnostic. We have a key to many parts of their system, when we know, that they held matter to be intrinsically evil, of which consequently the Deity could not be the author. Hence arose their fundamental tenet, that the Demiurgus, or Creator of the world, was not the same with the supreme God, the Author of good, and the Father of Christ. Those who embraced the doctrine of two principles, supposed the world to have been produced

by the evil one; and in most of their systems the Creator, though not the Father of Christ, was looked upon as the God of the Jews, and the author of the Mosaic law. Some believed that angels were employed in creating the world; but all were agreed in maintaining, that matter itself was not created. According to this theology the supreme God had dwelt from all eternity in a pleroma of inaccessible light, and they called him Bythos, as if to denote the unfathomable nature of his perfections. This Being, by an operation purely mental, or by acting upon himself, produced two other beings of different sexes, from whom, by a series of descents, more or less numerous according to different schemes, several pairs of beings were formed, called æons, from the periods of their existence before time was, or emanations from the mode of their production. These æons lived for countless ages with their first father, and became weaker and more impure in proportion to their distance from him, and their approach to the extremity of the pleroma. Beyond was matter inert and powerless, though coeternal with the supreme Being, and, like him, without beginning. At length, one of the æons passed the limits of the pleroma, and meeting with matter created the world, after the model of an ideal one existing in the pleroma, or in the mind of the supreme God. The evil thus produced the Deity endeavoured to cure; and here it is that the Gnostics borrowed so largely from Christianity. Logos, Monogenes, Zoe, &c. are successive emanations; at length we meet with Christ and the Holy Ghost as two of the last put forth. Christ was sent into the world to remedy the evil which the creative æon or demiurgus had caused. He was to emancipate men from the tyranny of matter, or of the evil principle, and by revealing to them the true God hitherto unknown, to fit them by perfection of knowledge to enter the divine pleroma. In all their notions concerning Christ, we find them struggling with the difficulty of reconciling the goodness of God with the existence of evil. Christ as an emanation could have no real connection with matter; yet the Christ of the Gnostics was held out to be the same with him

who was revealed in the Gospel; and it was notorious that he was revealed as the son of Mary, who appeared in a human form. Two methods of extricating them from this difficulty presented themselves. They either denied that Christ had a real body, and held that he was an unsubstantial phantom; or, granting that there was a man called Jesus, the son of human parents, they believed that the æon Christ quitted the pleroma, and descended upon him at his baptism. The former of these opinions seems to have occurred first, and those who held it were called from it Docetæ. These were the first heretics; and, as Jerom says, the body of our Lord was declared to be only apparent, while the Apostles were still in the world, and the blood of Christ was still fresh in Judæa.

The positions which St. John advances in the introduction, are afterwards supported in the discourses of Christ which he records. The other Evangelists have detailed such as respected the affairs of men, but his are dogmatical, and evidently selected as explanatory of the nature and divine legation of his Master. In the Epistles the inspired authors have enforced the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in their own words; but John in the very words of Christ himself; so that we are here admitted to a nearer view of our Redeemer than in any other of the sacred books. Michaelis and Rosenmüller are of opinion, that John had also an intention of opposing the Sabeans, or followers of John the Baptist; and unless there had been persons in his time who exalted too high the herald of the Saviour, the Evangelist would hardly have said that he was not the light which enlightens the world. It is also observable, that he connects this introduction, not, as a modern reader might expect, with the birth of the Messiah, but with his baptism by John, whose inferiority he thus pointedly marks by contrast. We learn from the Acts that Paul baptized twelve of these followers of the Baptist at Ephesus, the future residence of this Evangelist, where Apollos, a distinguished member of their body, was converted to Christianity. A few families professing this religion still remain at Bassora, and their Scriptures, written

in a dialect of Syria, have been brought to Europe, and translated by Norberg. In them the Baptist is called the Apostle of the light, his baptism the Baptism of life, and Jesus the Disciple of life; yet even in them he appears as John's inferior. This was probably not the case at first, for the Evangelist is anxious to put it beyond all doubt by commencing with the preexistence and proper deity of Jesus.

Some passages, no doubt, have been rendered more emphatic, by these critical investigations; but let us guard against the pernicious conclusion into which a curious inquirer may be betrayed so easily, that the main scope of this, or of any other book of holy writ, is the confutation of temporary error. If we concede, as men of learning are too apt to do, that our Lord and his Apostles had principally in view the prejudices and opinions of their own times, we shall infer that their declarations only indirectly concern us, and shall comparatively neglect their instructions. But we may be assured, that the manifold and varied wisdom of God, *πολυποίκιλη σοφία*, looking forward to the end of time, has contrived that his word should be a lamp and a guide to every succeeding generation. As to this Gospel in particular, its author informs us, that, out of the innumerable incidents which he might have recorded, he has made such a selection as should convince his readers that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that "believing they might have life through his name." The various modifications of Gnosticism have been long extinct, and are imperfectly known even to the learned; but this proposition has still opponents, though of a different description; and this Gospel is as useful as ever, since it reveals in language as decisive against the modern rationalist, as the fanciful heretic of the primitive age, this vital doctrine of belief in the incarnate Son of God, which is the foundation of the Christian's hope, and is the only one that can purify the heart and overcome the world. The style is plain and generally perspicuous, and when obscure, the defect arises from the sublimity of the subject, to which no expressions are adequate; he "sounding forth, as a son of thunder, things higher than any intellect can

comprehend ; and by a certain peculiar majesty of speech, bringing as it were out of the clouds and enigmas of wisdom, a devout knowledge of the Son of God ^b.”

Each Evangelist then, we perceive, has his peculiar manner, but simplicity is the characteristic of all, and that in design no less than in style. They neither explain nor command, promise nor threaten, commend nor blame ; but preserve one even tenor, reporting what was said or done by the enemies and friends of their Master, without any encomium on the one, or invectives against the other. They seem to avoid naming any one, without necessity, of whom they have nothing good to report ; the high priest, and his co-adjutor the Roman procurator, the tetrarch of Galilee, and the treacherous disciple, are the only persons named of the many who had a hand in Christ's prosecution and death. The suppression of these names would have impaired the evidence of the history ; and justice to the eleven required, that the guilty Apostle should be specified. But the names of Joseph and Nicodemus, the only members of the Sanhedrim who did not concur in the sentence of condemnation, of Bartimæus, Zaccheus, Lazarus and his sisters, and others of whose good qualities we hear, are preserved ; while the penmen make no secret of their own faults and those of their fellow disciples. Of this, the intemperate zeal, and the ambition of the sons of Zebedee, the incredulity of Thomas, and the presumption and denial of Peter, are eminent examples. Equally certain of all that they advance, the most signal miracles and the most ordinary events are narrated in the same tone, as by faithful witnesses, whose business it was to testify and not to argue. As to their Lord, they appear to consider his character as infinitely superior to any praise which they could bestow. Panegyric is the natural language of a disciple, or even of an impartial historian, after the recital of the unjust execution of any of those excellent men, of whom the world was not worthy ; and the colouring is apt to be heightened, in proportion to the

^b Basil. Hom. 169. Epiphanius adv. Hær. 73.

degree of the sufferings, and the worthiness of the sufferer. Both Xenophon and Plato close with praise their accounts of the death of their master, the only sage that ever was compared with Jesus; but his biographers do not presume to offer the tribute of their admiration, and instead of pointing out the wisdom and virtue of his life, they leave it to speak for itself^a. Hence animation is in a manner excluded from the narrative; no angry epithet or pathetic exclamation ever escapes them; no attempt is made to excite either pity or resentment. They lay before you nothing but facts, and are at no pains to make them appear credible, or to interest the reader in the subject of their narrative. About the ornaments of style they seem to have been indifferent, and their phraseology would be regarded as awkward and foreign; yet the more the Gentiles became acquainted with their books, the more they would discover of a charm in them, to which they found nothing similar; insomuch, that they were not ashamed to be taught by writers for whom they had previously entertained a sovereign contempt. Nor was this admiration of the sacred writings to be found only among the vulgar; it originated with them it is true, but it did not terminate there; for even those in the higher classes, who would be most shocked with inelegancies and barbarisms, found in the Scriptures an irresistible attraction, which overcame all their prepossessions, and compelled them to acknowledge, that no writers could so effectually convey conviction to the understanding and reformation to the heart, as these homely and artless biographers^b.

^a Newcome on our Lord's conduct, p. 503.

^b The information and opinions contained in this section are derived chiefly from Jones's Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament; Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History; Townson's Discourses on the Gospels; Campbell's Preliminary Dissertations; Bishop Marsh's translation of Michaelis; Hug's Introduction; and Greswell's Dissertations upon a Harmony of the Gospels.

SECTION II.

On Harmonies.

OUR Saviour's ministry having been narrated by four Evangelists, who have each not only peculiar matter, but also circumstantial variations of that which is common to the others, it is natural in studying any one Gospel, to compare it with the rest. The variations invite, and seem to require, adjustment. We accordingly find, that within a century of the publication of the last, a Harmony was compiled by Tatian, a pupil of Justin Martyr. In modern times above a hundred and seventy have been enumerated, and the number is the best proof of the difficulty of the undertaking. All may be reduced to two classes, one in which it is assumed that each Evangelist has written in chronological order, the other, in which it is allowed that some have deviated from it. Osiander, one of Luther's fellow-labourers, is at the head of the first, A.D. 1537; Chemnitz, 1593, at that of the second. In the former, of which Macknight's is the best known, there can be little important variation, as by maintaining that events recorded by two or three, with some minute difference, were not the same, they cut the knot instead of untying it. Thus they have the healing of the servants of two centurions, the raising from the dead of two damsels, the stilling miraculously two storms on the lake with nearly the same circumstances, and with the use of the very same words. In the second class there is of course more variety, because harmonists, though agreeing in their principle, differ in its application.

A Harmony is a much more difficult work than it appears to be to those who have not fully considered it; for not only few dates are given, but the events which Matthew relates in one order, are placed by Mark and Luke in another. Harmonists differ as to which they shall adopt, and in this diversity of opinion among eminent men, supported by ingenious

arguments, many will be disposed to acquiesce in Griesbach's conclusion, that no chronological Harmony can be made to stand on a sufficiently firm foundation. His own Synopsis represents in parallel columns all the sections common to the first three Gospels; and in order to make as few transpositions as possible, Mark's order is adopted, because the same as Luke's, as far as relates to the facts common to the three. The parts peculiar to each are inserted in intermediate sections. Michaelis, disclaiming also any attempt at a chronological Harmony, has given a very useful one, considered as a general index to the Gospels; pointing out where the same transaction is recorded, what the Evangelists have in common, and what is peculiar to each. He follows Matthew's account, with which the narratives of the others are collated. St. John's Gospel is the great obstacle to forming a Harmony; for since he has so little matter in common with the other, each harmonist must divide his into portions, to be inserted according to his own scheme between the sections of theirs. The simplest plan therefore is, like Calvin, to limit our Harmony to the first three. If, however, we bear in mind, that St. John had carefully perused them, and designed his own work as a supplement, we shall perceive, that unless we avail ourselves of it, our Harmony will be very unsatisfactory. Upon this plan we shall be likely to adopt the opinion of the three first centuries, that our Lord's ministry lasted only a single year. This opinion is now, I believe, exploded; yet it is scarcely avoidable, if we attend exclusively to the earlier Gospels, which treat only of the transactions in Galilee, and make mention of no journey to Jerusalem, except that which Jesus took to celebrate the passover at which he suffered. Clement of Alexandria, St. i. p. 407, applies to our Lord's ministry in the strictest sense Isaiah's description of it, the acceptable year of the Lord; but this is understood by Epiphanius and others who extend it, as descriptive of the first year of it in which the nation was generally favourable to him. Eusebius, who lived in the fourth century, tells us, that he agrees with those who assign to it four passovers; and this, which has

been ever since the prevalent opinion, appears to me to have been established by Greswell. Sir Isaac Newton, who is followed by Macknight, includes even five; and Mann, who is followed by Priestley, revived the ancient opinion. Bishop Marsh sums up his discussion of the question with observing, that St. John's Gospel presents almost insuperable obstacles to the notion of the single year, while at the same time we cannot prove from it the received opinion.

St. John notes all the feasts which our Lord attended, and three of these he calls passovers, ii. 13. vi. 4. xi. 55; a fourth he only describes as a feast, and upon the interpretation of this hinges the settlement of the question. In this, as in other cases, harmonists bring prominently forward those remarks that seem favourable to their own hypotheses; for a discussion of them I refer to Newcome; only observing, that the plucking the ears of corn, which seems to have followed it at no great interval, presupposes a passover, and transcribing from Greswell's Dissertations this passage. "Among the arguments intended to prove that this feast indefinitely mentioned could not be a passover, none perhaps is more confidently put forward, and none is perhaps more weak and inconclusive, than the following; that the events recorded in this fifth chapter are not sufficient to have occupied a year, and that another passover is mentioned in the next. Very possibly they did not occupy a single day; but this argument proceeds upon the supposition that St. John's Gospel is complete in itself, and that it has no supplemental relation to the rest, the contrary to which is among the few positions that do not admit of a question; and this being the case, it is not to be considered whether St. John's Gospel by itself supplies matter sufficient to have occupied a year, but whether Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in that portion of their Gospels, the true place of which is between these extremes in his, can presumptively be shewn to have; and upon this point the affirmative may be confidently asserted. The interval is, in fact, our Lord's second year, from the beginning of which to its end, by the miracle of feeding the 5000, there is no part unem-

ployed, nor the mode of whose employment it is not possible clearly to ascertain." The third passover, which is incompatible with the scheme of a ministry of a single year, is rejected as an interpolation by Bishop Pearce; and certainly, to those who do not consider that it might suit the Evangelist's purpose to insert a mark of time, it will appear to be an unnecessary interruption of the subject, which had better be omitted; but such a conjectural emendation, unsupported by any MS. or version, to support a preconceived theory, would be inadmissible, even if the nature of St. John's Gospel did not afford an ample vindication of it. The parable of the barren fig-tree is allowed by all to signify the Jewish nation; and we may suppose, that when the Lord of the vineyard says that he has come in vain for three years seeking fruit from it, he refers to the duration of his period of visitation.

Doddridge follows the arrangement of Mark and Luke, supposing the testimony of two Evangelists to be preferable to that of one; while Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Marsh defer to that of Matthew, because he was an eye-witness. This statement seems to impeach the accuracy of the Evangelist we desert, yet we claim not only credibility but inspiration for all. The necessity of making a choice seems to place us in a dilemma, but the following consideration will relieve us from our embarrassment. We concede, that Matthew must have known originally the order in which transactions took place, and if he could have forgotten it, the Holy Ghost that inspired him would, if necessary, have recalled it to his recollection. But though he knew the order, it is a gratuitous assumption that he followed it. His Gospel seems to show, that he preferred a classification of events, and Luke's preface appears to indicate that it was his design to present them in historical order. If indeed Matthew's order had been historical, we can hardly suppose that Mark, under the direction of Peter, would have deviated from it, or that Luke should have agreed with him instead of with the first. Assuming, as I have done, that each Evangelist had seen the work of his

predecessor, and meant his own for an improvement of it, I have no hesitation in adopting, with Doddridge and Newcome, the arrangement of the latest, though, as the latter observes, he has some anticipations and some resumptious. In fact, chronological order is not precisely adhered to by any. St. John and St. Mark observe it most, and St. Matthew least. When, however, there is any clear note of time or place in one of the Evangelists, the others may always be brought to a perfect agreement with him, by easy and natural criticism ; one affirming the order which the others often overlook, but never contradict. All neglect more or less accurate order in the detail of particular incidents, as appears from the phrase, on one of those days, at that time ; they sometimes join together detached and distant events, on account of a sameness in the scene, the person, the cause, or the consequences", and they often, particularly St. John, make transitions from one fact to another, without any intimation that important matters intervened. The Gospels, therefore, cannot be deemed methodical annals. From the difficulty of forming a complete Harmony, some divines maintain that it is better to explain each Gospel separately ; but though it may be impossible to make a perfect one, reasonable persons will allow that many transactions may be harmonized ; and Archbishop Newcome justly observes, that the juxta-position of parallel passages is often the best comment, and that a Harmony greatly diminishes our labour in studying the phraseology and manner of the Evangelists. It proves, that Mark, who inserts much new matter, did not abridge the Gospel of Matthew ; and it affords plain indications, that that of John was designed to be a supplemental history. Further, a Harmony in many instances illustrates the propriety of our Lord's conduct and words : thus previously to the call of the four Apostles, (Mark i. 16—20.) Andrew had been the Baptist's disciple, and had received his testimony to Jesus ; (John i. 35—40.) Peter had been brought

* Thus Matthew unites the calling and the mission of the twelve, though the latter was long after the former ; and Luke inserts the death of the Baptist long before it took place.

to Jesus by his brother Andrew ; (John i. 42.) and Jesus had shown more than human knowledge and power, (i. 48. ii. 23. iii. 2. iv. 29.) which probably had fallen within the experience of these disciples. So the words of Christ (v. 21—25.) are prophetically spoken before he had raised any from the dead, and his reproofs (Matt. xii. 34. Mark vii. 6.) are uttered after he had wrought miracles during two feasts at Jerusalem. The jealousy of the Jewish rulers was not early awakened by the call of the twelve Apostles to a stated attendance, for this event took place after our Lord had kept his second passover, and was about to absent himself from Jerusalem for eighteen months ; the seventy were not sent forth till within about six months of the crucifixion ; and the scene of raising the dead was remote from Jerusalem till the last passover approached. Lastly, strong presumptions of the inspiration of the authors of the Gospels arise, from their being so wonderfully supplemental to one another, and from their real agreement in the midst of a seeming disagreement : “ Truth like honesty often neglects appearances : hypocrisy and imposture are always guarded.”

Having decided upon a Harmony, the result may be exhibited either in columns, or in one unbroken narrative. The former is best calculated for reference, the latter for a regular perusal. In the former the student judges for himself, in the latter the reader may be thought to be too much at the disposal of the compiler. This was called by Tatian a *Monotessaron*, that is, one narrative composed out of the four Evangelists ; and *Diatessaron*, or the Gospel according to the four. The latter name has been revived by Dr. White, who has thrown Archbishop Newcome's Harmony into this form, and follows him with very few deviations, except in the narration of the resurrection, in which he prefers the scheme of West, as modified by Townson. I acknowledge the force of the objections urged by Townsend, yet it does not in my opinion outweigh the many advantages derived from such a work, which of course does not presume to supersede the four Gospels, but only to prepare the student

for a more critical perusal of them. For the best historical and critical review of Harmonies, I refer to the Introduction to his valuable arrangement of the New Testament, in which our Lord's history is carefully collected from the schemes of Lightfoot, Doddridge, Pilkington, Newcome, and Michaelis, who are in his estimation the principal guides. He considers that the beauty of the narrative is obscured or neglected by harmonizing with a reference only to the number of passovers, or the several journeys of our Lord; and I agree with him, that the most instructive and edifying arrangement will be that, which gradually develops the Christian dispensation. I have not thought it expedient to deviate from Newcome's divisions, yet I cannot refrain from extracting an outline of his scheme, which aspires to trace the ministry of Jesus not by dates but by results. His first chapter, including the period from our Saviour's birth to his temptation, is introductory to his ministry; and as he did not manifest himself to be the Messiah till the imprisonment of the Baptist, a separate chapter is assigned to this interval. The reply of the Baptist to the deputation from the authorities of Jerusalem, positively affirming the Messiahship of Him, whom a miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit, and the Bath Col, or voice of God, had marked as a superhuman being, in the midst of assembled thousands—the uninvited attachment of the disciples of the Baptist to our Lord, when their master pointed him out as the Lamb of God—the unostentatious miracle of Cana, when the silent operation of our Lord's power began to manifest his still concealed glory—his return to Capernaum with his family as the preaching of the Baptist continued—his still refusing to commit himself—and the final testimony of John—prove the very gradual manner in which he proceeded to attract the attention of the people, before he would offend the prejudices of those who expected a temporal Messiah. Though the ejecting the buyers and sellers from the temple may be considered as a public manifestation of his Messiahship, he did not verbally assert his claims till the Baptist was prevented from appealing to the people. He then returned

to his own province and his own town, and there openly declared himself the Messiah. And this Townson considers as another stage in his ministry. The first persecution of our Lord began upon his hinting to his proud and jealous countrymen, that he had sheep of another fold ; the service of the synagogue was interrupted, and the peace of the town disturbed. This explains his circumspection, for he did all he could, consistently with his character and object, to prevent the repetition of such scenes of exasperation and tumult. He proceeded therefore with the utmost caution, refusing to call himself the Messiah, charging the persons who were healed to tell no man, and keeping back many things even from the Apostles. The various sections of this chapter fully display the wisdom which continued thus gradually to impress the people with the conviction that the Messiah had arrived. The deliverance of the demoniac proved his power over evil spirits. By healing the leprosy, a disease considered incurable except by God, and by referring the leper who was cured to the priests, he communicated to them one evidence of his divine character ; and soon after he openly asserted his power to forgive sins, which he had already demonstrated by his cure of the paralytic man. He publicly wrought a miracle at Jerusalem, and assured the Jews that he was appointed by the Father to judge the world, and declared himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath ; and having attracted around him multitudes of people, he laid the foundation of his church in the appointment of the twelve Apostles. The fourth chapter includes the time from the mission of the twelve to that of the seventy ; and the fifth, the period from their appointment to his own triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The deeper impression produced by the preaching of his Apostles and of the seventy, and by his own example, miracles, and teaching, begin to appear more plainly. The agitation of the public mind at Jerusalem—the public assertion of his pre-existence—his increased boldness as his personal danger became greater—his assertion of his divinity, and the consequent determination of the Jews to apprehend

him—successively prove the wisdom of the plan upon which our Lord acted, of gradually convincing the people ; and then submitting to his painful death. No sooner was the resolution to seize him taken, than his lamentations over Jerusalem begin, and his parables assume a more prophetic character, descriptive of the reception of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews. At length he works his greatest miracle, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, with which he discontinues his appeal to this kind of evidence. The sixth chapter relates the conduct of the holy Jesus, from his procession to the temple, till his submission to the guard to whom he was betrayed. And as the time of his betrayal was come, he did not hesitate to reprove, with more boldness than he had hitherto shewn, all the sects among his countrymen. The seventh chapter contains his trial and crucifixion. The Lamb of God is sacrificed, the atonement is accepted, and man is pardoned. All unite to reject our Lord : the power of Rome, the religious hatred of his apostate church, the changeable populace, combine to fulfil the prophecies, and murder the willing sacrifice. In the midst of these scenes our Lord never forgot his divinity ; when dying as a man, he forgave sins as God ; and while he refused to come down from the cross, declared his power as Lord of the invisible world. The last chapter commences with his victory over the grave, commencing in his resurrection, and ending with his ascension to sit down, a Priest upon his throne, on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

SECTION III.

On the genuineness, credibility, and inspiration of the Gospels.

WE have shewn from Irenæus, that in his time the Gospels were ascribed to their respective authors, and that he was distant not much more in time than a century from their publication, and in his instruction separated only by one step from the person of the Apostles. In the passage preceding the one already quoted, he says, We have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those by whom the Gospel has been brought to us, which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for the time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith. For, after that our Lord rose from the dead, and the Apostles were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghost, they received a perfect knowledge of all things; they then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the Gospel of God. This Gospel, we know from Justin Martyr, who wrote in 140, contained in what we call the four Gospels, and he the memoirs of the Apostles, was read out and explained during divine service; and the testimony of Tertullian for Africa, and of Origen for Egypt and Palestine, proves, that this was not a local custom, but the universal practice of Christian congregations. The fact then of the existence and reception of the four Gospels from the beginning cannot be disputed. Some, however, may say, that they have perished, and that these we now read are not genuine. To such objectors, if such there be, I would say with Mr. Lancaster^a, Suppose any man at this day were to try to pass off a counterfeit book as the work of St. Paul, or St.

^a Bampton Lectures, page 63.

John, what would be his success? And can we possibly imagine any time whatever in which the task would not have been as much impossible as now? Or, to use a more familiar example, suppose any man should forge an Act of Parliament, and attempt to pass it off as having been enacted by the Legislature, how many think you would submit to the imposture, and receive his forgery as the authentic law of the land? especially if his pretended law required from the subject any painful duties to perform, or considerable sacrifice of his interest or property. And does not reason assure us, that it would be an utter impossibility thus to forge the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, since these require men to die to their lusts and profits, and to seek their happiness in an invisible and future kingdom? Let it be remembered also, that the books of the New Testament profess to be written by men endued with the power of miracles, and to be written for the instruction, in the first instance, of contemporaries. How then could they be brought to light in a later age, or by persons not known to possess the power alleged in proof of their authority? The task of imposing a literary forgery upon the world has been almost invariably found to baffle the utmost circumspection and ingenuity, for the slightest failure in any particular will lay open the fraud; but the hazard is greatly increased when the work is of any length, especially, says Lardner, if it be historical, and be concerned with characters and customs. The New Testament would present peculiar difficulties, from the style and language, which are neither those of the classics nor the fathers, and are what might be expected from the Apostles and Evangelists, and no others; and the precepts and the religious spirit that pervades the Epistles and Gospels are such, that no impostor would either be desirous or capable of giving. Our statement is not a mere supposition, but is confirmed by the fact, for the apocryphal writings supply the attempt and the failure. The universal reception of the same canon for so many ages is in itself evidence sufficient that our Scriptures are, as they profess to be, the genuine productions of the

authorized teachers of our faith. Where do you find a church, or sect, which rejects any of the books which we receive, or receives any book that we do not. However much they may vary in doctrine or discipline, the dispute is not about the authority, but the interpretation, of the books. This concurrence is remarkable and of great weight, especially as it seems to have been the result of private and free inquiry; for we have no knowledge of any interference of authority in the question before the Council of Laodicæa in 363; and this decree did not regulate but declare the public judgment already formed.

The genuineness of our present Gospels as we now find them, (and the same may be affirmed of all the books of the New Testament,) is supported by the substantial sameness of the text in all churches and versions. Take those of the Roman Catholic in English, French, Italian, or what tongue you please, and you will find that they are all derived from what is called the Vulgate, that is, the Latin translation of St. Jerome in the fifth century. Take our own, and it will be found to be nearly the same; it differs in some minute points, because it is taken from the original Greek; and if you ask where that is to be found, we say in the many MSS. of it which are still extant, some of which may be as old as the fourth century. These books having always been regarded as authority, from which there is no appeal, they were quoted from the beginning as now, both in the controversial and instructive writings of Christian divines. Some of course have had occasion, or the inclination, to do this at greater length than others. Dr. Mill says of Origen, that if we had all his works remaining, we should have before us almost the whole text of the Bible; and in those of Tertullian, his contemporary, says Lardner, there are more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than of all the works of Cicero, by writers of all characters for several ages. Paley justly remarks, that to pursue the detail of proofs throughout, would be to transcribe a great part of Lardner's eleven octavo volumes; and to leave the argument

without proofs, is to leave it without effect; for the persuasion produced by this species of evidence depends upon a view and induction of the particulars which compose it. To his well-known Evidences I refer for a perspicuous analysis of it, as extending upward from Eusebius beyond Irenæus, to the immediate followers of the Apostles; and upon the theory here maintained it may be carried up to the inspired writers themselves, making Luke bear testimony to Matthew and Mark, and both Luke and Mark to Matthew. These writings are equally accredited by heretics, and by the opponents of Christianity; for the emperor Julian in the fourth century, Porphyry in the third, and Celsus in the second, appeal to the same Scriptures as the orthodox. Books so regarded, which were studied at home, and read out in public, and quoted in controversies, were multiplied both in the original and in translations as early as the second century, so that they became universally known wherever there were Christians, and they were soon found in every province of the Roman empire. It would be therefore an absolute impossibility, at any period, to substitute false gospels for the true, unless we can conceive, that men of different nations, opinions, and languages, that the orthodox heretics and infidels, should all agree to impose upon the world one and the same forgery.

The genuineness of the Gospels having been ascertained, their credibility remains to be established; for, in order to believe the contents of any history, we ought to be satisfied, not only that the person who records it is what he professes to be, but that he has had the opportunity and ability of knowing the truth, and the honesty to relate it. But if these books were written by the persons, and at the time asserted, we may say with Lardner, that their contents must be true; and if they be true, that Christianity is a divine revelation; for if the things therein related to have been done by Jesus and his followers, by virtue of powers derived from him, do not prove a person to come from God, and that his doctrine is true and divine, nothing can.

It has been frequently shown, that the credibility of the

New Testament, though from the nature of the case it cannot be demonstrated, has been proved by moral evidence, which is quite as satisfactory ; and that this is more abundant and complete than can be brought in support of any other work. Two of the Evangelists were immediate and the others were competent witnesses of the facts which they attest, and upon which Christianity is founded. They were neither enthusiasts nor fanatics, and therefore could not be deceived ; their piety, integrity, disinterestedness, and their sacrifice of their earthly prospects, and their sufferings, are a guarantee that they would not wish to deceive others, and could have no inducement to make the attempt. We might safely accept from men of this character even a narrative intermixed with miracles ; but as our hopes are to be built upon what they record, and our conduct to be regulated by their testimony, it is, if not necessary, certainly desirable, that they should be secured against the possibility of error. In modern times, there have been Christians who deny the inspiration of the Bible, and maintain, that allowing the authors to be left to the use of their own faculties, without any supernatural assistance, we have sufficient grounds for believing the accuracy of their report. The evidence may be sufficient to claim our assent, and to render disbelief blameable ; still they must concede, that it would be more satisfactory to know that the record which contains the dogmas of our faith, and the history of our Saviour and his Apostles, is the word of God. Such has been from the beginning the belief of the Church, and from this position we deduce the grand Protestant principle of the sufficiency of holy Scripture ; so that, to use the language of the sixth Article, “ whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Christian faith.” The inspiration of the whole of the Old Testament stands upon the authority of St. Paul, who assures Timothy, 2 Ep. iii. 16, that as such it is profitable, able to make the reader wise unto salvation, and to furnish thoroughly unto all good works the Christian minister ; and almost every book of it has been cited, as Scripture, by our Lord or his Apostles. Arguing from analogy,

we may fairly affirm, that inspiration may also be predicated of the New, especially when we know that our Saviour promised the Holy Spirit, to guide the Apostles into all the truth, and to bring whatsoever he had said unto them to their remembrance. As to Paul's Epistles, he himself asserts, in almost every one, that he speaks by the Spirit of God. St. John says, "We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us;" and St. Peter, who writes with the authority of one who had been an eye-witness of his Lord's majesty, when with him in the holy mount, classes Paul's Epistles with the other Scriptures. Of the inspiration then of this important part of the New Testament, no doubt ought to be entertained; and Michaelis allows, that the two Gospels written by Apostles, were also inspired compositions. Mark and Luke he considers as entitled to rank no higher than other trustworthy historians; the former has so little matter peculiar to him, that the question of his inspiration is of subordinate importance; but since he and Luke convey to us the authority of Apostles, there seems no reason for regarding what Peter and Paul acknowledged as true, as less valuable or certain, than what Matthew and John have recorded.

Inspiration is used by divines in two senses, for that immediate suggestion of the Deity which makes discoveries to the mind, which it could not otherwise have known, and dictates sometimes the very words in which they are to be communicated to others; and for that superintending guidance which leaves an author to express himself in his own way, and merely watches over him to secure him from error. The Epistles to the seven Asiatic Churches, in which St. John was only the secretary of Christ, is an instance of the first kind; but for the historical books we only claim the lower degree of inspiration. And this will admit of imperfections in style and method; "for if," as Dr. Doddridge observes, "such works are not intended as exact standards for oratory, but only to teach us truth in order to its having a proper influence on our temper and actions; such human imperfections as may mingle with it would no more warrant our rejecting it, than the want of a ready utterance or a musical voice would excuse our disregard

of a person who should bring us competent evidence of his being a messenger from God to us." " We believe then that the Spirit of God directed the Apostles not only in their addresses to their contemporaries, but in their Epistles, which were meant as a legacy to the Church for ever; and that each Evangelist was guided to select and omit as would best suit his immediate object in writing, and the edification of believers to the end of time. Every line, therefore, of the New Testament we believe to be stamped with unerring truth, and to be the voice of God speaking in the language of men ^a."

SECTION IV.

On the Text of the Gospels.

THE arguments which establish the genuineness and authenticity of the books of the New Testament, are no less satisfactory in proving the substantial integrity of the text. In writings so highly valued, read by many at home, and heard by more in the congregation, and existing in so many distant places in manuscripts and versions, it is hard to conceive that important variations could ever have been generally introduced. If the text had been corrupted by negligence or design in one country, its falsifications would have been detected by the copies of another. Let it be observed, however, that it is only the *substantial integrity* that is maintained; the *absolute identity* of the most approved manuscripts with the autograph of the original authors, is an untenable position. In fact, the Bible has been left by Providence to the care of fallible men; and it is now allowed, that no one perfect copy of either Old or New Testament is extant, and that the text must be collected from a critical examination of all.

The more copies are multiplied, and the more numerous the transcripts and translations from the originals, the more

^a Rennel in reply to Hone.

likely it is that the true reading should be ascertained. Thus the most correct classical writings now extant, are those of which we have the greater number of manuscripts; and the most corrupt are those that have come down to us in a single one; in which case it is evident, that conjectural emendation is the only resource. As might be supposed, the manuscripts of the New Testament are far more numerous than those of any other work; three hundred and ninety-four were known to have been collated, some only partially, when Bishop Marsh translated Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament; and we have from the Bishop a critical description of four hundred and sixty-nine. I will enumerate the more remarkable, referring those who wish for a more complete account to Mr. Horne's valuable Introduction to the Scriptures, vol. 2. ch. ii.

(A) The Alexandrine, so called because presented in 1628 to Charles I. by Cyrillus Lucaris, who had been patriarch of Alexandria, where the manuscript was found, now preserved in the British Museum. It consists of four folio volumes. A fac simile of the New Testament was edited in 1786 by Dr. Woide, and one of the Psalms in 1812 by Mr. Baber, who has since published the whole. Dr. Woide refers it to the middle or end of the fourth century. (B) The Vatican manuscript, the beginning and end of which are mutilated, contests the palm of antiquity with the Alexandrine. To these we may add (C) the Ephrem manuscript, a rescript. (D) The Cambridge or Beza manuscript, so called, because presented by that reformer, 1511, to the University; a Greek and Latin manuscript of the Gospels and Acts, referred by many to the fifth century, and supposed by Michaelis to be the most ancient known. The Latin version is the old Italic. A fac simile of it was edited in 1793 by Dr. Kipling. (D) Codex Claromontanus, a Greek and Latin manuscript of St. Paul's Epistles, now in the Royal Library at Paris. This was used by Beza in preparing his new text, together with his own, of which Mill supposed, but erroneously, that it was the second part. (E) The Laudian manuscript of the Acts, in Greek and Latin, presented by the Archbishop to the Bod-

leian library, probably of the seventh century. The text, with a specimen of the original characters, was printed by Hearne, 1715. (G 2.) The Codex Bornerianus, a Greek and Latin manuscript of Paul's Epistles, without that to the Hebrews, referred by Griesbach to the ninth or tenth century. Matthew's Gospel, a rescript, found in Dublin College Library, published by Dr. Barrett. The Cotton manuscript in the British Museum, a precious fragment of the Gospels, in silver letters on a faded purple ground, is one of the oldest manuscripts extant. (K) Codex Cyprius, or Colbertinus, a copy of the Gospels from Cyprus, collated by Scholtz, 1820; assigned by him to the eighth century. It is charged by Wetstein with latinizing, but it is thought without sufficient evidence. (E 2.) Codex St. Germanensis and C. Augiensis, now at Trinity College, Cambridge; both contain Paul's Epistles in Greek and Latin; the first is supposed to be written in the seventh, the second in the eighth, century. C. Harleianus, a most splendid Evangelistarium, written in 995, not known to Griesbach. (L) Codex Regius, a MS. of the Gospels; the eighth of those collated by Robert Stephens. All these are uncial; those in small letters are designated by the Arabic numerals, and these may be as valuable as those of the first class, if transcripts of MSS. as ancient.

Three of the most celebrated, the Vatican, the Alexandrine, and the Codex Ephremi, contain the whole Bible, but few have even the entire New Testament; the greater part have only the Gospels, because they were the most frequently read out in the Church; others contain the Acts with the Catholic Epistles, some the Acts with St. Paul's Epistles, and manuscripts of the Apocalypse are rare. Some are accompanied with the Latin version; and there are also Lectionaries, which have only the portions selected for lessons. Few manuscripts are dated; their respective age is therefore a matter of opinion; but those who have studied the subject point out particulars which enable them to form a probable judgment. Thus manuscripts on vellum are more ancient than those on

paper, which are subdivided into cotton, which are later than the ninth century, and linen, which are later than the twelfth. Those written in capital or uncial letters are earlier than those in small, as they were in general use till the eighth century, but there is a difference in the shape of the letters after the seventh. There is one with the subscription of A.D. 949. The most ancient are without accents, and the words are not separated. About the middle of the fifth century, Euthalius divided the New Testament into stichoi or lines regulated by the sense, and this affords a criterion of age. In order to save space, a point was placed instead of the blank at the end of each stichos, and this originated punctuation. D and E, that is, the Beza and Laud MSS. are subsequent to stichometry. The text of some, which, on the rise of the price of parchment, was obliterated to substitute other works, has been recovered by extraordinary industry. The Codex Ephremi and Matthew's Gospel at Dublin are of this class, called Codices Rescripti or Palimpsesti. Almost all the ancient MSS. are imperfect. Thus the Alexandrine has not the greater part of Matthew's Gospel, and the Vatican wants some of the Pauline Epistles and the Revelation.

When the unlearned hear of 30,000 various readings, collected by Dr. Mills, and 150,000, which Griesbach's critical edition of the New Testament is said to contain, it is natural that they should feel uneasy; it ought therefore to be made as generally known, that the result is the very reverse of what they fear, and that this minute examination of manuscripts, versions, and quotations from the Fathers, has established the substantial integrity of the volume. Of this mass of readings which at first sight appears so formidable, not one hundredth part makes any material alteration in the sense; they consist principally of palpable errors in transcribing, and grammatical and verbal differences; most of which cannot be represented in a translation. Some are intended corrections, in which easier words are substituted for those that are obscure, and attempts to bring the text nearer to the Greek idiom. Others change the meaning, but the alteration is of no doctrinal

importance, as *found for saw*, Matt. ii. 11. and v. 47. *heathen for publican*. Marginal notes have occasionally been transferred to the text; and words that copyists did not understand, or thought superfluous, have been omitted; and parallel passages have been altered, to render their conformity to each other more perfect. Wilful corruption has been charged upon the ancient heretics, and by them upon the orthodox; but, under Divine Providence, attempts of this kind have been defeated, as from the many copies extant, either of the original, or of an early version, it was impossible that they could tamper with all. Instances of these readings are, Neither the Son, Mark xiii. 32. Born of thee, Luke i. 35. The angel strengthening Christ in his agony, Luke xxii. 43. Before they came together, Matt. i. 18. The most remarkable omissions are the twelve concluding verses of Mark's Gospel, which Griesbach retains; the history of the woman taken in adultery, which he thinks ought, probably, to be rejected; and the three heavenly witnesses in St. John's Epistle, which with most critics he maintains to be an interpolation. Of the readings which he condemns, or holds doubtful, few affect any point of doctrine or morals. There are, however, two, which in the received text unequivocally assert the divinity of the Saviour; the Church of *God*, which he hath purchased by his own blood; and *God* manifest in the flesh; against the first of which he decides; but of the second speaks with some hesitation. I reserve a more minute statement for a note^d.

^d The story of the woman taken in adultery is found in all the Latin manuscripts, but does not appear in the Vatican and some other Greek ones of note, nor in the Gothic and Syriac versions; it is rejected by Origen, and is not noticed by Chrysostom; Calvin, Beza, Grotius, Hammond, Leclerc, and Griesbach decide against it; but Michaelis maintains its authenticity. The first who mentions it is Tatian, who flourished in 160. Dr. Mill thinks that it was marked with an obelisk, that it might not be read out in public, and that it was in consequence dropped by transcribers.

Of Acts xx. 28. there are no less than six various readings:

1. Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased, &c.
2. _____ of Christ; old Syriac, but in no Greek manuscript.
3. _____ of the Lord; preferred by Griesbach and Wetstein, and found in the Alexandrine and most of the uncial MSS.

But even granting that these three texts must be surrendered, the candid will allow that the orthodox doctrines of the

4. Feed the church of the Lord and God; Complutensian Polyglott, Sclavonic.
5. _____ of the God and Lord.
6. _____ of the Lord God.

Upon the whole, the external evidence preponderates in favour of the received text, which is found in the Vatican manuscript and in the Vulgate, as well as in most of the Fathers, beginning with Ignatius; and the expression is in unison with St. Paul's style, occurring no less than eleven times in his Epistles, whereas the church of the Lord is a phrase unknown to the New Testament; it is, however, frequent in the Septuagint, from which it may have found its way into the Alexandrine manuscript.

The passage in Timothy has three variations, $\Theta\iota\omicron\varsigma$, $O\varsigma$, O ; and those who know that the first is in uncial manuscripts contracted to $\Theta\Xi$, will see at once how easily one reading might be substituted for the other, and from the present state of the Alexandrine, it is now impossible to ascertain which it read; but (see Dr. Berriman's discourses) there seems no ground for doubting that it supports the received text, which is found at least in a hundred manuscripts. The Vulgate reads *quod*, answering to the \omicron of the Clermont manuscript. A reference to the context will shew that the dispute is not material, for Paul is evidently speaking not of the dogmas but of the author of Christianity, as seems unquestionable, from the terms "manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, received up into glory;" and the only difference, if we substitute the pronoun, is, that we must go back for an antecedent to the contested word $\Theta\iota\omicron\varsigma$, which we shall find in the genitive case in the preceding verse. So that whichever reading we prefer, the sense will be the same, though it is more perspicuously stated in the received text.

The testimony of the three heavenly witnesses is celebrated for the many learned discussions which it has occasioned, from the days of Erasmus to our own; and the controversy has been of great service, as it has contributed, probably, more than any other circumstance, to the improvement of Biblical criticism. Mr. Butler, in his *Horæ Biblicæ*, gives a condensed statement of the evidence on both sides; but the most complete view may be seen in Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures. It was omitted by Erasmus, in his first edition of the Greek Testament, but he promised to insert it in a future one, if the passage could be shewn him in a manuscript; and, as he says, to avoid calumny, he introduced it into his third. A single authentic manuscript in which it occurs was produced, Codex Montfortii, which is now in the library of Dublin, for which a higher date is not claimed than the thirteenth century. It appeared, however, also in the Complutensian Bible, but the manuscripts which were used for that work are lost; it is not found in any of the ancient versions except the Vulgate, and only in some manuscripts of that; nor is it quoted by any of the Greek Fathers, even when appealing to the preceding and succeeding verses; it is therefore rejected by the most approved critics. However, Dr. Nolan and Dr. Hales have endeavoured to re-establish its credit; and Bishops Middleton and Burgess argue strongly in its favour. It is found in the Liturgies of the Greek and Latin Church, and is cited by the Latin Fathers. In my opinion, the internal

Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God, are found in other passages, the genuineness of which has never been doubted; they pervade St. John's Gospel, and are evidently assumed throughout the Epistles as the basis of reasoning and exhortation. It has therefore been justly observed, that "when the eyes of the understanding are opened, and the soul made acquainted with, and attentive to, its own state and wants, he that runs may read the divinity of the Saviour, not in a few detached texts of a dubious import, and liable to be twisted and tortured by the arts of criticism; but as interwoven in the very frame and texture of the Bible, and written in it as with a sunbeam^c."

We know not how long the autograph copies were preserved, but they must have perished at an early period, for there were various readings in the first century, which could hardly have existed, if the originals could have been consulted. Some therefore are previous to any manuscripts now extant, none of which at the utmost can be traced higher than the fourth century; and consequently the versions prior to that period, having been translated from manu-

evidence, at least, justifies our suspending our judgment; for the omission vitiates the grammatical structure of the original, and leaves the sense imperfect; for a comparison is introduced in the ninth verse, between the testimony of men and the testimony of God, in which the apostle must refer to these heavenly witnesses. The Unitarians exult in its rejection, as if the doctrine of the Trinity must be rejected with it; and indeed incautious Trinitarians have led them to this boasting by exaggerating its importance. All candid persons, however, will allow, that more decisive texts, as the baptismal form, and St. Paul's benediction, may be brought forward; indeed it seems only indirectly to support this dogma, for it is the apostle's design to urge the unity, not of the nature, but of the testimony, of the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, to the leading truth of the gift of eternal life through the Son of God. It may be useful in this place to observe, as Griesbach is opposed to this and other readings favourable to the Trinitarian hypothesis, that he had himself no Unitarian bias. "There are," he says, "so many arguments for the true Deity of Christ, that I see not how it can be called in question, the divine authority of Scripture being granted, and just rules of interpretation acknowledged. The exordium of St. John's Gospel in particular is so perspicuous, and above all exception, that it never can be overturned by the daring attacks of interpreters and critics."

^c Newton's *Cardiphonia*, vol. ii. p. 10.

scripts which have long perished, have a high critical value. Readings different from the received text occur in the earliest Christian writings, those of Justin Martyr and Irenæus. Clement of Alexandria, who died early in the third century, (Strom. iv. vii.) speaks of these ; and Origen, who devoted so much time to the revision of the text of the Septuagint, could not be ignorant of the various readings in the Christian Scriptures. There is, indeed, a passage preserved in his Commentary on St. Matthew, in which he condemns strongly the boldness of those, who from their own judgment add or expunge; and it seems, that he undertook in his old age the correction of the text of the New Testament, as he had done previously that of the Greek version of the Old. Copies of this recension being deposited in the celebrated library of Cæsarea in Palestine, others were corrected by it, and being followed by the more learned Fathers of the Greek Church, and by Jerome in the Latin, it became the generally received text. Lucian of Antioch, a martyr in the Diocletian persecution, and Hesychius an Egyptian Bishop, imitated his example. The recension of the former prevailed from Constantinople to Antioch, the latter in Egypt, while that of Origen was preferred in the intermediate country of Palestine. The whole world divided in consequence into three parties, says Jerome, *adv. Rufinus*. He is here speaking of the Septuagint, but his Introduction to the New Testament shews that their recensions included that ; for he says, that the Western Church remained stedfast to the established text, and that Pope Gelasius prohibited the Gospels which Hesychius and Lucian had falsified. I omit, he writes, those copies named after Lucian and Hesychius, to which the contentious perversity of some is in the habit of referring, nor were they successful in their emendations of the New Testament ; and, as Nolan observes, his statement is confirmed by the fact of three Latin versions. None of these recensions, however, were kept perfectly distinct. Eustathius purposely visited Cæsarea, to collate his Hesychian copy with that of Origen ; copyists did not restrict themselves to one family ; and even after these

critical labours, we find various readings in the subsequent Fathers. The common text as it existed previously, Hug conceives is to be found in Beza's Cambridge MS.

After the revival of biblical criticism in modern times, when the diligence of collators had accumulated thousands of various readings, it became necessary to lay down some rules for judging of their comparative merit. In prosecuting this study, it was perceived that MSS. were to be arranged according to the similarity of their text in certain families; and the fact of these differences confirmed the fact, that recensions had been made at an early period. This point established, it follows that the evidence of MSS. is not to be *counted* but *weighed*. It is possible that a hundred that now agree, may agree because they have descended from the same source. Of MSS. of the same family, the reading of the greater number is of course of most weight; but the reading is to be preferred which is found only in a few, if those few be of different families, and the MS. versions and fathers which follow the same recension are to be considered as constituting only one witness. Bentley conceived a scheme of methodizing the immense number of various readings collected by Mills, by classing his manuscripts by the Vulgate, and forming a corrected text, which should accord with that translation. Bengel and Semler suggested a more elaborate system, which was completed by Greisbach. Instead of the authority of Jerome, who flourished in the fifth century, they build upon that of Origen, who flourished in the third, whose testimony is entitled to the more weight, from the attention which he above all the ancients bestowed on biblical criticism; and instead of the existence of two texts, one of which corresponds with the Vulgate, and the other with the generality of Greek manuscripts, and is adopted in the printed Testament, he maintains the existence of the three which are mentioned by Jerome, which he terms the Alexandrine, the Western, and the Byzantine, from the countries in which he supposes them to have prevailed.

1. The Alexandrine recension is found in the Vatican

manuscript for the Gospels, and for the other books in the Alexandrine; it is followed by the Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Syro-Philoxenian versions, and coincides with the quotations of Origen and Clement of Alexandria.

2. The Western coincides with the Latin version, more especially as it stood before the time of Jerome, and is thought to be cited by the Latin Fathers; it very seldom varies in the Gospels from Beza's manuscript, and in the Acts and Catholic Epistles accords chiefly with the Alexandrine recension.

3. The Byzantine edition is found in the Gospels of the Alexandrine manuscript, and is the received text; it is cited by Chrysostom, Theophylact, and the other Greek Fathers, and is the original of the old Russian version.

Each recension has its characteristics. The Western preserves harsh readings, Hebraisms, and solecisms, which the Alexandrine has exchanged for others more conformable to classical usage. The Western is marked by readings calculated to relieve the text from difficulties; and the Byzantine preserves the Greek idiom still purer than the Alexandrine, and resembles the Western in its explanatory readings. Each of these classes he considers an independent witness, and decides upon the value of a reading, not according to the individual manuscript in which it is found, but according to the number of classes by which it is supported.

It is to the first recension that Griesbach ascribes the highest rank, the authority of a few of these outweighing, in his estimation, that of a multitude of the Byzantine. The peculiar readings which he selects from this class, he endeavours to confirm by a variety of collateral testimony, principally drawn from the collation of the Fathers, and the versions made in the primitive ages; and to the authority of Origen he ascribes a preeminent weight, taking it as the standard whereby his collateral testimony is to be estimated. His theory has affected the credit of the received text, but this has found a defender on the continent in Matthæi, and at home in Dr. Nolan, who strenuously and ably maintains its

doctrinal integrity^e. The latter, although he opposes Griesbach's conclusions, agrees with him in the existence of the three classes of texts, which he conceives to correspond with, and to be represented by, the three extant Latin translations which existed in the age of Jerome, namely, the old Italic as preserved in a manuscript at Brescia, the same as corrected by St. Eusebius of Vercelli, the contemporary of Athanasius, at the desire of Pope Julius II. and to be found in a MS. preserved in that town, supposed to be his autograph copy, and the Vulgate, the work of St. Jerome. Griesbach's Alexandrine and Western texts, according to him, coincide respectively with those of Palestine and Egypt. A manuscript which harmonizes with the Vatican manuscript, must be referred to the first class, and agrees with the Vulgate, and contains the text which Jerome refers to Palestine and Eusebius. The Cambridge manuscript is an exemplar of the second, and is represented by the manuscript of Vercelli, and contains the text which Jerome refers to Egypt and Hesychius. The Moscow manuscripts, and the Harleian G. 5684, are standards of the third, or Byzantine, which he agrees with Griesbach in referring to Constantinople and Lucian. So general was the influence of the revisal of Eusebius of Vercelli, that the Brescia manuscript alone preserves the antecedent translation. Mr. Nolan denies that Griesbach can claim the support of Origen, but he allows that the extraordinary agreement of the manuscripts of the class which he prefers, not only with each other, but with the western and oriental versions, has produced a conviction with many, that they contain the genuine text. The force of this he endeavours to remove, by supposing, that the Syriac and Italic have both been corrected by this recension. The manuscripts of the Byzantine are much the most numerous, and possess the most extraordinary conformity in their peculiar readings. Of the Egyptian text there is scarcely a second copy, and we should almost doubt its existence, if it were not confirmed by

^e Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate, 1815.

the Sahidic version, the Vercelli manuscript, and the manuscripts collated by Thomas Bishop of Heraclea, for the Philoxenian Syriac, in 616. He considers that the Egyptian text was imported into the west by Eusebius of Vercelli, and the Palestine text republished at Alexandria by Euthalius, while the Byzantine retained its authority in the capital of the Greek empire. It is material to observe, that whichever recension we prefer, or if rejecting the scheme altogether as not sufficiently established, (and even Griesbach allows, that no manuscript preserves any recension in a pure state, but is said to be of one, or of the other, as the readings of that recension *predominate*;) we consider the variations as accidental; the more the subject is investigated, the more reason we shall find to be satisfied, that though the literal identity of the received with the original text is abandoned by all, the doctrinal identity is established; and that even the most faulty manuscript extant, supposing all others to have perished, would not pervert one article of our faith, or affect one moral precept. In conclusion, I observe, that their general uniformity demonstrates both the veneration in which the Scriptures have been held, and the care that was taken in transcribing them, and affords us an additional and most convincing proof, that they exist at present in all essential points, the same as when they came from the hands of their authors.

The consideration of MSS. leads us to that of printed copies, and disposes us to enquire into the qualifications of editors. It is natural to ask, what manuscript the first editors adopted; but the result of our enquiries is more mortifying than those who have not studied the subject are prepared for, as the answer must be, that they had not access to those which are now acknowledged to be the best, some of which, indeed, have been brought to light since their time; that those they used were few, and comparatively modern, and that they do not always abstain from conjectural emendation. The primary editions are no more than three; the Complutensian, and those of Erasmus and Beza. From these all succeeding ones have been derived, some containing im-

provements, but others being mere reprints. The art of printing had been discovered, and employed in giving circulation to the Latin Bible, more than half a century before it was applied to the original text. Aldus had printed as an experiment, in 1504, the first six chapters of St. John's Gospel; but the honour of giving to the world the whole Testament in the language in which it was written was reserved for Erasmus, who published it at Basil in 1516. In the Gospels he made a MS. of the fifteenth century his basis, and in the remainder another, and towards the conclusion of the Apocalypse translated into Greek from the Latin version what was wanting in it. The Greek Testament had been printed two years earlier as a volume of the first Polyglott Bible, which had been achieved under the patronage of Cardinal Ximenes at Alcalá, the ancient Complutum, from which it derives its appellation, to distinguish it from the later ones of Paris and London; but it was not till 1522, by which time Erasmus's had reached two editions, that it was allowed by Leo the Tenth to be sold. It was arranged from MSS. of a recent date, and the editors are accused of sometimes deserting them, out of deference to the Latin version. Beza formed his first text upon the third of Robert Stephens, which is little more than a reprint of the fifth of Erasmus; but that of 1565 is altered chiefly from his own celebrated MS. and that of Clermont; and the edition of 1598 is particularly interesting to us, as being that adopted as the basis of our authorized version. Upon Stephens's third edition, and the improved text of Beza, a new one was formed, it does not appear by whom, and published in 1624 by Elzevir, which has acquired the appellation of the received text, and is the one in universal use. Other editions are distinguished by their collections of various readings, but they retain the received text. Curcelleus, the first editor, 1658, of note of this description, was followed by Walton in the English Polyglott, and by Bishop Fell; but the celebrated edition of Mills, published at Oxford in 1707, the result of thirty years' labour, and containing all the

readings then known, formed an æra in biblical criticism. The edition of Wetstein, which appeared in 1751, is considered by Bishop Marsh as invaluable. His enumeration of various readings far surpasses those of his predecessors. He collated many manuscripts for the first time, and recollated others, inspected the versions and the quotations by the Fathers, and rendered the use of his readings more easy, by describing the character of the manuscripts he used. Birch published an edition at Copenhagen, 1788—1798, with readings from the Escorial and Italian manuscripts, which had not been previously examined, and Matthæi one, Riga 1782, with readings exclusively from Moscow manuscripts of the Byzantine family.

But of all the critical editions, that of Griesbach, 1796, is universally allowed to be the most complete. His object was an arrangement of the readings which had been discovered up to his time; but as, from the number of his discriminating marks, it is difficult for one imperfectly acquainted with his work to ascertain their respective merits, Dr. White has supplied us, in his *Criseos Griesbachiensis Synopsis*, with a convenient index.

The ancients had a double division of the New Testament, into longer and shorter sections, *τίτλοι* and *κεφαλαία*, in Latin *breves* and *capitula*; and to show their difference it may be observed, that Matthew's Gospel contains 68 of the first, and 355 of the second, even the former being much shorter than our chapters, which were made for both Testaments by Cardinal Hugh de Sancto Claro, when he projected a Concordance. He subdivides them into smaller portions by the first seven letters of the alphabet, which he placed at equal distances in the margin; but this division has been superseded by that into verses, which, for the New, was invented by Robert Stephens, and first introduced into his edition of 1551. The Geneva English Testament, printed in that city, 1557, is the first of our translation in which it appears.

The punctuation seems to have been commenced by Jerome, who introduced the comma and the colon; the note of

interrogation was not used till the ninth century. The editors of printed editions have placed the points arbitrarily, and Stephens, in particular, varied his in every edition; and as they form no part of the original, we are of course entitled to vary them according to our judgment. It is well known, as an instance of this, that not only Augustine, but all the Greek Fathers, from Irenæus to Chrysostom, who introduced the present punctuation of the passage, marked the third and fourth verses of the first chapter of John's Gospel in the following manner: "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. That which was made in him was life." And this is preferred by Dr. Burton, and other modern critics.

SECTION V.

On the Language of the New Testament.

HAVING shown that the authenticity of the New Testament may be established by the strongest evidence, and that the text as handed down to us is sufficiently correct, we have next to examine the language in which it is written. That language it is well known is Greek; but it is Greek of a peculiar character, as all who are conversant with the classical authors will allow, and to distinguish it from that in which they wrote, it has been termed Hellenistic. It is not a distinct dialect, because it differs not in grammar, but in idiom; that is, the inflection of nouns and verbs is the same, but the phrases are different; being precisely the same sort of difference as exists between the English composition of a native and of a foreigner, who, though he understands the rules of grammar, thinks in his own language what he afterwards writes down in the other. Thus in the New Testament, the phraseology is Hebrew, but the words are Greek. When the Apostles went beyond the Holy Land to preach the Gospel, it was necessary that they should make use of

another language, their own being confined to Syria; and Greek, which seems then to have been spoken over the Roman empire even more than French in modern Europe, had many advantages over Latin, especially to those whose missions were chiefly directed to the eastern provinces. Cicero (*pro Archia*) had said when Rome was in its glory, that Latin was confined to its own narrow limits, while almost all nations read Greek. That language therefore was naturally preferred as the vehicle of a revelation, alike designed for Gentile and Jew. It had become the adopted language of the latter, to whom the Gospel was always first proposed. Their persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, the encouragement held out by the Ptolemies, and other concurring causes, had occasioned a considerable dispersion of the nation, not only in Asia and Africa, but even in Achaia and Italy, as appears from their historian Josephus, from the Acts of the Apostles, and from Roman authors. The gradual loss of their own tongue, and the adoption of Greek, naturally followed among these colonists; and this was much promoted by the translation of the Bible into the Alexandrian dialect, which, being used in their synagogues, soon became the standard of their language. Hence a certain uniformity of idiom would arise among the Jews speaking Greek, wherever dispersed. We find the distinction between them and the Jews of Palestine marked in the book of Acts, in which we read, that there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected; and for these there is a peculiar word in the original, Ἑλληνισταί^a, Hellenizing or Grecianizing, the real Greeks being called Ἑλληνές. This version is called the Septuagint, because it is the reputed work of seventy-two translators, sent for the purpose by the high-priest from Jerusalem to Alexandria, at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, who wished to enrich with a copy of the Scriptures the library which he was then founding at

^a Thus in Diodorus Siculus, and in other authors, the Greek settlers in Italy are distinguished from the natives, Ἰταλοί, by the similar word Ἰταλιώται.

Alexandria. This history, believed by Josephus and Philo, and mentioned with marvellous additions by the early Christian authors, is now regarded as a fable. It is the received opinion, that the Pentateuch was first translated for the use of the Alexandrian synagogue, and as it is in the idiom of that city, by Jews resident there, and afterwards the remaining books; and the diversity of style proves that they were translated by different persons. The Pentateuch and Proverbs are the best executed: the Psalms and Prophets, especially Isaiah, were undertaken by men unequal to the task; and the version of Daniel was so full of errors, that it was rejected by the Church for that of Theodotion. Its variations from the original are thought to indicate its translation from manuscripts without points; and in the Pentateuch it comes nearer the Samaritan than the Hebrew text. Being earlier than the Christian æra, it is of the highest critical value, particularly in the passages prophetic of the Messiah; though Dr. Smith^b considers that the translators themselves had faint ideas of the doctrine and promise of a Saviour. It was both in the Eastern and Western Church the only Bible used for many centuries, as none of the Fathers, except Origen and Jerome, were acquainted with Hebrew. Its use in the Church ruined its reputation with the Jews, who substituted for it the version of Aquila, (A. D. 130,) a proselyte from Christianity, and were said to keep a yearly fast, in order to curse this translation, in honour of which they used to hold a feast in Philo's time^c. It was familiar both to the writers of the New Testament, and to those for whom they wrote; and as they wrote in Greek, it was natural that they should make use of this translation, which was then probably regarded much in the same light as the authorized version is with us now; but they did not adhere to it without exception. The subject has been fully examined, principally by the foreign critics, and the result has been exhibited by Horne, who

^b Scripture Testimony to the Messiah.

^c Carpsovii Introductio; and Prideaux's Connection, vol. iii. p. 22, &c.

thus sums it up. “As their quotations now correspond with the Hebrew very frequently in express words, and generally in the sense, so it is highly probable that they uniformly agreed at first, and that where the Hebrew was properly expressed in the Greek version, they used the words of that version; but where it materially varied, they either gave the sense of the passage cited in their own words, or took as much of the Septuagint as suited their purpose, introducing the requisite alterations. Hence several passages are direct quotations from neither. All this accords with what ordinary writers in similar circumstances would have done; but the sacred penmen, being themselves inspired, might take liberties which we must not, because their comments are equally the word of God with the text commented on.”

All then who aspire to a critical knowledge of the style of the New Testament, must familiarize themselves with the language of this version, which is entitled to the denomination of a peculiar idiom; since it not only consists, as has been observed, of Hebrew phrases in Greek words, but even uses single Greek words in senses in which they never occur in classical writers^d. This difference in idiom constitutes a

^d For example, we should turn in vain over the classics, or recur to the roots *ἀγίος* and *δικη*, to ascertain the full import of *ἀγιασμός* and *δικαιοσύνη*, which will be learnt by examining the Hebrew *Kadesh* and *Zedek*, which they represent in the Septuagint. Thus also *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, which is a vice in the classics, becomes in the New Testament a virtue; nor can it be justly affirmed, as it is by some, that the word expresses the same disposition of mind, and that the difference is in the judgment formed concerning it, for it is comprised under *μικροψυχία*, *pusillanimity*, by Aristotle, *περὶ ἀριστῶν καὶ κακίων*, and contrasted with *μεγαλοψυχία*, *magnanimity*, and to evince that the corresponding Latin term *humilitas*, in heathen authors, has the same meaning, we require no better authority than Cicero. “*Succumbere doloribus eosque humili animo imbecilloque ferre miserum est.*” *De Finibus*, l. To this he opposes, “*Robustus animus et excelsus liber cura et angore.*” In conformity, however, with the style of the Italic translation, this word has been made the sign of the Christian virtue, *humility*; which Castalio, in his Bible, zealous for his Latinity, always renders by *modestia*. To those who would enter more fully into the subject, I recommend the chapter on the Septuagint in Ernesti’s *Institutes*, from which I extract the following observations. Whatever Greek word corresponded etymologically to a Hebrew word, or expressed its primary signification, was employed by the translators also for all the tropical significations, and

difficulty much harder to be surmounted than that of dialect, as it does not affect the form but the meaning of words. Blackwall, and others, have laboured to vindicate the purity of the New Testament Greek^e; and after a laborious investigation, solecisms have been explained away, by the production of similar phrases in the most approved classical authors. Their industry has been in several instances successful; yet upon the whole the truth of the remark remains unimpaired, for the general homeliness of the diction has been frankly owned both by Origen^f and by Chrysostom, who were far more competent judges of such a question than any modern can be, since not only was Greek their native tongue, but they were famous for eloquence, especially the latter, who has been called the Christian Demosthenes, and is indebted to it for his surname Golden-mouthed, which has nearly superseded his baptismal name, John. Still the New Testament contains fewer Hebrew grammatical constructions than the Septuagint, except in the book of Revelation, and a large proportion of the phrases and constructions is Greek, of the same degree of purity as that spoken in Macedonia, in which Polybius wrote his history.

Cicero^g informs us, that the Greek philosophers were of opinion, that if Jupiter were to speak Greek, he would use the language of Plato. If we enquire, why, on the contrary, the true God chose to communicate his will in an idiom which

that in a way irreconcilable with the usages of Greek. Thus *ῥῆμα* is made to represent Dabar in its double sense of *word* and *thing*. Secondly, when Hebrew words have many different meanings which cannot well be explained by tropical transference, nor derived from the primary signification, the corresponding Greek words are used with the same latitude; thus as Nathan is either *to give* or *to place*, *τίθειναι* and *δίδοναι* are used alternately. John x. 17. 11.

^e The Sacred Classics defended and illustrated.

^f "Lest we should make ourselves ridiculous arguing thus with Grecians, for our dispute is with them, let us accuse the Apostles of being illiterate, for this accusation is an encomium." *Hom. iii. in 1 Cor. i.* Origen goes still farther, "The Apostles, not ignorant of their defects, profess themselves to be of the vulgar in speech, but not in knowledge." *Philocalia iv.*

^g De Claris Oratoribus, 31.

they would have despised as barbarous, we reply, that it was in part, at least, that success, which was the consequence of divine truth, should not be attributed to human eloquence. And this very fact, which to critics of fastidious taste has been a stumbling block, is an intrinsic and irresistible evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament, since it is such in respect of style as could only have been written by Jews, and hardly even by Jews (such as Philo and Josephus) superior in rank and education to the disciples of our Lord. It may be added, (which greatly strengthens this argument,) that we find under this homely garb, the most exalted sentiments, the most convincing reasoning, the purest morality, and the sublimest doctrines, far beyond their own powers of mind to originate. Many authors who have devoted their time to the study of Greek have collected from the classics all the expressions, that can in any way illustrate the style of the New Testament; Lexicons also have been drawn up for the same purpose, none of which can be compared with Schleusner's, who has methodized and arranged in alphabetical order the most important remarks of preceding critics. It ought to be observed, however, that his own opinion must be taken with caution, in words which bear upon the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; since, like too many of his learned countrymen, he unhappily seems to be not a believer in them^b.

^b Examples of this are given by Bishop Jebb, in his *Sacred Literature*. This Section is principally abridged from one of Dr. Campbell's Dissertations.

SECTION VI.

On the Versions of the New Testament.

THE New Testament has been translated into the language of almost every nation that has been converted to Christianity. The ancient versions, especially the Syriac and the Latin, have a critical value, since they give us the sense of doubtful words, which we may presume prevailed while Greek was a living tongue; and being translated from manuscripts of higher antiquity than any now extant, they supply us with various readings which are in some instances preferred to those of the original text. The first was made probably in the second century; and the second, called the Vulgate, because generally received, deserves our study, as its author Jerome carefully collated the Greek manuscripts which were accessible to him, and it cannot be more modern than the beginning of the fifth century. As its adoption by the Church was voluntary and gradual, and as the Italic, that is, the old Latin translation, continued long in use in many places, there is reason to believe that the two have been blended together; at least we now find in the Vulgate phrases which its author expressly condemns, so that the style is not uniform throughout. We must also remember, that fear of shocking the prejudices of the ignorant prevented his introducing every improvement that he thought desirable. The sense in many places is conveyed justly and perspicuously; in others we find barbarisms and solecisms, to which it would be difficult to discover a temptation^k. But upon the whole it may be pronounced to be a good and faithful version, and though not to be implicitly followed, it must be of great

^k Thus the Greek *ὅτι*, which answers both to *quod* and *quia*, is almost always rendered by the latter, in defiance of sense and grammar; as thus, "Tunc confitebor illis *quia* nunquam novi vos."

service to the critic; especially as from its having been finished long before those controversies arose, which are the foundation of most of the sects now subsisting, it can have no bias to any side. Protestants, however, are apt to be prejudiced against it, because it was declared to be authentic by the Council of Trent; but the real reason of the decision was, that the members of that Council, knowing that versions were preparing by Protestants from the original, with which scarcely any of them were acquainted, interposed their authority in favour of the Bible already in use. Some passages¹ from it certainly are adduced, favourable to the abuses which have crept into the Roman Church, but there is no reason to suppose that they were so translated with any sinister design. The Douay Bible and the Rheims English Testament, published in opposition to that of the English Church, and other translations by Roman Catholics into their vernacular tongues, are from this text, which in consequence of the Trent decree has taken the place of the original. Being in constant use during the middle ages, it has contributed to form the theological language of Europe, and has had an influence upon our own authorized version, particularly in what are called consecrated terms, which King James instructed his translators to retain, and which had been familiarized by use. From the same causes

¹ As in the Old Testament, “*she (ipsa)* shall bruise thy head;” (Gen. iii. 15.) which affords some colour to the excessive honour paid to the Virgin Mary, and explains why Roman Catholic painters have represented her trampling upon a serpent. The best critics, however, of that Church, consider this as the mistake of a transcriber, and refer to ancient manuscripts, which read *ipsum*. A text, in the New, is quoted in support of the adoration of relics. “*Jacobus adoravit fastigium virgæ ejus;*” *προσκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ*: “worshipped *leaning* upon the top of his staff;” it is supposed that in the Latin the preposition was accidentally dropped. It renders *μυστήριον*, *sacramentum*, (Eph. v. 32.) and thereby has tended to exalt matrimony into a sacrament; but it appears from ecclesiastical writers, and other parts of this version, that this word was used for the moral or hidden meaning of an apologue; thus, (Rev. xvii. 7.) “*Ego dicam tibi sacramentum mulieris.*” The same justification may be urged for “*pœnitentiam agere,*” which, though translated *do penance*, in the Rhemish Testament, meant originally to *repent*.

that affected the original, this version in the lapse of ages was corrupted through the carelessness of transcribers. And notwithstanding the attempt of Alcuin, under the authority of Charlemagne, to restore it to its integrity, great varieties continued to prevail. When the Council declared it to be authentic, it became necessary that the standard of appeal should be correct; and accordingly an edition of authority was issued from the Roman press, by the celebrated Pope Sixtus the Fifth, who is said to have himself revised the proofs. Still notwithstanding, it was soon ascertained to be so inaccurate, that his successor Clement VIII. suppressed it, and sent forth, 1592, another edition, which is the present Bible of the Church of Rome.

In modern times several translations have been made by Roman Catholics and Protestants, of which the only one I think it worth while to name is that of the celebrated Beza, which has been made the standard of most of the vernacular versions used by the Reformed Churches, and has occasionally perverted certain doctrinal texts in our own. "It requires," says Campbell, "but very little of a critical eye to discover in him a constant and indeed an avowed effort to accommodate the language to his own theological views^m."

Wickliffe, the morning-star of the Reformation, as he has

^m We have a remarkable instance in Acts xiv. 23. which bears upon church government; *Χιροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς πρεσβυτέρους*: "Quumque ipsi per *suffragia* creassent presbyteros." The Vulgate renders it *consti, tuissent*; he has been followed by the French Diodati, and by the Geneva English, but not by the authors of our version; they have, however, rendered like him, *ἑρρίθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις*, in the sermon on the mount, *by* them, instead of *to* them; in which he is followed by almost all Protestant translators, though he confesses the other rendering to be more faithful; they have translated after him, in a sense more favourable to final perseverance than the original, the 38th verse of Heb. x. *Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται καὶ ἰὰν ὑποστίλῃται*: "The just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back:" although it is rendered *he* in the older translations. He even renders *πάντας, quosvis*, instead of *omnes, ὅς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι*, (1 Tim. ii. 4.) that he may do away the testimony of this text in favour of universal redemption; but in this our translators do not follow him. In candour it ought to be added, that for such variations he assigns his reasons in the notes, and as it is accompanied with the Vulgate and the Greek text, no reader can be misled.

been called, promoted that great work, not only by numerous tracts, but also by a translation of the whole Bible, which being from the Vulgate, is chiefly interesting as a specimen of the language, in its transition from Saxon to English. The first translation from the Greek is that of the martyr Tindale, who retired, for this purpose, to Antwerp; where, with the assistance of Fryth, who was burnt for heresy in Smithfield, and Roye, a friar, who suffered death, on the same account, in Portugal, he finished it only four years after the printing of Luther's, the earliest from the original in any modern tongue¹. Seven editions of it appeared, but all abroad, before his martyrdom, 1536. In the opinion of Dr. Geddes, few first translations are preferable; and he observes, that it has not been surpassed in perspicuity and purity of style by any subsequent version. Several of our reformers, having been driven from England by Mary's persecution, published an English Testament at Geneva, 1557, and completed the Bible in 1560. In 1568, the Bible projected by Archbishop Parker was published. Distinct portions of it, at least fifteen in number, were allotted to men of competent ability, and as eight of these were bishops, it goes by the name of the Bishops' Bible. This translation was used in the Church for forty years, though the Geneva Bible, on account of the notes, was more read in private houses, and is that which is quoted in the Homilies. In 1582, the Roman Catho-

¹ The following chronological list of translations may be found useful.
 Erasmus, 1516. His version varies little from the Vulgate.
 Luther, 1522.
 Tindale, 1526.
 Coverdale's Bible, and Olivetan, French, 1535.
 Castalio's Bible, 1551.
 Beza's Testament, 1556.
 Geneva Testament, 1557.
 ——— Bible, 1560.
 The Bishops' Bible, 1568.
 Junius and Tremellius, 1575.
 Rheims Testament, 1582.
 Diodati, 1607.
 The Douay Bible, 1609—1610.
 The Authorized Version, 1611; being eighty-five years after Tindale's.

lics, finding it impossible to withhold the Scriptures any longer from the people, printed their Testament at Rheims. Objections having been made to the Bishops' Bible at the Hampton Court Conference, the King gave orders for a new version. It was consigned to fifty-four persons; but some of these must have died, or declined the task, for the list, as given in Fuller's Church History, comprises only forty-seven names. They were divided into six classes: ten were to meet at Westminster, and translate from Genesis to the second Book of Kings inclusive. Eight at Cambridge undertook the other Historical Books and the Hagiographa. Seven at Oxford were to translate the Prophets. The Gospels, Acts, and Apocalypse were assigned to another company at Oxford of eight. The Epistles were translated at Westminster, and the Apocrypha at Cambridge. Properly speaking, it is not so much a new translation, as a revision of the preceding one; as any one may convince himself of, who will compare it with Tindale's, the source of them all. And in so doing, they were faithful to their commission, for they were instructed to alter the Bishops' Bible as little as the original would permit, and to use the other translations when they agreed better with it. It was begun in 1607, and published in 1611. After this publication the former versions fell gradually into disuse; only the Psalms from Cranmer's Bible, 1539, are still retained in our Book of Common Prayer.

No translation bears a higher character; but though substantially correct, it must, as an uninspired work, have its defects. Its actual mistakes are few, but in many instances the full energy of an expression, and the precise shade of meaning, has not been conveyed. This cannot always be transfused into a version: in other cases it is resolvable into the imperfect knowledge of the translator; for the two centuries which have passed since, have contributed much to a more critical understanding of the original tongue. These blemishes are not often in essential points, yet they injure the effect. Campbell has happily transferred to such correc-

tions as modern criticism supplies, Spence'sⁿ remarks upon the utility of his inquiries into the remains of ancient art for throwing light upon the classics. "The chief use I have found in this sort of study, has not been so much in discovering what was wholly unknown, as in strengthening and beautifying what was known before. When the day was so much overcast just now, you saw all the same objects that you do at present; these trees, that river, the forest on the left hand, and those spreading vales to the right; but now the sun is broke out, you see all of them more clearly, and with more pleasure. It shews scarce any thing you did not see before, but it gives new life and lustre to every thing you did see."

The fluctuations to which language is liable, has rendered our version, in some words^o, unintelligible to the unlearned reader, and in certain passages has affected the meaning, but for this the translators are of course not accountable. Their principal fault is the arbitrary rendering the same Greek word by different English ones. They avow in their preface, that they have not tied themselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, which was in their opinion to savour more of curiosity than wisdom; and would have been,

ⁿ Polymetis, Dialogue vi.

^o Archbishop Newcome has entered fully into the subject in his *Historical View of English Biblical Translations*, Dublin, 1792. The following words may serve as specimens of the obsolete: "leasing," for *lies*; "daysman," for *umpire*; "carriage," for *baggage*, Acts xxi. 15. 1 Sam. xvii. 22. "oweth," for *owneth*; "to eschew," to *avoid*. In the following the meaning is affected; "Take no thought," (*μίμνω*) for *be not anxious*. *Ἀναστροφὴ*, *conversatio*: conversation is now limited to discourse, but originally included conduct. This has enfeebled several moral exhortations, as these; "Be an example of the believers in word, in conversation;" *ἐν λόγῳ, ἐν ἀναστροφῇ*, 1 Tim. iv. 12. They "falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ," *καλὴν ἀναστροφὴν*, 1 Pet. iii. 16. Lust and lewdness are now restricted to one particular vice, and usury is applied no longer to what is considered as the proper interest of money; meat and food, quick and living, faithless and unbelieving, have also ceased to be synonymous. And it is generally known, that to *let*, (Rom. i. 13. 2 Thess. ii. 7.) and to *prevent*, have changed meanings. The use of *of*, for *by* and *from*, produces occasionally ambiguity, as, (John viii. 40.) "A man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God."

if they had only taken the liberty in such words as they specify, as *pain* for *ache*, *joy* for *gladness*. Their inaccuracy in this respect has produced a greater diversity in the translation than exists in the original, and quite prevents the English reader from observing the differences in style; thus, for example, Mark ix. 40. and Luke ix. 50. Matt. xxvi. 41. and Mark xiv. 38. are respectively identical in Greek, but not in English; and in the fourth chapter of Romans, where the word ἐλογίσθη so often occurs, it is rendered *reckoned*, *imputed*, and *counted*. They have also rendered καταλλαγή *atonement*, (in the only passage in the New Testament into which that word is introduced,) though they translate the verb *reconcile*. The Roman Catholics with more propriety have *reconcilement*; Romans v. 10, 11. for our translators in the Old Testament use *atonement* to represent ἱλασμός which signifies propitiation, and to the modern reader there seems an impropriety in saying that men have received an atonement. In consequence, many passages lose much of their beauty, when the meaning is not impairedⁱ, in others the sense is affected^k.

ⁱ Take the following instances out of many, in which an adherence to this rule would have made the translation much more emphatic. Διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφάνηκεν, because that which may be known of God is *manifest* to them, for God hath *manifested* it, Rom. i. 19. "ἵνα διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως τῶν γραφῶν τὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχωμεν ὁ δὲ Θεὸς τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως δόξη ὑμῖν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν, that through *patience* and the *comfort* of the Scriptures we might have *hope*. Now may the God of *patience* and *comfort* grant, &c. Rom. xv. 4, 5. 'Ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἔβη ἐλπιούσιν, ὁ δὲ Θεὸς τῆς ἐλπίδος πληρῶσαι ὑμᾶς πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ εἰρήνης, 12, 13. "In him shall the nations *hope*:" "Now may the God of *hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Οὐχ ὅτι ἱκανοὶ ἐσμεν ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν, λογίσασθαί τι, ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλ' ἡ ἰκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "Ὅς καὶ ἰκάνωσιν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης. Not as if we were *able* of ourselves to reason at all as of ourselves, for our *ability* is of God, who has made us *able* ministers of the new covenant. 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

^k Thus a passage in the Acts, viii. 9, 13. is so translated, as to countenance a belief in witchcraft, "bewitched;" but ἐξίσταν only means *astonished*, and is rendered *wondered* when applied in the same chapter to Philip. *They take pleasure in*, συνευδοκοῦσι, (Rom. i. 32.) is softened down to, "He was consenting to his death;" from the *consentiens* of the Vulgate when used of Paul, though faithfully rendered by Tindale. Κλέπτῃς and ληστῆς, thief and robber, are confounded in our version; thus, the persons who attacked the traveller to Jericho were not thieves in the present sense of the word; and the malefactors between whom our Lord

But although our translators have not made what use they might of our various synonymes, the variety of the

was crucified, were robbers; for theft was not among the Jews a capital offence. A harshness and severity, not in the original, is given by the frequent use of the word *fool*, which is made to stand not for *μωρός* only, but for terms of a much milder import, as *ἄφρων*, *ἀνόητος*, *ἄσοφος*. Many instructive distinctions, in the meaning of words nearly synonymous will be observed, by examining Stephens's or Williams's Greek Concordance; and much valuable information on the subject will be collected from a perusal of Campbell's Introductory Dissertations. He distinguishes in his version between the outer and inner garment, *ἱμάτιον* and *χιτῶν*, rendering the first, *cloak*, the latter, *coat*. He translates *εὐαγγέλιζεν*, to declare good news, and *κηρύσσειν*, not "to preach," but to *proclaim the Gospel*, and *ὁμοιοπαθής*, (Acts xiv. 15. James v. 17.) not "of like passions," but *of like nature*. *Μυστήριον*, means "what is secret, not yet revealed," but *mystery*, what is incomprehensible, and therefore cannot be revealed. *Σκληροκαρδία*, literally *hardness of heart*, does not mean inhumanity, but perverseness. With us the heart is made the seat of the feelings, but the ancients placed in it the intellect. Hence "reasoning," Mark ii. 6. "thought," Acts viii. 22. "comparison," Rom. x. 10. and "reflection," Luke ii. 19. are referred to it, and *cordatus* in Latin means *intelligent*. We may here notice the difference on this subject of figurative language in ancient and modern times. "Physici dicunt homines splene ridere, felle irasci, jecore amare corde sapere et pulmone jactari," is the remark of Cornutus upon Persius; and to the same purport, it is said in the Testament of the twelve patriarchs, (supposed to be the work of a Christian of the first century,) that God made the heart for thought, the liver for passion, the gall for bitterness, the spleen for laughter.

Blasphemy is confined to an offence against the Deity, but *βλασφημία* means reviling any one, even the evil spirit, Jude 9; our translators, therefore, have often rendered it defaming or reviling; it would have been better if they had so done in Matt. xii. 31. "all manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," &c. and (1 Tim. i. 13.) where Paul says he had been a blasphemer. *Ἄδης*, the place of departed spirits, and *γέεννα*, the place of future punishment, are confounded under the common name of "hell," except in 1 Cor. xv. 55; although almost all the foreign translators, except Luther, have preserved the distinction. But the most important words of this class are *μεταμελίωμαι* and *μετανῶω*, and their derivatives, which are both rendered to "repent;" but the first, as the etymology shews, means to *repent* or *grieve*, the second, to *change the purpose* or *reform*. In conformity with this statement, Phavorinus defines *μεταμέλεια*, [the noun does not occur in the New Testament,] "dissatisfaction with one's self for what one has done;" and *μετάνοια*, "a change from worse to better." The first accordingly, if genuine, will terminate in the latter. In some passages either translation would equally answer the purpose, in others the difference is essential, in none more than in 2 Cor. vii. 10. the Apostle's declaration, Ἡ κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀμεταμέλητον κατεργάζεται, which in the English version not only introduces an unsuitable play upon words, but makes him state an identical proposition; whereas if rendered as suggested, it contains an accurate definition of genuine repentance:

original language can never be fully communicated to our poorer tongue. For example, λέγω, ἔπω, φημί, φάσκω, φράζω, ῥέω, εἶρω, ἔρειω, all answer to the English word *say*; and yet an attentive perusal will show that they are not strictly synonymous. Thus our Lord says, in his sermon on the mount, Ἠκούσατε ὅτι Ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις, οὐ φονεύσεις, Ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὅσαν εἶπη τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ. Throughout this discourse, what he authoritatively delivers from himself, is signified by λέγω; whatever is mentioned as standing upon the authority of tradition, is expressed by ῥέω; and whatever is mentioned incidentally, by ἔπω. Of this verb we may observe, that it is used several times by Matthew, once by Mark, but never by the other Evangelists: εἶρω, is used by all except John; and ἔρειω, by all except Mark. Thus Luke calls our Lord six times Ἐπιστάτης, a word peculiar to himself: Καθηγητής is once employed by Matthew, and rendered by *Master*, the common translation both of Κύριος and Διδάσκαλος; an ambiguity which may mislead the English reader of St. James's Epistle, who may not be aware that masters, in the first verse of his third chapter, mean teachers; Δεσπότης, which implies Sovereignty, and is applied to Christ, by Peter, (2 Epist. ii. 1.) by Jude, and in the Revelation, (vi. 10.) is as well as Κύριος rendered *Lord*.

Greek has four words, βρώσκω, ἐσθίω, τρώγω, φάγω, answering to the verb *to eat*, and no less than ten for the act of *seeing*. The same remark may be exemplified in nouns; we have for a *net*, δίκτυον, ἀμφίβληστρον, and σαγήνη; and κόφινος and σφυρίς, for a *basket*; evidently of different dimensions, as the latter was capable of holding a man, (Acts ix. 25.); we have παιδία and τέκνα, for *children*; and ὁ πλησίον, γείτων, and περιοικὸς for *neighbour*: φίλος and ἑταῖρος are both rendered *friend*, which in the proper sense belongs only to the first; the latter being merely a term of civility, which is addressed to the dissatis-

Godly sorrow produceth a reformation to salvation not to be repented of. However, it must be owned, that these words are used promiscuously in the Septuagint, but the distinction is observed in the Syriac, and by Beza and Castalio, though not by Jerome.

fied labourer in the vineyard, (Matt. xx. 13.) to the guest without a wedding garment, (xxii. 12.) and to Judas (xxvi. 50.) when betraying his Master. It is granted that it is not always practicable to mark these shades of meaning, but it may be done frequently, as Campbell has shewn, and when done, the sense is more perfectly exhibited. Thus *θεωρεῖν* has clearly a more extensive meaning than *ἰδεῖν*. The enemies of our Lord *saw* him as distinctly as his disciples; it cannot be that whoever seeth the Son with his bodily eyes has eternal life; it is he that *contemplateth* or observeth the Son, that is, sees him as the Son, acknowledging his nature, character, and offices.

Another defect in our translators is, their frequent omission of the definite article; for a most interesting and important examination of which, I refer to Bishop Middleton's treatise. This neglect has lowered the emphasis of several passages; as this, "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am," is not equivalent to, You call me *the* Master, and *the* Lord; the former might be said of any teacher, the latter with propriety of one alone, Him who teacheth not as man does. It has also occasioned far greater injury, for it has obscured some plain and positive declarations of our Lord's divinity. Thus, *Ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, in the opening of Peter's second Epistle, is mistranslated, "through the righteousness of God *and* our Saviour," making two persons where the original speaks but of one: and in that to the Ephesians, v. 5. *Ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ*, the omission of the article before the second noun shews that Christ is here called God. "Looking for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ," (*Ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν*, Tit. ii. 13.) is a similar construction, confirmed by the allusion to his appearance, which never is said of the Father, whom no one has seen or can see; and this is the remark of Chrysostom, who refers the passage exclusively to the Son. *Ὁ Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ*, (James i. 27.) a phrase precisely similar, has always been rightly supposed to apply to the Father,

though rendered “ God and the Father;” but the same, 1 Cor. xv. 24. is translated, without any ambiguity, to God *even* the Father, τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρί. Καὶ μόνον δεσπότην [Θεὸν] καὶ Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἀρνούμενοι, Jude 4, and denying our only sovereign [God¹] and Lord Jesus Christ. This error is the more remarkable, since the true translation of the passage in Peter was given by Tindale and in the Bishops’ Bible, and also in the Rhemish Testament. Probably our translators were influenced by the authority of Erasmus; yet they often deferred to Beza, who, long before Mr. Granville Sharp had established this canon of criticism, declared in his note upon Titus, that the genius of the Greek language requires, that where there is only one article and two nouns, the article should apply to both, and closes it with this practical conclusion, Christo igitur, ut vere magno et æterno Deo, ὁμοουσίῳ καὶ συναίδιῳ sit gloria et laus omnis in sæcula sæculorum. Mr. Boyd, who has in many ways made his knowledge of the language subserve the cause of Christianity, in a valuable Essay appended to Dr. Clarke’s Commentary on the Ephesians, shows, by numerous examples, that this use of the article is not confined to the New Testament or the Greek Fathers, but prevails in those authors, who wrote the language in the utmost purity, both in verse and prose.

At a period when the imperfections of this version have been grossly exaggerated, as I have myself taken the liberty of stating some, it seems proper to close these remarks with observing, that its general merit and equality, at least, with those of other countries, has been strenuously maintained by those whose knowledge makes them competent to decide, from its first appearance down to our own times. “ It is incomparably superior to any thing which might be expected in the present age,” says Bishop Middleton; “ as to composition, it is simple, it is harmonious, it is energetic, and, which is of no small importance, use has made it familiar, and time has

¹ This is omitted in the Vulgate and the Alexandrine MSS; but though we should drop it with Griesbach, yet the next verse shows that deity is ascribed to Jesus by Jude.

rendered it [sacred.]” The best proof of its excellence, as observed by Whittaker, in his critical examination of Mr. Bellamy’s hardy and arrogant assertions, is, “ that it has been used, since its first appearance by the Dissenters as well as by the Church, and has been esteemed by all for its general faithfulness, and the severe beauty of its language.” To conclude, in the words of Scott, “ During nearly two hundred years our translation has been extant, and persons of various descriptions have made new translations of the whole, or particular parts; and scarcely any writer on these subjects fails to mention alterations which he supposes to be improvements. It may then be asked, How can unlearned persons know that the authorized version may be depended on? Let the inquirer, however, remember, that Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Calvinists, and Arminians, who maintain eager controversies with each other, all appeal to the same version, and in no matters of consequence object to it; and, in fact, if all different readings, and all their alterations, were adopted, the rule of duty and the articles of faith would continue the same they now are.”

SECTION VII.

On the Geography of the Holy Land.

WE naturally associate with remarkable events their locality, and the imagination forms a picture of the spot, which we wish to correct from the original. Who, that is even but imperfectly acquainted with the poetry and history of antiquity, has not longed at times to ascend the Acropolis of the city of Minerva, or to wander among the ruins of the ancient capital of the world? But what are the emotions of admiration which Athens or Rome can awaken in the minds of comparatively few, to the sentiments of reverence and gratitude which must touch the hearts of all believers, when they meditate on that hallowed land,

of the Euphrates, but it does not seem to have been regularly possessed for any length of time to this extent, except under David and Solomon ; and it is of less consequence to enter into this question, as there never could have been any considerable fixed population in the pasture grounds and sandy deserts on the left of the Jordan. That river, the only one in Palestine, for the other streams are no more than winter torrents, is a peculiar feature in its physical geography. Its true source is a small round lake, called from its shape the Bowl, at the foot of the eastern ridge of Lebanon, known in classical geography by the name of Anti-Libanus, whence it passes under ground, and, emerging from a cave near Cæsarea Philippi, flows due south, passing through the Lake of Galilee, and then, after a rapid course of about a hundred miles, rolls into the Dead Sea a volume of water, from two to three hundred feet in width, with a current so violent, that an expert swimmer will find it hardly practicable to cross it. Here it is lost ; but it seems probable from recent travels, that, previous to that convulsion of nature which converted the plain of Sodom into a lake, it found its way to the Elanitic gulph of the Red Sea, as is presumed from a deep valley bounded by mountains, which may be traced through the whole intermediate desert, and appears to have been traversed by the Israelites, and was in after times one of the lines by which the commerce of India and Africa with Palestine was carried on. The lake, or, to use the Hebrew idiom, the Sea of Galilee, on the shores of which our Saviour chiefly lived during his ministry, is about sixteen miles in length by six ; and is called by St. John the Sea of Tiberias, from a celebrated city in its vicinity. “ Its broad surface,” observes Dr. Clarke, “ covering the bottom of a profound valley, environed by lofty and precipitous eminences, added to the impression of a certain reverential awe under which every Christian pilgrim approaches it, gives it a character of dignity unparalleled by any similar scenery.” He describes it as finer than any of the English lakes, but as inferior to Loch Lomond. “ The barren aspect of the mountains, and the total absence of

wood," says Buckingham, "give a cast of dulness to the picture, and this is increased to melancholy by the dead calm of its waters, and the silence which reigns throughout its whole extent, where, though it still abounds with fish, not a boat is now to be seen." A strong current through it marks the passage of the river, and when this is opposed by contrary winds which blow with the force of a hurricane from the south-west, sweeping into the lake from the mountains, a boisterous sea is instantly raised. A second lake, which greatly exceeds it in dimensions, derives its name, the Dead Sea, from the popular but erroneous opinion, that fish cannot live in it. Its water is perfectly transparent, yet salter and heavier than that of the ocean, and containing no less than a fourth of its weight of mineral ingredients, and of such a specific gravity, as will enable a man to float on the surface without motion. The air, loaded by evaporation with sulphureous vapours, is fatal to vegetation. The coast is rocky and desolate, and well suited to the tales related concerning it by the inhabitants of the country, who speak of it with terror. It was once, as we learn from the Old Testament, a fertile well watered plain, in which were Sodom and Gomorrah, and three other cities, which, on account of the wickedness of their inhabitants, were destroyed by an interposition of the Almighty. Modern travellers assure us, that the neighbouring country is volcanic; and it is highly probable, that this awful visitation of God, who generally effects his purposes by secondary causes, was produced in part by the agency of subterranean fire. In confirmation of this supposition, we may cite Deut. xxix. 23. "all the land burning with brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah." Nor was the fire thus kindled soon extinguished; for it continued to send forth flames, smoke, and bitumen, in the first century. Josephus, Bell. Jud. iv. 4, 8. and Henderson, in his Account of Iceland, cites passages from the Prophets^a, which seem to shew that volcanic erup-

^a Thus Nahum, describing the majesty of God, says, "the hills melt,

tions were well known to them, as they sometimes derive their imagery from them.

The face of Palestine is mountainous, but there are some considerable plains, three of which deserve notice. 1. The plain of the sea, extending from the river of Egypt to the promontory of Carmel, being the land of the Philistines. 2. The region round about Jordan, on each side of the river, between the lakes. And, 3. the great plain of Jezreel, or of Esdraelon, the Armageddon of the Apocalypse, which runs from Carmel to the place where the Jordan issues from the Sea of Tiberias. Here, in the middle of the land, and in its most fertile part, the tribe of Issachar rejoiced in their tents. It has been the scene of many a memorable contest: here Barak descending from Mount Tabor discomfited Sisera; here fell Josiah; and here, to use the energetic language of Clarke, "from the days of Nebuchadnezzar, till the march of Buonaparte into Syria, warriors out of every nation have pitched their tents in this great plain, and have had their various banners wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon."

The climate which is hot in summer, is severe in winter, and snow and hail are not uncommon; rain falls rarely except in autumn and spring, but its absence is supplied by very copious night dews. Maundrel says, "We were sufficiently instructed by experience, what the Psalmist means by the dew of Hermon, our tents being as wet with it as if it had rained all night." The *early* or autumnal, and the *latter* or spring, rains, are indispensable for the support of vegetation, and the Scriptures have many allusions to their importance; Deut. xi. 14. Prov. xvi. 15. Jer. iii. 3. v. 24. Hosea vi. 3. Joel ii. 23. Zech. x. 1. The first fall about the beginning of November, when they plough and sow; the latter in the middle of April, a little before the harvest. The fertility of the soil, so often mentioned in the Bible, (Deut. viii. xi. Gen. xxvi. Matt. xiii. 8.) is confirmed by the testimony of and the earth is burned at his presence; his fury is poured out like fire." i. 5, 6. And Jeremiah, li. 25. "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain. I will roll thee down from the rocks, and make thee a burnt mountain."

Josephus, iii. 3. Tacitus, Hist. v. 6. and other heathen writers, and modern travellers. "Under a wise and beneficial government," says Dr. Clarke, "the produce of the Holy Land would exceed all calculation." Our Saviour, in the parable of the sower, suited doubtless to the then state of the country, speaks of a return of sixty or even a hundred fold; and the latter we know repaid the labour and faith of the patriarch Isaac. (Gen. xxvi. 12.) Such being the capability of the soil, its present state under a weak and oppressive administration, which affords no security to property, is not, as infidels have urged, contradictory to the Bible statement, that God hath given it of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; (Gen. xxvii. 28.) but in reality its diminished population and produce confirm it; for, in the event of the Israelites breaking the covenant, these among other judgments were prophesied against them; and their accomplishment is a standing comment upon the Psalmist's declaration, (cvii. 34.) that "he turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

This land of promise, so called, because promised by God to Abraham's posterity, when taken possession of by Joshua four centuries after, was portioned by lot into twelve shares for the tribes of Israel. The service of the Lord being the inheritance or lot (*κληρος*) of the tribe of Levi, it was maintained by tithes, first-fruits, and its share of the sacrifices, and had no other landed property than forty-eight cities for their residence, dispersed among their brethren; but their place was supplied by one of the sons of Joseph, for he as the adopted eldest son had a double portion, and therefore both his sons were counted as tribes. Half one of these tribes, Manasseh, Reuben, and Gad, had their portions, according to their own desire, east of Jordan; the others ranked in the following order; from north to south, Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, Isaachar, the other half of Manasseh, Ephraim, Dan, Benjamin, Judah, and Simeon.

On the return of Benjamin and Judah, (for the ten tribes

which formed the kingdom of Israel have never been restored as a nation, some families only joining the two tribes,) they settled in the southern extremity of the country, including their own original habitations, as well as that of Simeon, to which the name of Judæa, in its strictest sense, thenceforward appropriated. The northern part, which was the most fertile and populous as well as extensive, was called Galilee, and the upper part of it, from its large heathen population, Galilee of the Gentiles, under which name Isaiah mentions it as the chief scene of our Saviour's miracles. In the middle lay Samaria, and Peræa owed its name to its position beyond the river. The names of few places occur in the New Testament. In Judæa we have, exclusive of Jerusalem, Ephraim, eight miles to the north of it, to which Jesus retired, after raising Lazarus from the dead; and Hebron, twenty miles to the south; for though it is not named, it is justly supposed to be the city in the hill country, which was the residence of Zacharias. Near this was the tree under which Abraham entertained the angels, and the cave in which his wife, himself, and his son, were buried. Jericho, the first city taken from the Canaanites, was razed to the ground by Joshua. He declared, that whoever should presume to rebuild it, would be punished by the extinction of his family, and the prediction was verified in the reign of Ahab. It became famous for the schools of the prophets, and in our Saviour's time ranked next to Jerusalem in extent and magnificence. It was situated in the great plain, and as the road to it was rocky and desert, it was much infested by robbers; a circumstance which marks the propriety of selecting it for the scene of the benevolence of the good Samaritan. Bethlehem, only six miles from Jerusalem, is pleasantly situated on an eminence in a very fertile soil, which only wants cultivation to render it, what its name imports, a place abounding in provisions. In the immediate vicinity of the capital we have Bethphage, and a little beyond Bethany, and at a greater distance Emmaus, so called from its hot springs, which became afterwards a Roman colony. Jerusalem did not become the capital

till David conquered it from the Jebusites, and it had ceased to be considered in that light by the Romans, who transferred the seat of government to Cæsarea. It covered the oblong area of two hills of secondary limestone, of steep ascent on every side except the north, inclosed within an amphitheatre of eminences of a more commanding elevation. It is surrounded on three sides by deep ravines, the widest of which is watered during the three winter months by the torrent Kedron, and is called the valley of Jehoshaphat. The Almighty says in the prophecy of Joel, iii. 2. "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them for my people," &c. And from this it is supposed by some that it will be the place of the final judgment. Gehenna, or the valley of Hinnom, opens into it on the south of the city. Here the children had been made to pass through the fire to Moloch, and as their shrieks were drowned by the sound of drums, it was also called Tophet, from the Hebrew name of that instrument. When Josiah abolished this with the other idolatrous rites, a fire was kept constantly burning in it to consume the filth of the city, and this rendered it a fit emblem for the unquenchable fire of hell. The Mount of Olives, where our Saviour wept over the approaching ruin of the temple, and where Titus encamped, is higher than the city, and commands a complete view of it. A few of the trees which give it a name still grow there, and it retains a languishing verdure; but all around the general aspect is blighted, the grass is withered, and the bare rock appears through the scanty sward. Some gardens still remain on the sloping base of Mount Zion, watered from the pool of Siloam, and in the glen below a grove of aged olive trees is supposed to mark the site of the garden of Gethsemane. Modern Jerusalem has an imposing appearance, as seen from the Mount of Olives, but on entering it, as in most Asiatic cities, the illusion vanishes. There are no squares, the streets are narrow, the buildings mean, and we may exclaim with Jeremiah, Lam. i. 6. "From the daughter of Zion all her beauty hath departed!" Mr. Jolliffe



estimates the population at 25,000, Dr. Richardson at 20,000, in the proportion of 5000 Mohammedans, 5000 Christians, and double the number of Jews. The temple, of which not a vestige remains, has been succeeded by a mosque, which is reckoned inferior in sanctity to none but that of Mecca, and neither Jew nor Christian are permitted to enter the sacred area, on pain of death. The governor, however, dispensed with the prohibition in favour of Dr. Richardson, and a description of the building and gardens within this inclosure, which is nearly 1500 feet by 1000, may be read in his Travels, and in those of Ali Beg. The circumference of the modern city is less than three miles, and Josephus estimates that of the ancient one as within five. Golgotha, a place of execution on the west of Jerusalem, was so called from the skulls of those who were crucified there; and to the Christians of the west, who derive their theological language from the Latin translation of the Scriptures, it is better known by the name of Calvary. It is not high, nor is it a separate mountain, but merely a bluff point on the lower slope; and to the north and west the rock rises considerably above it. At the time of the Saviour's crucifixion, Golgotha was without the gates; but when Christianity triumphed over Paganism, the population gathered round this venerated spot, which is now not only within the walls, but the centre of the city. The temple was in our Saviour's time, as it had been for ages, the great ornament and glory of Jerusalem; and as the spot chosen by God himself for his dwelling among men, it must be more interesting to the believer in revealed religion than any other edifice. It is desirable that the Christian should form a correct idea of it, as in the Epistles, particularly those to the Ephesians and the Hebrews, the doctrines of our holy faith are expressed in terms borrowed from that building and its religious services. Happily Josephus, who had often worshipped within its courts, has given so minute a description, that we are better acquainted with it, than with any other of the celebrated buildings of antiquity, which like this have perished, without leaving a vestige. It is a peculiarity of the Mosaic dispensation, that

sacrifice, the most important religious act, could only be performed on the single spot where it should please the Almighty to set his name, after he had given his people possession of the promised land. They were not, however, required to wait for that event, as Moses had been instructed in the mount to form a sanctuary for Jehovah, and had been shown the pattern of it, and of the articles it was to contain. It was a tabernacle or tent, which might be taken to pieces, and put together at pleasure, as was required by a wandering nation: and it accompanied the Israelites in all their journeys, till they obtained possession of Canaan, when it was pitched nearly in the centre of it, at Shiloh. This tent was divided by a veil, and in the inner partition was the ark, a small wooden chest overlaid with gold, into which were put the two tables of the law, the pot of manna as a specimen of the miraculous food of their ancestors, and Aaron's rod which had budded. The lid of gold was called the mercy seat, at the ends of which were two cherubim, looking inward, towards each other, with expanded wings, which met in the middle, and above was the Shechinah, or actual presence of the Deity, in a cloud, from which, on consultation, proceeded the divine oracular answer. The tent was removed from Shiloh to Nob in the days of Saul, but the ark, which gave it sanctity and importance, having been recovered from the Philistines, who had captured it when presumptuously brought into the field by the sons of Eli, was placed by David in Jerusalem, which he had made his capital. He was preparing materials for erecting a permanent mansion for its reception; but this was by a divine command reserved for his son and successor Solomon, a man of peace, and was on the same plan as the moveable tabernacle, but on a larger scale. This temple was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was taken; and the true God remained without a place in which he could be worshipped in the manner he had been pleased to appoint, till it was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, after the return from the captivity. That building, after the lapse of about five centuries, falling into decay, it was gra-

dually restored by Herod the Great, but as it was not taken down at once, it was still considered as the second temple. He employed upon it 18,000 workmen for nine years; yet the Jews continued to adorn it, and to enlarge it with additional buildings, expending upon it the sacred treasure; so that they are justified in asserting that it had been forty-six years in building. It occupied the highest ground in the city, but was itself commanded by the tower Antonia, which Herod had erected, and named after his original patron Mark Antony. That communicated with the temple, and was occupied by a Roman garrison, and is the castle out of which the chief captain and soldiers issued to rescue Paul from the populace, Acts xxi. The different nature of our religious worship and that of the Israelites, has occasioned an equal difference in the places appropriated to that purpose. Where it consists in prayer and exhortation, a capacious building must be provided for the congregation; where sacrifice is the principal act, an altar is most conveniently placed in the open air, and the building, which is merely the symbolical residence of the Deity, which the laity have no need to enter, and from which, indeed, they were by the Mosaic ritual excluded, may be of small dimensions. None, therefore, of the religious edifices of the ancients (for the principle is as applicable to heathen temples, as to that of the true God) will bear any comparison in extent to our larger cathedrals. As soon, therefore, as the primitive Christians were able to provide themselves with places of public worship, the model upon which they built was not the temple, but the basilica, or court of justice; and hence that name is still given to the more distinguished of the ancient churches of Rome, erected by the first Christian emperor and his successors. The *Ναός*, or temple, properly so called, was ninety feet long, by thirty wide, into which our Saviour, not being "a priest after the order of Aaron," never entered; but it stood within an *Ἱερόν*, or sacred inclosure, within which he and other worshippers attended; and this is a distinction carefully preserved by the Evangelists, though seldom retained by any translators, and

altogether disregarded by our own. The consecrated area formed a square of half a mile in circumference; the site was a rocky eminence, and the side of the valley opposite the mount of Olives was lined by a stupendous wall 450 feet high, of blocks of white stone of a prodigious magnitude. Some of them, we learn from Josephus, (art. xv.) were not less than forty-five cubits in length; the disciples therefore, pointing them out to their Lord, might well say, what very large stones were there. The outer inclosure was entered through nine gates, one of which of Corinthian brass, higher and more magnificent than the rest, is supposed to be the Beautiful gate. It was called the court of the Gentiles, because they were not permitted to proceed beyond it; and was surrounded by colonnades, one of which was called Solomon's, because it stood upon the terrace which he had raised from the valley in order to enlarge the area. Josephus calls it the royal portico, and he says that no one could look down from its flat roof without being seized with dizziness; the south-east corner of it is supposed to be the wing from which Satan tempted Christ to precipitate himself. As the Jews did not worship in this outer court, they conceived that it might be used for secular purposes, and therefore allowed it to be frequented by the money changers, and sellers of cattle. Within this court was the court of the Israelites, divided into two parts, the inner for the men, and the outer for the women. The latter was parted from that of the Gentiles by a low stone wall, upon which were pillars, with the inscription, "Let no alien enter the holy place." This explains the metaphor in the Ephesians, (ii. 13.) by which St. Paul describes the union of Jewish and Gentile converts in one church a mystery, as he observes, which he was commissioned to reveal; "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace, who hath made the two one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." In this court was the treasury, where the people brought their voluntary offerings for the purchase of victims, and defraying the other expences

of the temple. An ascent of fifteen steps led from this court into that of the men; both together were called the court of the Israelites, and here they worshipped, each apart, in silent prayer, while the priest on duty was offering up incense within the sanctuary. Again, within this was the Priest's court, inclosing the altar, which they alone might enter. Magnificent as these courts with their buildings were, they were surpassed by the temple itself, which arose beyond the altar; and which unlike most Christian churches faced the west, as does the celebrated Roman basilica of St. Peter. From its elevation, it was visible from a distance; and it is described by Josephus as a snowy mountain, for it was built of the whitest stone, and being roofed with plates of gold, when the sun shone upon it was too dazzling to look upon. It was divided into two parts by a double veil, which was rent in twain at the crucifixion, emblematically denoting, that that event abolished the distinction between the Israelites and Gentiles, and that the privilege of the high priest of entering within the inner sanctuary, was now communicated to all believers, who through the Mediator's death have access by a great and living way to the Almighty upon his mercy-seat, Heb. x. In the outer division, or holy place, were the altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table with the shew-bread. The inner, or holy of holies, the type of heaven, was a cube of thirty feet. The ark and other sacred contents of the holy of holies perished with the first temple; and that of the second is described as empty, upon the authority of Pompey, the only pagan who ever presumed to enter it.

The temple worship was sacrifice, which could be performed on no other spot; the Jews, therefore, for near 1800 years, have been placed in this most extraordinary predicament, that though their ritual is of Divine appointment, it is impossible for them to perform its most important act. Their sacrifices were of three kinds; burnt offerings, peace offerings, and piacular offerings. The first, called in Greek holocausts, because entirely consumed, were presented to the Deity as

Sovereign of the world, and had prevailed from the beginning. It was offered, we presume, from their hiding their nakedness with skins, by Adam and Eve, and we know was graciously accepted from Abel. The peace offerings were presented to God as the giver of all good, either in acknowledgment of benefits received, or as a petition for new ones. The rump, kidneys, and interior fat, were to be consumed; the breast, and right shoulder, became the property of the Priests and Levites, and were called heave or waive offerings, because heaved or lifted up, and waived to or fro at the altar, in token of their consecration. The rest the offerer was to eat as a feast with his family and friends. The piacular sacrifices consisted of sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, which were presented to God as to an offended Judge, who could punish or pardon. The distinction between the two is not now well understood, and Outram, after stating the opinions of ancients and moderns, confesses that he is not satisfied with any. They could not differ essentially, because they were offered either on account of sin committed or duly omitted; they were not therefore like the two former, voluntary, and they were not to be tasted by the person offering, but were some to be eaten within the temple by the priests, and others were to be burnt without the camp. To these bloody sacrifices we must add the meat offering, not of expiation, except in cases of extreme poverty, but of gratitude, which was either unprepared, or formed into meal or cakes; and drink offerings of wine, which are not used alone, but accompanied both bloody and unbloody sacrifices. All these sacrifices were presented under certain circumstances by individuals, but there were also national ones prescribed at stated periods. The perpetual sacrifice was a burnt offering of two lambs, accompanied with a meat offering, and a drink offering of wine, presented daily, morning and evening, at the third and ninth hours, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, and three in the afternoon. This offering was doubled on the sabbath; and on the new moon it consisted of two young bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs, together with a kid for a sin offering,

and a suitable meat and drink offering. Fish were not brought to the altar, and therefore the Israelites were not prohibited from eating their blood, as well as that of birds and beasts. All clean birds might be offered, though the dove was the one generally preferred; no other quadrupeds but bullocks, sheep, and goats, were allowed, and all victims must be free from any blemish. Besides these sacrifices offered in the open air upon the great brazen altar, a priest, both at morning and evening sacrifice, presented incense, emblematical of prayer, and which was accompanied with that of the congregation without, upon the golden altar in the outer sanctuary. From this mode of worship, as familiar to the minds of the early Christians as it is foreign from ours, the Apostles often drew their metaphors, the beauty and force of which are lost to the common reader, and are only recovered by the learned. Thus Paul exhorts the Romans to present, instead of bullocks and sheep, their own bodies to God, as a living sacrifice, in contradistinction to slain victims, adding, that this is a rational mode of worship, (*λογικὴ λατρεία*, Rom. xii. 13.) And he declares his readiness to die for the edification of the Philippians, (ii. 17.) in sacrificial language, “If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith,” (*σπένδομαι*,) that is, if my blood be as it were poured forth as a libation, as wine and oil were on the sacrifices, “I joy, and rejoice with you all.” It is true that we still say, when a man exposes himself to death for another, or submits to some considerable loss, that he sacrifices himself, but seldom think of the origin of the expression.

All these sacrifices were of divine appointment; but we cannot presume that they had any intrinsic value; and we learn from the Apostle to the Hebrews, x. 1. that the Law was only a shadow of good things to come, and, ix. 23, that the blood with which Moses purified the patterns of things in the heavens, was only efficacious as typical of that of Christ. This is intimated in the fortieth psalm, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure;

then said I, Lo, I come, to do thy will." "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second," is the Apostle's comment; and therefore as Christ succeeded in the room of all the sacrifices, it is reasonable to consider him as the antitype of them all. Isaiah says, liii. 10. of the Messiah, that he made himself a trespass-offering. Paul calls Christ's giving himself for us, both a peace offering, and a sacrifice for sin. Eph. v. 2. and the expiatory victims which were burnt without the camp prefigure him in the most eminent degree. Above all, that of the great day of atonement, the blood of which was carried into the holy of holies. This our High Priest of good things to come, through a greater and more perfect tabernacle, by his own blood, entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, when he sustained the threefold character of offerer, victim, and sacrificer. A service of this description required numerous ministers with attendants under them. It was originally the privilege of the first-born; but when it pleased the Almighty to separate to himself a peculiar people, and to set up a particular form of worship, he chose to himself an hereditary priesthood of the family of Levi. They were exempt from secular occupations and cares, and were maintained by tithes and first fruits, paid by the other tribes, and by their share of the offerings: but of this tribe itself, the house of Aaron had an exclusive grant of the priesthood; the others, or Levites as they are called, filled subordinate offices; they prepared the sacrifice, and acted as porters and singers. In David's time they amounted to 38,000; of these he appointed 24,000 to the constant duty of the temple, and they were, as well as the priests, divided into twenty-four courses, to officiate in turn: and as the variety of their functions required the priests to be well read in the law, they were naturally consulted as interpreters of it, Hosea iv. 6. Mal. ii. 7. Lev. xiii. 2; and as judges of controversy, Deut. xxi. 5. As only four of the original courses of priests returned from the captivity, they were again divided into twenty-four classes, which retained the original appellations.

This explains Luke's naming the course of Abia, which is not noticed among those that returned, 1 Chron. xxiv. Ezra ii. Nehemiah vii. xii. To each order was assigned a president, supposed to be the chief priest mentioned in the New Testament, and by Josephus. The high priest enjoyed peculiar dignity and authority. He alone might enter the holy of holies, he had the supreme administration of sacred things, was the final arbiter of all controversies, and ranked next to the sovereign. The office descended from Aaron to Eleazar, his eldest surviving son, from whom it passed through a long succession to Eli. On his death, near four centuries after the promulgation of the law, it was transferred, as he had been informed by God through Samuel that it would be, as a judgment on him, to the descendants of Ithamar, the other son of Aaron. It returned into the elder branch in the reign of Solomon, who deposed Abiathar, and substituted Zadok; and Jozedek, high priest on the return from Babylon, was of this race, which expired with him. The priesthood then went into a private family, till it was usurped by the Maccabean princes. Under the Romans the sanctity of it was annihilated, and it was sometimes sold to the highest bidder, even to individuals not of the sacerdotal family. It was also conferred and taken away at pleasure; and this explains the existence of more high priests than one at a time, that is, of men, who, having held the office for a season, retained the rank and title for life.

To the temple it was the duty of all the men of Israel to repair at the three great festivals. Still the sabbath was sacred every where, and it was proper that then, and at other seasons, Jehovah should be worshipped by his people. Accordingly there were throughout the country, and wherever Jews were settled, and probably had been from their taking possession of Canaan, places whither they resorted, to hear the Scriptures, and to pray. These houses of prayer we call by the Greek term Synagogue, or a place of assembly, and they were opened for service on the Sabbath, Mondays,

and Thursdays, and three times in the day; for they made it their rule, after the example of David, Ps. liv. and Daniel, vi. 10. to pray thus often, either at home or in public: we read accordingly of Peter praying at the sixth, and Cornelius at the ninth hours. In each was a table upon which the book of the Law was spread, and on the east side an ark or chest in which it was kept. The seats nearest the ark being the most honourable, were those which the Pharisees were ambitious of occupying, Matt. xxiii. 6. A similar precedence seems to have crept into the churches of the first Christians, and to have excited St. James's indignation, ii. 3. A synagogue had rulers, Ἀρχισυνάγωγοι, (Acts xiii. 15. Mark v. 22. John vi. 59.) to regulate its concerns, and to permit persons to exhort; they were judges of theft and similar petty offences; and to them St. Paul is supposed to allude, (1 Cor. vi. 9.) when he reproaches the Christians of Corinth with bringing their differences before Gentile tribunals. Our Saviour refers to their power of scourging, Matt. x. 17; which Paul five times experienced, 2 Cor. xi. 24. The eighteen prayers at present used in the synagogues, may be found in Prideaux's Connection, vol. i. p. 374, or in Horne's Introduction. They are ascribed to Ezra, but some were evidently composed when there was neither temple nor sacrifice; and one, said to have been written by Gamaliel a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, is directed against apostates and heretics, and the kingdom of pride, meaning the Roman empire. The lessons at first were exclusively taken out of the Law, which was divided into as many sections as could be read through within the year. When Antiochus Epiphanes forbade this upon pain of death, the Jews selected fifty-four portions out of the other books; and when his persecution ceased, the Jews resumed the reading of the law, without discarding what they had substituted.

The Samaritans were regarded as aliens; for though intermixed with the ten tribes, they were descended from distant eastern nations, which had been transplanted there on the conquest of Israel. For a time they retained their idolatry;

but their territory, which war had depopulated, being infested with wild beasts, they considered this as a judgment upon them for neglecting to worship the god of the country; and upon applying to their sovereign the king of Assyria, he sent them a priest, who had been taken from Samaria, who taught them to fear Jehovah. 2 Kings xviii. 24—32. On the return of the Jews from the captivity, they proposed to join them in rebuilding Jerusalem, but the proposal was rejected, Ezra iv. and other causes of enmity arising, they obtained leave from Alexander the Great to erect a rival temple upon mount Gerisim, where they worshipped according to the Mosaic ritual. The temple was demolished before the age of Christ; but there are even now a few Samaritan families, about forty individuals, who live at Naplous, the town below, and who within twenty years still kept up the service of sacrifice upon its site, centuries after it had ceased among their ancient rivals. The only books of the Bible which they acknowledge are the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges. Their Pentateuch is of the greatest critical value; and as it is substantially the same as that of the Jews, and the enmity between the two nations prevented the possibility of one being a transcript of the other, our external evidence for this part of the Bible is thus carried a step higher than the Greek translation, even up to the captivity, or rather it may be supposed to the revolt against Rehoboam; for it seems more probable that the copy of these Samaritans was derived from Samaria than from Judah. It is written in a peculiar character, generally believed to have been the original one, and that the Jews abandoned it for that of their conquerors. Its variations from the Hebrew text mostly accord with the readings in the Septuagint, and like that it lengthens the chronology before the deluge. In Samaria we have Shechem or Sychem, purposely corrupted by the Jews into Sychar, which means drunkenness, Isaiah xxviii. 1. about forty miles from Jerusalem, which became the chief city after the destruction of the ancient capital Samaria by Hyrcanus, about a century before Christ, and still exists under the appellation of Naplous, that

is, Neapolis, or New Town. The neighbourhood from its productiveness had natural advantages over Jerusalem, and was distinguished in the ancient annals of Israel. The narrow valley is formed by Gerisim and Ebal, two mountains, upon which, as Moses had enjoined, were stationed a deputation from all the tribes; six upon one to bless those who kept the law, and six upon the other to curse those that broke it. The law itself, that is the decalogue, was written upon stones upon *one* of them, but which is disputed; Gerisim, according to the Samaritans: there they erected their temple, and there, as the woman of Samaria told our Lord, her fathers said "men ought to worship." The Hebrew Pentateuch reads Ebal, but Kennicot decides in favour of the Samaritan. At Jacob's well, which is cut out of a rock, the valley expands into a field, which was probably the estate that the dying patriarch left to his son Joseph, who was buried here. In this neighbourhood Joshua also was interred. Shiloh, only ten miles off, may be considered as the national capital previous to the monarchy, for there Joshua assembled the nation, (Josh. xviii.) to make the distribution of the land, and there the tabernacle was set up, where it remained for more than three centuries, till the ark was presumptuously brought into the field by the sons of Eli, and captured by the Philistines. Strato's Tower, thirty-five miles from Jerusalem, was enlarged by Herod the Great, who threw out a mole to improve the harbour, and denominated it Cæsarea in honour of his patron Augustus, to whom he dedicated it with games and other heathen ceremonies. It was the residence of the Roman governor, who only went up to Jerusalem at the feasts, and may therefore be considered as the political capital of the country. It retains nothing of its former splendour; the whole of the surrounding country is a sandy desert; not a creature except beasts of prey is found within many miles of it; and its ruins, which are very considerable, have long been resorted to as a quarry, whenever building materials are required at Acre.

In Upper Galilee, Dan, called from the neighbouring mountain Paneas, was the principal city; it had been enlarged and beautified by Philip the tetrarch, who changed the name to Cæsarea out of compliment to Tiberius, and his own name, Philippi, was added to distinguish it from the more celebrated Cæsarea.

Lower Galilee was most honoured with our Saviour's presence. Here, after his return from Egypt, he resided till his baptism; and so much did he live here, that he was considered as a Galilean. Josephus describes Galilee as containing above two hundred towns, the larger with a population of 150,000, the smaller with that of 15,000; and he states, that he collected from this province alone an army of 100,000 men of war; and however exaggerated may be the amount, we are authorized in believing that Galilee was very populous in the time of our Saviour. Partly on this account, and partly because he was there out of the power of the priests, he preferred it for a residence to Jerusalem. To this province he summoned his disciples to meet him after his resurrection, and as most of them were natives of it, they are styled (Acts i. 11.) by the angels, men of Galilee. Tiberias, built by Herod the Great, and so called after the Emperor, was the principal city; on the destruction of Jerusalem, it became eminent for a school of Jewish doctors, which continued until the fourth century, and it is still a considerable town. Nazareth, where our Saviour was brought up, and from which he was called, in contempt, a Nazarene, for the inhabitants bore a bad character, stands upon an abrupt precipice, over which they once attempted to cast him headlong, Luke iv. Capernaum, which may be considered as his home, for here he paid the tribute money, was upon the lake; but the situation of that and the other small towns in its vicinity has not been ascertained. Bethsaida, originally a village, the residence of Philip, Andrew, and Peter, was raised into a city by the tetrarch Philip, who called it Julia, in honour of the emperor's daughter.

Peræa, which was almost unknown to modern geography, has been lately explored by Buckingham and Burkhardt. The principal place was the strong fort of Machærus, erected near the Dead Sea, to check the predatory incursions of the Arabs, which Josephus names as the scene of the Baptist's death.

In this land it pleased Almighty wisdom that the Saviour of mankind should be born, should live, and should die. It occupies an intermediate station between the Roman and Parthian empires, that is, between the two then grand divisions of the world, and was most favourably situated for communication with both. It was with a view to this most important of events, that more than nineteen centuries before, Abraham had been called from beyond the Euphrates to sojourn in it, and that possession of it was promised to his descendants, and fulfilled five hundred years after. All that had access to the Scriptures might learn from them that this was (John i. 11.) the peculiar country of the Son of God, which was designated by Isaiah (viii. 8.) as Immanuel's land; not only as the abode of his chosen people, but because he himself, as this appellation, "God with us," denotes, was there to become incarnate, as a descendant, through his mother, of its ancient sovereign David. There accordingly, in the fulness of time, he was born, as had been expressly foretold by Micah, in the town of his royal ancestor. From the moment the first man became a sinner, this incarnation and its consequences became necessary to the restoration of the human race; and as this fall had been foreseen and the remedy provided from the beginning, Christ is said to have been slain (that is, his sacrifice had been offered and accepted) before the foundation of the world, to be manifested in due season. That season, however, did not arrive till mankind had existed four thousand years, by which time the gross ignorance of religious truth and the profligacy that had all along prevailed among all nations, had abundantly demonstrated the insufficiency of what is called the light of nature, and the necessity, which indeed the wisest of the heathens

had acknowledged, of a revelation of the divine will. Nor did the sins of Israel, under all the advantages of a written law, less evince the need of a spiritual deliverer; for if the Gentiles were perishing for lack of knowledge, the Israelites, who boasted of a law that was "holy, just, and good," had not the heart to practise it. This "Consolation of Israel," as Luke emphatically calls our blessed Lord, had been held forth to the eye of faith from the beginning, in the types of its temporal deliverers, and in the whole ritual of their worship; the sacrifices and purifications of which were to the spiritually minded, a prophetic anticipated Gospel^b; intimating most significantly both the necessity of justification through the atoning blood, not of animals, but of the Lamb of God;

^b These parts of the Bible, the details of sacrifices and purifications, which to us have no longer "any glory on account of the glory that excellet," might be the most edifying to those who could only see as "through a glass darkly" the blessing derived from a future Saviour. Romaine, impressed with this idea, has called what is perhaps to us the least interesting book, "The Gospel according to Leviticus." And, as Cowper sings,

Israel in ancient days
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the Gospel too;
The types and figures were a glass,
In which they saw a Saviour's face.

The paschal sacrifice,
And blood-besprinkled door,
Seen with enlighten'd eyes,
And once applied with pow'r,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile an angry God.

And again:

See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the veil appear,
In robes of mystic meaning drest,
Presenting Israel's prayer.
Through him the eye of faith descries
A greater priest than he:—
The blood, which as a priest he bears
For sinners is his own;
The incense of his pray'rs and tears
Perfumes the holy throne.

and their own inward purification from sin. The nature, the lineage, the offices, the character, the life, sufferings, and ultimate triumph of this predicted Redeemer had been more and more clearly developed in a long succession of prophecies, commencing in paradise; and the time had been so plainly announced by Daniel, that as it drew nigh, the diligent searchers of the Scriptures were eagerly looking forward to the event. It took place in the reign of Augustus, at a period of universal peace; and only a few months before, by the death of Herod, the sceptre, according to Jacob's dying prediction, (Gen. xlix. 10.) had departed altogether from Judah.

The house of David had been long before reduced to private life. The Jews on their return from the captivity, after the extraordinary commission to Ezra and Nehemiah had ceased, were governed by their high priests, first under the Persian monarchs, and then under the successors of Alexander. Three centuries of prosperity and obscurity terminated with Antiochus the Great. His son Antiochus Epiphanes was a persecutor; who forbade the reading of the law, and profaned the temple by consecrating it to Olympian Jupiter. Mattathias, a priest, retired in consequence to Modin, his own city; and being called upon to sacrifice to idols, killed a Jew who was about to comply, overthrew the altar, and having cried out, "Whoever is zealous for the law, and will continue firm in the covenant of the Lord, let him follow me," retired with his five sons into the mountains. Here he was joined by many of his countrymen, and became the founder of the Maccabean or Asmonean dynasty. He died after he had been a year at the head of his people; and was succeeded by his sons Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, in succession, who maintained the war twenty-six years with five kings of Syria, and at last established the independence of their country, and the aggrandisement of their family, by uniting in their own persons the sacerdotal and regal offices. Disputes at length arising between Hyrcanus II. and his brother Aristobulus, the latter was defeated

by the Romans under Pompey, who captured Jerusalem, and made Judæa a tributary province. Pompey having been defeated by Julius Cæsar, that celebrated Roman continued Hyrcanus, who was the last of the Asmonean family, in the high-priesthood ; but he bestowed the civil government upon Antipater, his minister, an Edomite by birth, but a proselyte, for his nation had embraced the law on submitting to John Hyrcanus. He was the father of Herod, to whom he assigned, at a very early age, the government of Galilee. Mark Antony, with the consent of the Senate, afterwards conferred upon Herod the title of King of Judæa ; and he contrived after the ruin of his patron to have his authority confirmed by Augustus. He was allied to the Maccabean princes by marriage with a granddaughter of Hyrcanus, the last of them. The Jewish polity, and a nominal independence, were kept up by Herod ; but he was hated for his cruelty ; and, knowing the weakness of his title, he was alarmed at the report of the birth of a king of the Jews, and scrupled not to order the massacre of all the male children of a certain age of Bethlehem, that the one who caused his uneasiness might not escape. Herod had had ten wives and a numerous family, and he divided his dominions among three of his sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. To Archelaus he assigned Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa, subject to the approbation of Augustus, who confirmed the appointment, though he refused him the title of king ; but after repeated complaints made to the emperor by his subjects, who were joined by his own brothers, he was deposed and banished to Vienna in Gaul, in the tenth year of his reign ; so that his kingdom had become a Roman province before our Saviour entered upon his ministry. Philip, whom Herod made tetrarch of Trachonitis, is represented by Josephus as an amiable prince, beloved by his subjects, whom he governed with mildness and equity. On his decease without issue, after a reign of thirty-seven years, his territories were annexed to Syria, the year after the death of Christ. Herod Antipas received Galilee and Peræa, with the title of tetrarch. He is described

by Josephus as crafty, and our Saviour calls him a fox. He had married the daughter of Aretas, the king of a tribe of Arabs, but falling in love with Herodias, he prevailed upon her, though both his niece and sister in law, to live with him. Herod Philip, her first husband, having been detected by his father in a conspiracy against him, was left in a private station. Their daughter Salome, whose dancing procured the Baptist's death, became afterwards the wife of Philip the tetrarch, who had no issue, and afterwards of Aristobulus, the third brother of the younger Agrippa. On the accession of Caligula, Herodias instigated the tetrarch to solicit elevation to royalty, which that emperor had conferred upon his nephew Agrippa, with the tetrarchy of Philip, who was now dead. But the application was so far from being successful, that he was banished first to Lyons, and afterwards to Spain.

On the removal of Archelaus, Judæa became a Roman province, annexed to Syria, under the immediate control of the emperor, who governed it by a procurator, an officer inferior in rank both to the legates of the imperial, and the proconsuls of the senatorial, governments. Pontius Pilatus, the fifth of them, came in the twenty-seventh year of the vulgar æra, and is characterised by Josephus as an unjust and cruel governor, who disturbed the tranquillity of the country by persisting in carrying the Roman ensigns into Jerusalem, and other acts of oppression. After he had held his office for ten years, having caused a number of innocent Samaritans to be put to death, that injured people sent an embassy to the proconsul of Syria, by whom he was ordered to Rome, to give an account of his administration; but Tiberius being dead before his arrival, A. D. 37, his successor banished him to Gaul, where he is said to have committed suicide, A. D. 41. Herod Agrippa, brother to Herodias and son of Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great by Mariamne the Asmonean princess, was, by Claudius on his accession, made king of the whole country. On his death, after a reign of seven years, A.D. 44, Judæa became again a Roman province, and so continued till its final subjugation

by Titus. His son Agrippa, whom St. Paul almost persuaded to become a Christian, the brother of Drusilla and Berenice, was considered too young to succeed him. A few years after, on the death of his uncle, the king of Chalcis, he was made the sovereign of that little state, to which Trachonitis and other territories were subsequently added. He lived to ninety years of age, into the reign of Trajan, having long survived the Jewish war, which he had endeavoured to prevent, and was the friend of Josephus, who records his testimony to the truth of his history. The government of the temple and the appointment of the high priest was entrusted to him. He was suspected of an incestuous intercourse with his sister Berenice, whose attractions fascinated Titus, who unwillingly yielded to the feelings of the Romans, who regarded his intended marriage with her as a disgrace. The other sister was the wife of the governor Felix, who trembled before Paul his prisoner; and they had a son, who perished in that memorable eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum.

LECTURES
ON
THE DIATESSARON.

PART I.

1. *Preface to St. Luke's Gospel.*

THE writing of the Gospels was not the cause^a but one of the effects of a belief in Christianity, which had been propagated even beyond Judæa by persons who had heard the discourses, and seen the miracles of our Lord and his Apostles; and they would never have been received as authentic memorials of facts of which there were many competent judges, if their contents could have been disproved. We learn from this Preface, that many had previously undertaken to publish accounts of these things that had been most certainly fulfilled; and from the terms in which he mentions them, as having been delivered to the authors immediately by the eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, we may conclude that they were substantially true, though not so accurate as his means of information enabled him to supply. From this remark, as well as from his dedication of his Gospel to a person of rank, we learn, that, contrary to the gratuitous assertion of modern infidels, the miracles of Christ, and the doctrines of his religion, must have excited a great sensation, and the desire of a more perfect knowledge of so extraordinary a person.

^a Priestley, *Notes on the Bible*, iii. 7.

Theophilus had been already catechised or orally instructed. Probably he was a convert of Luke, but nothing is known concerning him; we may, however, conjecture that he was a Gentile, and a man of some consequence, for the epithet *κράτιστος*, *most excellent*, applied to him, does not refer to character but to rank, as it is given to the governors Felix and Festus, and answers to Excellency, Grace, Highness, Majesty, and similar honorary appellations of modern times. The use of it by Luke and Paul shows, that Christians who refuse to employ the customary complimentary phrases of their time are over scrupulous.

2. The pre-existence, divinity, incarnation, and manifestation of the glory of the Logos, or only-begotten Son of God. St. John i.

St. Mark and St. John commence with the public ministry of the Messiah, Matthew and Luke supply an account of his birth and infancy; and the latter carries the reader a few months back to that of John the Baptist, who was sent to usher in this new dispensation. Their narratives are required to prove that the Messiah was, as predicted, David's son, and to establish the important fact, that in his desire to ransom our fallen race, "He did not abhor the Virgin's womb", but was literally "born of a woman;" being neither, as the early heretics taught, an incorporeal phantom, nor as affirmed by some in our days a mere man, like the other descendants of Adam. The importance of the tenet of his miraculous conception is evinced by its insertion in all the early Creeds; and certainly unless he had been "clearly void of sin both in his flesh and in his spirit, he could not have been the Lamb without spot, who by the sacrifice of himself once made should take away the sins of the world." Art. XV. Thus it was necessary that he should be the Son of God even in his human nature. But we learn from Isaiah, as interpreted by Matthew, that he is also "God with us;" and the same passage in Micah which foretells his birth, declares his goings forth to have been from everlasting. The earlier

Evangelists lead us to infer his divinity, but it is explicitly announced in the opening of that of his beloved disciple. Yet this declaration is not introduced, as might have been expected, in connection with his incarnation, but with the testimony borne to his pre-eminence by him whom Jesus himself informs us was the greatest of those born of women, and who acknowledges that Jesus was before himself, both in existence and dignity. As this Evangelist had been a disciple of the Baptist, he seems to have partaken of his master's anxiety to exalt the Lord, whom he had been sent to proclaim. Thus after declaring the Messiah to be the light, he continues, there was a man brought into existence whose name was John, to testify concerning that light. Christ afterwards appropriates the term to himself, calling the Baptist not φῶς light, but a burning and shining lamp λύχνος, which shone only as a light-bearer, for a short period, and in one country, and not to be confounded with him, who was the true light, that enlighteneth the world; nor even with his disciples, the least of whom was in the knowledge of divine things greater than the Baptist. To establish beyond all doubt the Messiah's superiority, the Evangelist commences with his pre-existence and proper divinity, and his statement rises in dignity; for he states, first, that the Word existed in the beginning; then, that it existed with God; then, that it is God. In the beginning, that is, "before God's works of old, before ever the earth was," Prov. viii. before all things, Col. i. 17. from the days of eternity, Micah v. 2. the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In this brief yet comprehensive sentence, the inspired writer, by a simple statement of the orthodox faith, condemns the heretics of his own and future times. The Word was in the beginning, is an assertion incompatible with the creed of all who deny the pre-existence and the eternal filiation of the Son of God. The Evangelist does not say, as Moses did of the material world, that God created the Word, but that the Word was, that is, as Paul declares to the Colossians, i. 15. begotten before all creatures, "begotten not made," and therefore there never

was, as the Arians maintained, a period when he was not; but he was "light out of light," co-eternal with the Father as the stream from the spring, the ray from the sun, ἀπόγασμα τῆς δόξης, "bright effluence of bright essence increate." *Milton*. The Word was, not as an attribute *in* God, but *with* πρὸς God. This marks the distinction of persons in the Deity, which the Sabellians confound; and that none may divide the substance it is added, that the Word was God. And this affirmation contradicts alike the Gnostic notion of his being an inferior æon, and the modern heresy of his simple humanity; and, lest the reader should overlook the personal distinction while contemplating the Son's divinity, the inspired writer repeats, "the same was in the beginning with God." Let these words, says St. Basil, be impressed as a seal upon your memories, and confute with them the sophisms of those who maintain that Christ had no existence before he was born.

It cannot escape notice, that instead of the Son of God, the Evangelist here uses Logos, which our translators, retaining the theological language of the western Church derived from the Latin translation of the Scriptures, render Word obviously in a peculiar sense, for no one can think that the Word of God is similar to a word which among men is composed of syllables. No other language can convey the double meaning of the Greek Logos, which signifies both the λόγος ἐνδιαθέτος and the λόγος προφορικὸς of the Stoics; that is, reason as it exists in the mind, which is *thought*; or as it is embodied in sound^a, that is *speech*. Some translators, especially those who have a Socinian bias, like Leclerc, prefer the former, as more favourable to their view. The majority take it in the second, and some theological writers, objecting to any translation as inadequate,

^a Eusebius, Dem. Ev. v. 5. Lactantius notices the two significations as follows. Sed melius Græci λόγον dicunt quem nos verbum sive sermonem λόγος enim et sermonem significat et rationem quia ille est et vox et sapientia Dei. Tertullian prefers ratio to sermo; and yet says, we ascribe to the Logos a proper spiritual existence, and that it was put forth from God by generation. Beza and Erasmus translate sermo.

retain the original. Either sense will suit the second person of the Trinity, for he is that wisdom which God “ possessed in the beginning of his way,” as the human soul does its thoughts; and it is not only through him that God hath in these last days spoken, but he has ever been the revealer of secrets^d, Dan. viii. 13. the channel through which God the Father, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man hath seen nor can see, has communicated his will to mankind from the time that the voice of Jehovah spoke to Adam in Paradise, till he assumed flesh as the Son of Mary. Since we must choose between reason and word, I prefer the latter as better suited to a person; in the thirty-six instances in which it occurs in the Gospel, it is always used in this sense; and Archbishop Laurence observes, that the corresponding word in Hebrew and Chaldee only bears this signification. Augustine says, the Son is called the Word of God, because his Father makes known his will by him in the same manner as a man makes known his mind by words; and to this interpretation the Evangelist himself leads us, when he says, that the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared or explained him, that is, both his real nature and his will. Word, the abstract, is to be taken for the concrete, by an idiom common in the New Testament, as salvation for saviour; thus the word stands for that oracle or interpreter of the divine counsels, who speaketh the words of God. John iii. 34.

^d The reader, however, who turns to the Latin or English Bible, will not discern this title except in the margin of the latter. The etymology of the word *Palmuni*, and its close connection with that of *Pelah*, secret or wonderful, the title claimed by the angel that appeared to *Manoah*, who, it is evident from the context, was *Jehovah*, and ascribed by *Isaiah*, ix, with others of the most exalted meaning, to the Child to be born to us, seems to justify this translation, which is adopted by *Calvin* and other approved commentators, and supported by the *Targum*.

“ This numberer of secrets, or wonderful numberer, must mean a person of extraordinary rank, as being able to unfold those secrets which are hid from other angels, and is therefore justly supposed to mean the Son of God, the wonderful Counsellor, as being acquainted with all God’s designs.” *Lowth*.

Logos, in the sense in which it occurs in this introduction, is used by St. John in the opening of his first Epistle, in which he speaks of hearing, seeing, and handling the word of life, and he applies it as one of the titles of the triumphant Saviour, where he describes him as riding on a white horse, to judge, and make war in righteousness. Rev. xix. The only instance of its use in this sense in another New Testament author, may be that in the prefatory sentence of Luke's Gospel, for ministers and eye-witnesses seem more appropriate to a living person than to a spoken word. A remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews has been applied to the living Word by many commentators; and this interpretation is plausible; but our faith in it is shaken by observing, that where St. Paul, Eph. vi. 7. seems to personify the Word, by calling it the sword of the Spirit, he does not use the ambiguous *logos*, but *rhema*; and this I conceive is done on purpose to prevent that interpretation, here, in Acts x. 36. and 1 Peter i. 23. where the reader might otherwise think of the personal Logos. It is natural therefore to ask, why St. John employed and whence he derived it. Bishop Pearson tells us, "that the doctrine of the Logos was the current interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and that the Targums, or Chaldee Paraphrases, which were read in the synagogues, taught the Jews of Palestine that God and the Word of God were the same; which explains why John delivered so great a mystery in so few sentences, as he spoke to those who understood him. The existence, nature, and operations of the Logos were allowed; its union with the man Jesus was the only point to be established." If for Jews we substitute Gnostics, the remark will be correct. Such expressions as the Bishop cites, "By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made," Psalm xxxiii. 6. the Christian knows to be true in this sense, but without a commentator it would hardly have occurred to a Jew; nor will the Targums supply this interpretation, for an examination of them will show that the word of Jah, which they substitute for Jehovah, (which partaking of the present Jewish superstition

they hold it unlawful to pronounce,) is only a periphrasis for God, and is in the same manner applied to man, and to say the least can in no instance be *proved* to designate the second person of the Trinity^e. In the Apocryphal book of Wisdom^f, however, Logos is used in the personal sense, which therefore must have been prevalent among the Jews of Alexandria before the Christian æra. The term occurs in Plato, and was probably taken from his writings by philosophizing Jews, who combined his speculations with the traditions of the East. In the numerous works of his imitator Philo, the Logos is presented to us under a variety of images; and the titles and operations assigned to it by him bear so remarkable a resemblance to those which the New Testament give to the Son of God, that some even maintain that he was a convert to Christianity; but the resemblance which appears so striking by an exhibition of insulated passages, diminishes on a closer inspection; and though the Logos of Philo has more personality than that of Plato, which seems to be no more than an attribute of Deity, it hardly appears to have a distinct and separate state of being. St. John might have perused his writings, since he was his contemporary; but there is no probability that he borrowed from him, and still less from Plato, a term, which must have been but too familiar to him from conversation with the Gnostics, who, even in his day, were

^e Dr. Pye Smith, in his *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, vol. i. gives the result of his examination both of the *Mimra* of the Targums, and the *Logos* of Philo. He considers the former as a substitute for an emphatic pronoun, in apposition with the noun of a person speaking this, whether it be God or man. Thus we have not only the word of Jah said to Moses, "Behold, my word shall be revealed to thee in the thick cloud," *Exod. xix. 9.* but Solomon said by his word, "Vanity of vanities is this world," *Eccles. i. 2.* Pursuing the common course of language, *Mimra* came to be used in a secondary sense, simply for a person's self. Thus, as *Pultiel*, the son of *Laish*, did, the righteous man who fixed a sword between his word and *Michal* the daughter of *Saul*. *Targ. on Ruth iii. 8.* In one passage the application to the Messiah is impossible, and it can be proved in none. "Behold, my servant, the Messiah, I will draw near to him, my chosen, in whom my word hath delight." *Isaiah xlii. 1.*

^f "Thine own Almighty word leapt from heaven a fierce warrior, bearing a sharp sword, thine undissembled commandment." *Wisdom xviii. 15.*

abundant in Ephesus, where he is supposed to have resided, and where he wrote his Gospel to oppose their errors. This opinion, suggested by Michaelis, and ably supported by Dr. Burton, is strengthened by the knowledge, that not only Logos, but Zoe, Alethia, Monogenes, and Pleroma, which all occur in this introduction, were terms of Gnostic theology. In borrowing the term, it must have been the object of the Evangelist to put upon it a new meaning. According to the Gnostics, the Logos was only an inferior emanation; St. John shows, that he proceeded immediately from the Deity, and was himself God; that life and truth were not other emanations, but only other names for the Logos, and that this Logos was the Creator of the world, became incarnate in Jesus the Son of Mary, and was thus the Christ. John proceeds to declare, that the Word was the agent through whom, as the instrumental cause, all things and beings were created, without a single exception. He is also the author of life and light, but this light shone in a darkness which it did not disperse. The heathen opened not their eyes to its beams as reflected from the objects which surrounded them, an attentive meditation on which would have discovered him to them as their Maker; and even when he came incarnate to his own peculiar country Israel, his own people, though they had been in various ways prepared for his advent, rejected him. Still, his advent was not without effect; there was both among Jews and Gentiles a "seed to serve him," and to as many as received him he gave the privilege of becoming the sons of God, and consequently heirs of God, and joint heirs with him. The value of this privilege appears from the declaration, that it could not be obtained for us by ourselves or others; not by the bloody sacrament of circumcision, by which Israelites were admitted into covenant; not by natural birth, nor by voluntary adoption, but by the good pleasure of our heavenly Father. He then shews, that those who rejected the Word were inexcusable, for he had the testimony of the Baptist; and his disciples, who preached him to the world, had beheld his glory visibly at his baptism, transfiguration, and ascension,

as well as in his miracles, (ii. 11.) and had additional evidence in the supernatural gifts which they had themselves received. In order to procure for believers this adoption. the Word was made flesh, and dwelt, or rather pitched his tent, (ἐσκήνωσε) among men, alluding to the tabernacle under the Jewish polity, in which the Deity was visibly present.

John then intimates the inferiority of Moses, through whom the law was made known to this incarnate Word, who not merely discovered, but was the author of the true grace of God, of truth as the substance of the types and rites of the ceremonial law, and of grace or favour put in opposition to the demands of the moral law. And we all, he adds, that is all Christians, have received out of his overflowing fulness, the gift of grace *upon* grace; that is, grace in the greatest abundance, or, as others render it, grace *for* grace, meaning the greater grace of the Gospel, instead of the lesser one of the Law. He tells us that he has explained to us (ἐξηγήσατο, see Eph. iii.) the secrets that were hid in God, that is, his character and designs, to which he alone is competent, “for no one hath seen the Father but the Son,” who is ever in his bosom, or in the most intimate familiarity with him. (xiii. 23.) The proposition with which John opens his Gospel, is supported in the discourses which follow, and he concludes with the declaration, that his object in writing was, that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name. xx. 31.

3. *The conception of Elisabeth. Luke i.*

The canon of the Hebrew Scriptures closes with the declaration of Jehovah, that he will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, (Malachi iv. 5, 6.); and we know from the infallible exposition of our Saviour, that his contemporaries, who understood the prediction literally, were mistaken in supposing that the Tishbite would return to life, but that it foretold, as explained by Gabriel to his future father, the coming of one in

the spirit and power of Elijah. This messenger of the Lord, this voice, as he is emphatically designated by Isaiah xl, is called the Baptist, from the emblematical rite, with which he was to make ready a people, prepared for their incarnate God. The Messiah's forerunner was to be his kinsman after the flesh, and was to descend through both parents from the sacerdotal line, though his ministry was not to be in the temple, but in the wilderness; and his birth, though not strictly miraculous, was to be contrary to the ordinary course of nature. His parents are characterized as really righteous, not as such merely in the estimation of their acquaintance, but of God, and as walking in all his commandments blameless. They had reached advanced age without issue, and the angel's address, Thy supplication is heard, seems to imply that Zachariah continued to pray for a child. It is observable, that though divorce was the common practice of his countrymen, and justified by their religious teachers, he had not married another wife.

The priests were divided into twenty-four classes, and as each consisted of several individuals, they drew lots for the respective parts of divine worship, and the burning incense upon the golden altar in the outer sanctuary at the time of the oblation, which was the most solemn part of the daily service, fell to Zachariah. During this service, which occupied half-an-hour, the congregation in the courts without was engaged in silent prayer. Zachariah had not the strong faith of his father Abraham, who was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform; but though not only Isaac, but other eminent Israelites, as Jacob, Samson, and Samuel, had been born of women who had, like Elisabeth, been regarded as barren, he staggered at the promise through unbelief, and required a sign. The angel announces himself to be Gabriel, the same who had so clearly revealed to Daniel the time of the Messiah's coming, and who now declares that Zachariah should beget his forerunner, the second Elijah, who shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. The sign he asks is granted to

him, but such a sign as is a manifest rebuke, for his want of faith in the angel's word; for he was struck with a temporary loss of speech, till the promise was accomplished. The congregation was waiting for Zachariah to dismiss them with the customary blessing, but when he came forth he could only intimate what had happened by his gestures. He was, however, able to go through his allotted ministration, and at the expiration of his week return to his home in the hilly part of Judæa, which tradition has fixed at Hebron.

4. *Gabriel's Salutation of the Virgin Mary. Luke i.*

In the sixth month of his wife's pregnancy, the same angel was sent by God to Nazareth, to Miriam, or Mary, a virgin of the house of David, betrothed, but not yet married, to Joseph, a descendant of the same illustrious progenitor, and though in the humble occupation of a carpenter, probably the heir of his throne. He salutes her as the most blessed of women, and highly favoured by the Lord, as chosen to be the mother of the Messiah; and he directs her to give the babe the significant name of Jesus, or Saviour, and assures her that he shall sit on the throne of David, and reign, not like his predecessor for a few years, but for ever, over the house of Jacob, that is, the true Israel. We should not have been surprised if a case so unprecedented as the conception of a virgin, who had never known man, should not have been credited by this young handmaid; but her reply, How shall this be? is very different from that of the aged priest, from whom belief in an easier prediction might have been anticipated. Whereby shall I know this? The latter implies doubt, the other only seeks for direction. The angel therefore informs her, that she shall conceive through the immediate energy of the Holy Spirit, and gives her unasked, as a sign, the conception of her aged and hitherto barren cousin, Elisabeth, assuring her, in the language of the Lord on a similar occasion to Sarah, Gen. xviii. 14. that with God nothing is impossible. Mary had reason to fear that her

pregnancy would subject her to reproach, and it might be to danger of her life; yet without hesitation she implicitly yields to the Divine will, saying, Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. Probably the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit immediately took place.

5. *Mary visits her cousin Elisabeth.*

Her anxiety to learn the accomplishment of the sign, we may presume, induced the Virgin to take a journey of eighty miles to visit and confer with her relation. And there she received full confirmation of her faith, for Elisabeth, to whom the secret of Mary's conception had been revealed, immediately greeted her by inspiration with the angel's salutation, as blessed among women; and though her superior in age and station, she acknowledges it as a condescension in the future mother of her Lord to visit her, and gives proof of her own pregnancy by declaring, that no sooner had the voice of Mary's salutation sounded in her ears, than the babe leaped in her womb for joy. The Virgin, encouraged by this address, breaks forth into a hymn of praise, familiar to us from its having been incorporated into the evening service of the Church. It strongly resembles that of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, in which the blessed fruit of the Virgin's womb is first celebrated by a woman, and under the title of Messiah, or King; yet with this striking difference, that Hannah in the fulness of her triumph dwells on her aggrandisement, while the Virgin thinks of the lowliness of her condition[‡]. She declares, that her spirit hath exulted in God her Saviour; whereby she seems to acknowledge, that as a sinner she could rejoice in God, only as interested in the salvation which was to be procured for mankind by her future Son. She adds, that he had condescended to regard her *low estate*, when it might have been supposed, that the Messiah

[‡] Jebb's Sacred Literature, sect. xx.

would assume his human nature from one of a more honourable station in the eyes of the world. It is *lowliness*, answering to the *humilitas* of the Vulgate, in the Prayer Book translation, but the original is not *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, but *ταπείνωσις*, and she means to express not her lowliness of mind, but the low and impoverished condition of her family. She advances from her personal feelings to the happiness which her Son's birth shall cause, not to her and her family alone, but to the world, and declares that the people of succeeding times will sympathise in her rejoicing. "Henceforth all generations will esteem me happy, for the Omnipotent hath done great things for me;" her faith thus realized what is yet future, and, looking back to the interferences of God's providence in overturning the oppressors of his people, she ends with expressing her conviction, that Israel will now be raised up from its fallen state, by a fulfilment of the promise which had been made in mercy to Abraham so many centuries before.

The Virgin declares that all future generations will esteem her happy. It is a painful reflection, that multitudes, not content to regard her as the happiest of women, have exalted this handmaid of the Lord to the throne of heaven. Some even raise her above human nature, maintaining that she, as well as her Son, was conceived without sin; and even in the present enlightened age, notwithstanding the continued protest of the reformed Churches, she is more frequently and more devoutly worshipped, it is to be feared, than her Maker. The angel's salutation, Hail! Mary, *κεχαριτωμένη*, is in the Vulgate rendered, instead of highly favoured, full of grace: thus attention is turned from the favour conferred of being selected to be the Messiah's mother, to the grace supposed to be inherent in her; and the salutation was by St. Dominic converted into an act of adoration, which in the devotion of the Rosary, in general use in the Church of Rome, is repeated a hundred and fifty times, to fifteen Pater nosters. Mary, after continuing with her cousin three months, returned home.

6. *The birth of John the Baptist. Luke i.*

On the eighth day after the Baptist's birth, the time for circumcision, a large company assembled, and it being proposed to give him his father's name, his mother informed them that he was to be called Jochanan, which we write John, that is, *God is gracious*, a most appropriate appellation for him whose office it was to proclaim the kingdom of grace. His father being appealed to, wrote down his name, John; and the season of his correction being expired, recovers the power of speech; and the first employment he makes of his restored faculty is to praise God. His hymn begins, where the Virgin's ended, with the testimony of prophecy, and declares the power of her Son, and his descent from the royal house of David; he addresses his own infant as designed to be the herald to prepare the way of Jehovah; and he describes this salvation, not as the temporal one anticipated by the nation, but as a deliverance from sin, the enjoyment of peace, and the power of obeying the divine commandments, as they respect both God and man.

As John grew in age and stature, he was prepared for future usefulness; but though of the tribe of Levi, he seems neither to have been educated by the Scribes, nor to have attended at the temple, but was in the desert till the time of his shewing unto Israel. There he lived with great austerity, drinking no fermented liquor, and eating such food as the place afforded, locusts and wild honey. His clothing was the coarse habit which the poor wore, and which the rich occasionally assumed as a garb of humiliation or mourning. He was therefore, even in outward appearance, a second Elijah, and much more so in reality, being endued, as the angel had announced, and as the last of the prophets (Malachi) had foretold, with the spirit and power of that eminent servant of God. Both were raised up in times of universal corruption, and both executed their commission with zeal and intrepidity. The abstemiousness and rigour of the Baptist's life were calculated to excite attention and reverence, to reclaim the

thoughtless, and to alarm the impenitent; but whatever mortification he practised himself, he was a preacher not of *penance*, but of *repentance*; and we do not find that he enjoined upon others more than the forsaking of sin, and the fulfilment of their duties.

7. *The angel informs Joseph of the miraculous immaculate conception of his virgin bride of the predicted Saviour.*
Matt. i.

When Joseph found that his betrothed wife was pregnant, and probably heard from her a statement of her miraculous conception, confirmed, it may be, by the testimony of Elisabeth, he was at a loss how to act; for, not satisfied with the statements, he was as a just man desirous of divorcing her, yet as a merciful one of doing it privately. In this perplexity he fell asleep, and an angel, probably Gabriel, is sent to remove his scruples, and to instruct him to take her to his home, it being the design of Divine Providence to raise up, through human agency, a friend and protector for the Virgin and infant Saviour. The angel announces to him, as he had before to the future mother, that the child shall be named Jesus, which Matthew considers as the accomplishment of Isaiah's declaration to Ahaz. The name Emanuel clearly designates the divine nature of the child; and that of Joshua, (for Jesus is only a Greek corruption of it,) Jehovah, the Saviour. This name, which had become an ordinary one, had been borne by two eminent men, types of the divine and real Joshua. The first was the son of Nun, the friend and successor of Moses, who led the Israelites into the earthly Canaan, and gave rest unto them from all their enemies round about, a rest which the Epistle to the Hebrews calls a figure of that which yet remaineth (in heaven, the true Canaan) for the people of God. The other was the son of Josedeck, high-priest on the return from the captivity, to whom, with Zerubbabel the governor, Haggai addresses his prophecies, and concerning whom Zechariah has two prophecies. He is called in both, as typical of Jesus, the Branch, which the

Septuagint renders, 'Ανατολή^h, and hence this word, translated in our version "Day-spring," is transferred to the song of Zacharias. He is called by the prophet, a Priest upon his throne, and this High-Priest after the order of Melchisedek is alone entitled and qualified to wear both the royal and sacerdotal crowns, which, though assumed by the Levite rulers of the Maccabean line, were according to the Jewish polity incompatible; and king Uzziah's attempt to perform the priest's office was miraculously punished by leprosy, which by a just retribution produced exclusion from his own. Our Lord wears many crowns and has many names, but that of Jesus or Saviour is higher than any, even than that of Creator; the others command our reverence, but this claims our gratitude; and that it may be honoured as it deserves, the apostle tells us, that the Father hath decreed that at this name every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is the Lord. Phil. ii. 9—11. The angel explains the nature of the salvation; "He shall save his people (not in, but) from their sins," from the dominion of them as well as the punishment; for sanctification or personal holiness, as well as forgiveness and justification, is included in the Gospel covenant. None then can have a right to the privileges and consolations of believers, who are not humbled and grieved for their sins, and endeavouring in reliance on God's grace to subdue them. A deliverer not from temporal but from spiritual enemies, from sin, and from the evil spirit, the author of sin, must be divine. Joshua delivered Israel not by his own power, but God by him, and he saved not his own people, but the people of God; whereas Jesus himself, as the angel declares, shall by his own power save his own people. Such a Saviour his people, with few exceptions, no longer expected or desired, but he had always

^h We learn from Tacitus, that Vespasian's advancement to the empire was in a great degree owing to a prevalent notion, that the east should triumph, "ut Oriens valesceret;" and the expression, which is remarkable, might be taken from 'Ανατολή, which is rendered *Oriens* in the Vulgate. It was by applying the predictions concerning the Messiah to Vespasian, that Josephus procured his favour.

been the hope of the pious Israelite, who with the patriarch, from whom he derived his name, could exclaim in death, O Lord, I have waited for thy salvation! And such we know was the sense assigned to his passionate exclamation by the Targumist, who thus paraphrases it; I wait not for the salvation of Gideon or of Samson, which are temporal, but for thy salvation; for thy deliverance, O Lord, is an eternal deliverance.

Our Redeemer is now commonly called Jesus Christ, but to many to whom he is precious, and altogether lovely, as he must appear in the eyes of all who have the faintest notion of his excellence, and their infinite obligation to him, this connection of the words, from its resemblance to the name and surname of those among whom we live, sounds too familiar, unless accompanied by the title of our Lord. Accurately speaking, his name is Jesus; by this he was addressed upon earth. Christ, equivalent to the Hebrew Messiah, is his official designation, meaning one who is anointed, and would be applied to him by none but those who acknowledged him. In the Scriptures this distinction is carefully observed; but as, out of respect to our Lord, Jesus is never given as a baptismal name, it has obtained a sacred character, and either that or Christ is used of him by most indifferently; but it is better to employ the former when we would draw attention to the salvation he has wrought for us, the latter when we would dwell upon his dignity and his claims to our obedience as our King.

8. *The birth at Bethlehem of our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke ii.*

In obedience to the divine command, Joseph took home his wife, but knew her not until she had borne her first-born Son; and he called him, as he had been instructed, Jesus. Thus Jesus being born of the Virgin solely, was most literally the promised seed of the woman, and partaker of human nature without the pollution of sin, which is inherited by all the natural progeny of Adam. He was also born in wedlock, which preserved his virgin mother from disgrace; and the

knowledge of the mystery was confined to Mary, her husband, and a few friends, until the time that it was necessary to be divulged, after our Lord's resurrection, and the foundation of his Church. This descent from a virgin had been foretold seven centuries before by Isaiah, vii. 14. and, in the opinion of many commentators, by Jeremiah, xxxi. 22; and such an event, apparently impossible, none but a true prophet would venture to predict, and none but He who inspired the prophet could accomplish. The language of the Evangelist seems to imply that she afterwards cohabited with her husband; but her virginity is an ecclesiastical tradition, and we may reasonably infer that at least she had no other children, from our Lord's recommending her to the care of his beloved disciple, who in consequence took her to his home. At this period she was probably in early youth, and her husband in advanced life. We read of our Lord's brothers and sisters, Matt. xiii. 55. and one of these, James, became the first Bishop of Jerusalem; but the term in Hebrew includes nephews and cousin-germans, Gen. xiii. 8. 2 Kings x. 13. Some have supposed that these were Joseph's children by a former marriage; but the supposition is not necessary, and is incompatible with the hypothesis, that deduces our Lord's right to the throne of David through Joseph.

9. 10. *The two genealogies of our Saviour.*

As the Messiah was to be the Son of David, it is necessary to prove his descent; and accordingly, both Matthew and Luke give us his pedigree, transcribed, as it appears, from the public registers, which we know continued to be kept in the time of Josephus. In these pedigrees there are minor difficulties: in that of Matthew there are omissions of his own; in that of Luke, perhaps interpolations since his time, as the earliest Christian writers reckon the amount of his generations seventy-two, or seventy, whereas in our MSS. we have mostly seventy-seven. Luke, or his copyist, follows the Septuagint in inserting a second Cainan between Arphaxad and Salah. Matthew has omitted three kings, the descend-

ants of Athaliah, and also Jehoiakim, and probably some persons between Obed and Jesse, since we can hardly suppose that four individuals in succession would each live above a century. The reason of this seems to be, that Matthew wished to arrange the genealogy in three divisions of fourteen generations, the first and third of which consisted of private persons, and the intermediate one of sovereigns. It is remarkable, that the only women named are either aliens, or of bad character; Tamar, who committed incest with her father-in-law Judah, the adulteress Bathsheba, Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabite.

Both pedigrees appear to be those of Joseph; and we are perplexed to know why they should be given by authors, who take care to inform us that Jesus was not really, but only supposed to be, his son, since their object was to show that the Messiah was not only the legal heir of David, but also, Acts ii. 30. the fruit of his loins. It also does not appear how both can belong to the same individual, since they proceed from two different sons of David, and agree only in two descents, in Salathiel and Zorobabel. The best solution of the difficulty appears to be, that both Joseph and Mary came, by true and real descent, from David, and that the genealogy of the former is set down by Matthew, that of the latter by Luke. Matthew writing for Jews, therefore, reckons only from Abraham, to whom the first promise of the kingdom was made, Gen. xvii. 6. but Luke runs up his line to Adam, the first head of human nature. Mary is called by the Jews the daughter of Eli, and her father having no son, her husband is reckoned to him, as it was not the Jewish custom to trace a pedigree through a female; or with Raphelius, we may translate, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, but in reality the son (*i. e.* the grandson) of Heli. The language of Matthew shows that he did not mean to assert, in contradiction to his narrative, that Jesus was really the son of Joseph; for in his instance alone he carefully avoids the term constantly used before, "begat;" writing, Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was or

had been born Jesus; and Luke also, as just observed, takes care to use a similar expression. The scheme I prefer is thus summed up by South, Sermons, vol. ii. p. 426. The royal line of David by Solomon being extinct in Jeconiah, whom, Jer. xxii. 30, God wrote childless, the right to his crown passed into the next line of Nathan in Salathiel. His son Zorobabel had two sons, Abiud and Rheza, the ancestors respectively of Joseph and Mary, and the former line failing in him, his right passes to his wife as now next of kin, and through her to Jesus, who is thus shown to be both the son and the heir of David. Solomon, according to this scheme, has no connexion with the Messiah; but though the Jews maintain he must descend from him, there is no scriptural warrant for that opinion. It is said, indeed, of Solomon, (1 Chron. xxii. 10.) that God would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever, yet it is not said in his seed; and besides, the kingdom there spoken of was the spiritual kingdom which his temporal one typified. Some, however, as Calvin, think it foretold that the Messiah should descend through Solomon; and Dr. Barrett, in his elaborate discussion of this question, for the substance of which I refer to Clarke's Commentary, or Townsend's Arrangement, endeavours to prove that Jesus came through this line, by assuming that Neri died without male issue, and that his daughter, heiress of the family of Nathan, united the two branches by marrying Salathiel, chief of Solomon's descendants. Upon this supposition, Jeconiah was the real father of Salathiel, and the latter is reckoned to Neri in the same way as Joseph is to Heli.

11. *The infant Saviour receives the homage of shepherds.*

Bethlehem, the predicted birthplace of the Messiah, a village six miles south of Jerusalem, is more than fifty from Nazareth. The Virgin, far advanced in her pregnancy, had no motive to take the journey, till the Emperor Augustus, whose paramount authority superseded when he pleased such nominally independent sovereigns as Herod, ordered a census

of the population, the time of which coincided with that of her delivery; and this enrolment by command of a foreign potentate was a badge of subjection, which proved, contrary to appearances, that the sceptre had now actually passed from Judah. We have in this decree a striking illustration of the mode in which the omniscient and almighty God accomplishes his purposes, without interfering with the free agency of his moral creatures. Persons were to be registered, not at their homes, but at the towns to which they legally belonged. Joseph accordingly was under the necessity of travelling to Bethlehem; Mary accompanied him, according to some commentators, because she was an heiress, and had property there; others think that the census might require the appearance of women as well as of men; or that she might judge it proper to avail herself of this providential opportunity of claiming her descent from David, as she knew herself to be miraculously with child of the Messiah.

The taxing is mentioned by Luke not so much to mark the time of Christ's birth, as to prove that it took place at Bethlehem, and that Mary and his reputed father were at that time allowed to be descendants of the royal family of David; for, John vii. 42, hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem? This registering was clearly made before the death of Herod; yet Luke connects it with Quirinus, or, as he calls him in Greek, Cyrenius, who ten years after, being governor of Syria, made a taxation on the deposition of Archelaus. As it cannot be supposed that the Evangelist has mistaken the time of the taxing, some method of making his language consistent with the fact must be devised. Lardner's elaborate Dissertation, says Dr. Hales, considerably longer than Luke's whole Gospel, offers only a choice of difficulties. Our version seems to convey the meaning of the same taxation being twice made. Scaliger and other eminent critics translate, This taxation was made before Cyrenius was governor of Syria; and Mr. Greswell, who advocates this interpretation, takes it as a parenthetical admonition, not to confound this with the later and more

remarkable one. Lardner translates, This was the first enrolment of Cyrenius; and he supposes that that officer was sent from Rome for this purpose, and is designated by his subsequent appointment. This supposition, however, has no support from history, and seems hardly reconcileable with the text, which represents Cyrenius as in the act of governing (it is not ἡγεμονός, but ἡγεμονεύοντος) at the time; I prefer, therefore, rendering, This registering first took effect when Cyrenius was governing. Josephus informs us, that Augustus had been provoked to write to Herod, that he would no longer treat him as a friend but as a subject; and he afterwards mentions, that the whole nation took an oath of fidelity to Cæsar, and to the king jointly. This was probably administered at the time of taking the census; but Augustus being reconciled to Herod, the tribute designed to follow this registering was suspended, till Cyrenius was ordered to confiscate the property of Archelaus. The word translated *the whole world*, properly means *inhabited country*; it is generally applied to the Roman empire, but it is used for Judæa by Josephus, and in the Septuagint, and ought, as is generally thought, to be so restricted in this instance, as the historians mention no census of the whole of Augustus's dominions. All may be added to shew, that Galilee was included.

Thus he, "who for our sakes, though rich, made himself poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," was pleased to commence a life of indigence, the beginning, the whole course, and end of which, expose the vanity of earthly distinctions, ennoble poverty, and consecrate suffering. Had our Lord appeared, as was expected, as a king, or even in a higher rank than he did, his example could not have been so extensively useful, and the great and rich would have been still more tempted than they are at present to despise their poor brethren, for whom he died no less than for them. His birth, however, though the place was humble, was marked by higher honours than have been conferred upon any other: unnoticed by the great of this world, it was announced by a heavenly messenger to shepherds watching

their flocks by night, (a practice necessary in countries infested by beasts of prey,) and the intelligence was declared to be a subject of great joy to all the people. He was then joined by a multitude of the armies of heaven, declaring the birth of this infant to be glory to God in heaven, and on earth to men the cause of peace¹, in the best and most comprehensive sense of the word, peace with God as a reconciled Father, which produces that peace of mind which passeth all understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away. Having been apprised where they should find their King, the shepherds hastened to pay him homage, and returned to their occupation with thankful hearts, glorifying God. They made known the transaction, which raised in the hearers a temporary wonder, but Mary meditated in secret on this extraordinary incident. As Bethlehem was on this occasion crowded with visitors, probably in better circumstances than Joseph and his betrothed bride, there was no room for them in the inn. The Saviour of the world, therefore, made his first appearance as man, in his more peculiar dominions, in which he never possessed the meanest home,—in a stable.

Neither the day nor year of our Saviour's birth is ascertained, and Scaliger, a high authority in chronology, classes this æra among the mysteries that will never be discovered. Dionysius Exiguus, a Roman abbot in 532, who had a design of reconciling the eastern and western Churches in the observation of Easter, chose to mark the years of his great paschal cycle from the birth of our Saviour, instead of the æra of Diocletian, or, as it is oftener called, the æra of the Martyrs; but this system, though more acceptable to Christians, did not come into general use till the eighth century, and unfortunately the year not being known, he assumed it upon reasonings, which more accurate investigations proved to be false, and chronologers are agreed, that he has placed it about four years too late. Some assign it to the autumn of the year of Rome 749, on the feast of tabernacles, or on

¹ There is a remarkable various reading, which has been followed by the Vulgate, "to men of good will."

the day of atonement ; and others prefer the spring following. The nature of this work precludes the discussion of such questions ; but I refer those who take an interest in it to a Dissertation of Mr. Greswell, who advances, but only as a conjecture, that the day of the Nativity is the tenth of the Jewish month Nisan, the day on which the paschal lamb was set apart, preparatory to its sacrifice on the 5th of April, 750. There is, he observes, no fact in our Lord's history, not altogether consistent with his birth about the vernal equinox ; and, certainly, either that or the autumnal one is more suitable than the winter solstice, both to the taking of the census, and to sheep being in the fields at night. The Roman Church has commemorated this event on the 25th of December from the time of Constantine, induced, it may be, by the wish of consecrating the Saturnalia ; and of this, as in other instances, converting a Pagan into a Christian festival. We learn from Chrysostom, that this opinion had been introduced from the west, for the Greek Church celebrated it originally on the sixth of January, together with the Epiphany, which they kept on the same day, because they imagined that the star first appeared to the Magi in their own country, on the night of the Nativity. The popular opinion cannot stand the slightest examination. It assumes as its basis, that the father of the Baptist was the high priest, and that it was on the day of atonement that Gabriel appeared to him ; now the very text itself contradicts this scheme, for it calls Zachariah a *certain* priest, and mentions both his course and his residence ; whereas the high priest was not reckoned of any, and lived always in Jerusalem.

12. *Circumcision and presentation of Christ in the Temple.*

Our Lord took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin of her substance only. He partook not therefore of the birth sin, inherited by all the other descendants of Adam, and, accordingly, needed no renewal of his nature which circumcision denotes. Still, as the seed of Abraham, to whom it

was given as a seal of the covenant of faith, and as born under the law, it was fit that he should comply with this as well as its other ordinances ; and as his mission was to the Jews, he could not fulfil it without attending the temple service and the synagogue, from which the omission of this ceremony would have excluded him. Upon the same principle, his Virgin Mother submitted to the purification prescribed by the law, though an exception from all the rest of our sex. It was evident that she was a mother, but it was not expedient that she should then announce her miraculous conception. The ordinary offering on this occasion was a lamb, but a pair of turtle doves was accepted from those who would find that too expensive ; and the fact that she only offered the latter seems to prove, that the Magi had not yet presented their gifts. An event now occurred which must have strengthened Mary's faith. Simeon, one of these spiritual worshippers, who was waiting for the birth of Him designated as the Consolation of Israel, and to whom it had been revealed that he should not die till he had seen the Messiah, was influenced by the Holy Spirit to enter the room in which they were, and taking up in his arms the infant Saviour, he was endowed with the gift of prophecy, which, as we have seen in the instances of Zachariah and the Virgin, was now, after a suspension of four centuries, granted to a favoured few. The Song of Simeon rises above the two preceding ones in interest. The Virgin gave vent to her immediate personal feelings, and her subject closes with the birth of the Messiah. Zacharias opens a prospective but limited field of vision ; but while "the Consolation of Israel" had been Simeon's hope through life, and its arrival the signal for his peaceful dissolution, he sees with a prophetic glance, like the evangelical and catholic Isaiah, (xlii. 6. xlix. 6—9.) the removal of the veil from the understanding and affections of the Gentiles, and rejoices not only that the Saviour will be the glory of his own people, but that he is also given as a light to all nations. He then turned to his mother, and moderates her joyous expectations by observing, that, notwithstanding, he will not be welcomed as she might

expect, but treated as a mark against which many a shaft shall be shot, and that she herself shall suffer as if her heart had been pierced by a javelin. Simeon's testimony was corroborated by that of Anna, a prophetess, an aged and devout widow, who was constant in her attendance on the temple, and not only now joined in thanksgiving to God, but also spake of the infant as the Christ to all in Jerusalem who looked for redemption.

13. *The Eastern Magi bring offerings as an homage to the new-born King of the Jews. Joseph by divine direction conducts the Virgin and her Son into Egypt, to avoid the fury of Herod, who, in order to destroy him, massacred all the male infant children of Bethlehem; and after his death settles with them at Nazareth. Matt. ii.*

This prophecy of Simeon soon began to be fulfilled in the arrival of strangers, whom a star seen by them in their own country, induced to seek Him who had been so lately proclaimed a Light to lighten the Gentiles. The period of their arrival is unknown, but the twelfth day after the nativity, on which it is celebrated, seems too soon even for a journey from Arabia, from which Tertullian and Justin Martyr would bring them. The application to them of this passage in Psalm lxxii. "the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts," is the chief support of this opinion. They are called Eastern Magi, and Persia, east of Judæa, was the seat of their religion, yet it might have spread to Arabia. The same text seems to have originated the idea of their being kings, which title is given them by Tertullian, but there is no reason except the specification of their gifts for limiting their number to three. These Magi might have heard of or even read Balaam's celebrated prediction of the star that was to arise out of Jacob. The journey they undertook proves that the Magi were religious men, and as they were warned by God afterwards, it is probable that intimation was given to them before, that this light was sent to them, to announce the birth of the King of the Jews. They could hardly have arrived before the presentation in the Temple: and some harmonists conclude,

that Joseph and Mary immediately after that event returned to Nazareth to settle their affairs, and then removed to Bethlehem. They might think the education of their Son in that village, in which his birth had been providentially brought to pass, was necessary to his acknowledgment as the Messiah; and we know that they would have fixed there on their return, if God had not interfered to prevent it. The age of the children marked out for death seems to require, that Jesus should be at the time of the command at least entering upon his second year; for if he had been born only twelve or forty days, it seems that even so cruel a tyrant as Herod would not have been guilty of such a wanton act, as to put to death those among whom the object of his alarm could not have been included.

The enquiries of the Magi in the capital of Judæa with reason alarmed Herod, who was hated by his subjects, upheld only by a foreign power, and could claim no title to the crown; and it is added, all Jerusalem with him, for the Jews believed that the reign of the Messiah would be ushered in by a train of calamitous events. The expectation too of the birth of one who was not only to be the King of the Jews, but an universal Sovereign, had been for some time prevalent both in the East and West. Virgil, in almost the same terms as Isaiah, describes the happy reign of a new progeny from heaven, which he applies to the new-born son of the Consul Pollio. This prophecy excited the ambition of Lentulus, and engaged him in Cataline's conspiracy; and Suetonius, in his life of Vespasian, remarks, that it was an ancient and constant opinion throughout the East, that sovereignty should belong to one who came out of Judæa. Tacitus, H. v. 13. reports, that many were persuaded that it was recorded in the ancient writings of the priests, that *Oriens valesceret*, the East should prevail, a remarkable expression, taken no doubt from the Prophets; for the word Zech. iii. 8. we render *Branch*, the Septuagint translates *Ἀνατολή*, and the Vulgate *Oriens*, a title which in either sense can only be justly claimed by the offspring of David, who is

that Sun of righteousness, to whose light the Gentiles should come, and kings to the brightness of his rising. Isaiah lx. 3.

By an inconsistent yet not unexampled mixture of belief in prophecy, and the hope of defeating it, he first ascertained from a council of the priests and scribes, that Bethlehem was the birth-place of the true King of Israel, and then planned his destruction. The Magi acted upon the information obtained at Jerusalem, and as they were on their way to Bethlehem, the star again appeared, and standing over the house where the babe was, precluded the possibility of mistake. This decides that it could not have been a star properly so called, but a meteor, moving at no great height. Their joy is expressed by the Evangelist in the strongest terms; and we find that they were not scandalized at the total absence of all the splendour that is expected to accompany royalty, but did homage, nothing doubting, to the infant King, whom they came to honour, presenting him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh; which the fathers explain, perhaps fancifully, as indicating the first his sovereignty, the second his divinity, and the third his human nature. Thus Jesus was acknowledged as a King in the place of his nativity by a chosen few of Jews and Gentiles, by the shepherds, and the Magi. Herod's craftiness seems to have deserted him on this occasion. By trusting to their fidelity, instead of sending persons with them, who might have been spies upon them, his plan was frustrated; for though their intention was to return to Jerusalem, it was altered in consequence of a Divine intimation. Herod, exasperated by disappointment, put to death all the male children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, who might be supposed to have been born since the time mentioned. But the atrocious measure which he commanded, only plunged him deeper into guilt; for the infant he sought to slay was not to die before the appointed time, or by any but the appointed instruments, and was safe in Egypt; an angel, probably Gabriel, having previously warned Joseph to retire there with his wife and her child. Thus Mary's espousals with him had been the means of

raising up a protector for them in the ordinary course of events; and the oblations of the eastern sages enabled them to bear the expense of a journey, and of a residence in a foreign land. The place of their abode is not known, but, as Egypt then abounded with Jews, their situation was less uncomfortable than it would otherwise have been: their stay also was very short; for, upon Herod's death a few months after, they returned, according to the instructions conveyed to them by an angel, but not as they intended, to Bethlehem, then in the dominions of his eldest surviving son Archelaus, but to Nazareth, in those of his brother Herod Antipas, the original home of Joseph.

14. *Jesus, when twelve years of age, questions and answers the doctors in the temple. Luke ii.*

Here the Saviour grew up in obscurity, his birth-place unknown to the nation at large, and the remarkable circumstances which pointed out his real dignity having been shown only to a few chosen witnesses of Jewish and Gentile extraction. It is said, that he grew strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom; but how and by what degrees the indwelling Deity communicated wisdom and holiness to his human nature, it is unprofitable, and seems to be presumptuous, to conjecture. It is natural to desire to know some particulars of the Saviour's childhood; and the authors of the false gospels undertake to gratify this wish. The anecdotes they detail, however, are so absurd, that they carry with them their own refutation; and it appears that the information we wish was not really expedient for us, since it has been withheld. St. John could, if he had pleased, have given us from the Virgin a minute account; but his object, and that of all the Evangelists, was the public ministry, not the private life, of the Saviour. We know in general, that he was obedient to Joseph and Mary, and it is probable that he assisted Joseph in his trade, being called the Carpenter, (Mark vi. 13.) and tradition reports that he made ploughs and yokes. Only a single incident of his youth is preserved. Joseph, as a conscientious Israelite,

went up yearly to Jerusalem to keep the passover, and his wife was in the habit of accompanying him, although the law did not require the attendance of females. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went up with them, and his age is mentioned, because that at which it was customary to admit youths into the congregation by some ceremony, corresponding to Confirmation in the Christian Church. The festival being over, they returned, and journeying in a company, as is still the custom of the east, did not, till families separated for the night, discover that he had remained behind. They went back to Jerusalem in quest of him, where they found him in some court or chamber of the temple, questioning the teachers of the law, and answering them, which he did with such wisdom and propriety, as to astonish all who heard him. The common notion, that he disputed with the doctors, derived from some commentators, and strengthened by paintings, receives no countenance from the text. His reply, How is it that ye sought me? Know ye not that I ought to be in my Father's *house*? seems to intimate reproof, as if they had not been sufficiently attentive to the various circumstances that designated his future office, and rebukes her for calling Joseph his father.

The whole of the preceding history has been boldly rejected by modern Anti-Trinitarians, and is unfairly printed in their new version in Italics, as if it were of doubtful authority. I say unfairly, because these chapters have been found in all un mutilated manuscripts and versions, and the facts they contain are referred to by the earliest Christian authors, and the earliest opponents of Christianity. It also deserves to be considered, that a prominent topic of discussion between those who favoured and those who opposed Jesus, was, the place of his birth, and the only proof of his birth in David's town lies in these chapters, which the Unitarians would explode, nor without them could we show that he was of the lineage of David. The phrase also *ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμεραῖς*, like *ἐν ἔτει δὲ πέντε καὶ δέκατῳ* in Luke, with which they would begin the Gospel, implies that something had preceded; nor

would Matthew have said, (iv. 13.) Jesus leaving Nazareth, unless he had mentioned before, (ii. 13.) that he came and dwelt there. The internal objections, then, are the only ones worthy of notice; the fabulous nature, as it is assumed, of the narrative, and the mode in which prophecy is applied. But these will not justify our rejection of what the whole Christian world, till our own days, has agreed to receive as Scripture. It is argued, that the massacre at Bethlehem must be a fabrication, because unnoticed by historians: but Josephus, the only author who could be expected to record it, compiles his narrative from the partial account of Herod's minister Nicolaus, and therefore is likely to be silent. The transaction too, however horrible, might not be of sufficient notoriety or importance to find its way into history. Michaelis estimates the number slain under twenty; but, without affecting an accuracy for which we have not sufficient data, we may observe, that Bethlehem was a small place, that the infants slain were not above two years old, and of the male sex only, and that several might escape. We know that Herod, who had already put to death his wife and three sons, made it his dying request to his sister, that on his decease there should be a general slaughter of the principal persons in the nation, that those who would otherwise have rejoiced at his funeral, might be compelled to mourn. Surely then we need have no scruple in believing, that such a wretch would command any crime, that could gratify his resentment or strengthen his authority. We have a remarkable instance not long before, of a similar design of atrocity, which, though not put into execution, was only prevented by selfishness; and it deserves our notice, that the suggestion arose out of the very same cause. Suetonius informs us, (Augustus 94,) that the same year in which Augustus was born, a Sibylline oracle made a great noise, that nature was about to bring forth a king to the Romans; which so terrified the Senate, that they made a decree, to expose all boys born that year; but those Senators whose wives were with child, because each appropriated to himself this expectation, took care that the decree should not

be registered. Some indistinct intimations, however, of this slaughter have been transmitted to us. Cedrenus says, that Herod was distinguished by the title of child-slayer; and Macrobius furnishes this heathen testimony, "when Augustus heard, that among the children, whom Herod king of the Jews ordered to be slain in Syria, his own son was also put to death, he said, It is better to be Herod's hog than his son." Probably he spoke in Greek, and thus played upon the words ὄν and υἱόν. His eldest son Antipater he did kill for a conspiracy, only five days before his own death; and in the repetition of the story some ages after, it is not unnatural that such an event should be confounded with the Bethlehem massacre.

It is objected, that the author of the introductory chapters assigned to Matthew, has brought forward as testimony to Jesus passages from the Prophets, which the context shows to have been fulfilled in other persons; and the candid reader must allow, that the application is far from obvious, and is open to critical difficulties. Yet an objector of equal candour will be ready to grant, that the application is made after the manner of Jewish commentators; and if other arguments are of sufficient weight to establish the authenticity of this introductory narrative, we are bound to acquiesce in the authority of an inspired author, though it may not be to our judgment convincing. "The Lord seems purposely (Scott on Isaiah vii.) to cast an obscurity over some of the most remarkable predictions in Scripture, as a trial of our humility, and to prove whether we will receive and profit by what is obvious, though we cannot satisfactorily solve every difficulty, or whether we will proudly reject the whole on that account." Nor can this be said to be reasoning in a circle, for it would be easy to show, that the remark is as applicable to other parts of the New Testament, as to these disputed chapters. There are divines, whose orthodoxy is above suspicion, who consider several of these passages as accommodated to subjects which they were never intended to predict; as modern preachers, by detaching verses from the context, sometimes in their sermons give a new and

not strictly appropriate meaning to Scripture. "To deny this," says Dr. Pye Smith, "would be to refuse the Apostles and Evangelists that liberty of observing striking coincidences, and of making useful applications, which writers of all ages have exercised, and the Scriptures were almost the only literature of the Jews." But he proceeds with a caution against the abuse of this practice. "We should be slow to admit this solution, and well consider the probability that in such cases there may be a ground of appropriation, the inobservance of which is solely owing to our ignorance of some circumstance in the *original* intent of the passage. But when it is introduced explicitly as an assertion of fact or doctrine, or as a prophecy, we must admit the propriety of the application, to the full extent to which it is carried by the sacred writers. The two citations, the application of which to Jesus we find most difficulty in allowing, are thus formally introduced, "That it might be fulfilled, Out of Egypt have I called my Son;" and, "Then was fulfilled, In Rama there was a voice heard," &c. These terms are said not to be so unfavourable, as they appear to be at first sight, to the hypothesis of accommodation, for they occur in the same manner in the Talmud, and Rabbinical works, and are not even unknown to the Greek. But this system, not so much of interpreting as explaining away a prophecy, is not, I conceive, required; the two passages may be understood as having a double fulfilment, of which the secondary is the most important, and was the more exact one. The calling up out of Egypt, by the hands of Moses and Aaron, of Israel, the adopted son of God, prefigured the future bringing up out of the same country of his real Son by generation, the one to enter upon the possession of the earthly Canaan, the other by his sufferings in the same land to obtain for himself and his people a right to the enjoyment of its antitype, heaven. The literal sense, says Lowth, "does more properly belong to Jesus than to Israel, which is observable in many other prophecies, which can be but improperly applied to those, of whom they were first spoken, and taking them in their true and genuine sense, are only fulfilled in Christ."

Rachel, who lay buried between Rama and Bethlehem, is particularly represented by the prophet, as weeping and inconsolable for the death of her children. The primary interpretation appears to be the captivity, but the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem, a town near the confines of the tribe of Benjamin, Rachel's son, and some of whom we may reasonably suppose to be her descendants, is the full accomplishment of the prediction; and this is rendered the more probable, to any one who will read through the chapter, which comforts both Ephraim and Judah with the promise of a better spiritual covenant, and includes that obscure intimation of the Messiah's miraculous conception, which the ancient Jews expounded of him, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth; A woman shall compass a man."

"He shall be called a Nazarene," presents a difficulty of another description, for the words are not found in the Old Testament. We know that in our Lord's time the bad character of the inhabitants of Nazareth had become proverbial: thus when Philip, John i. 45. said to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth," the reply even of that Israelite without guile was, "Can there any thing good come out of Nazareth?" It appears, then, that the residence and presumed birth of Jesus in that town contributed to his rejection. The interpretation, therefore, which takes it as equivalent to a despised person, appears to be the best, and we shall then allow that he is virtually, though not actually, predicted as a Nazarene; and this view is strengthened by the language of the Evangelist, who does not refer to a specific chapter, but says generally, in the Prophets.

St. Matthew expressly declares, that the naming of the Messiah Jesus, is the fulfilment of Isaiah's declaration to king Ahaz, that "*the* Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and that they shall call his name Immanuel, God with us:" and this celebrated prophecy has ever been regarded by the Church as evidence of the miraculous conception, and of the divine nature of the promised Deliverer. Efforts were early

made to deprive us of this valuable testimony, and the attempt has been zealously revived by the modern Anti-Trinitarians. Thus Aquila, a proselyte from Christianity to Judaism in the second century, in his new translation of the Scriptures into Greek, rendered *Almah*, translated *παρθένος*, *virgin*, by the Septuagint, *νεᾶνις*, *young woman*; and Jewish critics have endeavoured to show, but without success, that though generally meaning the former, it does not of necessity; and the prophecy seems to require the sense which the Church has put upon it, of one who is and continues to be a virgin, for so ordinary an event as a young woman giving birth to a child could hardly have been called a sign, or would have been announced with such solemnity. It is also objected, that our Lord was never called Emmanuel; but it is well known, that, by a common figure, not peculiar to Hebrew, it is taken for, he shall be entitled to that appellation, and that he is what it denotes, God manifested in the flesh. He would be called by this name, as much as Solomon was by that of Jedidiah; and though it was not applied to him while on earth, he has been actually invoked under it in the hymns of many subsequent generations. Bishop Pearson considers it as comprehended in that of Jesus, for what else is God with us, than God our Saviour, which is the real meaning of Jesus. The prophet calls Judah Emmanuel's land, it cannot therefore be referred to any future child of his own; and Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, to whom alone it could be applied with any plausibility, had been born some years before. These objections appear to us to be frivolous, and the prophecy, as quoted by the Evangelist, requires no further vindication; but the context involves us in considerable difficulties, for it seems to declare that the Son promised should be born within the year, and that the political deliverance announced to Ahaz, should take place before this child should have reached the age in which he would be able to discriminate the kinds of food. When it is contended that this is a direct prophecy of the Messiah, the question arises, how an event that would not happen till more than seven hundred years had elapsed,

could be a sign or assurance of another event, which was to take place within two or at most three. The solution proposed is, that since the promise of the Messiah to be born in the fulness of time, included an assurance of the preservation both of the nation and of the royal house of David ; that promise was, by inference, a sign of deliverance from the present Syrian invasion ; and to strengthen this argument, it is maintained, that the sign was not intended for Ahab, but for his family, or rather his remote descendants. Dr. Kennicott's scheme is to me the most satisfactory, according to which, the text contains *two* distinct prophecies, each literal, and to be understood in one sense only, the first relating to Christ, the second to Isaiah's son. He thus paraphrases it. Fear not, O house of David ; God is mindful of his promise, and will fulfil the same in a very wonderful manner. Behold, a virgin (rather the virgin, the only one thus circumstanced) shall conceive, and bear a son, and this son shall be called (that is, shall be) Emmanuel, God with us : but this infant shall be truly man ; milk and honey, that is, the ordinary food of infants, shall he eat, *till* he shall grow up, to know how to refuse the evil and choose the good. But before *this* child (pointing to his own son, whom he might hold in his arms) shall know how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. The child's name is evidently prophetic, Shear-jashub, the remainder shall return. This prophecy was soon after fulfilled, and therefore this son, whose name had been so consolatory the year before, was with the utmost propriety brought forth now, to declare that the lands of Syria and Israel here spoken of as one kingdom, on account of their present confederacy, should be forsaken of both their kings, which, though at that time highly improbable, came to pass about two years after, when these two kings, who had in vain attempted to conquer Jerusalem, were themselves destroyed, each in his own country. The prophet was commanded to take this child with him, but no use was made of him, unless in this application ; yet he afterwards declares, that both his

children were for signs. Those who think this transition from the one child to the other an untenable position, and that the prediction requires that the sign should shortly take place, will approve of Dathe's interpretation, that the prophet pointed out some virgin then present, and that she should bring forth a son for a confirmation of the promise given, who would be a type of the birth of Christ of the Virgin Mary, as the brasen serpent was of his crucifixion, and Jonah of his three days abode in the grave. The remarkable declaration, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given," is included within this prophecy, and this alone is sufficient to satisfy us, though difficulties may perplex the interpretation, that Isaiah was speaking of the Messiah. Whatever plausible objections, however, may be urged against the application of this or the other passages of the Old Testament, it is impossible to explain away the plain declaration of Micah, which is referred to the Messiah by the Chaldee Targum, and the most eminent Jewish commentators, and is authenticated by that Jewish synod, as it may be called, convened by Herod, to ascertain his birth-place. This, says Dr. Hales, p. 463. vol. ii. perhaps the most important single prophecy in the Old Testament respecting the personal character of the blessed seed of the woman, crowns the whole chain of prophecies descriptive of his several limitations to the line of Shem, to the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the tribe of Judah, and to the royal house of David, terminating in his birth at Bethlehem, the city of that Prince. It forms, therefore, the basis of the New Testament, which begins with his human birth, the miraculous circumstances attending which are recorded in these two introductions. St. Matthew, however, only quotes the part of the prophecy which his purpose required; and I here insert the remainder, which as explicitly declares the eternal generation and consequently proper Deity of the Babe of Bethlehem, with which St. John begins his Gospel, while the conclusion carries us on to the conversion of all Israel and his universal dominion.

But his issuings forth are from old,
 From days of eternity.
 Therefore he will give them up [for a season]
 Until the time that she which shall bear have borne.
 Then shall the residue of thy brethren (the Jews) return
 Along with the sons of Israel.
 And he shall stand and guide them
 In the strength of Jehovah,
 In the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God ;
 And when they return he shall be magnified
 Unto the ends of the earth.

15. *The Ministry of John the Baptist. Matt. iii. Mark i.
 Luke iii.*

It was not till he was about thirty years of age, the period fixed under the Mosaic dispensation for the priests to enter upon their official duties, that our great High Priest commenced the work he had undertaken. His mission was to the house of Israel, and the most effectual method both of giving it the requisite publicity, and of accrediting it, was his baptism by John, who had opened his preparatory commission in the wilderness, to whom men of all ranks and opinions flocked, as to a religious guide, and whose testimony, from the estimation in which he was universally held, would predispose them to receive Jesus as the Messiah. John, who was six months older, commenced his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius; and reckoning that event from the death of his predecessor, Jesus would have been at his own baptism 32 or 33 years old, which seems to be hardly reconcileable with the phrase, about thirty. The difficulty, however, is altogether removed, if we count from the real commencement of his reign, two years before, (767, A. U. 26 of the vulgar æra,) when he was associated by Augustus with himself in the empire. John's ministry may have begun in the autumn, about the feast of tabernacles; and its commencement is supposed by Greswell to have been on the fifth of October,

which he ingeniously shows to have been probably his thirtieth birthday. In these thirty years the political state of the country had been entirely changed. The Sceptre had passed away from Judah by the death of Herod, shortly after the birth of Shiloh, that Apostle of God to whom it of right belonged; for though he divided his dominions among three of his four surviving sons, his will required the Emperor's confirmation. To Archelaus he assigned Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa, but Augustus refused to give him the title of king; and after a tyrannical administration of ten years; he was deposed, and banished to Vienna in Gaul, on the petition of *his subjects, who would not have him to reign over them*^a, though they had unsuccessfully petitioned originally against his accession. His dominions then became an avowed portion of the Roman empire, and was placed under the government of a procurator, who was in a degree dependent upon the more important province of Syria. Pontius Pilatus, rendered for ever infamous by his condemnation of Jesus, contrary to his own conscience, had now filled that office near twelve years; and Herod Antipas, the third son, whose share of his father's kingdom was the larger part of the Holy Land, that is, Galilee and Peræa, still retained his patrimony under the name of tetrarchy, or the fourth part. Another tetrarchy to the north was the share of Philip, which he retained for 37 years till his death; but there is no further mention of him in the New Testament, and no other, in that, or in any history, of Lysanias, who is here recorded as tetrarch of Abylene, a district near Mount Lebanon. Luke also marks the period by the joint pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas. The law, however, acknowledges only one. Annas, or Annanus, as he is called by Josephus, who had been high priest for eleven years, was deposed by the Romans a few years before, A. D. 24; but he had the consolation of having for his successors his sons and sons-in-law. He continued in consequence to have the chief administration, and is

^a Luke xix. 14.

mentioned, together with Caiaphas his son-in-law, as high priest, and when our Saviour was arrested he was taken to his house in the first instance.

John held his baptism at Bethabara, the ford of Jordan, where the miraculous passage of the Israelites under Joshua took place, and called upon all who came to it to repent, or rather to reform their lives, as the condition of admission into the kingdom of heaven, which was about to be established. The phrase peculiar to Matthew is equivalent to kingdom of God used by the other Evangelists, and signifies the Church, that society into which both Jews and Gentiles were to be incorporated as the subjects of God, and which after continuing on earth in a militant state would be finally removed to heaven. The term was taken from Daniel's prophecy, and understood to mean a temporal sovereignty, the seat of which would be Jerusalem instead of Rome: and from the same prophecy the Jews had learnt to call its ruler the Son of Man, an equivocal title, as it had been applied to Ezekiel, to mark his low condition, as contrasted with the inhabitants of heaven, and seems to indicate, that it would be in human nature that the Son of God would reign. It is our Saviour's common appellation of himself, and it is observable that it is never given to him by others. John's call upon the nation to reform might have taught them, that as the qualifications for admission into this kingdom were of a moral nature, it could not itself be earthly. He prepared the candidates for it by baptism, a rite by which we are told that heathens were received into the Jewish church, but which had never before been administered to those who by circumcision already belonged to it. It implied therefore, that they too, notwithstanding their church privileges, were sinners, and required to be washed in "the fountain" which was about to be "opened for sin and for uncleanness," Zech. xiii. Baptize, is one of the terms consecrated by long use, which our translators were instructed to retain. In some passages it means to immerse; and that mode of baptizing which suits the metaphor, that "we are buried in baptism," have died

to sin, and rise to a new life, was unquestionably the practice of the primitive Christians; and it is commanded in the Rubric of our present service; but aspersion is permitted, and was also used from the beginning, when illness or other circumstances rendered it expedient. On the other side it is argued, that the word employed is not *βάπτω*, but the diminutive *βαπτίζω*, and that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is more often described as a shedding or outpouring, than as an immersion. The spot chosen by the Baptist on the banks of the river, and the observation that he baptized at *Ænon*, (John iii. 23.) "because there was much water there," seem to decide the question, as far as he is concerned; and the testimony of Chrysostom and other Fathers leave no doubt as to the original mode of administering Christian baptism. But it is reasonable to suppose, that our rational and spiritual religion, which consists not in a slavish adherence to precedents, but in a renovation of heart, allows the Church a discretion in such ordinances; and it would be deeply to be regretted if our attention should be drawn off by such investigations, from the necessity of regeneration itself, of which baptism (by the use of this purifying element, which putteth away the filth of the flesh) is the expressive sign as well as seal, and of which that of the Baptist was typical. Faith and repentance are the conditions upon which Christian baptism is to be administered, and those who came to John's were also expected to confess their sins, and promise amendment of life.

John himself avoided the pleasures and business of the world, and led apparently such a life, as was imitated afterwards by many a Christian hermit. Well-meaning but misjudging persons, aspiring to a perfection which it is impossible to attain in the world, were induced by such examples to abandon their duties, and retire into the desert, to indulge in religious contemplation; but he did not hold up his own conduct, for which there was a special reason, to imitation; for when asked by his converts what they should

do to flee from the wrath to come, he gave them plain practical precepts adapted to their several callingsⁱ.

The two chief parties into which the nation was divided, the Sadducees and Pharisees, equally came to his baptism. The former were called after Sadoc, who flourished two centuries and a half before, and was the pupil of Antiochus Sochæus, president of the great council, who inculcated the duty of serving God disinterestedly, not from the servile fear of punishment, nor the mercenary hope of reward; and he, misconceiving the doctrine of his master, inferred that there was no future state. They were the great supporters of the law, which they professed to keep pure from uninspired additions or interpretations; they undervalued (if they did not like the Samaritans reject) the other books of the Old Testament, and did not believe in a future state, or in the existence of angels. The sect of the Pharisees is supposed to have sprung up soon after, and derives its name from *pharass*, to *separate*, because they separated themselves from others, to a life of professed sanctity; but while strict in the ceremonials of religion, they were lax in the interpretation of its moral precepts, the force of many of which they contrived to explain away. They maintained that Moses, in addition to the law which he had committed to writing, had received oral instructions in the mount, which had been carefully transmitted from generation to generation; and these traditions, which were chiefly of a ceremonial nature, as the washing of hands and cups, and a punctilious payment of tithes of the most trifling articles, they even valued above the weightier matters of morality, and too often made to supersede them. They appear to have been generally correct in conduct, but blameable for their motive, which was the praise that cometh not of God but of men. They therefore made long prayers in public, were ostentatious in almsgiving, shewed by their appearance when they fasted, and wore broader phylacteries, and larger fringes than

ⁱ Parr's Works, VI. Sermon on Private Prayer.

others^k. The religion of many, we know, was only put on as a mask, for they are reproved by our Lord as hypocrites, and with more severity than their rivals. They acknowledged the immortality of the soul, but, like the Greek philosophers, connected it with its pre-existence. This is affirmed by Josephus, one of their sect, A. ii. 18; and the author of the Book of Wisdom maintains it, viii. 20. for he says, "being good, he came into an undefiled body." From the prevalence of this doctrine arose the supposition, that Jesus was the Baptist risen from the dead; and the question, "Did this man sin, or his parents, that he was born blind?" While they were superstitious, bigoted, and uncharitable, resting in complacency in their presumed holiness, trusting that they were righteous and despising others, the Sadducees were men of the world. The first were the favourites of the people; the latter, who were fewer in number, were generally of rank and fortune, and did not seek public offices. Josephus informs us, that scarcely any of the business of the state was transacted by them; and that when in the magistracy, they were obliged to accommodate themselves to the opinions of the Pharisees, or the populace would not have tolerated them. We commonly call them sects, but that is not so proper a word as party, for both conformed to the national form of worship; they therefore resemble in this respect the monastic orders in the Church of Rome, rather than what in modern language we understand by sectaries. There is also frequent mention in the Gospels of Scribes and Lawyers, νομικοὶ, (teachers of the law,) which appear to be synonymous terms, as they are used indifferently, Matt. xxii. 35. Mark xii. 28. They sat in Moses's seat, that is, instructed the people; they had their name from their original occupation of transcribing

^k The phylacteries were pieces of parchment inscribed with four paragraphs from the law, Exodus xi. 1—10. xiii. 11—16. Deut. vi. 4—9. xi. 13—21. which the Jews, interpreting literally the injunction to bind the words of the law as a sign on their hands, and as frontlets between their eyes, wore about their persons. They were commanded (Numb. xv. 38.) to wear fringes or borders to their cloaks, and those who wished to appear more devout than their neighbours, made both larger, that they might be more conspicuous.

the law, and became in time its interpreters, and were consulted in difficult cases. They were generally Pharisees.

The Baptist, who was an intrepid reprovcr of vice, addresses both as a generation of vipers, by which he seems to designate them, in contradiction to the title of which they boasted, their descent from Abraham, as more properly the children of that old serpent the Devil, as Christ afterwards expressly called them. He enquired with astonishment who had warned them to flee from the impending wrath; neither, therefore, came in the proper frame of mind: the one were as proud of their fancied piety and virtue, as the other of their presumed discernment, and superiority to vulgar prejudices; and both were alike unprepared to welcome a meek and lowly and self-denying Messiah. Probably expecting his immediate coming, they thought it necessary to submit to baptism as an appointed ceremony, without any desire of the internal purification, which it was designed to denote. As some, however, might have been impressed and affected by his preaching, the Baptist requires not mere *μεταμέλεια*, or uneasiness of mind concerning sin, but such conduct as would show *μετάνοια*, change of purpose from bad to good. He draws them off from their reliance for salvation on their descent, which would be no protection for them if they continued in sin, since the divine promise would not be frustrated by their rejection, as God could raise up children unto Abraham, in their stead, from the very stones before them, or the Gentiles, whom they esteemed as no better. In figurative language he implies, that their repentance must not be delayed, as the axe of the woodman is already lying by the trees he is about to fell. His preaching brought conviction to the consciences of many, and led them to seek directions for their conduct. He enforces the great duties of benevolence and justice, the latter peculiarly necessary to two professions among his hearers, the publican and the soldiers, then apparently on their march¹; but while his instructions shew their

¹ It is supposed against Aretas, Herod's father-in-law; and it is inferred from the use of the participle instead of the substantive.

besetting temptations, he says nothing against either profession itself. John had been predicted by Isaiah as a "voice crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make his paths straight;" in language fully declaratory of the divinity of the expected Sovereign, meaning, that as pioneers level the road for a monarch about to march through morasses or over mountains^m, so his ministry, by humbling the proud, and raising their minds to aspire after spiritual happiness, prepared them for their Saviour and their God. John is characterised by the prophet as a voice, for the sole object of his commission was to proclaim the Messiah. He was faithful in discharging it, for he took care that his hearers should not rest in admiration of himself, but directs them to the Light, to bear witness to which he was sent, and speaks of the Saviour's pre-eminence in terms which cannot be explained upon any other than the orthodox scheme; for he declares that he existed before him, though it is evident that he had come into the world later, and that himself was not worthy to act as his menial servant, although the Saviour bore testimony to him afterwards, that he was inferior to none of the human race. He also strongly marked the greater efficacy of his baptism, by contrasting the quality of water, which cleans the surface, with that of fire, which refines and purifies the substance; and compares him to the husbandman, who separates the wheat and the chaff by winnowing, that he may preserve the one and consume the other. This related to the terrible judgments about to be executed upon the nation, and the preservation of a pious remnant, but it is no less applicable to the final condition of the righteous and the wicked.

Unbelievers maintain, that repentance is in itself sufficient to restore the most abandoned sinner to the Divine favour; but if the doctrine were true, surely it would have been announced by him who was sent on purpose to preach

^m When Semiramis came to the Zareian mountains, she ordered the precipices to be digged down, and the hollow places to be filled up, and thus, at a great expence, made a shorter road. Diod. Sic. ii. 13.

repentance. It was indeed enjoined by him as an indispensable duty, but he points to the Lamb of God as taking away sin: nor have they the opinion of mankind on their side; for the universal prevalence of sacrifice, as well among civilized as barbarous nations, shews a persuasion, handed down by tradition, that “without shedding of blood there is no remissionⁿ.” “Those that can imagine the removal of the guilt of the least sin feasible by the choicest and most religious of their own works, never as yet knew God truly, nor themselves, nor their sins; they never understood the fiery strictness of the law, nor the spirituality of the Gospel. In Christ alone is that “fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness;” it is from his crucified side that there must issue both blood to expiate, and water to cleanse our impurities^o.” Most professors, in all their works of repentance, sorrow, and humiliation, are too, too apt secretly to think that they make God some amends for their sins. But this conception is most dangerous to the soul, and dishonourable to God, as being absolutely and diametrically opposite to the tenor of the Gospel, for it causes us, while we acknowledge a Christ, tacitly to deny a Saviour. And herein is the art and policy of the Devil seen, who will keep back the sinner as long as he can from the duties of repentance and humiliation, and when he can do this no longer, he will endeavour to make him trust and confide in them. But let this persuasion still remain fixed upon our spirits, that repentance was enjoined the sinner as a duty, not as a recompense, and that the most we can do for God, cannot countervail the least we have done against him. Nothing can cleanse the soul but that blood that redeemed the soul; and the only repentance that deserves the name, is itself one of the spiritual gifts which Jesus hath been exalted to the right hand of the Father to bestow.

The period, during which the Baptist was preaching in the

ⁿ Porteus's Lectures, vol. i. p. 84.

^o South's Sermon on 1 John iii. 3.

wilderness repentance, is uncertain; some extend it to three years, or even three and a half, but Mr. Greswell has satisfied me that it did not exceed six months. It is inconsistent, he conceives, with the subordination of John to Christ, that his ministry should be as long as that of his Master; and his only office was to prepare the nation for his coming, for which the shorter period would be sufficiently long. It is not credible that he should have been three years baptizing and making converts, before the Sanhedrim should have thought of asking by what right he acted. The particulars of his ministry are few, and the scene of it from first to last the same—the plain of Jordan. Again, the history of our Lord, up to the commencement of his ministry, runs parallel to that of the Baptist, with the distance of six months between them; and there is the same reason to conclude, that they would both enter upon their offices at the same age. Supposing that the personal ministry of John, succeeded and perpetuated by that of Christ, was necessary to the fulfilment of Daniel's half-week of years, and that the latter lasted four consecutive passovers, precisely three years, we have six months for that of John.

PART II.

16. *Jesus comes to John for Baptism. Matt. iii. Luke iii.*

WHILE the public expectation had been raised by John, this superior Teacher, whom he came to announce, offered himself for baptism. Luke says, that Jesus was then beginning to be about thirty years of age; we may then conclude, that, as he would have completed that time at the passover of 27, April 9, he was baptized in the early spring of the same year. Being free from sin, he could not repent, nor had he any need

of reformation, yet he thought fit to honour this baptism as a divine institution; and though in himself of immaculate purity, deriving no taint from Adam, it might become him to be baptized, as the representative of his corrupt race. John, conscious of the purity and superior dignity of Jesus, hesitated to perform an office, which seemed to mark superiority; nor did he consent, till admonished, that it was an ordinance which it became them both to fulfil. The reason has not been recorded, but it may be considered as a formal consecration to his office, in the same manner as, under the ancient dispensation, the high-priest required ablution, previous to his inauguration. When John afterwards announced him to his disciples as the Lamb of God, he declares that he knew him not till the Spirit pointed him out as such, by descending and remaining on him. Some, taking the expression in the strictest sense, suppose, that, though they were relations, and their mothers friends, it was arranged that they should have no personal acquaintance, that the Baptist's testimony might be placed beyond suspicion. Yet, upon this supposition, it is not easy to conceive why he should have hesitated to baptize him, as the sign was given afterwards; and this apparent dissonance between the Evangelists Matthew and John may perhaps be best reconciled, by distinguishing between knowing the person and the office. Thus the Jews knew Jesus as the reputed Nazarene, the son of Joseph, but not as the Christ; and Jesus himself said afterwards, John xiv. 9. "Philip, have I been so long time with thee, and hast thou not known me?" As Jesus went up straightway from the river, he prayed, probably for the influence of the Spirit to render his ministry acceptable and efficacious, when the heavens were opened; which seems to mean, that the glory, or bright light, accompanying a manifestation of the Deity, appeared, and the Holy Spirit descended with the fluttering motion, and probably in the appearance of a dove, while a voice proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus in the baptism of our great High Priest, there was an exhibition to the senses of the three Persons in the ever-blessed

Trinity, each acting according to the economy of the scheme of redemption, the Father appointing the Son to be Mediator, the Son accepting the appointment, and the Holy Spirit anointing him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and qualifying him for the work he had undertaken. Thus the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him in all its fulness, being not given to him by measure, as to his apostles, to whom its gifts were divided. This voice was again repeated at the transfiguration, and, for the third time, at the close of his ministry, after he had been proclaimed the Christ by the multitude, when for their sakes, to confirm their faith, he prayed in their hearing, "Father, glorify thy name." Thus was our Lord consecrated to his high office, by one who was universally honoured; and God confirmed the appointment, but whether to the Baptist alone, or in the presence of others, is doubtful.

17. *The Temptation.* *Matt. iv. Mark i. Luke iv.*

An interval of solitary meditation before he entered upon the duties of his active and painful course was a proper preparation. The Spirit therefore impelled him to withdraw into the desert; and here, like Moses previous to his receiving the Law, and Elijah when called upon to restore it, he endured a fast of forty days among wild animals, far from the haunts of men. During the whole of this period he was tempted by the evil spirit; but only the three assaults with which he tried him at its expiration are recorded, either as more violent than his other wicked suggestions, or as more suitable for our instruction, who here see our Master's triumph over the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life. The conflict had no human witness, it must therefore have been revealed at the proper season, in order to be recorded for the edification of the Church; and though we pretend not to be able to fathom the depths of this mysterious transaction, we can perceive with the light afforded us by the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it behoved him in this, as in other respects, to be made like unto his brethren; and that as

our progenitors yielded to the first temptation, and thereby transmitted to their whole posterity their depraved nature, it was fit that our new federal Head should, before he entered upon his office, encounter and triumph over the tempter. We are hereby taught, that there is no impiety so gross which the Devil will not tempt the best of men to commit ; and we have the consolation of knowing, that our Master has had an experimental knowledge of the temptations that try his people, and that not only having been proved to be without sin, he is able to succour them that are tempted, but that he can also sympathize with their infirmities. Our gratitude is increased by this record of what he unseen endured for our sakes, in addition to his poverty and his sufferings, which met the public eye, for he suffered, being tempted, and the suggestions of the tempter would cause him distress in proportion to his purity. His great example also teaches us, when exposed to the fiery darts of the spiritual adversary, to resist him by watchfulness, prayer, and a right use of the word of God.

The perfect human nature of our Lord was incapable of sinful thoughts ; and this is sufficient answer to those, who would explain the temptation as an allegorical representation of the suggestions that occurred to him, to abuse his delegated power as the means of personal gratification. Others conceive, that the whole passed in a vision ; but there is no intimation that favours this opinion in any of the three narratives, and no more reason to deny that it literally took place as described than the temptation of Eden, and indeed it seems fit that both should be considered as similar transactions. The Devil, we assume then, appeared in a visible and probably a human form ; he knew that the fate of man depended upon the conduct of his representative, and that by his failure, the scheme of redemption would be frustrated. Our Lord's appetite returned, in a place where no food could be procured by ordinary means, and no suffering is probably more severe than extreme hunger. How great then is the trial to one who has it in his power to remove it ! The evil spirit, called in this narrative by the three names that characterise

him, the tempter, the accuser, and the enemy, chose therefore this crisis for his most subtle assault. The first Adam had been tempted in a garden, and prevailed upon to eat one forbidden fruit, when he might innocently have satisfied his appetite with all the rest; but the second Adam met the enemy in a barren wilderness, and thus gave him his full advantage. Satan tempts him to distrust the providence of God, and to provide for his support by that miraculous power with which he had been entrusted, not for his own use, but for the promotion of the work which he had undertaken. He insidiously transforms himself, as it were, into an angel of light. The danger of the temptation appears in its plausibility; he did not urge him to create a feast for indulgence, but to change a stone into a loaf, that he might not perish with hunger, and might satisfy himself that he had not been mistaken in supposing himself the Son of God. Consent would have shown distrust of God's providence and promise, and a disposition to use improper means of relief. It was his duty to wait patiently; and so Jesus told him in the words of the Law. The life of man depends upon the will of God; he can find food for him, or, if he pleases, support him without it. As in other quotations in the New Testament, the force of his reply is not fully perceived without a reference to the context. The chosen people, with a promise of entering Canaan, were also in a desert, which could not maintain them by its produce, and therefore they were fed by miracle; "He humbled thee, and *suffered thee to hunger*, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This reply therefore repelled the temptation, and the tempter was overcome by the "sword of the Spirit." Thus we see that the Devil is too crafty to begin by tempting established believers to gross and evident wickedness; and when he finds them still relying, notwithstanding their distress and difficulties, upon God's goodness, determined to suffer rather than seek relief by sin, he changes his ground, as in the second

temptation of our Lord, when by a garbled quotation from Scripture, (omitting "in all thy ways,") since by Scripture he had been defeated, he tempts him, whom he could not persuade to distrust, to the opposite sin of presumption. He took Jesus along with him to the roof of the temple, and urged him to throw himself down, and thus exhibit himself to the people suspended in the air, as their long-expected Son of Man "coming in the clouds of heaven, and suddenly to his temple." That this was his design may be conceived from the scene of it being, not, as before, the wilderness, but the temple. This would have been an ostentatious and an unwarranted requisition of a miracle to be wrought for his preservation, from danger wantonly incurred from the desire of display, and of proving the faithfulness of God. Jesus therefore answered the enemy by another quotation from Deuteronomy, which plainly forbids men to tempt the Lord their God, by unnecessary appeals to his providential care. The last recorded temptation is the offer of universal empire, addressed, it should seem, not to ambition only, but to every passion that can be gratified by the unlimited possession of all the objects of sense. When we consider how many hopeful Christians have sacrificed their consciences even for a small share of the enjoyments, the power, or the praise of the world, we may appreciate in some degree the irresistible attraction of the whole to men, unless restrained by divine influence, and shall thankfully use the petition recommended by our tempted Master, who perfectly knew our nature, "Lead us not into temptation." The Devil, defeated in the former instances, seems to have despaired of success by any covert temptation, and to have resolved to make one bold effort, grounding his hope upon the vastness of the recompence which he proposed as the price of a transient act of worship. Whatever disguise the Devil had before assumed, he must now have thrown it off. Jesus therefore addressed him by his name of Satan, or enemy, and commanded him to depart immediately, for it was written, that God alone should be worshipped. Thus baffled, he left him for a season; and we

are taught by our Lord's example, that if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us. Angels then came to rejoice in his triumph, and to pay him a willing homage, far more satisfactory than that an universal emperor would have received from slaves, and to supply his wants, an act which shows his pre-eminence above every creature.

Matthew and Luke, though they give substantially the same account, and often use the same words, record the temptations in a different order, the second of the first being the third of the second; and with the majority of harmonists, I prefer that of Matthew, for it does not seem likely that the Devil should have left Jesus on the roof of the temple; and there is an obvious opposition between the trial there and the first, neither of which would, so manifestly as the last, betray the real character of the tempter. Mr. Greswell suggests an ingenious reason for this transposition, which I transcribe. The first temptation is addressed to the purely sensual principle, the second to the purely intellectual principle, the third to the two combined: the proximate cause of the first we know was hunger; that of the second, we may reasonably conjecture, the voice from heaven at our Lord's baptism; and that of the third, the expectation of a temporal Messiah: the object of the two first was to discover whether Jesus was the Son of God; that of the third, whether he was the true Christ. If so, it would appear to be the strongest in the eyes of the Jews, because a temptation to avow himself such an one as they expected and desired; but to the Gentiles it would seem to be simply addressed to ambition, and of inferior strength to the second, and therefore one writing for Gentiles, would be likely to place it first. It is remarkable, that he was afterwards twice assailed by the temptation of worldly grandeur; first by his own disciple Peter, whom he rebuked in the same terms as he did Satan on this occasion; and again, when the multitude, persuaded, by the stupendous miracle of the 5000 fed with a few loaves and fishes, that he was the prophet like Moses foretold to come into the world, intended to take him by force, to make him their king.

18. *The testimony of the Baptist to Jesus. John i.*

The fame of John's baptism had attracted the notice of the Sanhedrim, and they sent a formal deputation of priests and levites of the sect of the Pharisees, to enquire whether he were himself the expected Messiah. This he plainly denied, and answered in the negative to their other enquiries, if he were Elijah, or the other prophet whom they expected. This may appear contradictory to our Saviour's subsequent testimony; but if he had assented, he would have misled them, as they understood the prophecy of Malachi literally. Being then asked who he was, he answered as before, the herald of the Messiah; but he now declared, that though they knew him not, he was actually in the midst of them. The day after their departure Jesus returned from the desert, and John, seeing him approaching, pointed him out to his disciples and the persons assembled as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; intimating to them who were well acquainted with the Mosaic ritual, that both the paschal sacrifice and the lambs that were offered up in the temple at the morning and evening service, were only typical of this the real victim, which had been slain (in the Divine decree) before the foundation of the world. The Saviour taketh away the sin of the world, by rendering it consistent with God's justice and holiness to pardon and accept sinners; and repentance and reformation, to which the deist ascribes inherent efficacy, are themselves gifts purchased by his death. The next day, seeing Jesus walking, John repeats his testimony to two of his disciples, Andrew and another, thought to be St. John, (from the accuracy with which he marks particulars, and his omission of the name:) they returned with Jesus to his abode in the neighbourhood on his invitation, and stayed with him the day. Andrew, convinced by his conversation with Jesus, brought his brother Simon, who at this first interview was surnamed Cephas, in Greek, *Peter*, in English, a *stone*; but they were not called to a constant attendance upon him till some time after his return to

Galilee. The next day, Jesus himself called Philip their townsman; and he introduces to him Nathaniel, supposed to be the same as Bartholomew, who was prejudiced against him on account of his reputed birth-place, but candidly yielded to his friend's request that he should come and judge for himself. To him our Saviour bore this honourable testimony, that he was in character as well as by descent an Israelite, and without guile. To convince him, he tells him that he saw him, when he thought himself unobserved, under a fig-tree, probably at his prayers; and this proof that he knew his most secret occupations when at a distance, removed his doubts, and he acknowledged him for the Son of God, and the King of Israel. Our Saviour seems to wonder that so small an indication of divine knowledge should have drawn forth this confession, and he promises him greater helps for the confirmation and increase of his faith than he had had for its production. He assured him, that as he had been brought to believe, by this single discovery of his glory, his power to read the heart, he should henceforth be favoured with a sight of greater things, and should behold an intercourse carried on by angels between earth and heaven, through him the medium of communication, as typified by the ladder shewn to his progenitor Israel in his mysterious dream.

19. *Jesus first shows forth his glory, by miraculously changing water into wine, at a wedding feast at Cana. John iv.*

Our Lord returned into Galilee, probably with these four disciples, and, on the third day after, was present at a marriage feast, which it is supposed, from the part taken by his virgin mother, was at the house of a relation. He here first manifested forth his glory; a remarkable expression, which is never used concerning the miracles of any prophet or apostle. They were only instruments by which God manifested forth *his* glory; but Jesus, as Emmanuel, wrought miracles by his own inherent power. As he taught, so he performed miracles

with authority. I will, be thou clean: I charge thee come out of the man: whereas the language of Peter is, Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong. Acts iii. As Joseph is not mentioned, it is supposed that he was dead. The occasion on which this miracle was wrought, the miracle itself, and our Lord's answer to his mother, may almost be regarded as a prophetic protest against the superstition and idolatry of the Roman Church, which disparages marriage, which it absolutely prohibits in the clergy, and worships the Virgin. Even at this day there are multitudes who call upon her to beseech, nay even to command^p, her Son, now that he sits upon his throne, though in his state of humiliation he would not allow her to counsel him in the exercise of his ministry. Her Son's reply is an intentional discouragement to her interposing, and conveys a reproof; but there is no coarseness or disrespect in the manner, for ladies of the highest rank are thus addressed, not only in Homer's Poems, and in the Greek Drama, but also in the refined age of Augustus, in which Christ was born. The respect naturally felt for our Lord's mother, soon degenerated into a blameable excess. She was called even by Origen and Athanasius, Theotokos, or Mother of God, and the Council of Ephesus confirmed the title. A subsequent age, transferring to her the office of her Son, calls her Queen of Angels, and Queen of Heaven. Epiphanius bestows upon her titles too high for any mortal; yet her Roman Catholic votaries would do well to consider this remarkable passage in his Reply to the Collyridians, who were in the habit of offering to her cakes, as an unbloody sacrifice. "Holy indeed is Mary's person, but not divine, not

^p Witness these passages from Roman Catholic hymns:

"Jussu matris impera Salvatori."

"Monstra te esse matrem."

The latter may still be seen inscribed over an altar in the cathedral of Narbonne. These commands are softened down to intercession in the English translations, prepared for the Roman Catholics of our own country.

given to us as an object of worship; but she herself worshipped him who was born of her flesh, and descended from heaven from the Father's bosom. Why did our Lord call her Woman, but that no one might think her of a more excellent nature, prophetically referring to those schisms and heresies which he knew would come. That ancient error shall not rule over us, to desert the living God, and worship his creatures; for if he does not suffer us to worship angels, much less will he the daughter of Anna." H. iii. 59. He uses the same word, "Woman," when addressing her from the cross. The reply is obscure; for though Jesus says, his hour is not yet come, he complies with her wish, and she does not take it for a refusal. The best explanation, as it appears to me, is, that he reserved for the passover at Jerusalem the performing of miracles openly as the Messiah; and that this, which was not made known even to many who were benefited by it, was only meant as an act of kindness, and for the confirmation of the faith of his immediate followers. Infidels object, that this miracle has a tendency to encourage, at least to tolerate, intemperance; and we must allow, that the quantity of water turned into wine was considerable, being upon the smallest computation above a hogshead. But we should consider, that in that country wedding feasts lasted generally seven days, that the guests were probably many, and might, in consequence of the invitation of Jesus, who was already sufficiently known to have disciples, be more than had been expected; and that it was not unsuitable to his amiable and friendly character, to provide the new married persons with some for future consumption. We too in this northern climate are apt to forget, that wine, which is with us a luxury, was in Palestine, as in France or Italy, the ordinary drink, and was much weaker than that which is brought to our tables. It has been observed, that the Hebrew legislator, who was commissioned to work upon the fears of a tyrant, began his miracles by converting water into blood; and that Jesus, whose object was to persuade and to change the heart, commences his with one well adapted to show the kindness of

his disposition, and which we are told produced the desired effect upon his disciples. Those disciples had been followers of the Baptist, and one object might be to show that his religion was of a less severe and austere character. His social character, conveys to us the important lesson, that virtue does not consist in withdrawing from the world, but in keeping ourselves unspotted by it, exposed him among his captious adversaries to the charge of excess in eating and drinking ; but we may be assured, that he who warned his associates not “ to be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,” (Luke xii. 34.) would countenance no degree of intemperance by his presence, much less have worked a miracle to provide more wine for those who had already drunk too much ; nor can its occurrence be fairly inferred from the speech of the manager of the entertainment, who speaks not of this particular feast, but of the ordinary practice of the world. Preachers, in contrasting the Saviour’s permitting the innocent pleasures of life, with the ascetical austerity of some Christian teachers, have sometimes expressed themselves unguardedly, and have led their hearers, whose passions have seconded their arguments, into too great a conformity with the world. Let us remember the treachery of our own hearts, and the old remark “ perimus licitis ;” and how dangerous it is to approach to the very border of propriety. Whether we eat or drink, it should be done to the glory of God ; and the recollection that the articles that compose our entertainment are his, and the Christian practice of begging his blessing on our meals has a tendency to sanctify their use, and to check intemperance. None has been so much abused as the subject of this miracle ; and Mahomed, knowing that abstinence is easier than temperance, altogether prohibited a beverage, which may for a season degrade man in stupidity below the brutes that perish, or by its maddening quality prove itself, as it is called by the Eastern poets, the mother of sins. Our true Prophet not only teaches us by this miracle, that wine, “ which maketh glad the heart of man,” may be innocently drunk, though it is to too many the occasion of guilt ; but by making it a symbol of

the spiritual refreshment which believers in him derive from his blood, he has consecrated it, and thereby afforded an additional motive not to abuse a gift which he hath pre-eminently honoured.

On Miracles.

As this is our Lord's first miracle, I shall here introduce some general remarks. A wonder is natural ; our ignorance only makes it wonderful, and when it is explained our wonder ceases : but a miracle is supernatural, an effect contrary to the established order of things. The creation of God is full of *wonders*, his word alone acquaints us with *miracles*. For example, persons apparently dead are sometimes restored from their state of suspended animation, and these resuscitations, however extraordinary, being known to be effected by human skill, are regarded only as *wonders* ; but no one who had seen a man that had been four days dead, come alive out of the grave at the command of another, could doubt of his having witnessed a *miracle*. Such an event, however, has not occurred within our own experience, or that of our acquaintance ; we read of them only in history, and the proper effect of a miracle is limited to spectators ; to others at a distance, whether of time or space, it resolves itself into a question of testimony. Now testimony is fallible ; some men, we know, wish to deceive us, others are themselves misled ; ancient historians record miracles which our judgment satisfies us are incredible ; and pretensions to them are made in the Roman Church, and of late, I grieve to add, by Protestants, which will not bear investigation. Infidels therefore may plausibly urge suspicions against those in the Bible : and this has been the grand attempt of those of modern times, for they have seen that this is the strongest argument for Christianity, since if one miracle were really wrought in its behalf, who can deny that this is an incontrovertible proof, that our religion came from God. I say, infidels of modern times ; for those who were present at our Lord's miracles could not resist the evidence of their senses. But loving darkness rather than light, they

ascribed them, through works of mercy, to a confederacy with an evil spirit. He argued against the absurdity of this supposition, subversive of the Devil's power; and we may reason unanswerably, that though spiritual invisible beings inferior to the Supreme may be capable of performing acts beyond our power, the goodness of the Deity is a security to us, that he would never suffer one of them, any more than he would authorize one of our race, to work a miracle to establish a falsehood.

As in other instances, so in this, the attacks of the enemy have been overruled to good, since they have drawn forth replies and vindications, the effect of which has been to confirm the reader in the belief of Scriptural miracles, and consequently to strengthen his faith. Thus Leslie, in his *Short and Easy Method with the Deist*, has laid down four criteria; Bp. Douglas, in his *Criterion*, supplies three rules, by which he refutes Pagan and Popish miracles, and establishes those of the Bible; and Dr. Campbell has satisfactorily refuted the sophistical scepticism of Hume. We may observe with Bishop Conybeare, that the more numerous the deceits of this kind are which are brought to light, the greater advantage arises to the Christian cause; for if the Church of Rome, which had all the advantages imaginable on her side, towards propagating an imposture, hath yet been unable to deceive us in this respect, how much more incapable must Christ and his Apostles have been, of carrying on such a cheat without discovery. It hath been objected, if miracles were formerly required, why are they not now granted. The reply is, if there be no just ground to question the truth of the miracles alleged to have been performed to authenticate a religion when first announced, why should men insist on any new ones. And if miracles should become common, it is hard to determine how they should be distinguished from more natural effects, for we judge of what is natural or supernatural, by observation and experience.

A miracle is defined by Bishop Conybeare to be a sensible effect, either in itself or its circumstances supernatural, that

is, above the natural powers of any visible agent, or evidently not produced by it, or contrary to the general laws of God's acting upon matter. This definition will comprehend two classes of miracles, of both of which the Evangelists supply examples, such as no natural causes will produce, as this conversion of water into wine, walking upon the sea, the satisfying thousands with a few loaves, the raising the dead, and those that are only miraculous in their circumstances. Thus gradually to heal the sick with medicine is sometimes granted to the physician in the ordinary course of providence ; but to heal instantly, and with a word, and sometimes at a distance, without any application of means, or of such means as are evidently inadequate to the effect, is no less miraculous than the first class, which interferes with the laws of nature. A miracle is contrary to the laws of nature ; but there is no real power in nature, as our language seems to imply ; these laws are no unalterable powers, they are only what God has been pleased to impress upon his works, and which he can suspend at pleasure. With him any change is possible, and to the Almighty whatever is possible, is equally easy. To prove then a miracle possible, we have only to show that the moral perfection of the Deity does not forbid its performance ; and every reasonable person will grant, that the confirmation of a divine revelation is the fittest occasion that can be conceived for such a display of power. If a knowledge of God's will be desirable for the guidance of our conduct here, and for our happiness hereafter, we may reasonably expect the communication of it from our heavenly Father : but how shall a teacher sent from God convince us that he speaks with authority, unless he produces the credentials of his mission ; and what other credentials can he appeal to except miracles. " In fact, the very idea of a revelation includes that of miracles. A revelation cannot be made but by a miraculous interposition of Deity, so that the probability of a revelation implies a correspondent probability of the occurrence of miracles ; nay, we may even venture to affirm, that there is a necessary correlation between the two ; for as on the

one hand miracles (or prophecies which are in fact miraculous, being contrary to the course of nature) are necessary to prove the divine authority of an agent; so, on the other hand, the performance of miracles, or the delivery of true predictions, immediately suggests the conviction that they have been permitted, for the purpose of proving, that the person by whom they are performed, is employed by God to do something, or reveal something, which mankind would not have known in any other way'.^r The Greek word therefore, σημεῖον sign, is a most appropriate one. What sign showest thou, seeing thou doest these things, John ii. 18. was the demand made by the Jews to Jesus, when he assumed the Messiah's office of purifying the temple. We know, iii. 2. Nicodemus's conclusion, Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these *miracles* that thou doest except God be with him: and our Lord himself uses the same argument on several occasions; The works that I do, they bear witness of me, v. 36. x. 24. And with regard to the Apostles, the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, that God bare them witness, with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, including under these various terms every thing of a supernatural character.

The miracles which we justly discredit, as those of Apollonius of Tyana among the heathens, and those of the Jesuit Apostle of the Indies St. Francis Xavier, are mentioned for the first time by biographers who were unacquainted with them, and wrote at a considerable interval after their deaths; whereas those of Jesus were from the first maintained by his adherents, and allowed by his opponents. We have a remarkable instance in the case of the miracle wrought on the man born blind, of the endeavour of the latter to discover some collusion; and his last, the restoration to life of Lazarus, which they could not deny, determined them to procure his death. But what neither Celsus nor the Emperor Julian ventured to attempt, has been undertaken

^r Olinthus Gregory's excellent Letters on the Evidences of Christianity.

by modern infidels; they have studiously brought forward some Romish miracles, and some reports recorded by Tacitus of the Emperor Vespasian, and argue, that no better evidence can be assigned for those of the Scriptures. Their objections have been ably refuted by Bishop Douglass, and Leslie in his celebrated tract, to which I refer, only extracting from them their marks of true and false miracles. The latter, says the Bishop, labour under one or other of the following defects, which we think warrant our disbelieving them; that the accounts of them were not published till long after the time when they were said to be performed; and that the report of them was propagated only at a distance from the supposed scene of action; and allowing them to have the two foregoing qualifications, we may still suspect them to be false, if in the time when and the place where they took their rise, they might be suffered to pass without examination. Leslie has proposed these criteria in favour of Scripture miracles. 1. It is required that the fact be such as men's outward senses can judge of; 2. that it be notorious, performed publicly in the presence of witnesses; 3. that there be memorials of it kept up in commemoration of it; and, 4. that such memorials commence with the fact. There may be facts, in favour of which these four marks cannot be found, but whatever has all the four, cannot be false. These criteria he applies both to the history of Moses and of Christ. The miracles of the latter were wrought publicly in the face of the world; and we learn from the Acts, ii. and iv. that after his ascension, three thousand at one time, and more than two thousand at another, were converted upon conviction of what themselves had seen and known, and in particulars, respecting which it was impossible to impose on them. Here then we find the first two criteria, and in Baptism and the Lord's Supper we have the others; for they were instituted as perpetual memorials by our Lord himself, at the very time when the circumstances to which they relate took place, and they have been observed without interruption, through the whole Christian world, in all ages, from that time to the

present. Besides, Christ himself ordained Apostles, to preach and administer the Sacraments, who have continued by regular succession to the present day; so that the Christian ministry is, and always has been, as notorious in point of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. The Gospel is also as much a rule of conduct to Christians, as the books of Moses to Jews; and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that pastors and teachers were appointed by Christ, and to continue until the end of the world, consequently if the Gospel history and doctrines were invented, in some ages after Christ, then at the time of the invention, there could be no such order of ministers, as derived themselves from the institution of Christ, a circumstance which must give the lie to the Gospel. The miraculous actions of Christ and his Apostles being affirmed to be true, no otherwise than as there were at that identical time (whenever the deist will suppose the Gospel history to be forged) not only Sacraments, but an order of clergy to administer them, and it being impossible that there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible they should be received and accredited when invented. Hence it follows that it was as impossible to have imposed these miraculous relations upon mankind, in after ages, as it would have been to make persons believe they saw the miracles, at the time they are said to have been wrought, if they had not taken place. It is said, that Dr. Conyers Middleton looked out assiduously for twenty years together, to find some pretended fact, to which these four criteria could be applied, but without success.

The failure of earlier infidels led Hume probably, in his celebrated Essay, instead of making specific objections, to maintain that no miracle, however attested, can ever be rendered credible even in the lowest degree. A miracle, says he, is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as complete as any argument from experience can possibly be

imagined ; and if so, it is an undeniable consequence, that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever, derived from human testimony : but as Campbell, in his answer, shows, the whole is built upon a false hypothesis. The evidence arising from human testimony is not solely derived from experience ; on the contrary, testimony has a natural influence on belief, antecedent to experience. Besides, the uniformity of experience in favour of any fact, is not a proof against its being reversed in any particular instance. The evidence arising from the single testimony of a man of known veracity, will go farther to establish a belief of its being actually reversed ; and if his testimony be confirmed by a few others of the same character, we cannot withhold our assent to it. Now though the operations of nature are governed by uniform laws, and though we have not the testimony of our senses in favour of any violation of them, still, if in particular instances we have the testimony of thousands of our fellow creatures, and these too men of strict integrity, swayed by no motives of ambition or interest, and governed by the principles of common sense, that they were actually witnesses of these violations, the constitution of our nature obliges us to believe them. And, in the case of Christian miracles, we may add, that these witnesses were themselves convinced by them, contrary to their original prepossessions ; and proved their honesty, by submitting, in consequence, to contempt, privations, persecution, and some even to death. The determination to propagate the belief of false miracles, (independent of the additional difficulty arising from the silent concurrence of Jews and Gentiles in the delusion which this hypothesis requires,) in support of such a religion as that taught in the New Testament, is as great a miracle as human imagination can conceive. “ The proof arising from experience, amounts to no more than this, that we learn from it what is conformable to the ordinary course of things ; but we cannot learn from it, that it is impossible that things should happen in any particular instance, contrary to that course. And if it be possible, there is place for testimony. When he

also talks of uniform experience, he supposes the very thing in question, because, by his own acknowledgment, mankind in all ages have believed that miracles have been wrought*.”

The miracles of our Lord are distinguished from all others in having been foretold, and they also far exceed in number those both of the old prophets and of his apostles. Near forty are specified; but we learn from St. John, that he performed many more signs not recorded in his Gospel, and a careful reader of the first three will perceive, that these are only given as a specimen. Thus St. Matthew tells us, iv. 22, that the fame of Jesus went out into all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed of devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them. And again, xv. great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them. Similar passages occur in Mark and Luke; and St. John adds, immediately on his purifying the temple, “many believed, seeing his miracles;” now the only one he has yet mentioned, was that performed at a distance from Jerusalem, at Cana. We perceive, therefore, that his miracles were far more numerous than we are apt to suppose. Again, Chorazin is mentioned by Christ himself, as the scene of miracles, which would have converted Tyre and Sidon; yet none of the Evangelists even speak of his visiting that town. It is natural to ask, why, among the multitude out of which they had to select, the different Evangelists have generally given us the same? and the answer is, they probably recorded the most memorable, on account of their greater celebrity, or from their more important results. Variety is another characteristic of his miracles. Not merely one disease, but all, yield to his power; not only diseases, but bodily defects: he made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak,

* Leland's Deistical Writers.

the lame to walk ; and there are commentators of note who think, that he not only restored the use of limbs, but even the limbs themselves^p. In four instances he restored life itself: the ruler's child, just after she had expired—the widow's son, as he was carried to be interred—Lazarus, when he had lain in the grave four days—and, lastly, that act which set the seal to his mission, he raised himself. Inanimate objects, the wind and the waves, obeyed him, and evil spirits submitted to his command, and left those they had possessed at his bidding. Some persons he cured on their own petition, others on that of their friends. No distinction was made between rich and poor ; the only exception is, that his miracles were never worked to gratify unbelievers. In subservience to their grand design, Isaiah xxxv. 5. the confirmation of his mission, they had a secondary object, the alleviation of misery. If the condemnation of the barren fig-tree, and the destruction of the herd of swine, be urged as exceptions, I answer, that the first was neither an interference with private property, nor an injury to the community, and conveyed to his own age, and as recorded to all, a warning which, properly improved, will save many souls from destruction. The other he did not command but permit, and it is no greater impeachment of his goodness, than the existence of moral evil is of the justice of God's providence. It proves beyond the power of confutation the reality of demoniacal possession ; as such it answers still a most important end, and it produced, though not immediately, a beneficial effect upon the inhabitants of the district in which it was wrought.

To three¹ of his miracles (John ix. 1—7. Mark vii. 32. viii. 23.) it is objected, that he made use of an external application ; but the reason of this departure from his ordinary mode, seems to have been because he required faith in the

^p This is the sense given by Elsner and Wetstein to *καλλῶ*, which we rendered *maimed*, and is distinguished from *χολῶ*, with which it is joined. Matt. xv. 31.

¹ Graves's Essay on the Character of the Apostles and Evangelists.

person to be relieved. Thus we are told, that he did not many mighty works at Nazareth because of their unbelief; and of many whom he cured, he first made an enquiry as to their faith in his power. For this purpose our Saviour used such an application as was best calculated to make an impression on the senses the men possessed unimpaired, antecedent to the miracle, and such as led them to observe, that he was about to interpose in order to perfect the organs which were defective. Thus a deaf man can judge of the intentions of another only by seeing what he does. Such an one, therefore, our Lord took aside from the multitude, that he might fix his attention on himself, and then he put his fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue, thus signifying to him that he intended to produce some change in these organs; he then looked up to heaven, at the same time speaking, to signify that the change would proceed from a Divine power exercised at his interposition. The same purpose was answered by the application of clay to the eyes of the man born blind. It assured him, that the person who anointed them was the sole author of the cure. Had the ground of his assurance been less full and circumstantial, he could never have silenced so unanswerably the captious objections of the Pharisees. We may be confirmed in believing this to have been the design of these external applications, by observing, that they were used in no instance except those of blindness and deafness; and still more, by observing, that it does not appear that any of these three men had any previous knowledge of our Saviour. It was therefore necessary to fix their attention to himself. When the blind man at Capernaum, (Matt. ix.) and those near Jericho, (Matt. xx.) applied to be healed, it was with a declared conviction of his power. Here, therefore, a less remarkable external application was sufficient; as they professed their belief, he only required that this profession should be sincere. "Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened." Matt. ix.

PART III.

20. *Jesus commences his public ministry, by driving traders out of the temple. John ii.*

FROM Cana, Jesus, with his five disciples, his mother, and brethren, went down to Capernaum, which seems, whenever he was stationary, to have been his home ; but he now stayed there not many days, according to Mr. Greswell no more than seven, as he was desirous of commencing his ministry at Jerusalem at the passover, when it would be filled with worshippers not only from Judæa, but from all the countries in which the Jews were dispersed. This was probably the year 28 of the Vulgar æra, and 780 of Rome, and literally the acceptable year of the Lord, the thirty-third Jubilee, reckoning from the first sabbatical year after the second division of the conquered lands by Joshua, 1589 before Christ, and the feast fell on the 9th of April. The miracle of Cana was wrought rather to gratify his mother, and to confirm the faith of his disciples, than as a public sign to his nation, which he chose to give during the feast at Jerusalem. This we learn from St. John, whose account is previous to that of the earlier Evangelists. The miracles he wrought there were probably numerous, but they are mentioned only generally ; we are told, however, that the consequence was, that many believed on him as the Christ, but most of them probably entertained carnal and worldly hopes, and had no conception of the spiritual nature of his sovereignty, because he did not commit himself unto them, knowing them as the Searcher of hearts. Acts i. 24. Rev. xi. 23. But first he took possession of his house, the temple, and commenced his ministry by purifying it from the mercenary traders who sold the animals used in sacrifice, and who, for the convenience of worshippers, exchanged money within its precincts. He nearly closed it with a similar act, (Matt. xxi.)

which must not be confounded with this, which is recorded by John alone. On that occasion, when being about to be offered up reserve was no longer expedient, he referred to Isaiah's prophecy, (lvi. 7.) "It is written, *My* house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations." He now calls it *his Father's* house, in a sense higher than that in which it could be used by those who were only God's children by adoption, and which was suitable to no one but the Messiah; and that he was so understood, is plain from the interrogation, By what right or authority doest thou these things? Jesus did not spring from Levi, but was of another tribe, Judah, of which no man gave attendance at the altar, (Heb. vii.) it must therefore have been as the proprietor of the temple, as the God of Israel, to whose service it was dedicated, that he drove from it those who had polluted it. The Jews required of him a sign from heaven to justify this assumption of authority, but he refers them enigmatically to a sign from earth, his crucifixion by them, and resurrection on the third day. This they misunderstood literally, but he spake, we know, of his own body, in which dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, Col. ii. 9. *σωματικῶς*, really, not typically, as in that temple made with hands, and which was therefore better entitled to the appellation than that material fabric. He was not understood by his disciples any more than by his enemies, till his meaning was explained by the event; but they applied to him the words in which David, as a type of the Messiah, says, "The zeal of thy house has eaten me up," Psalm lxix. 8. understanding by it, the ardent desire which now led him to purify the temple from the abuses that disgraced it. Yet this zeal, however ardent, was tempered with discretion; the sheep and bulls he drove before him, but he only ordered the dove-sellers to remove their cages, as he did not wish to injure them by the loss of their property. His enemies treasured up the saying, and brought it as an accusation against him on his trial; but their malice was defeated, as they contradicted themselves in reporting it; one saying, "I am able to destroy the temple

of God, and to build it in three days," Matt. xxvi. 61 ; the other, " I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands." " Make not, he said, my Father's house a house of merchandize." The last time his reproof was, " You have made it a den of robbers," which seems to imply, that they were not only covetous, but dishonest. It was the court of the Gentiles that was given up to them, and it would be difficult for the proselytes, who were not allowed to come nearer, to make it a house of prayer, amid the talking of the traders, and the noise of the cattle. By this act he restored the whole to its original use, and marked, as on other occasions, that the time was at hand, when God should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. These mercenary traders must have been numerous, especially at the passover, when a multitude of worshippers were assembled ; yet Jesus, a man in humble life, and hitherto little known, without influence, without attendants, or arms, except a scourge made at the moment out of the ropes with which the cattle were confined, drove them all before him, though pride, covetousness, and resentment, disposed them to resistance ; but their consciences made them timid, and his majesty overawed them. The antithesis is striking, for he contrasts the holy use for which the temple was designed, with their gross profanation of it ; and it is the more impressive, since the two clauses are brought from their own prophets, Isaiah, and Jeremiah vii. 11. His reference to the latter was calculated to alarm these self-righteous worshippers, since it declares, that unless they amended their ways, " the Lord would do unto this house as he had done to Shiloh, where he set his name at the first^a."

^a The speech in which Josephus, War, v. 9. endeavoured to persuade the inhabitants of Jerusalem to surrender, is a striking comment on this chapter of Jeremiah and our Lord's declaration. " The temple itself is become the receptacle of all crimes, and this divine place is polluted by our own countrymen, while it is revered by the Romans. And after all this, do you expect Him whom you have treated so impiously to be your supporter ?"

21. *Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. John iii.*

Nicodemus is one of the very few Israelites of learning and distinction that became a Christian. He appears to have been ashamed of seeking instruction from Jesus, and came therefore secretly by night; but though timid, he was sincere, and his progress in religion is most encouraging to those whom the fear of ridicule or persecution tempt to conceal their convictions. If they will only set out on the narrow path, God will grant them strength and courage as they advance. The next time we hear of Nicodemus, he ventures to speak in behalf of Jesus in the council, and after his crucifixion he boldly comes forward to beg his body from the governor. His disposition seems to have been already right; yet, though a teacher in Israel, he was ignorant of the truth known to babes in Christ, that no profession of religion can be of any use without purity of heart, and that this no man possesses by nature, but must receive as a gift from God. He had the same notion as his countrymen in general respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, which John's baptism was intended to dispel, that they might become members of it without repentance, as they were. To these opinions, perhaps not expressed, Jesus replies, by declaring the necessity of a change of character, and that those who believed in him must be admitted into his dispensation by baptism, even though already through circumcision in covenant. You Jews must like the proselytes be born again, enroll yourselves among my disciples, and be baptized into my name. Nicodemus begins the conversation with acknowledging his belief that Jesus was a divinely commissioned teacher, having been convinced by his miracles; and he observes in reply, that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; and our Lord introduces this declaration as he is accustomed to do those of special importance, Verily, verily, I say unto you; and certainly there can be none of greater importance, than that which states the qualifications that are indispensable to our becoming members of the kingdom of heaven, and without

which we cannot be comprehended within the Christian covenant. Our Lord here positively asserts the necessity not only of a change of relation, but of a change of disposition and character, so complete and entire, as to justify its being called a new or heavenly birth; and in conformity with this declaration, the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, 2 Ep. v. 17. if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. His dulness of comprehension amazes us, and our Lord's reply shows, that he who undertook to teach others, should have been acquainted with this elementary truth. Much unquestionably had been spoken by the prophets concerning the renewing and purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine was implied in the initiatory rite of circumcision, and the various lustrations enjoined in the law. Jeremiah had described the new covenant by Jehovah's writing the law on the hearts of his people, xxxi. 33; and by Ezekiel, xxxvi. 25. he had said, I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. His own reason too might have convinced Nicodemus, that this position was founded on the nature both of God and man. The law of God as a holy and perfect Being must be holy and perfect, and a rational being can only find happiness in obeying it. Experience painfully teaches that man takes no pleasure in this obedience; a change therefore must take place; but God cannot deny himself, it is consequently man that must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and be born again of incorruptible seed, and become partaker of the divine nature. For that which we derive through our parents from the stock of the fallen Adam, is, like that stock, corrupt and inclined to evil, and averse from the will and service of its Creator, whom it dreads as a hard master, instead of loving as a benevolent parent. In all his descendants, therefore, this change is required, and no exception is made in favour of any, on account of a difference in external circumstances, or in character, not even of those who were by their birth the children of the promise, the seed of Abraham, or those who had been adopted as proselytes. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Our fallen nature is here contrasted with the new nature of the second Adam ; and the remark is introduced to show, that even a second natural birth, as supposed by Nicodemus, could be of no avail, since from corrupt parents, a child could derive only a corrupt nature. The reality of this change Jesus illustrated by a comparison drawn from the natural world. The wind is invisible, yet its existence is demonstrated by its effects ; so the Christian, though the manner of his becoming one eludes observation, manifests by his conduct, that he has been delivered from the powers of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. So far regeneration, though a hard saying to Nicodemus, presents no difficulties to us ; but in explaining it, our Lord inserts another word, and says, a man must be born of water, as well as of the Spirit. On comparing this with the charge to the disciples to baptize, adding, whoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; and St. Paul's declaration, Titus iii. 5. that we are saved by the washing or laver of regeneration ; we are naturally led to interpret the new birth of baptism, by which, according to our Lord's command, we are admitted into the Church, and made, as our Catechism expresses it, members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Such, accordingly, is the unanimous opinion of ancient interpreters, in conformity with which our Church asserts baptismal regeneration. She has incorporated this very passage into her Service of Baptism for adults, and in that, as well as in her Articles and Homilies, this doctrine is maintained. To many, I am well aware, this will appear to be an untenable position, at variance with the genius of Christianity, and tending to make the nominal professor satisfied with his condition, and as lulling into a deadly sleep the guilty conscience, that was awakened to the danger of its situation, by substituting the form of godliness for its power. The present occasion is not suited to the discussion of a subject which divides some within the Church, as well as separates, more perhaps than any other doctrinal point, many pious persons from her communion ; yet, as the passage

before us scarcely permits me to pass it over in silence, I will just observe, that so many pious and eminent believers, since the Reformation, would hardly have objected to baptismal regeneration, had there not been much misconception arising from the use of the same word in different senses. Regeneration is confounded with Renovation, and it is assumed that grace is indefectible, which few of those who maintain baptismal regeneration would grant. The doctrine has also been pushed by its opponents to an extreme, which neither this nor any other will bear. Thus it has been said, that it condemns all who have not been baptized to perdition; yet common sense will tell us, that it is not the involuntary omission, but the contempt of the ordinance that will be fatal; and our Church only maintains, that the sacraments are *generally* necessary to salvation, that is, when they can be had. As the punishment of original sin is remitted in baptism to infants, so we may fairly conclude, that none of them will suffer for the omission of an ordinance, for which no blame can fall upon them. Much confusion has arisen from our looking chiefly to infant baptism, whereas we ought to consider primarily the case of adults. Our Article affirms, that it is a sign of regeneration, or new birth, whereby they that *receive* baptism *rightly*, are grafted into the Church; and if we ask what is a right reception, the Catechism will inform us, that the conditions are faith and repentance, and these being present, how is it absurd or unreasonable to suppose that regeneration ensues? Is this more than is warranted by St. Peter's language? 1 Ep. iii. 21. "baptism saves us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God." As to infants of believers, (and others are not the proper subjects of baptism,) original sin is remitted to them for their parents' sake, and grace conferred; but the continuance of it is suspended upon conditions, which, when they come to years of discretion, they may or may not fulfil.

Those who, adhering to the original and unvarying language of the Church, maintain baptismal regeneration, mean not to deny that the best Christians require continual renewal, or that

those must be converted who, by sinning, have forfeited the grace bestowed in baptism, which may not only be weakened, but lost; for though to those who believe and are baptized there is no condemnation, yet even in them doth the infection of their nature remain; and as the flesh still lusteth against the Spirit, (Art. ix.) they may after baptism depart from grace given, and fall into sin. We pray therefore for the person about to be regenerated in baptism, that all things belonging to the Spirit may *live* and *grow* in him. Baptism, as the stipulated condition on God's part of granting salvation, need not be repeated; but its privileges will be forfeited by those who cease to walk in newness of life. Lapsed converts, however, are never exhorted to be born anew, but to repent, to be converted, to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, upon which they will be reinstated in their baptismal privileges; and as the sacrament of Baptism is the prescribed mode of regeneration, so is the Lord's Supper the prescribed mode of renovation; the soul which is born anew in the one, being strengthened and refreshed in the other. The original mode of administering this ordinance, significantly represents our death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness.

It is generally allowed, that when our Lord spoke of eating his body and drinking his blood, he referred to the sacrament in commemoration of his passion, which he designed to institute; and it is reasonable to assume in this conversation, an anticipation of the sacrament, by which men were to be received into the Church. Baptism had already been used as the rite by which proselytes had been admitted into covenant with God, under the Jewish dispensation. John had baptized even the Jews themselves, though they had received the sign of circumcision; and Jesus seems here to declare, that the members of his kingdom must enter into it by the same rite, but which, as foretold by John, would not only be symbolical of mental purity, but be accompanied by it. Both a change of character and of state was required, and the latter must be manifested to the world by some ceremony. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with

the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Nicodemus is taught, that it is not enough to believe Jesus to be the Christ, but that his followers must publicly acknowledge him. The adult believer, then, who declines to be baptized, cannot be regenerated ; for though he calls Christ, Lord, he obeys not his positive command ; but he who comes in faith to that ordinance, is translated out of the kingdom of Satan, and is at the same time born again of the Spirit by water, as an instrument, and obtains the remission of his sins, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

The distinction between regeneration and renovation is thus stated by Waterland^b. “Man does not regenerate himself, whatever hand he may otherwise have (but still under grace) in preparing or qualifying himself for it. God makes the grant, and it is entirely his act ; man receives only and is acted upon, though sometimes active in qualifying himself, as in the case of adults, and sometimes entirely passive, as in the case of infants. The thing granted and received is a change from the state natural into the state spiritual ; a translation from the curse of Adam into the grace of Christ. This change carries in it many privileges, but all reducible to two ; remission of sins, and a covenant claim, for the time being, to eternal happiness. These blessings may all be forfeited or finally lost, if a person revolts from God, either for a time, or for ever ; and then such person is no longer in a regenerate state, with respect to any saving effects ; but still God’s original grant stands in full force to take place as often as any revolter shall return, and if he desires to be as before, he will not want to be regenerated again, but renewed or reformed. The grant once made continues always the same ; but the reception may vary, because it depends upon the condition of the recipient. Renovation is rather a capacity or qualification (in adults) for salutary regeneration than the regeneration itself ; in them it may and it should be before, in, and after baptism. Preventing grace must go before, to work faith and repentance : afterwards in baptism, the Holy Spirit fixes, as

^b Regeneration stated and explained.

it were, his dwelling, renewing the heart in greater measure, and, if his motions are more and more complied with, the renewing grows through the whole course of the spiritual life. Therefore, though we find no Scripture exhortations made to Christians (for Nicodemus was a Jew) to become regenerated, yet we meet with several to those to be renewed.

This doctrine Jesus calls earthly, because the nature of the new birth may be illustrated from earthly objects, and may be understood from its results; but he proceeds to observe, that he has heavenly truths to disclose, such as his own incarnation and propitiation, which, not falling under the cognizance of experience, are more hard to receive.

He then explains, that the Messiah would not be as Nicodemus expected the avenger of Jewish wrongs, and the restorer of their liberty, but, by his crucifixion, the author of eternal salvation. This doctrine, which he could not then bear, Jesus expressed figuratively, which would be understood after the event, and he purposely chooses a figure from the Old Testament, to shew that this doctrine, as well as that of regeneration, was taught in the Scriptures. To us the brazen serpent is a most significant type of the Redeemer; for as the Israelite who looked to that was cured and lived, so he that believeth on the Son of man lifted up on the cross hath eternal life. It appears to have been already the tradition of the Jews, that as the bites of the fiery serpents were cured by looking up to this image so shall the bites of the old serpent inflicted on Adam and his posterity be cured in the time of the Messiah; and the Book of Wisdom says, xvi. 6. "He that turned himself towards it was not saved by the thing he saw, but by thee who art the Saviour of all." Jesus declares, that the object of the Son of God in coming into the world was to save it, but that it would not receive his testimony, and as that was supported by sufficient evidence, the world alone was to blame. The light had come into the world, and men preferred darkness because their deeds were evil. He that shuts his eyes and remains in voluntary darkness, is inexcusable.

22. *John again bears testimony to the superiority of Jesus.*

John iii. Mark i. vi.

JESUS now left Jerusalem, but continued some time longer in Judæa, and his disciples baptized with water unto repentance like the Baptist; but Jesus himself baptized not, because the baptism he was to institute, as the rite that was to introduce members into his Church, was the baptism of the Spirit unto regeneration, and was not to take place until after his resurrection. The spot chosen was probably Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where the nation had entered their own land, and from which John had removed, we presume, that he might not interfere with his Master, to Ænon near Shalem, remarkable, as the name implies, for its springs, and consequently well suited to his purpose. A dispute arose here between John's disciples and the Jews concerning purifications. The question seems to have been, why Jesus, who had himself been baptized by John, should, by delegating this office to his disciples, assert his own superiority, and so virtually declare the inefficacy of his baptism. John's disciples, not comprehending the subserviency of their master's ministry, were unable to give a satisfactory answer; and by proposing to him the question, gave him, before its close, an opportunity of bearing his final testimony to the preeminence of the Bridegroom of the Church, of whom he announced himself to be no more than the paranymp, that is, the friend and attendant, who, according to the custom of his age and country, presented the husband to his bride, and continued with them during the seven days allotted to the wedding festival. The marriage union is employed in the Psalms and the Prophets to represent the intimate connection that subsists between Jehovah and his people; and the same figure occurs in the New Testament, when Paul declares that he is jealous with a godly jealousy over the Corinthians, that he may present them as a chaste virgin unto Christ; and when John in the Apocalypse describes the New Jerusalem as a bride prepared for her husband. Isaiah (liv. 5.) tells God's

ancient Church that her Maker is her husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name ; and since from the beginning, the Israel of God, under various dispensations, has been ever one and the same Church, under the same Head, we cannot doubt that this title of Bridegroom, when applied to Jesus, identifies him with Jehovah. Our Lord himself afterwards assumes it ; and it was probably with a reference to this idea that, in describing the state in which he should find his followers at his second advent, he chooses the comparison of virgins waiting for the bridegroom's coming, in preference to others equally apposite. The Baptist declared, that this marriage, which had for his sake excited envy in them, on the contrary completed his joy. He reminded them, that he had never claimed any higher dignity than that of the herald of the Messiah, and foretold the increase of Jesus, and his own decrease. He confessed, that he, a mere man, could announce only earthly things, but that Jesus who came from heaven testified to the truth of what he had seen and heard, that is, heavenly things, yet that, generally speaking, no man received his testimony. Yet those who did receive it, thereby acknowledged the veracity of God, in performing his promise through the prophets of redemption, by sending his Son, to whom he gave—not as unto them, that is, sparingly, by degrees, and at certain seasons, but—without measure the Holy Spirit. Whoever believed in him should have eternal life ; but on those who disobeyed him, the original curse laid upon Adam, and which through him alone could be removed, would abide^a.

^a This explains our Lord's declaration, that he came not to condemn the world, but that through him it might be saved, for the world was condemned already. All who come to him for salvation, he will deliver ; and those who refuse to hear him, were before in a state of perdition. His coming, therefore, while it saves all who believe and obey him, causes the ruin of none, only the wrath of God, under which all were before, still remains on those who will not come unto him for life ; as the diseased, who reject the medicine that would cure them, die in consequence of their own obstinate want of faith in their physician. A due consideration of this statement, which might be enforced by similar passages both from the Old and the New Testament, would silence some of the most specious objections of the infidel.

Our translators have not preserved the distinction in the original between he who believeth and he who disobeyeth; a variation, as Doddridge observes, not to be overlooked, since the latter word explains the former, and shows that the faith to which the promise of eternal life is annexed, is an effectual principle of sincere and unreserved obedience. Thus John fulfilled his ministry, by directing his disciples again to Christ, as the only Saviour, and by showing that eternal life was suspended upon faith in him. He was soon after cast into prison by the tetrarch Herod, at the investigation of Herodias his brother Philip's wife, who was incensed at his reproof of their incestuous connection. His desertion of his wife was soon after avenged by her father Aretas; and the Jews considered the defeat of his troops, a judgment for the murder of the Baptist. The real cause of John's imprisonment we learn from the Evangelists; Josephus states the ostensible one. He describes the Baptist as a good man, who persuaded the Jews to be religious and just, and to come to his baptism; and Herod, fearing his influence with the people, for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise, first imprisoned, and then put him to death. This speedy termination of his ministry was designed by Providence, that the people might not be divided in their opinions between him and Jesus: and his imprisonment was the epoch from which our Lord commenced his office more publicly.

23. *Jesus, on his way to Galilee, passes two days at Sychar, in Samaria. John iv.*

THE next discourse of our Lord that has been preserved, was with a person as much despised as Nicodemus was respected; a woman in low life, of bad character, and moreover a Samaritan. On John's being cast into prison, Jesus deemed it prudent to retire into Galilee, and Samaria lay in his way, which he could not have avoided, without a considerable circuit. Probably, however, though his own mission was only to the Jews, and he would not suffer the seventy disciples to preach to the Samaritans any more than to the heathen, he

might seek an opportunity of once addressing in person the words of life to this people, and of gathering the first fruits of that harvest, which was reaped not many years after his ascension. No two nations could be more exasperated against each other than these; and the bitterness of this hatred appears from the woman's astonishment, that a Jew should so far deviate from the common antipathy, as to ask a Samaritan for so much as a draught of water. It also probably displeased his disciples that he should converse with her; for to a Jew, drunkenness, malice, apostacy, and every vice, was connected with the idea of a Samaritan. Thus, when instigated by rage against the Saviour, the words their fury dictated were, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil;" and even the author of the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus (l. 26.) ranks among those whom his soul abhorred "them that sit upon the hill of Samaria, and the foolish people that dwell at Sichem." Nor did the Samaritans yield to the Jews in virulence, as appears from their refusing to receive Jesus, when he was going up to keep the passover at Jerusalem; and they often affronted the Galileans when they passed through their country on these occasions, of which Josephus records a memorable instance in the reign of Claudius, A.D. 52. Jesus drew nigh to the town of Sychar, but knowing the unfriendly reception he was likely to meet, instead of entering it, sent forward his disciples to purchase provisions; and wearied by his journey, sat down by the well, called after the patriarch Jacob, from which he could derive no refreshment, as it was deep, and he had nothing to draw with. A woman, however, soon came for that purpose, and her coming gave him an opportunity, according to his custom, of extracting spiritual improvement out of the scene or occupation before him. He begins the conversation by asking for a draught of water, and she expresses astonishment at the request. Without opposing her prejudices, which would not have convinced but irritated her, he contrasts, under the veil of parable, the temporary benefit that water would confer upon the body, with the lasting service the Holy Spirit

would render to the soul. He replies, that though she was disposed to refuse him, as a Jew, so small a favour, yet he was ready to grant her, though a Samaritan, if she had asked him, (and this she would have done, if she had known who he was,) a more precious gift, even living water, which would quench her thirst, not for a season only, but for ever. As living water in their language, like running in ours, is opposed to dead or stagnant, she understood him literally ; but he spoke in a figure, common in the Prophets, of the refreshing influence of the Holy Spirit, that best gift of God, which if sought will be bestowed, and if bestowed will rectify the judgment and purify the heart. To prepare her for the reception of this primary truth, by convincing her of sin, the divine Teacher desires her to call her husband. She had had as many as five, and probably had been divorced from all except the last, for she was not married to the man with whom she was then living. She endeavours to evade the subject ; but his statement of her whole history, which probably was unknown to her neighbours, satisfied her that he was a prophet. She confessed her persuasion, and, perhaps, to divert the conversation from a topic that was distressing, she enquired, whether her countrymen, or the Jews, were right in the controversy respecting the spot upon which they ought to sacrifice. He decides in favour of the Jews ; but he adds, that the time had actually arrived which should supersede disputes of this description, when no place or people would be preferred, but the Deity himself, a Spirit should be worshipped by all in spirit^c and in truth ; not only with the lips, but with the heart and life ; not under the faint adumbration of a ceremonial law, but with a clear knowledge of

^c It is painful to reflect, that this important aphorism should ever be forgotten by his followers ; yet such is the tendency of man to substitute the forms for the spirit of religion, that the ceremonies of Paganism were soon transferred from the temple to the church. Christians again returned to the beggarly elements of the Law, and brought back the altar and sacrifice ; and instead of praying with the understanding, even now in the whole of Christendom, with the exception of protestant communities, the public service is celebrated in languages in which scarcely any of the congregation can join.

him as a reconciled Father through Christ. She makes no objection to this new view of religion, and seems disposed to leave the settlement of the question to the Messiah; whereupon he informs her who he is; for he had not the same reason for secrecy here as among the Jews, who, according to the disposition in which they heard him were ready to accuse him as a traitor to the Romans, or to rebel in his favour.

Struck with awe, and agitated with joy, she leaves her bucket, forgetful of the purpose with which she came, and hastens into the city, to invite the inhabitants to come and see this extraordinary person, who had told her the events of her life. Their notions of the Deity were erroneous, for they worshipped they knew not what; and the Psalms and the Prophets, which reveal the Messiah more clearly than the earlier books of the Bible, were not received by them; yet they seem to have had clearer conceptions of his character than the Jews; and Jesus, who would not commit himself to his countrymen, declared himself to them at once without reserve, and they believed him without his working any miracle. The disciples on their return pressed him to partake of their provisions; but he was so absorbed in the prospect of usefulness opening to him, that he thought no more of his hunger and thirst, observing, that he had food to eat which they knew not of. As they did not comprehend his meaning, he explains that it was his food, that is, that which strengthened and refreshed him, to do the will of him that sent him. As therefore an opportunity of being employed in his work now presented itself, he would postpone to another season the refreshment of his body; and he encouraged them to imitate his example by the observation, that the harvest was near, and their toil would be lightened by that of their predecessors. You say, that between seed time and harvest is an interval of four months; but see the approaching multitude of the Samaritans; my spiritual harvest is as a field already ripening for the sickle. This was the good work in which he meant to employ them, as well as to labour himself; and, in this case, the proverb which was generally applied to

calamities would be happily verified, Judges vi. 2, 3. Isaiah xv. 21. Mark vi. 10. for they would succeed to the ancient prophets, and to the Baptist, and reap what they had sown, in which the sowers as well as the reapers would rejoice.

He passed no more than two days at Sychar, and this at the earnest request of the inhabitants. By his own example he taught, that the distinction between Jew and Samaritan was to cease; and Samaria was the first country invited to embrace the Gospel, when persecution had driven the early converts from Jerusalem. John, who was sent with Peter to confirm the faith of the Samaritans, converted by Philip the Evangelist, now probably accompanied his Master. Luke had recorded his resentment against inhospitality on another journey; and it was natural that he should introduce into his own supplementary Gospel this interesting narrative, more creditable to that people. The three first Gospels commence their account of our Lord's ministry with his return to Galilee, which he opened with the same words as his appointed forerunner, calling on men to repent. The fame of the former had gone through the country preparing his way, for all men held John for a prophet; and all must have known the testimony which he had borne to the latter, when he came to him for baptism. The direct road from Samaria to Cana would have been through Nazareth; but he seems to have gone by another route, in order to avoid that town for the present, that he might work his first public miracle in Galilee, at the place where he had begun among friends to show forth his glory.

24. He cures at a distance the son of an officer of Herod's court. John iv.

ON his return here, an officer of Herod's court solicits Jesus to accompany him a day's journey to Capernaum, to cure his son who was dying of a fever. He is supposed by some to have been Manaen, the tetrarch's foster brother, whom we read of in the Acts as one of the Christians of

Antioch; by others, to have been his steward Chusa, whose wife afterwards attended upon our Lord, and helped to maintain him. Jesus, to try his faith, declares, that except they saw signs and wonders they would not believe, whereas the Samaritans had been convinced without one. This courtier believed that Jesus could on the spot have restored his son to health, but he does not seem to conceive that he could at a distance. Our Lord, to prove and increase his faith, ordered him to return home, assuring him that his son was now well. He had only the word of Jesus for the fact, and no similar instance, as far as we know, had yet occurred, yet the officer was enabled to believe. A few verses after, it is again said, that when he learnt that his son had recovered at the very hour that Jesus spoke, he and his whole house believed. We may suppose that he first believed the truth of the declaration, and that when he found it to be as he expected, he believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Faith appears to have been required as a previous condition for every miraculous cure, but it existed in different degrees of strength in different persons. The centurion spoke with full assurance, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed;" the leper less confidently, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean;" another in still fainter language, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon us, and help us." The faith of the last was alloyed with much doubt, yet Jesus did not despise "this day of small things;" and his case is recorded as an encouraging instance, how graciously he accepts and cherishes the feeblest efforts of genuine faith.

25. Jesus applies to himself Isaiah's prediction of the Messiah.

Matt. iv. Luke iv.

JESUS now visited Nazareth, his own town, in which he had been brought up, and according to his custom attended on the Sabbath the synagogue. The reader was not required to be of the sacerdotal tribe: the ruler assigned the office to whom

he pleased, and probably curiosity now induced him to offer it to his townsman. The prophecy of Isaiah was the portion of Scripture delivered to him, and he turns to the passage in which the Messiah announces the year of jubilee, but closes the book without proceeding to the mention of the day of vengeance^b. The passage is descriptive both of the nature and manner of the Messiah's teaching, and of the signs by which he confirmed it. And Jesus plainly tells his countrymen that it is fulfilled in himself. They admired his discourse, and were astonished at his abilities, knowing that from his education as a carpenter's son he had not enjoyed the same opportunity of improving them as other teachers. But their prejudices were not subdued, and they reproached him with not healing the diseased at Nazareth, his own city, as he had done among comparative strangers, as at Cana and Jerusalem. He replied, that they were not worthy, as they did not receive him as a *Prophet*; and he justified his conduct by the example of Elijah and Elisha, who had worked miracles even on heathens, in preference to their own ungrateful and persecuting countrymen. They were so enraged by his reproof, that they hurried him to the brink of the precipice on which Nazareth stood, to throw him down. He eluded their fury by rendering himself invisible, and passed unseen through the crowd. He declined working a miracle, because they had already had sufficient evidence to satisfy any candid mind; and it is not in accordance with the Divine wisdom, to grant what would be irresistible. Our Lord is sometimes reproached by objectors, for not always informing the people explicitly of his office; this transaction proves the wisdom, and indeed necessity, of his caution. He here publicly avowed himself to be the Messiah, and the service was hastily terminated by their fury. We may suppose, that if in other places he had been equally open, his ministry would have been disturbed by

^b According to the present order of lessons which the Jews maintain to have prevailed then, this sixty-first chapter is to be read on the day before the Feast of Tabernacles; but it is remarkable that it omits this passage, not commencing till the tenth verse.

similar interruptions. Jesus now chose Capernaum as his ordinary abode, where, according to Luke, he taught regularly on the Sabbath days, and thus the neighbourhood of the lake of Galilee became, as Isaiah had foretold, the chief scene of his public life. Several reasons might determine his choice, as its populousness, and distance from Jerusalem, the seat of the Scribes and Pharisees; for when in the beginning of his ministry he made many disciples in Judæa, they took such offence, that he found it prudent to retire into Galilee. He had also here Peter's house for a home, and the countenance, it may be presumed, of the officer of Herod's court, whose son he had cured, and of other leading inhabitants; the lake also afforded him an easy passage to the neighbourhood, and would facilitate a hasty retreat, whenever the jealousy of Herod, or the impatience of the multitude to proclaim him king, should render it expedient.

26. *The miraculous draught of fishes.* Luke v. Mark i.

THE curiosity and interest that Jesus excited in a populous country, exposed him to great inconvenience; he often therefore taught from a boat, which, while it kept the multitude from pressing upon him, was near enough to the shore for them to hear him. On the first of these occasions recorded, when he had finished, he desired Peter, in whose boat he was, to launch out into the deep water, where he might fish. Peter, though unsuccessful the preceding night, obeyed, and his obedience was rewarded by so extraordinary a draught, that the net brake, and the boat, and that of the sons of Zebedee, who came to assist, were ready to sink with the weight of the fish. He required them to give up their trade and follow him. The demand, and their immediate compliance, appear extraordinary; but we learn from John, (i. 40.) that Simon and Andrew, who were with the Baptist, had already become the disciples of Jesus, on hearing their former master's testimony to him as the Lamb of God; and probably when he

had ordered Philip to accompany him into Galilee, he had also required their attendance. They were, we may conclude, with him at the wedding at Cana, but they seem to have been only in occasional attendance, and to have pursued their occupations till he chose twelve to be with him constantly. We are apt to consider them as poorer than they really were: Simon and Andrew were in partnership with Zebedee and his sons James and John, and had hired servants under them. Peter, who was married, had a house; and his speech, "Lord, we have left all and followed thee," indicates that he must have had some property, at least the boat by which he gained a livelihood. If with most harmonists we consider the call in Matthew to be the same with that which Luke connects with the miraculous draught of fish, that event, emblematical of their future success as fishers of men, would be a powerful encouragement to them to follow a Master, who thus proved himself to be at least a divinely commissioned teacher. Peter, however, was satisfied that he was more, for his speech, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," seems to mark his conviction of his divine nature; and neither then, nor on any future occasion, does our Lord reject or condemn such an acknowledgment. In the fisherman's calling are required a certain dexterity, much patience, and a readiness to bear hardships; and the habits formed in it would be useful to the disciples, when they became fishers of men. Their faith in him that called them was confirmed by a succession of miracles, in which he demonstrated his power, not over fish and natural diseases only, but also over the world of invisible spirits.

27—30. *Jesus works all manner of miraculous cures: those of a demoniac, Peter's wife's mother, a leper, and a paralytic man, are specified. Matt. viii. Mark i. Luke v.*

IN the synagogue Jesus delivered a man from the dominion of an unclean spirit, who acknowledged him to be the Holy One of God; and the miracle, though wrought on the Sabbath day, did not give offence, as happened afterwards on similar occasions. There might be no Pharisees present, or they might be glad to be freed from the annoyance of the demoniac. The congregation were astonished, but their astonishment produced no salutary effects. He immediately retired into Peter's house, where he cured his wife's mother, who was confined to her bed with a fever, and she arose and waited upon them at their meal. This seems to be mentioned to show that her recovery was so complete as not to have left the usual lassitude. At sunset, when the Sabbath was ended, all the sick, and persons possessed with demons, were brought to him, whom he cured; and such was the sensation that this excited, that he found it expedient to leave the town before day-break for a desert, and afterwards to move about through Galilee, not making any long stay in one place. As wherever he went he taught in their synagogues and cured every disorder, his fame spread far and wide, not only in the Holy Land, but in the whole of Syria; and multitudes followed him, not merely from Judæa and Galilee, but even from Decapolis, and from beyond the river.

There are modern writers who endeavour to explain away demoniacal possession, because there are no instances of it in their own times, and because in subsequent ages the belief in it has been abused by impostors. In this they contradict the uniform doctrine of the Church from the beginning, and have been confuted by the most approved commentators, who show that greater difficulties embarrass their scheme than the original opinion. They assume that the Evangelists wrote under the influences of Jewish prejudices; and that as under

the old dispensation the authors spoke on philosophical subjects like their contemporaries, being ignorant of the discoveries of modern science, so our Lord accommodated himself to the language and notion of the Jews. These writers, however, forget the distinction between natural and moral subjects, and the different effect of false opinions on them : a man who believes that it is the sun and not the earth that moves, may, in moral and religious knowledge, be equal to him who has the most perfect knowledge of astronomy ; but it is obvious that a belief in demoniacal possession, if false, must lead to errors of a practical nature ; and we cannot suppose that our Lord would humour madmen by adopting their language, especially after their restoration to a sound mind. If the demoniacs had been mad, though some worshipped, others might have reviled him ; but all these afflicted persons, or rather the demons who spake through their organs, believed and trembled, and evinced a knowledge of his nature and office, which was hidden from the wise and prudent of the nation. He abhorred and disdained their testimony ; he suffered them not to speak, because they knew him to be the Christ ; and he argued against those who charged him with casting out demons, through the cooperation of their prince, in a manner which assumes the reality of possession. This is also established by the specification of their number in particular cases. Thus Mary of Magdala had been tormented by seven ; the two demoniacs of Gadara by two thousand. The Evangelists discriminate between diseases and possessions, even enumerating among the former lunacy. Still, ingenious persons may render this modern opinion probable in many of the cases recorded ; but that of the herd of swine admits only a literal interpretation.

Matthew represents these miracles as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction, which we interpret of the removal of the penalty of sin. We learn from him, that it applies also to the cure of bodily diseases, which are likewise consequences of Adam's transgression ; and our Lord connects the two together in his speech to the paralytic man.

As the transactions of ancient events prefigured Christ, so some of Christ's actions seemed to signify others. It cannot be doubted that health restored to the body was a figure of health restored to the mind; the prophecy therefore was twice fulfilled; first, when Christ employed himself in healing the sick, and afterwards, when by his death on the cross he obtained the remission of our sins.

He miraculously cures a leper. Mark i. Luke v.

THE next miracle was wrought on a leper, cured on his own petition. Jesus touched him, disregarding the ceremonial uncleanness that would ensue, and in performing the miracle he asserts his sovereignty, "I will, be thou clean." In this cure he prefigures his power of forgiving sins, in that of the paralytic man he declares it. The leprosy is an infectious disease of the skin, of slow progress. During our intercourse with Palestine, through the crusades, it was not uncommon in our own country, as may be inferred from the hospitals founded for lepers. It is now of very rare occurrence. In hot climates it is accompanied by formidable symptoms, such as mortification, and is considered incurable. "Am I God," said a king of Israel, "to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" 2 Kings v. 7. It excluded the sufferer from all intercourse with society, and was an emblem of the pollution of sin; and was regarded more particularly as a divine judgment, probably because we know that it was such in certain instances, as in those of Miriam, Uzziah, and Gehazi. Lepers were obliged to live apart, at a distance from habitations; not even kings were exempted from this law; (2 Kings xv. 5.) and the sister of Moses herself, when leprous, was put out of the camp, Numb. xii. 14. They were obliged to make themselves known by their dress, and when any one approached, to warn him of their uncleanness. The cleansing a leper with a word or a touch is an undeniable miracle, for an immediate change must be effected in the whole mass of the blood. The priests are authorized in the

law to ascertain a leper's recovery ; our Saviour therefore charges this person to show himself to one, that he might offer the appointed sacrifice, which would authenticate his cure, and thereby restore him to society ; and would be, at the same time, a testimony to the divine mission of him who cured him. Matthew mentions his forbidding him to make the miracle publicly known ; the other Evangelists add, that he disregarded it. The reason was, that he might not needlessly exasperate his enemies, and so urge them on to premature designs against him. But when he wrought miracles on heathens, or persons dwelling among them, as in the case of the demoniacs of Gadara, he bids them declare what God hath done for them. Attention to such circumstances will, in many instances, remove apparent contradictions.

He forgives the sins of a paralytic man, and restores the use of his limbs. Mark ii. Luke v.

THE cure of the paralytic man, who was let down on his couch into the court of the house in which Jesus was, because the crowd prevented their approaching him in any other manner, is remarkable for his mode of addressing the sufferer, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The Pharisees were offended by this language, as a blasphemous invasion of the prerogative of God. He does not deny their position, "Who can forgive sin but God alone?" but he shows, by an instantaneous miraculous cure, that he had Divine power ; thus tacitly allowing the justice of the remark. Omnipotence was alike required to forgive this sinner, or to cure him of his palsy ; and since by the latter he showed that he possessed that attribute, this visible demonstration of it ought to have convinced them that he could as easily remit sin, though that could not be exhibited to their senses.

31. *Matthew is called, and obeys. Mark ii. Luke v.*

AFTER this, Levi, or Matthew, who was sitting at his office by the lake side to receive the duties imposed upon

goods, was invited by Jesus to follow him ; and he immediately renounced his profession, and became his disciple. Living in Capernaum, he must have known of his miracles, and had probably heard his discourses ; nor is it improbable, that, like those Apostles who were called to be fishers of men, he might before have occasionally attended on him. The tribute of the provinces was farmed by the Roman knights ; the publicans of the Gospels were those to whom they underlet them, who, we may presume, were generally natives. Such we know was Zaccheus, who is styled a chief publican, receiver, probably, of all the taxes of Jericho ; and this Matthew, who, on quitting his profession, provided an entertainment for his new Master. He mentions it in connection with his call, but does not say it took place immediately ; and harmonists in general, I think with reason, place it after the return from Gadara. The collecting of taxes is in its nature unpopular ; still more, when they are levied for the support of a foreign power. It was peculiarly odious to the Jews, who, out of a mistaken principle, scrupled to pay taxes, considering that as an acknowledgment of the right of the heathen Romans to govern them ; and they esteemed it infamous in their own countrymen, who were, moreover, brought by it into familiar intercourse with sinners, as they called the Gentiles. Our Saviour might purposely choose an Apostle out of this despised class, to reprove the narrow prejudices of the nation. We may perceive from the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, that the latter was considered as nearly synonymous with extortioner. They had strong temptation to enrich themselves, by exacting more than was due, especially in a province remote from the seat of government ; and the low estimation in which they were held, would be at once both the cause and the effect of dishonesty. Yet, as there were Pharisees who were not hypocrites, so, no doubt, there were publicans exceptions to the general character ; and nothing is hinted against the honesty of Matthew.

PART IV.

32. *The cure of the cripple at Bethesda. John v.*

SEVERAL instances of miracles performed on the Sabbath day are here brought together. The first was wrought at a feast, which must have been the Passover, if it be correctly connected in order, with his disciples rubbing the ears of corn. The day was chosen by Jesus, to afford him an opportunity of publicly shewing that he was the Messiah. The scene was a bath^a called the house of mercy, because at a certain season an angel agitated the water, and whoever first stepped in after was cured, whatever might be his disease. Attempts have been made to give a natural explanation of the fact, but, as might be expected, without success; and it is not unreasonable to suppose with Lightfoot, that to this water flowing from Siloam, as the type of the Messiah, it might please God to give this virtue, sometime before Shiloh, or He that was sent, appeared, that true Bethesda, that fountain opened, as foretold by Zechariah, for sin, and moral uncleanness, not unto one, but to all (spiritually) "impotent folk." The person chosen had been suffering thirty-eight years from infirmity, produced by sin, and was too poor to pay any one to help him into the bath. Jesus not only cures him, but orders him to carry his bed, which would give his cure the greatest publicity. The subject of the miracle felt, no doubt, like the rest of his countrymen, and the trial therefore of his faith was heightened, when he was not only called upon to

^a There are remains of the pool to this day, and as it is sunk in the rock, it may remain the same for ever. The Greek term *κολυμβήθρα* implies, that it was deep enough to swim in. "It is," said Sandys in his Travels, "a great square profundity, into which a barren spring doth drill between the stones of the northward wall, and stealeth away almost undiscovered." Thus it was observed by him on Good Friday, 1611. Maundrell, 1697, does not mention the spring, so that possibly it is intermittent, and to this day, in the Evangelist's language, runs, *κατὰ καιρὸν*, occasionally. Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible.

take up his bed, an apparent impossibility, but to do it also on a day on which it was unlawful, for the carrying of burthens was not merely a prohibition of their scribes, but had been expressly condemned by Jeremiah xvii. 21, 24. He was convinced, however, that the person who spoke to him was endued with power from God; and his miraculous cure satisfied him that he was justified in the breach of the commandment. The Jews, if candid, might believe, that satisfactory reason could be shown, why the commandment should be broken, for the sake of the cripple who had been so long a sufferer, but the same would not hold for carrying the bed, which was neither a work of necessity, nor of charity; Jesus, therefore, now takes a higher ground than on other occasions, and maintains that he is not amenable to the law. “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;*” an argument which could have no weight in the mouth of one who was no more than other men. His enemies considered it as equivalent to claiming equality with God; and instead of denying their conclusion, or explaining away his declaration, he goes on to confirm it by asserting, that the Son performs the same acts as the Father, and that the final judgment of mankind has been entirely made over to him, because of his assuming the nature of man; and he assigns as the reason for it, that he may receive from men the same honour as the Father, and declares that whoever refuses to do this, does not really honour the Father. The Anti-Trinitarian pleads, that the worshipper of Christ robs the Father of the honour due to him, by paying it also to his Son; but if he believes that these words were indeed spoken by him, how can he satisfy himself with disobeying a positive command, and think that God can be dishonoured by our acting according to his pleasure. The Apostle, when he tells us that every tongue is to confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to prevent such an inference, adds, that it is to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 1. Jesus does not require them to believe this claim on his simple assertion, but he appeals to the testimony of the Baptist, whom they acknowledged as an inspired

teacher; and to the more decisive testimony than that of any man, the testimony of God himself, as proclaimed at his baptism by a voice from heaven, and as manifested by his power of working miracles: and he appealed to the Scriptures, which they acknowledged and searched, as bearing such testimony to him, that Moses himself, who wrote of him, and in whom they trusted, would hereafter condemn them for wilful blindness; he allows that they cannot believe in him, but the inability was not of a *physical* but of a *moral* nature; they *could not* because they *would not*; it was not a natural defect, which would have made them objects of pity, but an unwillingness, which rendered them sinful. There have been modern Christians, who like these Jews could not discover Christ in the Pentateuch; yet surely after this speech, it becomes them to think that they, like Jews, must read it with a veil over their hearts. The cause was, they had no real love of God, though they affected to be jealous of his honour. Him they would not receive, but they afterwards followed false messiahs, who accommodated themselves to their carnal expectations. They sought to kill him, both for this breach of the Sabbath, and because by calling God his own father, in a peculiar sense he had made himself his equal^b. It became therefore necessary that he should again withdraw from Jerusalem.

33. *The disciples pluck ears of corn and rub them on a Sabbath. Matt. xii. Mark ii. Luke vi.*

THIS is followed by two other events, which likewise took place on Sabbath days, and gave Jesus an opportunity of laying down the principle which ought to regulate its observance, the benefit of man. The first was, his disciples plucking and eating ears of corn, as they walked through a field; the second, his curing a man who had a withered hand. The first occurred on a Sabbath called Deuteroprote, the

^b It is to be regretted, that our translators have much enfeebled this passage by leaving out *His* own or peculiar, which could be said with propriety of none but Him, the monogenes or only-begotten. John v. 18.

signification of which is disputed, but means, I apprehend, the first after the second day of unleavened bread, upon which the first-fruits of the harvest were offered, and which suits the fact. This was prohibited, being considered as a sort of reaping. Hunger was the motive, for our Saviour silenced the objectors by the example of David, who, on his flight from Saul, ate of the loaves of the presence, which was only lawful in the priests, probably on the Sabbath, on which day they were changed. They blamed not David, because necessity excused his dispensing with a ceremony. He also proved, that such a rigid observance of the Sabbath was impracticable, for the temple service of the day must have ceased, unless the priests were allowed on it to slay and prepare the victims. They would reply, that the service of God was a lawful exception. He therefore anticipated them by saying, "One greater than the temple is here;" intimating, that if the priests were blameless for an unavoidable breach of the Sabbath when incompatible with a higher duty, no censure ought to attach to his disciples if they broke it by their attendance on a Master, who was more truly than that worldly sanctuary the temple of God; thus, as when he cleared its courts of the traders, declaring it to be typical of himself. He added, that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man, not man for the sake of the Sabbath; and concludes with telling them, that it is his own institution, and that he might, when he saw fit, dispense with its observance.

34. *Cure of a man with a withered hand in a synagogue.*

Matt. xii. Mark iii. Luke vi.

THIS doctrine he soon after supported by an action; for on another Sabbath, after teaching in a synagogue, probably of Capernaum, he miraculously restores to a man the use of his withered and contracted hand. The man had no doubt the same prejudices as his countrymen; but there was something in Jesus, that satisfied him it was a prejudice, and therefore his cure was the reward of his faith. He ordered him to stretch out his hand. The ability to do this is the very

power he wants: had he refused, pleading inability, his hand would have continued as it was, but he *endeavours* to obey the order, and in the *endeavour* he obtains the *power*. Thus, in moral precepts, whatever God commands us to do, he likewise promises to do for us; "Make you a new heart and a new spirit," Ezek. xviii. 31. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you," Ezek. xxxvi. Whatever metaphysical difficulties may present themselves in the attempt to reconcile our freedom of action with the Divine decrees, still the language of the Bible is plain; "I will sprinkle clear water upon you, and ye shall be clean," saith the Almighty, without whose grace we can do nothing. But how? Are we to wait in idleness for the accomplishment of his pleasure? No; no more than the cultivator of the soil, who ploughs and sows not the less, because it is "God that giveth the increase;" we must both labour and pray; "I will yet for this be inquired of to do it for them," Ezek. xviii. We must exert ourselves as much as if all was in our own power; our reliance upon Divine aid must be as strong as if we could do nothing. In this instance alone of the many in which his contemporaries reversed the Divine demand, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," we are informed that our Saviour's indignation was excited. He looked round with anger, but his anger was combined with pity for the subjects of it. He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. On this occasion there does not appear to have been any infraction of the Sabbath, for the man only stretched forth his hand. Our Lord silenced objectors, by an appeal to their own conduct. If a Jew did not scruple to take out of a pit his sheep, who fell into one on the Sabbath, either out of regard to his property or compassion to the animal; could they reasonably object to his delivering a man from a disease, or restoring to him the use of a limb, on that day? This act would have produced on candid minds a change of conduct, if not an acknowledgment of error; but these perverters of the Sabbath were only irritated by it to such a degree, as to deliberate with the partizans of Herod for the destruction of Jesus. He

therefore retired to the lake side, where multitudes followed him, and he performed on those who needed them miraculous cures.

As the rigid and servile observance of the Sabbath is censured so often by our Lord, there are persons in the present age, when the opposite error has succeeded, who justify the laxity of their own practice from his example and remarks. His example, however, when he dispenses with it, cannot be pleaded by us, who are not, like him, Lord of the Sabbath; and his remarks do not extend beyond works of necessity and charity; and as he assures us that (to use Hosea's words) "God prefers mercy to sacrifice," we need not scruple, whenever the two interfere, to omit the appropriate duties of the day. But let us not deceive ourselves, but remember, that they cannot be fairly said to interfere, when the work proposed may be done as well on the day after. If every seventh day is to be consecrated to his service, and by calling it the Lord's we profess as much, the commandment will not be fulfilled by an attendance on public worship, which can occupy but a few hours. Few, it is granted, can devote the whole day to God, and some will need more intermission of the duty than others: but how our time should be divided between religious occupation, such as meditation, self-examination, private prayer, the perusal of the Bible, and other books of piety, and innocent relaxation, must be left to each individual's discretion: only let him remember, that what is a duty, is at the same time the means of grace; and that if he follow the prophet's direction of not doing his own ways, or finding his own pleasure, or speaking his own words, on God's holy day, he will, though it may first be irksome, in the end find it a delight, (Isaiah lviii.) and rejoice at its return. Worldly business desecrates it no less than worldly pleasure. Travelling or riding is a gross violation of it, which occasions the breaking of it by others, and deprives animals of the rest which their Creator has kindly designed for them. The man of business should suspend on this day of rest his worldly concerns, the student refrain from secular study.

The rule our Saviour gives is, that the Sabbath was made for the sake of man, that is, for the promotion of his true happiness; and as man is immortal and responsible, his happiness must be considered with a reference to eternity. Still, as he is a compound being, the body is not to be entirely neglected. The very name applied originally to the seventh day; and the reasons assigned for hallowing it show, that rest from labour was the primary object of its institution. To the great majority who earn their bread in the sweat of their face, this interval of cessation from toil has been found, by experience, to be essential to the maintenance of health and cheerfulness; nor is it less necessary to those whose pursuits occupy and fatigue the mind. To both classes a stated period of rest and recreation is necessary; nor can we justly blame them, if they seek refreshment from social intercourse with their relatives and intimate friends. The Sabbath is not a fast, but a feast; it should therefore be kept as a day of rejoicing; still our rejoicing should be within such limits as will not interfere with the rest which others have a right to as well as ourselves, and as is compatible with keeping it holy to Him whose name it now bears.

Few will deny that such an employment of the Lord's day would be rational and edifying, but all will not allow that it rests upon divine authority; for some with Paley maintain, that the fourth Commandment is no longer binding. The Church of England, however, by incorporating the Decalogue into her Liturgy, and by putting into the mouth of the congregation a petition for grace to keep each Commandment, pledges her members to the religious observance of one day in seven; and her decision, which is in conformity with the opinion of the great majority of divines, has, as I conceive, been proved to be true, by President Edwards, Sermons, vol. vii. Dr. Dwight, iv. 1—54, and Bishop Horsley, Sermons 21—53. To them I refer for a full refutation of plausible objections, which the nature of this work only permits me briefly to notice. It is obvious, that those who deny the perpetuity of the Sabbath, must endeavour to show that it was a Jewish

ordinance, and as such was to cease with the ceremonial law. Now the Sabbath is declared to be a sign between Jehovah and the children of Israel; and Paley argues, that to make it such, the observance of it must be peculiar to that people. Dwight replies, that this declaration was subsequent to the promulgation of the Decalogue, and could not release them from the obligation of commemorating on the seventh day God's resting from the work of creation; and that if they were still bound by the commandment, this declaration could in no way affect the rest of mankind. In the same manner, he adds, the Sabbath was made a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage, and a type of the promised rest in Canaan. But these were merely additional uses of the Sabbath to which it was applied, because they harmonised with its original design. The inspired historian of the creation concludes his narrative with informing us, that God sanctified the seventh day, because on it he had rested from all his works. A literal interpretation of these words would determine the dispute, for a commandment given to the parents of the human race would have been obligatory on all their descendants. The end too of the institution holds out the same universality of application. Paley accordingly assumes, that the words declare only the reason for which God sanctified the Sabbath, not the time when it was done; but this arbitrary supposition, so much at variance with the unaffected simplicity of the writer, could only have occurred to one who felt the natural interpretation to be subversive of his hypothesis. Rejecting the received account of the appointment of the Sabbath, he is obliged to seek for a subsequent one, and he thinks he has found it in the declaration of Moses in the wilderness, when the elders reported the supposed transgression of their countrymen, in gathering a double portion of manna on the sixth day of the week. 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord. Most of my readers will, I think, agree with me, that this is the language of one reminding others of a known, yet probably a neglected, duty; and the word Re-

member, which introduces the fourth Commandment, is more suitable to the reenactment of an obsolete ordinance, than the promulgation of a new one. That Commandment is generally considered as establishing its perpetuity, but an ingenious attempt has been made to deprive it of its universal application, by showing, that it is not like the rest a moral, but only a positive, precept. The distinction, however, will be found to fail, when we consider, that the Sabbath was intended to give all mankind an interval of rest, during which they might serve their Creator, and that such an interval was not more requisite for a Jew, than the other descendants of Adam. The duty of social worship is admitted by both parties, but unless a particular day be previously set apart, and that by an authority to which all would submit, its due performance would be impracticable. Our conclusion is strengthened by the consideration, that the other nine are allowed to be universally binding; for it is most improbable that one should essentially differ from the rest, and that if it were not of a moral nature, it should have been included in the Decalogue, which was promulgated with such awful solemnity, that not only the people intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, but even Moses said, I exceedingly fear. Twice, as it should seem to mark that it was never to pass away, was the Decalogue engraven on tables of stone by the finger of God himself, whereas the rest of the Law was spoken not to the assembled nation, but apart to Moses, who was ordered to write it. The perpetuity of the Sabbath may also be inferred from the language of Isaiah, lviii. 13, who affirms, that the Lord will honour and provide for him who calls the Sabbath a delight, not doing his own ways, nor speaking his own words; and he foretells, that it shall be observed under the Gospel dispensation, for he pronounces the man blessed who keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, while speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law, which forbade the admission into the congregation of eunuchs, of the gathering of the outcasts of Israel, and of the sons of the strangers, that is, Gentile nations serving God. Our Saviour repeatedly condemns the

superstitious manner of keeping the Sabbath, yet he has never made a remark that has a tendency to lower the Sabbath itself; and his declaration, that it was made for man, seems to imply, that it was designed to continue as long as the race for whose sake it was made. The parallel which the Apostle to the Hebrews draws between the resting from creation and the resting from redemption, establishes in the opinion of some eminent divines, that in this sense, as well as in that of a heavenly Canaan, there remains the keeping of a Sabbath for the people of God, iv. 9. I conclude, therefore, that the Commandment was prior to the Sinai covenant, and the call of Abraham; and that its authority is not impaired by the abrogation of the one, or by the rejection of the natural seed of the other; and believe, that as it was given in Paradise to our first parents, it is binding on all their posterity, to whom it was handed down by tradition; for, as Josephus says, "no city of Greeks or Barbarians can be found which does not acknowledge a seventh day's rest from labour."

The change of day is the principal difficulty, but it is not an insurmountable one. The institution obviously consists of two parts, the Sabbath, or holy rest, and the day on which it is holden. These are plainly alluded to, as distinct from each other in the text, The Lord rested the seventh day, and blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. The keeping holy one day in seven I regard as an ordinance for ever; and this ordinance may be kept as properly, and as usefully, on the first day of the week as on the seventh, if the festival be transferred by a competent authority. None we allow is competent but that which enjoined it. The change is not positively affirmed in Scripture, but Christians, with few exceptions, believe, that there are passages from which it may be inferred; and we know that those who could not be ignorant of the practice of the Apostles, as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Ignatius, kept the Sabbath on the Lord's day. St. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians to lay by on the first day of the week, and the manner in which he passed it at Troas, in preaching and breaking of bread, afford a strong presump-

tion, that the change had then taken place; and the Apocalypse informs us, that Sunday had, in St. John's time, obtained its appropriate title, which it probably had enjoyed from the time that the Lord made it his, by rising on it from the grave. We conclude from these reasons, that the Apostles, whom he had authorized to bind and loose, had been instructed to substitute the first instead of the seventh day for the Sabbath of the new dispensation. The change seems to have been designed for that great Jewish festival on which Christianity was first announced, and was accredited by the descent of the Holy Spirit, "when the Law went forth from Zion" instead of Sinai, was arranged to fall upon the first day of the week, and is predicted in Psalm cxviii, which, declaring this to be the day which the Lord has made, invites his Church to rejoice in it. The Sabbath was revived in the wilderness, as a sign between God and his chosen people, Ezek. xx. to keep them from relapsing into idolatry, by reminding them that on that day they were delivered from the Egyptians. As such it ceased with the Jewish economy; but the patriarchal Sabbath, which commemorates creation, is unaffected by this abrogation, though Christianity has transferred it to another day, and superadded thanksgiving for the superior blessing of redemption. We maintain that God hallowed a seventh portion of our time, that we might also hallow it; let us never forget that he has also blessed it. We must perceive that it is a blessed institution to the lower classes, as far as their temporal good is concerned; and we shall discover it to be such to the soul, if we have any spiritual discernment. It is a fact, that, in proportion as the Sabbath has been honoured in any country, religion and morality have flourished; and He who instituted it has often set his seal to the appointment, by making his ministers on this day the instruments of converting sinners, and of strengthening and improving his faithful servants.

35. *The appointment of the twelve Apostles. Matt. xii.
Mark iii. Luke vi.*

WE have already seen, that Jesus had chosen out of those who believed in him a select few, to whom he might impart, in the first instance, his doctrines more fully and confidentially, which they were in due season, when he was withdrawn from them, to communicate to the world. He now called them to a constant attendance, and they never henceforward left him, except by his command, when he sent them forth on a mission, strictly limited to the Jews. He afterwards conferred upon them the power to form, govern, and, through the ministers they should appoint, perpetuate the Church. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you:" and as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls our Lord an Apostle, so he designates them as his Apostles. The number seems chosen in order to show, that it was God's design, through their ministry, to gather into his fold his ancient people; and he himself says of them, that they shall sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. After the distinction between Jew and Gentile was done away, they proclaimed salvation, in his name, to all who would accept it; but an extraordinary Apostle, himself also a Jew, and appointed directly by Jesus from heaven, was the principal agent in the conversion of the Gentiles. Matthew does not record their appointment, it is thought out of modesty; he writes, however, of the twelve, as of a body known by that appellation, and introduces a catalogue of their names, in which he puts his own after that of Thomas, and takes the opprobrious epithet of publican, which the other Evangelists omit. They were arranged in pairs, probably because they were afterwards sent out two and two; and at least, the brethren Andrew and Simon, and James and John, were called in that order. It is not exactly the same in any Gospel, perhaps, that we may not assign preeminence to any. Their equality their Master has declared, but three were most in his confidence; and of some we are permitted to know much

more than of others. All were Galileans, and it is observable that several were relations. Four were partners as fishermen, and these, with one, if not two more, were natives of the same town, Bethsaida. Four were originally disciples of the Baptist, and therefore prepared to follow him, whom their master had declared to be the Lamb of God; and five, if we may depend upon the tradition that makes Bartholomew the same as Nathaniel. The testimony borne to the latter by Jesus, rendered him worthy of this distinction; and what we know of his history renders it probable, for the other disciples of John who believed on him were made apostles. He was one of the party fishing, to whom Jesus showed himself after the resurrection: he is not spoken of to supply the place of the traitor; and in all the lists Bartholomew is paired with Philip. Andrew was converted before Peter, whom he brought to Jesus; but the latter is perhaps named first, because the elder; and this may also be the reason of James being placed before John. Thomas appears to have been a fisherman, and the surname of Didymus marks him as a twin. James and Jude, both writers of Epistles, were the sons of Cleophas, or Alphæus, and first cousins of our Lord; and his relationship to him might be the reason of the former's presiding over the Church of Jerusalem. He is called the Less, as younger, perhaps, than his namesake, the son of Zebedee, and, like him, he suffered martyrdom. Jude is called Thaddeus by Mark, and surnamed Lebbæus by Matthew; which are words of the same import, to distinguish him from the future traitor, who bears the surname of Iscariot, it is thought, from his birth-place. Simon was the brother of James and Jude, who, that he may not be confused with Peter, has the epithet Canaanite, which Luke interprets a zealot; a word used originally in a good sense, but which afterwards, from the conduct of those who bore it, came to mean a bigotted supporter of Judaism.

Our Saviour was a frequent attendant on public worship, both in the temple, and in synagogues; and several instances of his private devotion are recorded; for in this, as in other

acts of duty, his precepts are confirmed by the living law of his own practice. The night before this appointment of the Apostles he passed in solitude, in fervent prayer ; and thereby teaches us, that, previous to any undertaking of importance, we should solicit the blessing and direction of our heavenly Father.

36—38. *The Sermon on the Mount. Matt. v. vi. vii. Luke vi.*

JESUS had before this preached in the synagogues ; but, probably, no building could have contained the multitude that his miracles drew around him, and therefore he ascended an eminence, sitting down, as was the custom of the teachers of his age and country. From its locality it has received the name of the Sermon on the Mount : and we have a similar one in Luke's Gospel, spoken on a plain ; but this variation may be reconciled, by assuming, that, after curing the sick below, Jesus, in order to be better heard, removed to a rising ground. Many of the sentences contained in both may have been repeatedly uttered : but I regard them as two copies of the same discourse. Both commence with the beatitudes, and conclude with the same simile ; there is scarcely any additional matter in Luke, and his omissions, in his abridged report of the false glosses and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, are easily explained from his writing for the use of Gentiles. Both Evangelists relate, that after the discourse Jesus came into Capernaum, and healed the servant of a centurion ; a cure attended with circumstances, which I can hardly conceive to have happened twice, and that in the same town. Luke has only four beatitudes, addressed exclusively to disciples, and to the actual poor, instead of the poor in spirit. They are also contrasted with four woes, not recorded in the Sermon on the Mount. Luke's order is preferred, because Matthew seems to have anticipated the time, that he might give near the opening of the Gospel a specimen of his Master's preaching. But whether we place it before or after the

appointment of the Twelve, I conceive that there is no reason to restrict the application of the Sermon to them at that time, or to the ministers of religion now.

“To resist no injury, to take no care for the morrow,” says Lord Bolingbroke, “seem fit enough for a religious sect, like the Essenians; but reason and experience both show, that, considered as general duties, they are impracticable, inconsistent with natural instinct as well as law, and quite destructive of society.” The remark is natural in the mouth of a sceptic, but there are even Christians, to whom Christ’s precepts are hard sayings; and instead of raising their lives to his perfect standard, they either lower that standard to their own inclinations, or ingeniously endeavour to prove, that it does not apply to themselves. Some among Roman Catholics resolve them into councils of perfection, not designed for ordinary believers; while Protestant divines, whose religion forbids their acquiescing in this distinction, like Clarke and Tillotson, inform us, that “this discourse was not intended for a general and standing rule to all Christians, but only designed for his immediate disciples to take *them* off from all care about the things of this life, that they might attend upon his person, and wholly give themselves up to that work to which he had called them. James Blair combats this exposition, “as an odd and dangerous opinion, and as opening a great gap,” as if there were any part of this Sermon not binding upon all private Christians as such. Justly does he maintain, that throughout pastors were not instructed in opposition to laymen, nor the Twelve in opposition to other disciples, but the followers of Christ in opposition to heathens, hypocrites, scribes, and pharisees. The context proves that he is in the right; for the word disciples include, not merely his constant followers, but all which for a season attended on his teaching; and we know, that the multitude were also within hearing, for they are said to have been astonished. His Apostles then, and the Clergy now, may be above their brethren, the light of the world, and the salt of the earth; but we were all, though under no ordination engagement,

bound by our baptismal vows to preach the Gospel, by the example of a Christian life; we are like the Jews of old, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light; and the Apostle Peter, who was present at this sermon, takes it not exclusively to himself, but in the same spirit that there said, Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, writes to all, As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye also holy. There are believers now, who require, as much as the Apostles then, to be taught the lesson of reliance upon Providence for the morrow's food and clothing; and many who need much more, the warning not to lay up treasure upon earth. The same maxims too are reproduced by the Apostles, when writing to the whole congregation: thus James is as strong against swearing as his Master, and Paul reproaches the Corinthians for not suffering wrong, instead of going to law. The popular opinion therefore may be adopted as the true one, that the sermon is addressed to all Christians, of all times, subject only to such limitations as a right reason, under the guidance of religion, will, in each case, easily point out; and this I think will be allowed by every candid person, who reflects, that if these precepts be impracticable in their full extent, it is only on account of the wickedness of mankind; and that, in proportion as the Christian spirit prevails, they will become easier; and if that spirit were universal and perfect, there would be no capability of performing at all the hardest^d.

Many are surprised that this discourse, the longest specimen we have of our Lord's teaching, should contain so little of the *peculiar* doctrines of revelation; and the fact has been perverted by those who would wish Christianity to be considered as nothing more than a purer and more comprehensive system of morality, and forget, that though Christ be our instructor and example, he came into the world to be the propitiatory victim, offered as a sacrifice for our sins. It

^d Archbishop Newcome on our Lord's Conduct.

should be remembered, that obedience to the Divine will, the consecration of all the faculties of man as instruments of righteousness to the glory and service of the Giver, is the ultimate end which revelation professes; and that it was our Saviour's grand object in this discourse to rectify the popular lax interpretations of the moral law, and to bring his hearers back to the true standard, the word of God rightly understood. He declares, that he requires a righteousness exceeding that of the strictest observers of the moral law in his time; whereby he, by anticipation, guards believers from an Antinomian abuse of Christian liberty, and by preaching the law in all its spirituality, as extending beyond overt acts to the desires, strips them of every plea of self-righteousness; and convincing them of their inability to keep, in their own strength, commandments so "exceeding broad," draws them to the throne of grace to solicit pardon for the past, and assistance for the future. Such is the proneness of fallen man to be satisfied with himself, that, like the young man in the Gospel, if he has led a regular and decent life, he is inclined to say of God's commandments, and with sincerity, "All these have I kept from my youth up." As Paul expresses it, he was alive without the law once; but when that is laid open to him in all its extent and spirituality, and with the awful threatening denounced against every breach of it, then he perceives that he is a ruined sinner, and throws himself unreservedly upon God's mercy. It is the law faithfully preached that drives him to the Gospel for refuge from just condemnation; and then the Gospel will send him back to the law again with a desire, and in a degree the power, of keeping it, not by it to earn salvation, but to shew forth his gratitude to him, who hath pardoned and accepted him, and given him a conviction that the law is "holy, just, and good," and has "written it in his heart." "It is argued by some expositors, that this sermon contains all things needful for salvation; but most certainly the unchangeable God never meant to recommend one part of his revealed will, by disparaging another. And who have ever unreservedly obeyed these say-

ings, except they who have firmly believed the doctrines of the Gospel. This sermon, doubtless, contains the grand outlines of Christian practice, but Christian doctrines must be learned from the other parts of the sacred oracles^c." It should ever be borne in mind, that our Saviour differs from all other teachers of his religion in this particular, that he came into the world to *act*; and that his actions, that is, his dying for our sins and his rising again for our justification, is the subject of Christian preaching. These doctrines he could not bring out so prominently, as it is the duty of his ministers to do. His enemies would not have suffered it, and his disciples could not bear them, till their minds had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that gift which, on his ascension, he obtained for men. Still he is not silent on these points. There are, even in the earlier Gospels, continual allusions to them; and St. John, who wrote to supply their omissions, has many doctrinal discourses, in which Christ's divinity, and justification, and sanctification through his death, are revealed by himself to "those who have ears to hear." In the surrounding multitude there might be a few who followed, from hunger and thirst, after righteousness, but the majority were attracted by the wealth and honours, which they conceived that he, as the Messiah, was about to bestow; and, therefore, to correct their mistaken notions, he opens his discourse with the eight beatitudes, which have been called the Christian paradoxes, for they place happiness in such dispositions of mind, as no man naturally longs for, but which, on examination, will be found most effectual in procuring it. These blessings are pronounced as detached aphorisms: but we are not to conceive that the qualities exist apart; they will all meet, though it may be in different proportions, in the same individual, and form together the Christian character. "There are two opposite characters under which mankind may generally be classed; the one possesses vigour, firmness, and resolution, is daring and active, quick

^c Scott's Commentary.

in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purposes, violent in its resentments; the other meek, yielding, complying, forgiving, not prompt to act, but willing to suffer, silent and gentle under rudeness and insult, and suing for reconciliation where others would demand satisfaction. The former character has ever been admired by the world, the latter, which it despises as abject and poor spirited, is the subject of our Saviour's commendation^f. As the world is constituted, the Christian may shrink from its opposition, or wish to withdraw from its temptations; our Lord proceeds therefore to declare, that he must live for others as well as himself, and that as salt is employed for seasoning, and a lamp for giving light, so he must show forth his good works, not for ostentation, but that others may give glory to God. Many imagined that the Messiah was to set aside the whole law; he therefore solemnly declares, that it is of eternal obligation, and that he came not to abolish but to fulfil it. This he did in every sense; first, in being himself the substance of its shadows, the real victim, which its sacrifices prefigured; secondly, in being the only man, who ever perfectly obeyed its moral precepts; and, thirdly, as a legislator, by reenacting them in all their purity, and freeing them from the corrupt interpretations of the Scribes. He first declares, that all its injunctions, even those they considered as least, were binding; and explains some of the prohibitions of the Decalogue, in a manner that shows, that they include the desires from which crimes originate; the sixth Commandment, hatred; the seventh, lust. Knowing that the desire, unchecked and indulged in, will, when opportunity favours, break out into sin; nay, is sin already, in his eyes, who can look into the heart, and judges of men, not by what they do, but by what they wish; he goes at once to the source of the evil, and in highly figurative language declares, that we must eradicate the eye of concupiscence, and cut off the hand that would

^f Paley's Evidences, part ii. 2. on the Morality of the Gospel.

commit violence, if we cannot turn aside the one, or restrain the other. The sixth Commandment was explained by the Scribes, so as to prohibit only actual murder, and that chiefly on account of the capital punishment which would ensue ; but our Legislator extends it to unjustifiable anger, which generates hatred ; for he that hateth his brother, is in heart a murderer ; and he declares, that it shall be punished hereafter, proportionably to its degree, as it breaks forth into words of derision and contempt, such as *Raca*, or as charging men with extreme infatuation, and rebellion against God, such as *Fool*. To the commandment thus enlarged and fortified, he attaches collateral duties, the appeasing a brother who has reason to be displeased, and a speedy settlement with a plaintiff in a lawsuit when he is in the right. Religious worship, both before and since, has been made a substitute for moral duties ; but our Lord here teaches, that God will not accept it from one who has not previously obtained forgiveness from any whom he has injured. He forbids retaliation, permitted by the Mosaic law, but explained by the Scribes as authorizing private revenge, and commands a patient submission to injury, and unlimited compassion to the distressed. He not only forbids our hating our enemies, but commands us to love them, that we may be the children of our heavenly Father, who causes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and thus explains, that it is doing to them good offices, especially those of common humanity, not the love of affection. The seventh Commandment he combines with the tenth. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, and restricts divorce to the case of adultery. In explaining the third he condemns the casuistry, which, by ingenious distinctions, excused the performance of vows, showing, that since God was Lord of the Creation, an oath by any part of it was equivalent to an oath by him. But he adds, Swear not at all, a command which not only Quakers, but some of the Fathers conceive admit of no limitation. The context, however, clearly proves, that he is speaking of promissory oaths, and we may reasonably enlarge it so as to

comprehend the swearing, that still occasionally disgraces the conversation of Christians; but St. Paul's Epistles, and parts of the Old Testament, justify appeals to the Deity on occasions of sufficient solemnity; and the affirmatory oaths of courts of justice are approved in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as "the end of strife," and were sanctioned by our Lord's own practice on his trial.

The religion of the Pharisees was deficient not only in its rule, but also in its motives. Jesus therefore proceeds to warn his disciples against ostentation, and seeking the praise of men, in almsgiving, in private prayer, and in fasting. He condemns those also who deceive themselves by their vain repetitions, and gives as an example, both of the form and matter of their petitions, the prayer which in consequence we call his. He declares, that it is impossible to unite the service of God with the love of earthly treasure, which he personifies under the Syriac term Mammon, which means any thing in which we place our confidence. He forbids solicitude for the future, and reproves them for not trusting implicitly in their heavenly Father, who, if he clothe with more than royal splendour the perishable flowers of the field, and provide food for the birds, will much more supply the necessary wants of his children. He who made them knoweth what they need, and their existence is an earnest, that what he hath made he will preserve.

Admonitions follow against the common fault of overlooking our own great defects, while we are intently seeking after the minute ones of our neighbours; to circumspection in communicating religious truth, since there are some, like swine, on whom it will be thrown away, and others, like dogs, whom it will exasperate to persecution; and to earnest prayer to our perfect Father which is in heaven; encouraged by the fact, that even an earthly parent, though imperfect in goodness, will not refuse the reasonable petitions of his children. Life is then compared to a journey; and the wide gate, and broad and frequented road that leadeth to destruction, are contrasted with the strait gate and narrow path of ge-

nuine Christianity. Not only is it rugged, and beset with thorns and briars, but there are treacherous guides who would decoy the pilgrim out of the right way; and it would be easier for them to mislead the inconsiderate, because, though wolves in disposition, they would assume the clothing of sheep. Our Saviour, however, gives a criteriori to detect them, the unholy nature and tendency of their doctrine, and solemnly declares the unprofitableness of profession without practice. Even the ministers of his religion, who have prophesied and performed miracles in his name, no less than surely those who, since these extraordinary gifts were withdrawn, have, according to their natural ability, improved by study, expounded his Gospel, will be rejected by him in that day, if they have been workers of iniquity. And, in conclusion, he contrasts the final portion of him who is a mere hearer, with him who is also a doer of his will, by the impressive parable of two men, who built houses of similar appearance, but one on a shifting sand, the other on the sure foundation of a rock.

The morality commanded in this discourse, excelling so much that of the Scribes and Pharisees, both in extent and motives, such, indeed, as had never been heard from the lips of any other teacher, might well produce astonishment in his audience. But the manner astonished them still more than the matter, because, as Matthew informs us, he taught not as the Scribes, but as one who had authority. Thus it was said of old, and this is the meaning of the saying, was the Scribes manner of teaching; but Jesus, assuming the office not of the interpreter, but of the enacter of the law, introduces his teaching with, *I say unto you*; and the solemn admonitions, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear—Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away—*show his consciousness of the high office with which he was invested. This manner in any other would have been arrogant and absurd; but it became him, whose doctrine was not his own, but that of him who sent him, and who proves by his works, that they might depend upon the veracity of his words. He

then justly claims authority, yet, in many instances, he condescends to state the reasons of his commands, and may therefore require them to trust him, when he does not see fit to assign any.

39. *The cure of the centurion's servant, at the request of his master. Matt. viii. Luke vii.*

THE most eminent instances of faith, for they drew forth our Lord's admiration, were exhibited by Gentiles—by the centurion, and the woman of Canaan. A centurion was a Roman officer, commanding, as his name signifies, a hundred men. That nation in general despised the Jews too much to condescend to inquire into their religion. Even the philosophic Tacitus gives us strange and fabulous notices, though he might, if he had chosen, have been better informed, since he lived in the same town and at the same time with Josephus. They were regarded as hating other nations, and were hated of course in return. This centurion, however, was a honourable exception. He loved them, no doubt on account of their religion. He had been at the expence of building the synagogue at Capernaum, and we may presume that he had renounced the idolatry in which he had been bred, and worshipped the only true God. Matthew describes him as coming in person; Luke as speaking through the elders; for I agree with the majority of harmonists, that there was but one such centurion; and we have a similar instance in the petition of the sons of Zebedee, made, according to one Evangelist, by themselves; according to another, by their mother. Probably the centurion, in the first instance, sent, and finding that Jesus was on the way, hastened out of his house to meet him. Deeply affected by this act of condescension, he regarded his house, the habitation of a Gentile, as unfit for one so holy to enter. Being full of faith, and perhaps calling to mind the case of the nobleman's son of the same town, who was cured at a distance, he added, that it was not necessary that Jesus should so demean himself, and illustrated his meaning by his own office and power. He was

only an inferior officer, subject to his Tribune's authority ; yet having a company of soldiers under him, he found them prompt to obey his orders, whether delivered to them on the spot, or sent to them from a distance ; and in like manner *his* servant implicitly obeyed *him*. By a figure of speech, not uncommon among the ancients, and of which we have other instances in the New Testament, the reader is left to draw the inference, which expressed is this ; “ Much more can one, who is not under authority either present or absent, cure my dying servant, by commanding the disease to leave him.” The servant was healed instantly ; and our Lord took occasion to remark, that many of the Gentiles from distant parts of the earth would be admitted hereafter into the presence of Abraham, when his children after the flesh, cast into the darkness without, would mourn, and gnash their teeth from vexation and envy at their exclusion from the banquet, which they imagined was provided only for themselves. The Jews, while miracles of every kind were daily wrought by him, were asking for a sign, whereas the centurion is fearful of betraying the least distrust in his power. He declares his belief, that he can cure at a distance as well as near, and acknowledges his own unworthiness ; and this lowliness of mind is the more remarkable, since the Romans were a proud and imperious people, and have not even a word in their language that answers to our humility. The centurion, however, possessed this virtue, which predisposes the mind to listen to the evidence, and to relish the humbling doctrines of Christianity ; and his attachment to his servant places his disposition in honourable contrast with most of his countrymen, who treated their slaves with a severity, which the laws of no modern nation would allow, torturing them, and even putting them to death, for trivial offences. It is remarkable, that this is not the only centurion whose praise is in the Gospel. Another, the just and devout Cornelius, was selected to be the first fruits of the Gentile harvest ; a centurion preserved the life of Paul ; and a centurion declared of the dying Jesus, deserted by his friends and rejected by his nation, that he was the Son of God.

38. *The son of a widow of Nain is raised from the dead.*
Luke vii.

THIS was succeeded by a more amazing miracle, the restoration to life of a young man, whom Jesus met, carried out to the grave, as he was entering Nain, a small town in the neighbourhood. He is described as the only son of a widow, and compassion for her appears to have been his motive for raising him from the dead; the miracle made a great impression on the inhabitants, who acknowledged that God had visited his people, and that Jesus was the Prophet who should come into the world.

39. *John enquires if Jesus be the Messiah. Matt. xi. Luke vii.*

JOHN, having been now some time in prison, sent two of his disciples to enquire if Jesus were the promised Messiah. Some commentators think that he sent them for their satisfaction; others, that his own faith was staggered, seeing that Jesus took no steps to deliver him, and did not even declare himself; and this seems better to suit the reply, "Happy is he to whom I am not an occasion of stumbling." To his question our Lord did not answer in words which might have given his enemies a handle against him, but by an appeal to this miracle, which he was then performing, and the fact of his preaching to the poor. John had wrought no miracle, and that rendered the evidence derived from his the more decisive, especially as they had been predicted by the same prophet, who had described the Baptist's preparatory ministry. Our Lord, on their departure, turning to the Jews, bore his testimony to John, as being far more than a prophet, the very Elias that was to come, the harbinger of the Messiah. And yet, though none was greater than him under the old dispensation, the least in the kingdom of heaven would be his superior: that is, the Christian of the lowest attainments would be favoured with more distinct views of the nature and glory of the Gospel. He then animadverted upon the per-

verseness of that generation, which was alike dissatisfied with the austere and abstemious habits of John, and his own more social mode of life; observing, that wisdom was justified of all her children, the difference in their modes of life being suited to the different offices assigned to them for accomplishing the divine purposes.

40. *Jesus upbraids those who had seen his miracles without repenting, and invites the weary and heavy laden to come unto him. Matt. xi.*

HE next upbraids for their unbelief the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, and declares his willing acquiescence in his Father's decree, that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven should be concealed from the wise and learned, (that is, from those whom the world accounts such,) and revealed unto babes, or persons of childlike humility and willingness to learn. He calls upon all who labour and are heavy laden to come unto him, promising that he would grant them not mere deliverance from toil, but the rest which not only puts an end to fruitless labour, but affords a reviving cordial. There is not only peace but joy in believing. There is a rest from the unsatisfying and harassing anxieties felt by those whose hearts are set upon this world. There is a rest from the uneasiness of conscience, and a rest in degree from the power of sin. Preparatory to this invitation, he produces, as it were, his commission from his Father; and for the encouragement of the weary heavy laden sinner, who wishes to come to him, and yet might doubt his ability to fulfil his promises, he declares, that all power has been delivered unto him. The expressions "to labour," and "to be burthened," comprehend in their literal sense all the modes in which working animals are commonly employed; they either wear a yoke, or bear a burthen. The moral meaning of this figurative language is clear. To *labour* is to pursue the work of sin as an agent; to be *burthened* is to endure the pains and penalties of evil as a passive recipient. To

this miserable course of action and endurance are opposed the blessed activities, and not less blessed sufferings, of the Christian life, "*my yoke is easy*;" it is a service of perfect freedom, "*my burthen is light*;" for though the Christian has his sorrows, he would not exchange them for this world's joys. The happy consequence promised is rest unto the soul, rest from evil action and from mental suffering; the former given on coming to Christ, the latter found by perseverance in the course recommended. The beauty of the passage is heightened, if compared with the oppressive yoke of the national teachers, as described by Jesus on another occasion, "They bind burdens heavy and hard to be borne, and place them on men's shoulders, but they will not move them with one of their fingers;" whereas our Lord bare our infirmities, and does not impose, but invites us to take up his burthen^a." Still we must remember, that, though freed from bondage, the Christian must bear a yoke—the yoke of obedience to his Lord's commands; and this, though it will require self-denial, will be rendered easy by copying his example; and to those who love him it will be its recommendation, that he requires nothing but what he hath himself performed, and that in the path he hath marked out for us we may perceive his own footsteps all the way.

41. *A woman who was a sinner anoints the feet of Jesus at an entertainment. Luke vii.*

AN opportunity soon offered of proving him to be in the best sense, what was brought against him as an accusation, the friend of publicans and sinners—"the sinner's friend, but sin's eternal foe." He accepts a Pharisee's invitation to dinner, and a woman who was a notorious sinner, that is a harlot, and it may be a Gentile, encouraged perhaps by his late gracious call upon all to come unto him who laboured and were heavy laden, enters while he is reclining at the meal. She stands

^a Jebb on Sacred Literature, p. 208.

behind, and is therefore for a season unobserved, and shed such a flood of penitential tears as wetted his feet. She then wiped them with her flowing tresses, and anointed them with the balsam, once probably used on her own person, not thinking herself worthy to pour it upon his head. Simon, looking at this woman's past life, not at her present feelings, began to form an unfavourable opinion of Jesus, for he concluded, judging from himself and other Pharisees, that if he had been a prophet, he must have known her character, and would not have suffered her to approach him. But Jesus answered to his thoughts, for he does not seem to have expressed them, in a way that shewed him to be more than an ordinary teacher, a discerner of the heart, and authorized to forgive sin. Had he directly remonstrated with the Pharisee upon his pride and disdain of this penitent, he would have only irritated and hardened him; but his indirect reproof was calculated to convince and to affect without affronting him. The creditor in the parable represents our Lord himself; the two debtors different descriptions of sinners, who are both guilty, though not in the same degree, and who have no power in any measure to discharge their debt; that is, to atone for their sins. The case being put in the form of a question, Simon allowed that the greater debtor would have the deeper sense of his obligation. Jesus having approved of the answer, proceeded to apply it, and contrasted this woman's conduct with his cold reception of him. Simon had not treated him with ordinary respect; he had not welcomed him with the usual salutation of a kiss, nor anointed his head with common oil; whereas she had kissed his feet, and anointed them with fragrant and costly balsam. She had been forgiven many sins, and *therefore* she loved much. "For she loved much," is our own and the Vulgate translation; and it must be allowed that *ὅτι* is usually so rendered. But as it appears that this sinner's love was the *effect* and *evidence*, not the *cause* of her forgiveness, which our Lord ascribes to faith, "*therefore*" is preferable, which, though uncommon, is not without authority. This best ac-

ords with the conclusion of his speech, "but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." This seems to have been spoken aside to Simon, for Jesus says afterwards to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and when the guests are offended at his assuming this divine prerogative, he confirms his declaration by observing, that it is her faith that has saved her. She required no bodily cure, he must therefore have meant the salvation of the soul.

Tradition reports, that the sinner who anointed our Saviour's feet at the Pharisee's entertainment was Mary of Magdala, and hence she is become, as it were, in the Roman church, the personification of female penitence. As such, she is a favourite subject with their artists; and in our own country her name has been assigned to a benevolent asylum, provided by Christian philanthropy for women who have deviated from chastity. For this opinion there is certainly no scriptural authority, for she is there only described as possessed with many devils, which are not in any other instance taken to mean sins; nor is there any reason to suppose, that if she had been this woman, the Evangelist would have concealed her name. This portion of Scripture has been selected for the Gospel on St. Mary Magdalene's day, and the Collect in our original Prayer Book has been composed in conformity with this tradition. Within three years, however, this Prayer Book was revised, and among its numerous alterations was the entire omission of this festival; from which we may conclude, that in the interval our Reformers had satisfied themselves, that Mary of Magdala and this sinner had been erroneously assumed to be the same person.

42. Jesus cures a demoniac, and, being accused of confederacy with the devil, declares that all reviling is pardonable, except that of the Holy Spirit. Matt. ix. Mark iii. Luke viii.

JESUS now made another circuit of Galilee, accompanied by his Apostles, and several women, who had been cured by him of diseases and of demoniacal possession; and some of

them, being persons of property, defrayed his expences ; for he not only, as he told a person who offered to become his disciple, had, strictly speaking, no home of his own, but was unable even to pay the tribute money to the temple without a miracle, to such a depth of poverty did it graciously please him to condescend. Three of them are named, Susannah, Joanna, the wife of Chusa, a person of some distinction in Herod's court, conjectured to be the officer whose son was miraculously cured^b, John iv. 46, and Mary of Magdala. From her being mentioned with Joanna, we conclude that she was also a person of rank and property, and neither the sinner who anointed his feet, nor the sister of Lazarus. On his return to Capernaum, when the eagerness of the multitude to hear him did not give him leisure for his meals, his relations were so far from believing in him, that they wished to keep him within the house, considering him as disordered in mind.

His cure of a demoniac, who was at once both blind and dumb, being an indisputable fact, occasioned the malignant charge, that he performed miracles through a confederacy with Satan. He repels it, by showing that he came to deliver men from subjection to evil spirits ; and that Satan's kingdom must be subverted in proportion as his was established. From the fact of his ejecting demons, he demonstrates the superiority of his power to theirs ; illustrating it by the remark, that no one could break into and rob a strong man's house, unless he first overpowered and bound him. And as he came to destroy the works of the devil, the case admitted not of neutrality, but those that refused to act with him must be accounted as his enemies. He added, that every kind of sin and reviling was pardonable, except one—*blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost. It is frequently, but improperly, called the *sin* against the Holy Ghost, and this inaccuracy has a tendency to augment the alarm which is raised at the

^b Ἐπίτροπος, which is also translated *steward*, is a word of wider extent than οἰκονόμος, (which answers more accurately to the English term,) and may mean any kind of superintendence.

mention of an unpardonable offence. It is *blasphemy*, and this limits it to something not done but spoken. Few passages have more alarmed and distressed conscientious yet weak believers, than this awful denunciation; yet taken, as all Scripture ought to be, in connection with the context, we perceive that it was primarily designed as a warning to these his personal opponents, and cannot be committed by any who believe in Christ, though they may grieve, resist, and even quench the influence of the Holy Ghost, by provoking him to leave them to themselves. Hammond, Tillotson, Waterland, and other eminent divines, are of opinion, that our Lord means the very sin which his enemies were then committing, the ascribing his miracles to the devil; and I apprehend they are supported by the authority of Mark, for he adds as a comment, "because they said he had an unclean spirit." It is thus paraphrased by Whitby, and Scott approves of the explanation. "You represent me as one who casts out devils by Beelzebub, and you will still go on to represent me as a deceiver of the people; but, notwithstanding, this grievous sin shall be forgiven, if that last dispensation of the Holy Ghost, which I shall send after my ascension, shall prevail upon you to believe in me; but if, after sending him to testify to the truth of my mission and resurrection, you shall blaspheme him by representing him as an evil spirit, your sin shall never be pardoned." The two senses nearly coincide, and the guilt seems to differ only in degree, the second being an obstinate and wilful perseverance in the first. Upon either supposition, the persons thus solemnly admonished were eyewitnesses of facts, which they themselves allowed to be miracles; they were also works, not only of supernatural power, but of benevolence; and he who will not recognize in them their real author, but deliberately ascribes them to diabolical agency, seems to have sinned beyond the reach of forgiveness, since he insults and reviles the only Being who can bring his mind into such a frame as to be a fit object of mercy. Infidels of modern times have miracles only upon testimony, and do not ascribe them to an evil spirit, but only

call in question their reality. The difference, therefore, of guilt is one not of degree but of kind; the one being the offence of the understanding, the other of the heart; still, if the rejected stone become the head of the corner, shall grind the latter to powder, the former who falls upon it shall be broken. Whether or not the most offensive kind of modern disbelief, which reviles the moral character of our immaculate Redeemer, may come under this tremendous condemnation, must be left for his decision, who knoweth the secrets of the heart, and can alone appreciate the temptations of individuals. Some we know have been reclaimed from the lowest depths of infidelity; and we may be sure, that none, however deep his guilt hath been, who believes and repents, can have committed this unpardonable offence; for genuine repentance and faith are inseparably connected with forgiveness, and being themselves the gift of God, would never be bestowed on those he had determined not to pardon. They who fear having committed it, are generally at the farthest distance from it, while those (if we may presume to form an opinion of their probable future lot) who seem to approach it are fearless, and well satisfied with their conduct, promising themselves, if they believe in another life, an eternity of happiness. Our Lord adds, that though this species of slander is alone unpardonable, none can be practised with impunity, for an account must be given at the day of judgment, not only of sinful actions, but of every wicked speech^c.

43. *The Scribes and Pharisees are reproved for requiring a sign from heaven. Matt. xii. Luke xi.*

THE Pharisees, intimating thereby that the miracles they were in the habit of seeing were not satisfactory, as they might be performed through collusion with the devil, de-

^c ῥῆμα ἀργόν, "idle word," which by a common euphemism is put for *pernicious* or *injurious*: for which meaning of the word we have the decisive authority of the Classics and the Greek Fathers; and this is confirmed by the various reading *προνήϊον*. But though this seems to suit the context better than merely trifling and light conversation, that, if not noticed here, is condemned by St. Paul under the term *ὕστεραπειλία* and *μωρολογία*, Eph. v. 4.

manded of Jesus a sign from heaven, meaning, it should seem, that he should appear at once in the clouds, according to Daniel's prophecy, and establish the universal monarchy of the Messiah. He answered, that the demand shewed them to be a wicked and adulterous race, who had degenerated from the faith of their father Abraham, and that no sign would be given to them, except that of Jonah, (authenticating thereby a history that has been often disbelieved and ridiculed^d;) and declares it to be typical of the period that he was to remain in the grave. He affirms, that past generations, who availed themselves of less favourable opportunities, would rise up to condemn them who were unaffected by a preacher of repentance more impressive than Jonah, and uninstructed by a teacher wiser than Solomon; and concludes with a parable, pointing out their national danger, and indicating that the temporary conviction wrought by the Baptist's preaching having died away, their evil passions would revive with fresh strength, and they would become seven times more callous and presumptuous than before. This sign, his resurrection, was the great evidence of his mission, and the commencement of his reign, but it did not come, as they expected, with observation. The parable is a prophecy of the rejection of the Jews, and of their awful state of enmity to the Gospel, which still continues. It is also applicable to individuals, to such as in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (x. 26.) "sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth,

^d It has been maintained by the great body of commentators, that Jonah was deposited in the stomach of a large fish, and as the throat of a whale is too narrow to admit the passage of a man, they have assumed it to be a shark; but in avoiding one difficulty they only make another, for a man could not pass through the formidable ranges of teeth of the latter, nor indeed exist in the stomach of any fish, without a series of miracles. But a safe asylum is afforded in another *cavity*, *κοιλία*, of the whale, in which Jonas might be preserved; not indeed without miracle, but with that economy of miracle so frequently exemplified in Scripture. "At the bottom of the throat is an intestine so large and wide, that a man might pass into it; it is an air vessel, in which are two vents, which serve for inspiration and expiration, and enable the animal to rise or sink at pleasure." And this testimony of a naturalist is of the more weight, as he had not the case of Jonas in view. *Bomare Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle*. For these remarks I am indebted to Bishop Jebb's interesting volume.

for whom there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

44, 45. *Jesus declares who are blessed. Matt. xii. Luke xi.*

THE assiduity of Jesus in teaching the people, notwithstanding the opposition of the Pharisees, gave disquietude to his near relations, who wished him to desist, supposing that he exceeded the bounds of reason, and they seem to have engaged his mother to concur in the design. But he, aware of their intention, answered by enquiring who were his mother and his brethren; intimating that they had no authority over him in respect to his ministry; and that his spiritual regard for his disciples exceeded his natural affection to his family. We Protestants, who know how sadly the reverence for his virgin mother has degenerated into idolatry, cannot fail to be struck with the way in which she is mentioned in the Gospel, where the few incidents recorded of her have an indirect tendency to diminish our respect. Our Lord here declares, that she is his mother, that is, equal in his estimation, who performs his Father's will; and a little before, a woman in admiration having exclaimed out of the crowd, Happy she that bare him! he replied, Rather should they be called happy, who hear the word of God, and keep it.

46. *Jesus, being at dinner in a Pharisee's house, denounces woes against the hypocritical Pharisees, Scribes, and Lawyers. Luke xi.*

BEING at dinner with a Pharisee, who had assembled many of his brethren, probably with the view of ensnaring him in conversation, his host expressed surprise that Jesus had not washed when he came in, according to their tradition; and this gave him an opportunity of boldly and sharply reproving their superstition and hypocrisy. He observed, that they affected to honour the dead prophets, and blamed their forefathers for putting them to death; yet, as in their behaviour to him they imitated their conduct, the monuments they

erected seemed raised less out of respect to the prophets than to their murderers; he concludes with declaring, that the Divine wisdom, that is, he himself, (as appears from the parallel passage, Matt. xxiii. 34.) will send them prophets and apostles, whom they will in like manner persecute and destroy, so that the punishment of their own sins, and those of their forefathers, would fall upon them. The dreadful vengeance inflicted by the Romans upon the nation was not more than their own wickedness, in crucifying the Lord of life, had deserved; yet it was so signal and complete, that, humanly speaking, it would seem an adequate punishment for all the murders of the righteous, from that of Abel, the first who was slain, till the extinction of their state^e.

47. *He teaches the people. Luke xii.*

HIS reproof exasperated the company, who endeavoured to provoke him to say something that might afford them matter of accusation. He then left the house, and in the presence of the people assembled, as it were, in tens of thousands, warned his disciples against the fear of men and hypocrisy, the leaven which corrupted the religion of the Pharisees. An application to him out of the crowd, by a man who asked him to desire his brother to divide the inheritance with him, led him to caution them against covetousness; and he shows its absurdity by the parable of a rich man suddenly called into eternity, while immersed in worldly enjoyment, rightly called thoughtless, for he is foolishly laying up goods for many years, when he has not a day to live. He charges them not to resemble him, but to make a wise use of worldly goods by giving alms, and so securing a treasure in heaven that faileth not. He then foretells, that his religion will not introduce upon earth the peace they expect, but division; and he charges the people to judge for themselves what is right,

^e It is remarkable, that Josephus, speaking of his countrymen, declares, in the strongest terms, that there never was so wicked a race; War, v. 13. and that if the Romans had delayed coming, God would have interfered to destroy them, since they were worse than the people of Sodom.

and to accept, before it be too late, his offer of mercy, like the prisoner, who, if he is prudent, will satisfy his adversary, before he is brought to the judge.

48. *He cautions them against forming rash judgments.*
Luke xiii.

AN incident which had lately occurred of some Galileans, whom Pilate had ordered to be slain while engaged in sacrifice, and the fact of eighteen people having been killed by the fall of one of the towers of the city, gave him occasion to warn them against the natural fault of supposing the subjects of such judgments to be greater sinners than others who are spared in mercy; and to instruct them, instead of drawing such conclusions, to look carefully to their own conduct, lest a similar fate should befall them: and he illustrates by the parable of a fig-tree, which bore nothing but leaves, though planted in a vineyard, the forbearance of God towards his undeserving people, in still affording it a respite for amendment; a parable which is no less true of individuals who continue unfruitful under the means of grace, and, like this worthless plant, instead of repaying the care of the husbandman by the fruit he has a right to expect, only cumber the ground.

49. *Jesus teaches in parables.* *Matt. xiii. Mark iv. Luke viii.*

THIS day is a remarkable one in our Lord's ministry, for finding the multitude pressing upon him, he withdrew with his Apostles into the vessel, from which he could continue his instructions without being incommoded by them; and this discourse is distinguished from that on the Mount, as the sermon in parables, a mode of teaching which the malice of his enemies now rendered expedient. It is recorded with variations by the three Evangelists, but at the greatest length by the first. The number of parables is eight; four are peculiar to him, and one to Mark; of which, four, the sower,

the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven, were addressed to the multitude, the rest to the disciples when explaining the others. Mark however observes, that with many such parables he spake the word unto them ; we therefore conclude, that these are only a specimen. The Hebrew, *Mashal*, figurative speech, is rendered in the Septuagint by *παροιμία*, and *παραβολή*; the former is used by St. John, the latter by the other Evangelists. The etymology of both leads to the notion of comparison, and includes maxims, the *γνώμαι* of the Greeks, even when not expressed in figurative language, as many of those of Solomon ; and such sayings as “ Physician heal thyself ; ” and “ If the blind guide the blind, both will fall into the ditch. ” This mode of teaching has many advantages. To persons of uncultivated minds, that is, the great majority who feel strongly but cannot reason accurately, argumentative instruction is dry and forbidding, while that conveyed through the imagination pleases, and attaches itself to the memory. The obscurity in which it is involved excites curiosity, and the trouble it costs to elicit the meaning enhances its value. It gains the easiest admission into both head and heart ; it strikes the deepest and remains the longest. Parables also insinuate reproof with less offence, and greater efficacy, than open rebuke ; and truths, imperfectly seen through this veil, will be endured, which without any covering would be offensive to the hearer, and might be dangerous to the speaker. This is strikingly illustrated in the Old Testament by that of Nathan to David. This method of teaching hath been always popular in the East, and in our Saviour was a necessary precaution. His enemies would have turned a positive declaration to his premature destruction ; but a parable, though its bearing might be quite as obvious, they could not lay hold of. Such were those which show him to be the Messiah, and his opponents to be wolves and robbers ; and those which upbraid them with their pride and stubbornness, and foretell the admission of the heathen into the Church, and their own rejection. Before, as in the sermon on the Mount, he had taught plainly, but the behaviour of the Pharisees that very morning showed

the necessity of his guarding against their enmity; and the people too, who were much under their influence, were as yet unable to bear the whole undisguised truth. But in private he expounded these parables to his disciples, and gradually prepared them for the plainness of speech they were to use hereafter. Parable in modern use is almost restricted to those of our Saviour, which differ from apologues or fables, because, instead of assigning to irrational or inanimate beings, to brutes or plants, the speech and feelings of man, he assumes the occurrences of real life, which are at any time happening. There is no improbability in supposing, that while he was delivering the parable of the sower, he might see one in the act of scattering seed, for he generally expresses himself in his ordinary instruction, by conveying maxims in figures, drawn from the objects before him. Thus, upon curing a blind man, he styles himself the light of the world. Beholding the lilies of the field, and the fowls of the air, he teaches men to frame worthy notions of the Providence which supports them. Seeing the money-changers, he exhorts the disciples to lay out their several talents to the best advantage, and among the sheepfolds he shows himself to be the true Shepherd of souls. At a feast he gives general advice to master and guests, and brings them to the consideration of a better entertainment, to which they were all invited, and from meat and drink he leads them to the eating of his body, and drinking his blood, in a spiritual sense. Thus he improved every thing into an useful moral, and made the objects which we are continually seeing, serve for a constant remembrance of his lessons.

The parables of this day were prophetic, as well as explanatory. The first predicts the different reception of the same Gospel by different classes of men; the second, the corruption of that Gospel which has hitherto prevailed; the two next, the gradual progress of Christianity in the world, and in the heart of individual believers; and the drag-net, the nature of the Christian Church, which includes unworthy as well as worthy professors of religion.

The sower is represented as sowing the same seed throughout a field, with different success, according to the nature of the soil. A fourth portion only fell into good ground, and this varied much in goodness; for while one seed yielded thirty times as much as had been sown, a second multiplied itself sixty fold, another even a hundred. A gradation is also marked in the three that fail; the seed sown on the hard and beaten pathway comes not up at all; the seed sown on the rocky soil comes up, but increaseth not, though it looks for a while flourishing; the seed sown among the thorns even puts forth the ear, but it does not come to perfection. We know from the divine Author of the parable, that it designates four kinds of hearers of his religion, and probably we shall not press it too much in supposing that there are but four. As all the seed will fail sooner or later that is not sown in good ground, so it is only in the honest and good heart that the word of God will endure, and yield a return; and the preparation of the heart is from the Lord. The rest it doth not profit, not being mixed with faith in them. The first are the careless inattentive hearers, on whom it makes no impression, and who, though they may conform to Christianity, cannot be called with propriety believers. The second understand the doctrines, and appropriate to themselves the privileges, of religion, but they receive not the truth in the love of it, and having no root, though they seemed to flourish more than the genuine believer, in the hour of trial they even renounce their profession. In our time, where there is no actual persecution, this class is not so numerous as the third, who retain profession to the end, but being distracted by worldly cares, or drawn aside by the deceitfulness of riches, are Christians only in profession.

In this parable of the seed, the truth is snatched out of the heart, or lost through the wickedness or weakness of man. In that of the tares we have the effect of false doctrine designedly introduced. The produce of the seed sown by Satan, transformed into an angel of light, is only gradually detected. Gross transgressions, either in doctrine or practice, may be

known at once, and therefore this parable does not forbid the excommunication of such. The persons here represented as tares, are too plausible to be surely ascertained by human judgment; and as the governors of the Church might confound with them some real yet defective children of the kingdom, their exclusion must be left for the unerring decision of the owner of the field. A knowledge of the plant seems necessary to the understanding the parable. It clearly could not be the vetch, now called tares, which, like wheat, is deserving of cultivation, but some pernicious plant, not easily distinguished from it; and I think there can be no doubt that St. Jerome, who lived much in that very land, was right in thinking that it is the loliune, to which Virgil (*Georg.* i. 154.) has attached the epithet of infelix, and which in England, where it is indigenous, is called darnel. It grows up with wheat, and in an early stage of its growth can hardly be distinguished from it. If the seeds of it should happen to be mixed in any considerable quantity with the corn, the bread will occasion giddiness, and hence it has received the specific name *temulentum*, or intoxicating^f.

The parable of the slow growth of a plant shows, that the change wrought in the believer is gradual, imperceptible to others, and often to himself. That of the mustard seed denotes the progress of Christianity over the world. The description of it as the greatest not only of herbs but of trees, strikes an European reader as an exaggeration; yet Scott observes, that even in Lincolnshire he has seen it larger than most shrubs; and, in a warmer country, a Rabbi, quoted by Whitby, talks of climbing into one as into a fig-tree. It has however been suggested by Mr. Frost, that our Lord meant a species of *phytolacca*, which is of the same natural order, and has the same properties. This is common in Palestine, and having the minutest seed of any tree there, and attaining as great a height, the proportion between the two would equally recommend it for a comparison. The man who accidentally

^f English Botany, 1824.

discovers a buried treasure in a field, and the merchant who diligently seeking goodly pearls finds one of great price, and who both alike willingly give in exchange all that they possess, strongly mark the preeminent value of Christianity, with this difference, that they represent two kinds of converts, the first of whom is sought, as it were, by religion, and the second seeks it. The drag-net, under a figure familiar to all who live on the banks of a lake, represents, like the field of corn intermixed with useless and even injurious grasses to the husbandman, the character of the Christian Church, which will include unworthy as well as worthy members till the scrutiny of the judgment day.

Our Lord having finished these parables, and ascertained that they were understood by the Apostles, concluded with another relating to the ministerial office, showing, that as the householder bringeth out of his store both old and new provisions, as the occasions of his family require, so they and their successors should feed the souls of his people with the knowledge they acquired, both from the ancient dispensation and from his.

No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. This was probably a proverb, and applies to the subjects as well as the ministers of the Gospel, but more especially to the latter, and warns them not to undertake the office without due deliberation; but having undertaken it, not to be diverted from the work by casting a lingering longing look behind on the pleasures and gains which they have resigned to promote his cause[§].

§ The ancient plough was little more than a crooked piece of wood; so that, besides the usual attention to the business, unless the ploughman leant upon it, and, as it were, loaded it with his own weight, [arator nisi incurvus prevaricatur, Pliny xviii. 19.] the share would glide over the surface without making any furrows. The language of Hesiod illustrates that of our Saviour, "Ὅς κ' ἔργῳ μελετῶν ἰθείαν ἀύλαχ' ἰλαύνο, Μηδέτι παπταίνων μεθ' ὀμηλίκας ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἔργῳ θυμὸν ἔχων, Works 440. He recommends, that the man who follows the plough should be forty, that attentive to his work he may make straight furrows, and not look off to his associates.

50. *Jesus stills a tempest on the lake. Matt. viii. Mark iv. Luke viii.*

JESUS now put again to sea, as he was, probably, to seek the necessary repose which he could not command on shore, and, on his way to reembark, detects the insincerity of three persons, who professed, and might really think, that they were willing to become his disciples. The first made the proposal, the others were invited, but all were found wanting. The first was deterred by a statement of the privations that must be endured, the others pleaded family duties, the one the settling of his affairs, the other the funeral of a father. Both are apparently reasonable excuses; but Jesus probably knew that they were no more than excuses, and replies in words that show, that neither then, nor now, any personal or relative concern may justifiably interfere with the primary obedience due to him. The three speeches mark the difference of their characters; the first is too forward, the second too backward, the third undecided ^h.

He now embarked, and, while they were crossing the lake, from fatigue fell asleep. A violent tempest arising, his disciples are alarmed, awake him, and address him, it appears, with some degree of reproof; "Teacher, carest thou not that we are perishing?" He issued his commands to the wind and to the lake; immediately the wind fell, and there was a great calm. Considering the evidence they had had repeatedly of his power, their distrust was blameable; he therefore mildly censures them. They were amazed that even the elements were obedient to him, and said to one another, Who then can this be? Thus the storm that threatened their destruction, was overruled to their spiritual advantage.

^h Boy's *Tactica Sacra*.

51. *Jesus suffers the demons to enter into the herd of swine.*
Matt. viii. Mark v. Luke viii.

UPON landing on the opposite shore of Gadara, he was met by two demoniacs, who resided in the tombs cut out of the hill, so fierce that no one ventured to approach them, and whom it was found impossible to bind with ropes or chains. Matthew, who was present, mentions as well as Luke two, but Mark only one, perhaps because one only was properly affected by his recovery, and obeyed his benefactor. Jesus commanded the demons to quit their prey, and they being questioned, called themselves, on account of their number, Legion, the Roman name of a regiment, which consisted of 6000 men. This conveys a tremendous notion of demoniacal possession. They solicited and obtained leave to enter into a large herd of swine, which they immediately drove down a precipice into a lake, where they perished.

The swine-herds, affrighted, fled and told the miracle in the city, and the inhabitants came out to Jesus, not to implore his protection, but to intreat him to depart, viewing him with alarm as a person possessed of supernatural power, but not as disposed to use it for their benefit. One of the dispossessed demoniacs, who used to be naked, they found in proper clothing, (provided we may suppose by the charity of the Apostles out of their own,) composed and rational, and listening to the instructions of his Deliverer. He was desirous of becoming his stated follower, but Jesus orders him to return to his friends, and to tell them "how great things the *Lord* had done for him." So he began to publish in Decapolis what great things *Jesus* had done for him. This is a remarkable expression, since it shows that *Jesus* and *Lord*ⁱ, here standing (not, as in some instances, as a term of respect, but) for *Jehovah*, may be used indifferently of the same person with propriety, and manifests, if not this man's persuasion, at

ⁱ Luke uses *Θεός* instead of *Κύριος*.

least that of the Evangelist, who would not have employed the term, if he had thought there could be any danger in honouring his Master in the highest degree. Thus the demoniac was not only restored to himself, but became a preacher of Christ, an undeniable evidence to his power and mercy in that remote corner, and was probably the means of procuring to his benefactor on his next visit to that country a more favourable reception. Mark vii. 31—37. We have here two requests, which ought to be considered in connection with each other; the prayer of the believer is denied in wisdom, while that of the ungodly is granted in judgment.

52. Levi's entertainment; the cure of the woman of an issue of blood; and the restoration to life of the daughter of Jairus. Matt. ix. Mark v. Luke viii.

LEVI'S entertainment is placed by most harmonists after their return from Gadara; and though in his own Gospel it immediately follows his call, his reason for introducing it there might be, that he wished to dismiss at once the mention of himself. Many of his former associates of his own profession were invited, probably in the hope that they might derive benefit from the conversation of Jesus; this scandalized the Pharisees; but Jesus vindicated himself by replying, that it was the diseased that needed a physician, and that therefore he sought out sinners that he might reform them.

The disciples of the Baptist then came to express their surprise that he and his followers did not fast, like themselves and the Pharisees. He, adopting the image by which their master had described him, replied, that it would be unseasonable for the friends of a bridegroom to fast during the days allotted for the nuptials, which were always given to festivity; but if any calamity tore him from them, their joy would be turned into mourning, and then they would fast. Thus he indirectly taught, that it would be unbecoming in his disciples to fast while they were blessed with his presence; but that when he should be taken away from them, they would

meet with hardships and trials that would render fasting seasonable. He further illustrated the subject by remarking, that no one would piece an old woollen garment with new cloth, which had never been fullered or properly dressed, (*ἀργυραφός*, Mark,) because its rough and unpliant texture, instead of suiting the worn cloth, would rend it more; and in like manner, that it was not usual to put new wine into old (leathern) bottles, going to decay, as the fermenting of the liquor would burst them. Thus in these occasional duties, which are not so much religion itself as means of promoting it, discretion should be used, and a due proportion observed between a believer's knowledge and stability of character, and the self-denial required from him; otherwise hopeful persons might be disheartened by premature demands, or led to rest in them as meritorious; so that great caution and tenderness is necessary in recommending such practices to young converts, as, though useful, are not indispensable, and which should be inculcated gradually as they are able to bear them.

As to fasting, it is a matter of notoriety, that by many Roman Catholics it is little better than nominally observed, the abstinence generally practised by members of that Church respecting only the nature of the food taken; and among Protestants, at least among the English, although recognised as a duty by the national Church, it is almost exploded. Its abuse by the Church from which we separated, has reduced it in our estimation; and it may be conceded, that as the edification of the individual is the object in view, seasons for this duty should be chosen by himself, with a reference to his constitution and circumstances, instead of being imposed at stated periods by authority, except in such cases as call for national and public humiliation. Still it is spoken of by our Lord in a manner perhaps more imperative than a positive command; for he assumes it as a fact that they would fast, and intimates the manner in which it should be done: "When ye fast, be not of a sad countenance," &c. And its utility for disciplining the body, and bringing it into subjection to the

nobler part of our nature, is generally allowed by moralists, and is expressly declared by St. Paul.

Our Lord's discourse was interrupted by Jairus, a ruler of a synagogue, who fell at his feet, intreating him to come and heal his daughter, a girl of twelve years old, who was dying. Jesus complied with his request; but his faith was tried by delay, (during which his daughter died,) occasioned by a woman with an issue of blood, who, pressing through the crowd, touched the tassel of our Saviour's mantle, and was cured. Her disease being one that was reckoned unclean, she was ashamed of naming it before the crowd; yet having formed a high, and seemingly a superstitious, conception of his dignity, she attempted to obtain from him a cure even without his knowledge, and would not pollute him by touching his person. No miraculous virtue could have gone forth from him without his consent, but he spoke to produce a public confession, which would at once make known his power and her faith. Her feelings convinced her that she was cured *ἔγνω τῷ σώματι*, (Mark v. 29.) and the instantaneous ceasing of an hæmorrhage, which had lasted twelve years, and baffled medical skill, was evidently miraculous. Eusebius informs us, that she was a person of rank of Paneas, and that he had himself seen the statue which she had erected there to the Saviour. We learn from Sozomen and Philostorgius, that Julian substituted for it his own, and that the Christians then placed it in their Church. Jesus had comforted the ruler with the assurance that his petition should be granted, when his family would have had him retire in despair. He sought, however, no unnecessary display, and therefore took with him only Peter and the sons of Zebedee, and the family, excluding the hired mourners. She was restored not only to life but to health, for she was able immediately to walk and to eat. There are only three instances specified of Christ's raising persons from the dead; this only child of Jairus, the only son of the Nain widow, and his own friend Lazarus, the only brother of two sisters to whom he was attached.

53. *Jesus restores sight to two blind men; 54. and speech to a dumb demoniac. Matt. ix.*

THE displays of the power of Christ were varied in almost every conceivable mode; but all his miracles were works of mercy, in which respect they are opposed to those of Moses, which were judgments upon sinners. The restoration of the blind to sight is a miracle peculiar to him, and is predicted by Isaiah as characteristic of the Messiah. The two blind men who met him coming out of Jairus's house, accosted him as the Son of David, thereby acknowledging him as the promised Saviour; and it is therefore probable, that they grounded their hope of his restoring their sight as much upon prophecy, as upon the report of his miracles. Having already abundantly excited attention, he would not publicly grant their request; but on their following him into the house, (probably Peter's,) he there, apart, drew from them a confession of their belief in his power, and rested their cure upon their faith: "Be it unto you according to your faith." As that was genuine, their eyes were opened.

The cure, immediately after, of a dumb demoniac, shows the wilful blindness and inveterate malice of the Pharisees, who, when the multitude honestly exclaimed, That it had been never so seen in Israel, returned to their charge of a confederacy with the evil spirit.

55. *Jesus is again rejected at Nazareth. Matt. xiii. Mark v.*

JESUS had commenced his ministry in Galilee, at Nazareth, where he had lived till the thirtieth year of his age. After a series of miracles, and after making many disciples, he now grants them another opportunity of acknowledging him. Once more he taught there on the Sabbath; he excited amazement, but no better effect was produced upon their minds than on his former visit; and though they did not now proceed to any act of violence, his low rank in society was a

stumbling block, which neither his wisdom nor the report of his miracles could remove. Such immovable disbelief excited his astonishment, and no doubt his regret, for we are informed, that he was in all circumstances affected, as any man would be who is free from sin. Their unbelief prevented his performing miracles, except a few cures, for it would prevent their bringing the sick to him, and few of the sick themselves would have faith to be healed.

*56, 57. Jesus instructs and sends forth the twelve Apostles.
Matt. ix. x. Mark vi. Luke ix.*

MULTITUDES resorted from distant places to hear him, and their forlorn condition, as stray sheep without a shepherd to guide them, (since the priests deserved not that name,) excited his compassion. He observed, that there was a plentiful harvest growing, which would require many labourers to reap it, and as they were so few, he exhorts them to pray the Lord of the harvest to increase their number. How many countries, some of which were not even known to the Apostles to exist, have, in the eighteen centuries that have since elapsed, embraced the Christian faith! yet many more still remain enveloped in the darkness and profligacy of heathenism; and those where they laboured, and founded so many churches, have been in a great degree usurped by Mahomed. As long, therefore, as the harvest is plentiful, and the labourers comparatively so few, this command continues in force; and when we consider that the harvest is the standing crop which is ready for the sickle, and with due diligence may be gathered in, we perceive that it is not to an hopeless state of things that our Lord's words direct our minds, though it is to a piteous one. Here is a vast and awful multitude of immortal souls in a most perilous state no doubt, but still in a salvable state, supposing the appointed means to be used on their behalf; and, according to our Lord's putting of the case, the difficulty lies, not in the nature of the work to be done, but in the deficiency of labourers. He there-

fore points out our duty, which is, to pray to God to raise up and prosper labourers among the heathen, and to do our best by such means as are in our power to send them forth ourselves, and to support them in their ministrations; for, in all cases, where a man can do any thing himself for the attainment of a holy object, his prayer must be such a faithful one as simply hopes in God for the event, but such an honest one also as pledges himself to all needful personal exertions. Labour without prayer would be infidelity; prayer without labour would be hypocrisy, and a presumptuous appeal to God, instead of a pious waiting upon his providence^k.

^k When we consider the facilities for communicating Christianity, which the press, learning, commerce, and peace, at the present day afford, there appears to be no age since the foundation of the Church to which it is so applicable as our own. The claims of heathen nations upon the charity of believers begin at length to be acknowledged; and the immense colonial empire which it has pleased Divine Providence to bestow upon Britain, making her the sovereign of many more millions of heathen than of Christian subjects, clearly points it out as our imperative duty to take the lead in the glorious office of converting the world. While every denomination of Christians in our country is now earnestly labouring in this work, which is vast enough to engage the attention of all, without their interfering with one another; the Established Church has two Societies pursuing this grand object; that for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts, which has hitherto confined its operations to the British dominions; and the Church Missionary Society, which has no other limits than its opportunities assign it. Both are usefully employed, and highly deserving of support; and the principle of encouraging missions, which, strange as it may seem, has been ridiculed, and even argued against, by persons who would yet be affronted if they were classed with unbelievers, though expressly commanded by the Saviour, has of late years been formally recognised by our Sovereign, who, in his capacity as Head of the Church, has twice in our own days issued a Royal Letter recommending the cause to every parish in England.

Some scruple to contribute to the Church Missionary Society, because they think that it interferes with the more ancient one, and is principally supported by what is called the Evangelical Clergy. Still this enjoys, though certainly not so largely, the patronage of our Bishops, and refrains from employing any clerical agents that have not received episcopal ordination. Others think, that there are advantages arising from having more than one set both of agents and of patrons, and that it would not be desirable that the two Societies, if disposed, should coalesce into one. There is at least one obvious advantage, that if we disapprove of the management of one, we have still the power of aiding the salvation of the heathen through the other. Let every one be free to choose his own methods of doing good, but let no one decline all. "Some good persons," says Bishop Benson, "hinder themselves from doing much good in the world, because

Our Lord followed up his remark, by sending out the Apostles over the Holy Land to proclaim his approaching reign; but on this occasion he strictly limited their mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, forbidding them to visit Samaritan, as well as Gentile, cities. His authorizing them to work miracles, is justly brought forward as evidence of his divinity. God put his Spirit upon those Moses appointed, but Moses conferred not that Spirit; the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha, in answer to the former's prayers, but he did not *give* him power. It is Christ alone that both works miracles at will, and authorizes others to perform them. The Apostles were sent out two and two; and it has been suggested, that much advantage might be obtained by a recurrence to this practice in the case of modern missionaries, as the presence of a pious and wise companion would cheer a Christian among aliens and enemies, and in difficult cases might be of the greatest use, by advice, example, and encouragement. Some of the instructions given were of a temporary nature, only suited to the present journey, and were subsequently revoked. Thus he tells them that they had been sent without provision for their journey, but hereafter they must take with them what property they had; now their mission was limited to the house of Israel, hereafter the Gospel was to be preached to every creature. The warning, that, notwithstanding the power with which

all that they do must be done in their own way; and many bad persons, whatever way any thing is done in, take care to find fault with that particular method, in order to frame an excuse, when indeed they are against every method. The only way then to do any good at all, is to be always ready to assist in doing the most which can be compassed in the present circumstances of things. But if objections be taken, not to particular Societies but to their object, a special refutation of them, whatever they be, is superfluous to those who recollect, that He, who is the sole Judge in the case, has in two sentences overruled them all. So long as "Teach all nations" shall stand in holy Scripture as a commandment, it will be our duty to endeavour to fulfil it, let what will be urged against it; and so long as "Lo! I am with you alway," shall stand there as a promise, nothing but infidelity can make us think at any time that our labour in such undertaking can be in vain in the Lord.

Archdeacon Bather's Sermon before the Church Missionary Society, 1833.

they were endued, and the joyful nature of the intelligence which they had to convey, they would be hated by all that were not prevailed upon to receive their message, and would be exposed to such sufferings and persecutions as would tempt them to apostatize, has been found applicable in every age. He charged them therefore to beware of men, and to combine *prudence* with *innocence*. Still, after every justifiable precaution, they must expect no better treatment than he would himself experience ; but though they were condemned to death, they must not fear those who at the worst could but shorten life, but him whose power extendeth over eternity. Him therefore they must confess before men, whatever it might cost, if they would have him to acknowledge them, and to reward them in heaven. Nor would his enemies only endeavour to frighten them from their duty ; there would be the well-meant opposition and the entreaty of friends to try them ; but no relative or personal regards must be suffered to interfere with love to himself. It is manifest that here, and in other places, our Lord demands that supreme love with which the law requires us to love God ; and this claim is to a thinking person, who can draw conclusions, and weigh consequences, as strong evidence of his divinity as a direct affirmation of it. No mere man can make such a demand without becoming the rival of his Creator, who is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another ; nor would such, if in his right mind, think of advancing it. We should find it impossible to bring ourselves to feel the right of any human teacher, even though he sacrificed his life for us, to claim this supreme affection ; and we must qualify and dilute his expressions, before we can bring them within the bounds of propriety, and free them from the charge of unexampled presumption. Yet the Apostles and primitive Christians felt the claim of Jesus to be just, and love to him, which is the preeminent and distinguishing feature of Christianity, becomes, upon the orthodox scheme of his divinity, both natural and reasonable. “ View Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us, the atoning Redeemer of a lost world, and all

is as it ought to be. The contemplation of what he is, and of what he hath done, will dispose us, with all the ardour of a grateful heart, to join in the song of heaven : “ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever^m.”

He concludes his address with the encouraging assurance, that persons who entertained them would be recompensed in the same manner as if they had welcomed himself in person ; and that at any time, whoever should receive a prophet, that is, a teacher of religion, for the sake of his office, would receive the same reward as if he were a teacher himself ; and that even the most inconsiderable service rendered to a private Christian, *because* he is a Christian, would not fail of a proportionable recompence.

60—62. *Herod, who had beheaded John the Baptist, is desirous of seeing Jesus. Matt. xiv. Luke ix.*

THE fame of Jesus about this time reached Herod, (in whose dominions he chiefly resided,) and his guilty conscience suggested that he must be the Baptist risen from the grave, with the power of working miracles. He expressed a desire to see him, perhaps that he might imprison him ; but John’s disciples, having buried their master, apprised Jesus of his death ; who withdrew (together with his Apostles, who had returned from their journey) beyond the lake, to a desert near Bethsaida, within the tetrarchy of Philip. Herod had honoured the Baptist, he had listened with apparent satisfaction to his discourses, and done many things that he recommended ; but when he remonstrated with him about his adulterous marriage with his niece and sister-in-law, he cast him into prison at her suggestion, and was only restrained from putting him to death, by the fear of a popular commotion. His birth-day, which he kept with great pomp, gave Herodias an opportunity

^m Wardlaw, Discourses on the Socinian Controversy, p. 52—54.

of fully gratifying her hatred ; and her plan seems to have been previously concerted with her daughter Salome, who must have been at that time very young. Herod's regret at having made so rash a vow, arose less, it should seem, from any wish to save John's life, than from the checks of conscience, or the fear of consequences. He was soon after engaged in war with his father-in-law, who resented his conduct to his former wife, in which his whole army perished by treachery, and the loss was by the Jews considered as a divine judgment on him for his putting the Baptist to deathⁿ.

63. *Five thousand are fed miraculously in the desert.*

Matt. xiv. Mark vi. Luke ix. John vi.

IN the desert crowds flocked to hear Jesus, probably in greater numbers because the passover was near, and they might intend to accompany him to Jerusalem. Compassion induced Jesus to feed them all, consisting of 5000, without including women and children ; and this he did by multiplying five loaves and two small fishes so greatly, that, after satisfying these persons, who were almost starving from long abstinence, the fragments so much exceeded the original quantity, as to fill twelve baskets. In the result was fulfilled that declaration of Scripture, "He that watereth shall be watered himself." The disciples found that they were no losers by parting with their loaves and fishes ; they had when they began but one loaf for each thousand men, yet after all were fed, the twelve had a basket apiece. This, being one of the most astonishing and most extensively convincing of Christ's miracles, is recorded by all the Evangelists. In computing the number fed, they do not speak by guess, for the disposition of the people in squares of a determinate length, enabled them to calculate with certainty. Jesus did not think it beneath him to order his disciples to gather up the frag-

ⁿ Joseph. Ant. xviii.

ments. This was a convincing proof that there could have been no magical deception; but the reason he assigns that nothing may be lost, is eminently deserving of our attention; for it shows, that he, to whom "the earth and the fulness thereof belongs," is no friend to a lavish waste of his gifts; and as by feeding these thousands he sets us an example of liberality, so by taking care of the fragments he teaches us, that frugality and charity should be united, and that there is an important difference between wastefulness and beneficence. The effect of this miracle was peculiar; it was the only one that provoked from any considerable assembly of the Jewish people an acknowledgment of him as the Messiah. Its similarity to the feeding of their fathers in the wilderness, seems to have been the circumstance that led them to the conclusion, that He was the prophet like unto himself, whom Moses had taught them to expect; they wished therefore to force him to declare himself, perceiving that it was in his power to feed an army in a desert, and being convinced that every obstacle must give way before him; and conceiving too that he would not be unwilling to be constrained to assume his sovereignty.

64. *Jesus walks on the sea. Matt. xiv. John vi.*

As the Apostles might be disposed to concur in the design, Jesus constrained them to put to sea without him; and then dismissing the crowd, instead of resting after his fatigue, withdrew to a mountain to pray. He had no sins that needed pardon, but he had temptations and services before his view, and he had the cause of his disciples and his Church to plead, and no doubt he delighted in communion with his heavenly Father.

Meantime the Apostles encountered a violent contrary wind; and three hours before sunrise, about the dawn, when they had made not above three miles, Jesus walked upon the lake to overtake them. At first they cried out from fear, supposing it to be an apparition, but as soon as he addressed

them they took courage ; and Peter, raised to a high degree of confidence by this second miracle, sought permission to come to him. His Master suffered him, and as long as his faith was fixed upon his power, he was enabled to walk upon the waves ; but the boisterous element soon drew off his attention, his faith staggered, and he began to sink. Yet in his extremity he still relied upon Jesus, who stretched forth his hand in answer to his cry, and kept him up, rebuking him at the same time for his distrust. They embarked, and the ship instantaneously, and therefore miraculously, “ self-moving, without winds, without oars,” reached the coast, not as was intended at Bethsaida, but at Capernaum°. The Apostles seem to have been more impressed by this than by any preceding miracle, for they worshipped him in consequence, not merely as a superior, but as the Son of God ; nor did he decline the homage.

65. *The discourse of Jesus, concerning eating his flesh and drinking his blood, which causes many of his disciples to leave him, but elicits a confession of adherence to him from Peter. John vi.*

THE next morning, the multitude, disappointed in his not returning to them from the mountain, took shipping, and came after him to Capernaum, where they expressed their surprise, probably because the wind was contrary, inquiring by what means he had arrived. Instead, however, of satisfying their curiosity, he blamed them for their motive in seeking him ; which they did, not because his miracles had convinced them that he was a teacher of righteousness, but that they might make him a king, in order to enjoy secular advantages. He exhorts them, instead of labouring for the perishable food of the body, to labour for that food of the soul, which lasteth for ever. Finding that faith in him was the work that he required, and seeing that such doctrine had nothing

° Nonnus's Greek Paraphrase.

congenial with their carnal expectations, their admiration began to die away, and suspicions to arise; and they asked what miracle he would work, that should induce them to believe in him; what evidence he could show to convince them that he could bestow upon them eternal life. He had *once* fed, they allowed, some thousands in a desert with ordinary food, but what was he in comparison with their lawgiver, who had fed in a miraculous manner the whole nation of their ancestors for *forty years* with bread from heaven. In reply, he takes up their language, and contrasts the manna of which they spoke with the true bread from heaven, which giveth life to the world. "Lord," they exclaim, not conceiving his meaning, which was to draw them off from literal to spiritual feeding, from the food of the body to that of the soul, "evermore give us this bread." He then plainly declares that he is speaking of himself, and that though they deserted him, he should not be left without disciples, for all whom his Father had given to him would come unto him, and he would reject none who came. None that seek salvation from him need ever fear to be cast out; for it is his Father's will, that will to accomplish which he came down from heaven, that whoever [*θεωρεῖν*] contemplateth the Son, and believeth in him, shall have everlasting life; and none can come unto him unless the Father draw him. He then shows the inferiority of the manna to the genuine living bread, which is of such a nature, that he that feedeth upon it shall live for ever; and adds, that this bread is his flesh, which he will give for the life of the world. At this statement they strove among themselves, saying, How shall this man give us his flesh to eat? Now it is remarkable, that upon this expression of their amazement, our Lord, instead of softening down his previous declaration, aggravates the difficulty which embarrassed them, by affirming in the most solemn manner, that except they eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, they have no life in them. The discourse will satisfy the candid enquirer, that more is meant by this figurative language than the reception of doctrine; feeding upon Christ must mean partak-

ing of the benefits of his passion, that is to say, of the pardon of sin, and the grace of the holy Spirit ; but whether this spiritual feeding is also sacramental, is disputed. Though the commemoration of his death was not yet instituted, and consequently an allusion to it at the time unintelligible, it seems natural to suppose, that there is a reference to it intended, though from the positive declaration of the necessity of this feeding, we must not exclusively thus limit it. As Waterland observes, the universality of the language prevents our interpreting it of sacramental feeding ; for it is not true, that all who receive the communion have life, or all who never have, and never shall receive it, have not life. But, he continues, there is one construction that will completely answer in point of universality, and it is this ; all that shall finally share in the atonement of Christ are safe ; those that are blessed with capacity and opportunities must have faith, must have sacraments, must be in covenant, must receive and obey the Gospel, in order to have the atonement applied to them ; but our Lord's doctrine here seems to abstract from all particularities, and to resolve into this, that, whether in the sacraments or out of the sacraments, whether before Christ or since, whether in covenant or out of covenant, no man ever was or will be accepted, but in and through the great propitiation made by the blood of Christ. His passion is our redemption, and by his death we live. According to Waterland, for the first four centuries, both in the Greek and Latin Church, this chapter was not *interpreted* of the Eucharist, but as the Eucharist was one way of participating of the passion, it was sometimes applied, as it is by our Church, for explaining its nature, and exciting to a reception of it. But this frequent applying of it came at length to make many interpret it directly so ; and hence the common practice of giving the elements to infants, which arose in the beginning of the fifth century. Though the Romanists in general contend for the sacramental construction, others prefer the spiritual, influenced it may be both by the disuse of infant communion, and the denial of the cup to the laity,

which can hardly be vindicated upon the former view of it. The Reformers in general, both our own and foreigners, reject this application. Our Lord may be supposed to allude in this discourse to the future commemoration of his death, but to suppose that he will really give us his flesh to eat, and to substitute for a spiritual union with him, the mere act of partaking of a supper is to pervert the Gospel, for being an act only, it can, whether it be bread or flesh, only feed the body. Such is the error of the Roman Catholic, many of whom deduce from this discourse the dogma of the real corporal presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but he cautions us against this interpretation, by giving us his own, "the *words* that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," thereby declaring his speech to be metaphorical; and they likewise overturn every exposition that would inseparably connect the spiritual grace with the outward visible act, independent of the disposition and qualifications of the communicant. Others, again, who speak exclusively of feeding upon his words, that is, his doctrines, without any reference to faith in his atoning sacrifice of himself, only lead men by an opposite road from the fundamental truths of religion. That his declaration should appear hard and incredible is not astonishing, for though instruction had been spoken of as the food of the soul, no teacher had yet called *himself* the bread of life, and this notion of feeding upon him must have been repulsive to their feelings. It was however less harsh in the language he spake, in which *laham*, like the English *meat*, is used both for bread and flesh.

Many of his disciples forsook him in consequence of this discourse, and he seems to have been left alone with the twelve. He asked if they also would depart, intimating that he wished for no reluctant followers: Peter, from the warmth of his disposition and his attachment, in the name of all, declared his full persuasion that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he had the words of eternal life; and when we consider that they were as yet ignorant of the fundamental fact upon which the propriety of our Lord's language rests, the fact that

he was to be the sacrifice of the atonement, and of the nature of the feast by a participation in which the benefits of that sacrifice were to be communicated to the faithful ; it appears that nothing but faith in him, the gift of his Father, could have sustained them in their adherence to him. To this confession he only thought fit to reply that one of them was a devil, thus checking presumptuous self-confidence, and hinting to them that they might fall.



PART V.

66. *Jesus gives offence to the Pharisees by condemning their neglect of the law of God, in order to keep their own traditions. Matt. xv. Mark vii.*

OUR Lord appears, from prudential motives, not to have attended the passover of this year ; but the report of his miracles gave such uneasiness to the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, that some of them came down to Galilee to watch his conduct, and discover, if possible, matter of accusation against him. Not finding that he and his disciples broke the law, they objected to them their disregard of the traditions. The Pharisees maintained that these precepts had been handed down through successive generations from Moses, to whom they had been *orally* communicated in the mount by God himself, when he delivered the *written* law ; and neither they nor modern rabbis have scrupled to prefer them to the former^a. Jesus being asked why his disciples did not, according to one of these traditions, wash their hands before meals, he, without answering their question, accused them of hypocrisy, applying to them the words of Isaiah, “ This nation honoureth me with their lips,

^a “ The words of the Scribes are lovely above the words of the law,” is the saying of a Jewish rabbi, in Whitby, who has several similar citations.

but their heart is far from me." He continued, that their enforcing human ordinances rendered their very worship vain and unprofitable; for they not only did not themselves keep, but had explained away, the positive commands of God, that they might observe their traditions. As an instance of this he cites the fifth Commandment, but only as an instance, for he adds, "and *many* like things you do." This Commandment orders children to maintain (τίμω) their parents, if they need it, as well as to honour them. But according to those casuists, if a child should say to father or mother, Whatever I have that would support you has been consecrated by me to holy uses, he not only was free from any obligation, but might not hereafter, if he repented of his unnatural conduct, assist them, his property being henceforth *corban*, or a gift to the temple; and yet it appears that he was not really bound (as would be the rational conclusion) to give to God what he might have bestowed upon them, but might spend it in any other way; and thus, says Chrysostom, was a double evil committed, for they did not bring it to God, and yet, as if that had been their intention, they deprived their parents of it, and obtained credit for piety. The extant writings^b of Jews prove that the same unhappy perversion of morality has survived their polity; and, incredible as it may seem, it would be too easy to find in the works of Christian divines, a no less decisive, though perhaps a less avowed, preference of human traditions to the word of God. This tendency of tradition to make the law of God of none effect, which the Roman Church unhappily so abundantly exemplifies, explains our Lord's strong protest against it.

He then called the people to him, and said, Attend ye all to me, and understand; and told them in plain terms, that it was not what entered into the mouth, but what came out of it, not any sort of food, but bad words which betray the thoughts and desires, that defile a man. Peter afterwards, in

^b "A man may be so bound by vows, that he cannot without great sin do what God hath in his law required to be done, so that in such cases the vow must stand, and the law be abrogated." *Pococke, Miscell.* p. 415.

private, asked him the meaning of this saying; we are surprised at his dulness, but we forget, that the explanation, which has been familiar to us from childhood, was then new, and that the Jews, who rested satisfied in the performance of outward ablutions, had lost sight of the purity of heart which they denoted.

67. *Jesus retires to the extremity of the Holy Land, where he rewards the faith of a woman of Canaan, who would take no denial, by curing her daughter. Matt. xv. Mark vii.*

AFTER this offence publicly given to the Pharisees, Jesus retired to the most remote northern extremity of the land, on the confines of Tyre and Sidon, where the population was chiefly Gentile, and if his enemies were disposed to follow him, he might place himself under Philip's protection. Here a woman, descended from the ancient Canaanites, besought him to deliver her daughter from demoniacal possession. She is also called a Greek, that is, an idolater, which, by owning herself to be justly treated as a dog, she appears to have still been, although she addressed him as the Son of David. That title she might have used without an adequate conception of its meaning; she might have had some vague notions of the true religion, and the miracle would confirm her belief in it. He heard her in silence, and with apparent indifference, intending thereby to prove and manifest the strength of her faith. The Apostles, pitying her distress, or rather wearied with her importunity, requested him to grant her petition; but he replied, in her hearing, that he was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that it was not fit to bestow upon the heathen, miracles designed for their benefit. This speech was so far from offending or discouraging her, that she pleaded the more earnestly; and instead of disdain, the comparison to a dog, and leaving him in indignation, meekly submitted to the mortifying distinction, which by a happy ingenuity she even turned into an argument for his

granting her petition. She said in effect, We heathen are no better than dogs in comparison of thy children the Jews, still as such we are an inferior part of thy household ; and as the dogs eat of the fragments of a plentiful table, without any detriment to the children, so thy power and mercy are so great, that thou canst heal my daughter without any diminution of the blessings reserved for Israel. Our Lord's purpose being now answered, he granted her request, in language which, while it commanded and encouraged perseverance, conveyed reproof to many Israelites. "Great is thy faith, be it unto thee as thou wishest."

68. *He returns through Decapolis, and cures a deaf man, who had also an impediment in his speech. Mark vii.*

THE notoriety of this miracle, which had been conceded to the importunity of maternal affection, interfered with his desire of privacy, and seems to have been the cause of his returning immediately homeward through Decapolis, the district in which the dispossessed demoniac of the tombs had declared by his orders the great things that he had done for him ; and it is probable that the different reception which he now met with was owing to his report. For they brought to him to be cured a deaf man with an impediment in his speech, *μογιλάλον*. Taking him aside out of the crowd, he cured him, but not, as in other instances, signifying his intentions by words, which the man would not have understood, but by touching the defective organs, and at the same time looking up to heaven, to direct him to the Giver of speech and hearing.

69. *He feeds 4000 men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fishes. Matt. xv. Mark viii.*

IN this retired neighbourhood the multitude flocked to him, and stayed till the third day, so that they must have lodged two nights in the open air, such was their earnestness

to hear him. The necessity of supplying them with food, lest they should faint on their return, occasioned his performing in their favour a miracle similar to one already performed on or near the same spot. The persons, however, were not the same, and seem to have been chiefly heathen, who had followed him from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, because it is said that they glorified the God of Israel. In the former instance the men fed, exclusive of women and children, were 5000, and the baskets filled with fragments, twelve; in the present, the men were 4000, and the baskets seven. Our translators have used *basket* in both places, but the original has two different words, *κόφινος* and *σπυρίς*, rendered in the Vulgate by *cophinus* and *sporta*; the latter, which occurs here, must be the largest, for it is big enough to contain a man, Acts ix. 33; and it appears from Juvenal, (iii. 14.) that it was the practice of the Jews to carry about with them the latter.

70. *The Pharisees and Sadducees again seek a sign from heaven. Matt. xvi.*

No two descriptions of bad men could be more opposite to each other, in principle and conduct, than the Pharisees and Sadducees; yet enmity to holiness, common to both, united them to tempt Christ. They again desire him to show them a sign from heaven; and he again replied, that they could conjecture, from their observations upon the sky, the changes in the weather, and might, if they would, have discerned as readily the signs of the times. The sceptre was departing from Judah, for a part of the country was already a Roman province, the rest but nominally independent: Daniel's seventy weeks drew towards a close; the Baptist had appeared as the predicted herald of the Messiah; and the prophecies were fulfilling in the character and miracles of Jesus: so that it needed little sagacity to foresee that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

71. *The disciples are warned against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matt. xvii.*

THE disciples on their embarking had forgotten to supply themselves with bread, and the fragments of their late miraculous meal being exhausted, they had but a loaf remaining. While uneasy on this account, Jesus, with a reference to what had just occurred, warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which soured and corrupted all that they did. They took his warning literally, which led him to reprove them for distrust, as if he could not as easily supply them with necessary provisions, as the thousands whom he had twice fed miraculously; and for their dulness in not comprehending that he referred to matters of higher moment than the leaven of bread, which, as he had already taught, was not one of those articles that could defile.

72. *Jesus restores the sight of a blind man by degrees. Mark viii.*

HE then came to Bethsaida, where at the request of his friends he restored a blind man to sight. In this miracle, as in that of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech, he made use of a symbolical action. To us it seems an extraordinary one, but the Jews believed that fasting spittle had a medicinal effect on diseased eyes, and it was employed by them with an invocation of God. The same notion prevailed among the heathen, and the blind man, who applied to the emperor Vespasian^c, declared his persuasion that he would restore his sight by spitting into his eyes. This miracle differs from the rest recorded, in its being not an instantaneous act; at first the man saw objects indistinctly—men as trees walking; but Jesus touched his eyes once more, and he saw them as they were. It has been observed, that this progressive cure affords a decisive proof of the divine power and knowledge of Christ, for it shows that he knew, almost

^c Tacitus, Hist. iv.

seventeen centuries before it was suspected by the most sagacious and inquisitive philosopher, that the mere perfection of the organs of sight is not sufficient to render vision perfect ; and thus we see an instance in the Bible, in which a fact unintelligible at the time, lies useless, as it were, till a scientific age supplies the key to open this hidden treasure.

It was universally believed, till the time of Locke, that a man born blind would immediately see as well as other men, if the organs of vision were suddenly rendered perfect : but the contrary conclusion to which he was led by theory, was established when Cheselden removed a cataract from the eyes of a young man who was born blind. It appears that though he obtained sight, he could not discriminate objects by their figure or magnitude, that they all looked extremely large, and that he imagined that they touched his eyes ; and he was obliged to spend a year in learning to see like other men, or in acquiring experience of the alterations made in the ideas of sight by judgment. The identity of imperfection observable in the vision of this young man, and of the person cured by our Lord, must convince us, that effects so similar must have been produced by the same cause ; and that therefore the subject of the miracle was blind from his birth. Jesus by the first application of his hands effected as much as the removal of the cataract, and he gave the man an opportunity to describe the imperfection of his sight, in a manner sufficiently clear to prove, (not to his contemporaries, but to a more scientific age,) that the first application rendered the organs perfect, and the second conferred the advantages of experience. As none but one who had been born blind could have made the remark recorded by Mark, we have incontrovertible evidence of the reality of the miracle. Jesus led the man out of the town before he cured him, and when his blindness was entirely removed, directed him not to return, nor relate the case, leaving the inhabitants to their awful state of infidelity and impenitence^d.

^d Graves's Essay on the Character of the Apostles.

73. *Peter repeats his confession, that Jesus is the Messiah.*
Matt. xvi. Luke ix.

ON his way to the borders of Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus enquired of his Apostles what notion the people had formed of him, and having been told their several opinions, he enquired as to their own. The Son of Man, the title by which he here and in several other places designates himself, is never given to him by others, and was probably assumed, both as a mark of humility, and as pointing to the nature which he had taken into union with his deity, to enable him by undergoing suffering to atone for the sins of mankind, and to exalt the race to a dignity and happiness superior to that from which the progenitor fell; namely, not merely to original human perfection, but to the partaking of the divine nature; to be the temples of the holy Spirit. Thus, where sin did abound, divine grace not only brought the remedy, but did much more abound. The term occurs in the Old Testament, generally as an oriental idiom for man himself; God is not the son of man that he should repent, Numb. xxiii. 19. and Ezekiel is so addressed by the angel, to mark the difference, it should seem, between their respective natures. But our Lord uses it to show that he is the second Adam, the new covenant head and elder brother of the race, under whom, more completely than his type the original man, God hath placed all things in subjection, and whom he has crowned with honour, by exalting him to the throne of the universe, and requiring not only men but angels to worship him. Under this very title he had been designated by Daniel, “ Behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.” To this passage he himself draws attention, not only in the parable, Matt. xxv. in which he describes himself as coming in his glory to judge the world, but when, upon his trial, he announced his second

advent in glorious majesty. His Apostles, when they speak of his priestly office, emphatically dwell upon his human nature, as, There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. ii. 5. By *man* came death, by *man* came also the resurrection from the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 21. The second *man* is a quickening Spirit, ver. 47. And Anti-Trinitarians, not perceiving the reason of this reference to the nature he assumed, catch at such expressions as evidence of his simple humanity. But they should remark, that the beloved Apostle, Rev. i. 13. gives him this very title, when he describes him as appearing in a glory too intense for mortal senses to contemplate, and while he declares him to be the Almighty, the first and the last; and that he himself employs it, when he drew forth Peter's blessed affirmation of his divinity, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? thereby connecting his two natures; Peter, with his usual promptitude, replied for all, "The Messiah, the Son of the living God." Our Lord pronounced him happy, as this conviction of the truth proceeded not from man's teaching, nor from his own reflection, but had been revealed to him by the Father; and this high commendation proves that it was genuine. It was, however, imperfect, for he knew not as yet that redemption was to be purchased by his Lord's blood, who was to be the Priest as well as the King of his Church. He took occasion from the name, (Πέτρος,) Peter, (*stone*,) which he had given him, to declare, that upon this *rock*, (πέτρα,) that is, upon this confession of his divinity and his office, which includes atonement, and all the essential doctrines dependent on it, he would build his Church, and that the gates of Hades, or the grave, should never prevail against it. The prophecy has been wonderfully accomplished, for neither the power nor policy of men, neither the rage of persecuting emperors, nor the more dangerous craft of Julian, could overpower the Church at a time when no human authority maintained it; and in the dark ages, real Christianity flourished unnoticed in a few obscure Alpine valleys, when the rest of Europe was sunk in the deepest ignorance,

and the Bible was almost unknown. The religion of Mohammed has nearly banished it from the lesser Asia, the field of its earliest triumphs, and even from its native land; and the candlestick of northern Africa, the land of Cyprian, Tertullian, and Augustine, the scene of so many martyrdoms and triumphs of the faith, has been long removed; but the promise is not to any particular community, but to the universal Church, and when the light has been extinguished in one country, it has been kindled in another. Thus, what has been lost in Africa and Asia, has been more than compensated by its progress in the new world, and its recent triumphs in the South Sea.

From this discourse the Roman Catholics deduce their doctrine of the pope's supremacy, as successor to Peter, as the representative of his Master, and governor of his Church: and some Protestant commentators allow that Christ here builds his Church upon the *person* of Peter, understanding, however, no more by this than is conveyed in the following words, "To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" which seems to denote, that he was the individual chosen to open the Church both to Jews and Gentiles, as we know from the book of Acts that he did. The power of binding and loosing, or of commanding and prohibiting what was to be done or omitted in the Church, is afterwards assigned to all, so that the possession of the keys is the only privilege peculiar to Peter. That privilege, it is evident, gave him no higher authority than the other Apostles; for, subsequent to this, we find them disputing who should be the chief: nor did he ever advance any such claim, but in his Epistles simply calls himself an Apostle, and exhorts the elders as being himself an elder, 1 Pet. v. 1. It did not even give him an honorary precedence, for though we find him present at the council of Jerusalem, James presided; and Paul we know on one occasion publicly withstood him, Gal. ii. 11. A power then which he never possessed could not be transmitted; nor can the bishops of Rome even prove that they are his successors. The papist, we see, derives little support

from Scripture, though we should yield to him that the Church was founded upon the *person* of Peter; and still less, if we adopt Chrysostom's interpretation, which builds it upon his *confession*, and which is more according to the analogy of faith; for, properly speaking, it is built upon our blessed Master, as Isaiah (xxviii. 16.) expresses it, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation;" and St. Paul, in his comparison of the Church to a material fabric, seems to mark the equality of its ministers in this respect, "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Ephes. ii. 20.

74. *Jesus plainly foretells his death and resurrection, rebukes Peter, and exhorts them all to self-denial. Matt. xvi. Mark viii. Luke ix.*

HAVING elicited the confession of his being the Messiah, and having confirmed its truth by the authority he in consequence committed to Peter, he proceeded to reveal more explicitly than he had done hitherto the real nature of his reign, and checked their rising hopes of immediate wealth and dignity, by declaring that he must go to Jerusalem, not to assume sovereignty, but to be put to death. This was so contrary to the worldly triumph that they anticipated, that Peter, who had overlooked the predictions of an afflicted and rejected Messiah, and was perhaps elated by the commendation he had just received, took his Master aside, or by the hand, and with a mixture of affection and ignorance expressed his hope that he was mistaken. Jesus rebuked him in the very words that he did the devil, "Get thee behind me, Satan," or *enemy*, adding, "thou art a stumbling-block to me," that is, he tempted him to decline the cross; to give up, on account of the suffering and the shame, the great work which he had come into the world to accomplish, declaring that he did not *relish* (φρονεῖν) the spiritual things of God,

but the things of man, such as ease, honour, and riches. He then called the people to him, as self-denial was equally the duty of all, and said, that whoever was disposed to follow him must deny his natural inclinations, and must be ready, if called upon, even to die in his cause; but that whoever was faithful unto death, would hereafter receive an adequate recompense, as much more valuable than earthly life, as that life is to the enjoyments that accompany it, and which can profit nothing the person that is about to quit it. And to strengthen them to endure the temporary privations to which he called them, he brought before their minds the future judgment, declaring that when he came in glory he would then be ashamed of those who now were ashamed of him. Probably there was some expression of incredulity upon their countenances, as he cautioned them against unbelief, and declared that some who were present should not die till they saw him coming in his kingdom. That generation has long since passed away, and Christ has not yet come in his own glory, and in that of his Father, to reward every man according to his work. Some other mode then, besides the obvious one, must be devised of explaining his meaning; and some interpret it of his exhibiting himself six days after, to his three most confidential Apostles, in that original glory, of which he had divested himself while on earth. This, the opinion of Chrysostom, is ably supported by Bishop Porteus. Others apply it to that period, when our Lord, being perfected by sufferings, divested himself of the form of a servant, and ascended to his Father, when he properly commenced his reign, and came in glory, by sending down on his followers the gift of the Holy Ghost; and not long after came, through the arrangements of his providence, to remove that great obstacle to its progress, the temple of Jerusalem. And as St. John outlived that event, either is equally suitable; the last perhaps most so, as the expression seems to assure a considerable interval of time. The kingdom too had not then properly commenced, and the transfiguration was not so much the commencement as the anticipation of it. His dis-

course had not overcome their prejudices, and therefore he endeavoured to impress the truth upon their minds, as on other occasions, by a significant action. The scene of this change of appearance, or transfiguration, as we translate metamorphosis, was, according to tradition, Mount Tabor, in lower Galilee. Jesus had gone up to pray, and in the act of prayer was transfigured. It was in the night, which explains their having fallen asleep.

75. *The transfiguration. Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix.*

THEY saw their Master daily in the “*form of a servant,*” as the Son of Man, but on this one occasion they were permitted to behold his glory as the only-begotten of the Father, and had such a discovery of him “*in the form of God*” as they were able to bear. This his dazzling appearance, bright as the sun, or as the snow, would give them some faint conception of the glory which he had had with his Father before his incarnation, which was always inherent in him, though he saw good to veil it while on earth, and which he would resume after his ascension; and of the glory which awaited them, when hereafter their bodies should be changed into the resemblance of his glorified one. It would also serve to explain to them the meaning of their late confession, “*Thou art the Son of the living God;*” and to support their faith during his approaching humiliation. Moses and Elijah, the one the giver of the law, the other its great restorer in a period of universal defection, appeared also in glory, and conversed with him on the subject of his death; and this ought to have convinced them that it would be no disgrace, but perfectly consistent with his office of Messiah. Peter, delighted, broke out into an exclamation, that it was good to remain there, and not go down to meet the sufferings, of which he was so reluctant to hear; but in this he knew not what he said: the sacrifice, without which he could not be accepted, must first be offered, and services remained for him and his brethren to perform, which would promote the divine

glory by the extension and edification of the Church long after their own decease. He seems to have considered them of equal dignity and authority, for he adds, let us make three tabernacles. While thus inconsiderately speaking, a bright cloud, like that, we may presume, which hung over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and in the first temple, the symbol of the Divine presence, overshadowed them, and from it a voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" being the same testimony that was borne to him at his baptism; to which was added the command, "Hear ye him," that is, in preference to Moses and the Prophets. They are God's servants, he alone is his Son; they came not to share the glory, but to acknowledge the preeminence of Christ, in whose obedience the morality of the law was magnified, and its ceremonies and types fulfilled; Moses and Elijah disappear, and he henceforth alone remains, the Legislator, the sole and unrivalled object of their reverence. The glory of the vision was more than the faculties of these, who were still in the body, could long endure; awed and overpowered, they lay with their faces on the ground, till Jesus touched them, and encouraged them to rise. On arising, and looking round, they found that the visitants from the world of spirits had departed, and their Master was alone with them, in his usual appearance; except, as is supposed, from the amazement of the multitude on his return, and the respect they paid him, (*ἐξέθαμβήθη*, Mark ix. 15.) that as the face of Moses shone when he brought down the tables of the law from Sinai, so some degree of brightness still remained upon that of the Saviour. On descending, he charged them to mention the vision to none till after his resurrection, not even, it should seem, to the other Apostles. Before that event it would not have obtained credit, and it was designed, at present at least, more for their own support than the conviction of others. The scene, transitory as it was, made such an abiding impression upon Peter, (and we may infer the same of John, i. 14.) that in his second Epistle, written many years after, a little before his death, he argues from it, that he had not followed cunningly devised

fables, that he had neither deceived, nor been himself mistaken, for he had been an eyewitness of the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, which he heard when he was with him in the holy mount, 2 Peter i. 16—19. Yet for the consolation of those who had not been favoured with such a display of his glory, he adds, that the evidence of fulfilled prophecy was more convincing. The law and the prophets were until John, who came to usher in the Christian dispensation. This will assist in explaining the injunction of secrecy, since the abolition of the ceremonial law was one of the truths which the first converts were unable to bear. The mention of the resurrection of the Son of Man perplexed them, as with the rest of their countrymen they believed that the Messiah was to abide for ever; and they could not understand why Elijah had disappeared, for it was the popular notion that he should come to prepare the nation for his advent, as Malachi had foretold. The fact the Messiah allowed, but explained in a manner that showed, that the person designated by that figure was the Baptist; and this figurative interpretation appears to me to authorize a disbelief of Christ's future personal reign on earth.

76. *Jesus on his descent cures a demoniac, whom his disciples were unable to dispossess. Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix.*

DURING their absence, a father had brought for cure to the remaining nine, his son, whom a demon tormented with epilepsy, then called lunacy, because supposed to be under the influence of the moon. On their late mission they had found the evil spirits subject to them: they were now baffled, not because this demon, as I conceive, was more difficult to eject than others, but because their faith had failed. Our Lord on his return found the Scribes disputing with them, and his address, "faithless and perverse generation," which includes them, supports this explanation. He requires the demoniac to be brought to him, which revives the father's hope, and after suffering the demon to display all his power, by throwing

down and convulsing the boy, he dismisses him by a word of authority. The faith of the father, though inferior in degree to that of many whose cases are recorded, some of which drew forth our Lord's commendation, was genuine, for it brought him as a suppliant, notwithstanding the failure of the Apostles; and his petition, "increase my faith," seems to show a conception, however indistinct, of his superiority to a prophet, and of his power not only of casting out evil spirits, but also of enlightening the understanding, and influencing the heart. As soon as they were in private, the Apostles asked the cause of their failure; and he, using proverbial expressions, to contrast the smallness of the principle with the greatness of the effect, and alluding to the mountain where he had been so lately transfigured, declares, that nothing is impossible to faith. He adds, "this kind," that is the race of demons, "goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." Faith is not here used in its ordinary sense, but, for a strong persuasion of the power of working miracles, as in the Epistles to the Corinthians, where it is classed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and is described, as in this passage, as capable of removing mountains, and as separable from charity; which cannot be said of the justifying faith that worketh by love. But there is no reason why we should limit the efficacy of faith to that age, or to this extraordinary kind; the experience of every age has shown the grand results that have been produced under the present administration of Providence, when miracles have ceased, even by believers of no greater natural attainments or opportunities for service than others; when, with an implicit reliance on the Divine blessing, they have steadily pursued some great end, with no other view than the promotion of God's glory. If, therefore, we do less, it is because we are straitened, not in him but in ourselves; it is because though we have faith it is but weak and wavering. "Pains and prayer through Christ can do any thing," was the declaration of the venerable Eliot, on completing the translation of the whole Bible into the language of the Indians of Virginia. "Attempt great things, expect great things," the

motto of a modern missionary, (the late Dr. Carey of Serampore,) who has been the instrument of translating it into almost all the numerous dialects of India, and has so rendered the tidings of salvation accessible to many millions of idolaters. And even the heathen Quintilian teaches the same lesson; for he says, speaking of eloquence and the fine arts, and the observation is equally applicable to other pursuits, that it has sometimes happened that great things have been accomplished by him, who was striving at what was above his power. May we not hence infer the efficacy of preparing ourselves by prayer and fasting, in cases of peculiar difficulty and temptation in our own lives, since Scripture is not of *private* (*ιδίας*) interpretation, (2 Peter i. 20.) but, generally speaking, independent of its primary meaning, has a secondary application to the believers of all ages?

77. *Jesus procures by a miracle the tribute-money for himself and Peter. Matt. xvii.*

As Peter's house at Capernaum might be regarded as the residence of Jesus, it was to that disciple that the collectors of the tribute applied to know if his Master would pay it. Their question shows that it was a voluntary one, it therefore could not be a Roman tax; and this also appears from our Saviour's argument, which rests upon his being not an ordinary worshipper of the Sovereign for whom it was levied, but his Son. It was in fact an annual contribution towards the expences of the service of the temple, not only raised in Palestine, but remitted from foreign countries. It was paid by all Israelites above twenty years of age; and it was one of their national mortifications, that on the destruction of Jerusalem, Vespasian transferred it to the Capitol, so that the worshipper of Jehovah was taxed for the support of idolatry^c.

^c Cum aurum Judæorum nomine, quotannis ex Italia, et ex omnibus provinciis Hierosolyma exportari soleret Flaccus sanxit edicto ne ex Asia exportari liceret. Quis est Judices qui hoc non vere laudare possit? The orator's contemptuous feeling is throughout strongly expressed. Barbara superstitione tam suspiciosa ac maledica Civitas. Cicero pro Flacco, 28. Josephus, vii. 26.

The sum was half a shekel, which is equivalent to the double drachma of the Greek mint, or two denarii of the Roman, fifteen-pence of our money ; the stater, a coin equal to four drachma, would therefore pay for both Jesus and Peter.

Jesus first convinced Peter that there was no need for his paying this contribution ; but he waived his privilege, to prevent the scandal which would have been caused by a refusal, as if he despised the temple, since he could not assign the reason he had given to Peter, without declaring that he was the Son of God. He had not the money required, he therefore ordered his disciple to angle in the lake, telling him that he would find the precise sum, which would settle the claim upon them both, in the mouth of the first fish which he caught. By whatever means the stater was lodged in the fish's mouth, Omniscience could alone discover it there, and Omnipotence secure its being brought to Peter's hook. The voluntary poverty for the benefit of mankind of Him, who might, if he had pleased, have commanded as readily all hidden treasure, deserves our consideration. Christ teaches us by this example to avoid exciting sinister suspicions in men, although groundless, with some inconvenience to ourselves, especially when we have not the means of convincing them of their error. The scandal of the Pharisees, proceeding not from ignorance but malice, he is not thus concerned to avoid.

78. *The Apostles contend for preeminence, and are told that it can only be acquired through humility. Jesus condemns the bigotry of his disciples, warns them against causing weak believers to stumble, and teaches forgiveness by a parable. Matt. xviii. Mark ix. xi. Luke ix.*

JESUS, being arrived at Capernaum, enquired of his disciples the subject of their discussion on the road ; but they kept silence, being ashamed ; for the conversation had not had the

improvement of themselves or others in view, but was a dispute concerning their claims to distinction in the kingdom, which they presumed he was about to establish. Had he designed to confer greater authority or higher rank upon Peter than on his brethren, this surely would have been the time to declare it, but all such ambitious pretensions he decidedly condemns; *speaking* to their thoughts and desires, which they ventured not to utter, by a most significant *action* as well as by words. Calling them around him, he placed a little child in the midst, solemnly assuring them, that unless their disposition changed, and they became as such, (as humble and unambitious,) they could not *enter* into his kingdom, and that their *advancement* in it would be in proportion to their humility, and their kindness to their brethren; for he who aspired to be chief, must behave himself as the least, and the servant of all. Their first dispute concerning preeminence soon followed the transfiguration, and was probably the consequence of it. The three who had been present might look forward to some distinction above their brethren, and might therefore take too much upon them, while James, Thadæus, and Simon the zealot, might build upon their relationship to their Master.

John then mentioned the case of a man who cast out demons in the name of Jesus, but who did not, like them, join him, upon which account he had forbidden him. Jesus, instead of commending, reproved his zeal as mistaken; "Forbid him not; whoever is not against us is on our side." This admonition seems to teach us to respect those, who, by their preaching, bring sinners to repentance and faith in Christ, though not ordained, as we conceive, by the proper authority, and instead of attempting to silence them, to leave them to pursue their course unmolested. God, the author of their ordinary vocation, acts when he pleases in an extraordinary manner; but this extraordinary call must be tried by its doctrine and its fruits. He then pronounces a woe upon those who cause weak believers to stumble, declaring that it is better to part with every thing most precious to us, represented under

perceive the strong opposition between the merciful lord and the implacable servant, and the amount of their respective debts. It silences whatever justification, or palliation of revenge, can be drawn from the nature or number of the offences committed, or the dignity of the injured party.

79. *Jesus sends forth the seventy. Luke x.*

As our Lord in an earlier period of his ministry had sent forth the twelve Apostles, he now commissioned seventy disciples, in imitation, probably, of the seventy elders appointed by Moses to assist him. The appointment is recorded only by Luke, but the tradition that he was himself one of them, is probably not true; since the preface to his Gospel seems to declare, that he did not write from personal knowledge. The twelve had been allowed to go where they pleased, provided they confined their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but these went out in pairs to prepare for him in the several places he meant to visit on his way to Jerusalem. Both commissions were ushered in with the remark, that the harvest was plenteous but the labourers few; and the instructions are nearly the same, only the seventy, as the time assigned to them was short, were not to waste it by saluting any on the way.

80. *Jesus attends the feast of tabernacles, and teaches in the temple. John vii.*

JESUS had not visited Jerusalem for eighteen months, and his brethren, who did not as yet believe in him, taunted him with his continued absence, and his preaching and performing miracles in places of comparative obscurity. Another opportunity of visiting the capital was offered by the feast of tabernacles, so called because the Jews during the seven days it lasted dwelt in booths, made of the boughs of trees, upon the flat roofs of their houses, in imitation of the temporary tabernacles, of their ancestors in the wilderness. It was called also the feast of ingathering, because one object of it was to

return thanks for the vintage and for their fruits, which were now gathered in, about the beginning of October. Jesus would not accompany them, that he might not give needless offence by having the attendance of a multitude, but went up, as it were in secret, neither preaching, nor working miracles by the way. He entered the temple about the middle of the feast, and taught. The leading persons enquired with a mixture of surprise and contempt, how he had attained sufficient learning and knowledge of the law to qualify him for a public instructor, since he had not received a liberal education. He replied, that his doctrine was not his own, as men acquire knowledge by study, but a message which he was commissioned to deliver, and that the preparation of the mind for receiving it consisted (not in abilities or learning, but) in a desire to do the will of Him that sent him; so that every one that was thus inclined, would be enabled to form a just opinion of his pretensions. He added, as a criterion, that the teacher who came forward of his own accord, would in one form or other pursue his own interest; whereas he who disregards self, and seeks only God's glory, proves himself to be in reality, as he asserts, God's messenger. He exposes their insincerity by observing, that while they affected so much zeal for the law of Moses, none of them kept it; and that they were even then meditating a flagrant breach of it,—“Why seek ye to kill me?” Their motive was, because he had broken the Sabbath, by healing on that day the cripple at Bethesda, at his last visit. He requires them to judge fairly, and if they did not scruple to dispense with the Sabbath that they might perform the act of circumcising, not to condemn him for restoring on it a man to the use of his limbs.

Alarmed at his increasing popularity, for the people seemed disposed to acknowledge him as the Messiah, the Pharisees and chief-priests sent their officers to apprehend him; but unintimidated he continued to speak, obscurely intimating his approaching decease, telling them that he was yet to stay a little longer with them, and that then he should go

to him who had sent him; and they would seek him, but in vain, for where he would be they would not be able to come. On the last and the greatest day of the festival, he again came forward, and more explicitly declared himself, inviting, by an allusion to Isaiah's prophecy, every one that thirsted to come unto him and drink, describing himself as the fountain of living water, in opposition to the broken cisterns provided by men. We are informed, that this is a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the passage teaches us, that it will not only be communicated to satisfy the believer's own thirst for spiritual blessings, but will be, as he told the woman of Samaria, a spring within him, whence streams will flow for the cleansing and refreshing of others. His words derive a peculiar energy from the occasion upon which they were spoken; for upon this day it was the custom to fetch water from the spring Siloam, which issued from a rock under the temple; some of which was drunk with joyful acclamations, while the rest was poured over the evening sacrifice, the people singing, from Isaiah xii. 3, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." This was said to be done in remembrance of the miracle by which the thirst of their forefathers in the desert was relieved; and it was brought as a drink offering to supplicate for rain against the approaching seed time. The Jews also allow that it is emblematical of the Holy Spirit, so that their ancestors could hardly have misunderstood Jesus. The people were divided in their opinion; some maintained that he was the prophet who was expected as the Messiah's harbinger, and some that he was the Messiah himself. Others asserted, that as the Messiah was to spring from David, and to be born at Bethlehem, it was impossible that this Galilean could be he; so ignorant were they of the lineage and birth-place of Jesus. The officers themselves were too much impressed with what he had spoken to seize him; and Nicodemus ventured to suggest, that a man ought not to be condemned without a trial: so they separated, without coming to any determination, and Jesus retired to the Mount of Olives.

81. *A woman, taken in the act of adultery, is brought before Jesus, who declines to condemn her as a judge, but as a teacher admonishes her to sin no more. John viii.*

His enemies, having failed in their late attempt to seize him, concerted a specious plan to ensnare him; and accordingly very early the next morning, when he was again in the temple teaching, they brought to him an adulteress, whose guilt was undeniable, since she had been taken in the fact, committed perhaps in some apartment of the temple, which on this festival was turned into a scene of revelry. They observed that Moses had commanded that such persons should be stoned, and desired to know what order he would give. Their question was a dilemma, from which there seemed to be no escape. Had he ordered them to put the law of Moses in force, they would have accused him to the governor of assuming independent authority; and if he had referred them to his tribunal, they would have represented him to the people as a partisan of Rome, a betrayer of their liberties, and a despiser of their lawgiver. With consummate wisdom he defeated their scheme, without seeming to be aware of it; for he declined, as he had done before, Luke xi. 14. acting as a judge, without losing sight of the moral teacher. "Neither do I *condemn* thee; go, and *sin* no more." He at the same time unmasked his enemies, by shewing that they were guilty of the very sin for which they brought the woman to be judged; for so we must understand ἀναμάρτητος, "he who is without *this* sin;" for none avowedly are without sin of any kind; nor would a general charge of sinfulness so come home to their consciences. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact, that adultery was then so common, that the practice of trying by the waters of jealousy women suspected of it had been abolished, the trial according to the rabbinical comment being only effectual, when the husband was innocent. It was customary for the witnesses to cast the first stone. By stooping to write on the ground, he gave them an opportunity to withdraw. The consequence was, that the woman was left alone; their ingenious scheme was disconcerted, and they were exposed as

hypocrites. It hath been asked, what he wrote ; Dr. Hales suggests this sentence from the Scriptures, which would record both their offence, and their judgment, and was in harmony with his late invitation to those to come unto him and drink.

O Lord, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed.

They that depart from me shall be written in the earth.

Because they have forsaken the Lord,

The fountain of living waters. Jerem. xvii. 13.

Bishop Law, perhaps, gives the true meaning of the action. According to the rule in the trial of a woman suspected of this offence, the priest was to take up some of the dust of the floor of the tabernacle, and write on it the curses denounced, Numbers v. Jesus conformed to it as nearly as he could, and, by that act, shows his willingness to take cognizance of the cause, if they would abide the consequence, the being involved in the same curse if guilty.

82. The discourse, in which Jesus declares his existence before the birth of Abraham, is abruptly terminated by an attempt of his auditors to stone him. John viii.

AFTER this interruption, he proceeded in his instructions ; and the sun probably then rising, he drew his imagery from that luminary of the material creation, and called himself the light of the world. The Pharisees objected that he bore witness to himself, and that therefore his testimony was not to be depended upon. He replied, that, notwithstanding their objection, it was valid, for he knew on what it rested ; whereas they neither knew whence he came, nor whither he was going. He added, that he had moreover his Father's testimony, and that, with his own, according to the decision of their own law, was sufficient. In the course of the conversation he tells them, that they will put him to death, and that they have never really known his Father, who is their God ; for if they had, they must have known him, who spoke what he had heard from him, and always did what pleased him. On their being led to declare themselves the children of Abraham, he tells

them that they are not entitled to that appellation, since they did not resemble him in their conduct, and that by their works they showed themselves to be the children of the devil, who was a manslayer and a liar. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever keepeth my saying, shall never see death ;” meaning the second death, which alone deserves the name, eternal misery in the unseen world. The doctrine was known to them, but they misrepresent his meaning, and exclaimed, “ Now we know that thou art possessed by a demon. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead ? Whom makest thou thyself ?” Their question drew forth his memorable answer, “ Abraham longed to see my day ; he saw it, and rejoiced ; and before Abraham was born, I am existing.” The Anti-trinitarians tell us, that this means he was designated to his office before the existence of Abraham ; a proposition not worth announcing with such solemnity, and which would have given no offence : but their attempt to stone him as a blasphemer for this speech, which he did not explain away, sufficiently proves that they understood him, and that he meant them to understand him, to speak of his existence before the patriarch, and consequently of his divinity. Many commentators maintain, that our Lord here assumes the title by which the Deity announced himself to Moses, I am that I am. This opinion appears to me to be erroneous, and I do not think that our Lord ever made so positive a declaration to his enemies ; yet his divine nature is implied in the word *I am* ; for if his existence was to be measured by time, as that of all created beings, he would have employed *was*, but his existence is one eternal *now*. If it be asked when Abraham saw the day of Christ ? we answer, In that illustrious trial of his faith, his offering up of his son, whom he received back again, ἐν παραβολῇ, (Heb. xi. 19.) in a figure, that is, the future sacrifice for sin was thus visibly represented to his senses ; and not only the death, but the resurrection of the victim. Their fury terminated the discourse abruptly. He eluded their malice, passing through the midst of them, rendering himself, it is supposed, invisible.

83. *Jesus restores the sight of a man born blind. John ix.*

ON leaving the temple, he meets a blind beggar, whom he cures by anointing his eyes with clay, and sending him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam, which was typical of himself as the Sent of God, and to the water of which wells of salvation he had so lately referred. This miraculous cure sets in a strong light the wilful unbelief of the rulers, who were the more exasperated, because it had been performed on the Sabbath. At first they treated it as a collusion, and examined his parents; and when the fact could be no longer denied, they wished to dismiss him, charging him to give glory to God; which may be interpreted in the obvious sense of thanking him, but was meant, I conceive, for an exhortation to confess the deception^m. The man, however, whose faith had procured him the recovery of sight, was not satisfied with acknowledging the fact; he stood forth as the defender of his benefactor's moral character when his parents were overawed, declaring that such a miracle had never been accomplished before since the world began; that if this man had not come from God, he could have done nothing, and that God doth not hear sinners.

In their resentment they excommunicated him; but Jesus found him out, and, to reward the honesty of this first sufferer in his cause, discovered himself to him as the Messiah, and he believed, and did him homage. Upon this Jesus observed, that he had come into the world for judgment, that those who saw not might see, and that those who saw might become blind. This judicial blindness, as he declared to some of the Pharisees who were present, arose not from an incapacity of seeing, but from their wilful closing of their eyes. The Sanhedrim had presumed to declare him to be a sinner, that is, an impostor; he therefore goes on to show, (for I consider the following chapter to be a continuance of the same discourse,) that these his calumniators were unworthy of the

^m Joshua in these very words calls upon Achan to acknowledge his guilt. Josh. vii. 19. 1 Sam. vi. 5.

name of shepherds, that they were, in fact, thieves and robbers, and that he alone was the true Shepherd, who was willing even to lay down his life for the sheep. He represents himself also as the gate of a sheepfold, which in those countries, where it is necessary to take precautions against wild beasts, is of a more substantial nature than with us: and as it was through the gate that the shepherd entered, while they that came to rob and steal climbed over the fence; so he was the only entrance into the Church, and those who entered through him should be preserved and find pasture. He then reverts to the figure of the shepherd, and contrasts his own readiness to devote his life for them, with the cowardice of the hireling, who flees in the hour of danger, and leaves his sheep a prey to the wolf, "because he is a hireling, and the sheep are not his own." The Saviour declares his determination to die for the sheep, and he obscurely intimates the conversion of the Gentiles, saying, that he has other sheep whom he must bring, who also shall hear his voice, and both shall be united into one fold under him. In the east, the shepherd is a character of higher moral dignity than with us; there, instead of following, he walks before the sheep to see if they may venture forth, he protects, and is ready to risk life for them; and his care is repaid by a corresponding attachment on their part. As here described, he knows them individually¹, and they acknowledge his voice, and follow at his call. When therefore Jesus says, "I am the good Shepherd," to feel at all the force of the comparison, we must take these circumstances into consideration: but even then our con-

¹ A striking illustration of this language is afforded by Polybius, (xii.) who tells us, that "when strangers land in Corsica, the swine immediately run away, and flock to the sound of the horn blown by their keepers, who, instead of following their herds like the Greeks, go before them to some distance." We may presume, that the good Shepherd was a favourite emblem with the early Christians, from its frequent occurrence on their sepulchral monuments in the Roman catacombs. It was the custom in Greece for shepherds to give names to their sheep; Longus iv. and we learn from Mr. Hartley that it still prevails, for on desiring one of them to call a sheep, on his doing so it ran up to him with apparent pleasure; and he told him that many of them were still wild, and had not yet learned their names. *Researches in Greece*, p. 321.

ception of his character will be far short of the truth, since a reference to the image in the Old Testament, will raise us above all created objects, even to the Deity himself, for we there shall discover that the good Shepherd is no other than Jehovah. "Behold," says Isaiah, (chap. xl. 10, 11.) "the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: he shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead them that are with young." And Jehovah himself says, by the mouth of Ezekiel, "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out; I will feed them in a good pasture, and cause them to lie down." xxxiv. 11, 13.

84. *The seventy disciples return. Luke x.*

THE seventy disciples returned exulting in their power over evil spirits, which exceeded their expectations, as only the cure of diseases was comprehended in their commission. This gave their Master an opportunity of directing their thankfulness to a subject which far more deserved it, the fact that their names were written in heaven. In another place (Matt. vii. 22.) he tells us, that some who have cast out devils in his name shall be rejected at the last day. How far more precious then is grace than gifts! Talents and learning in our days answer the same end as miraculous powers did then; they avail to the edification of others, but do nothing towards our own salvation. How awful the state, and how bitter will be the self-reproach, of those, who, after they have been the means of saving others, shall be themselves cast away!

85. *A lawyer is taught the extent of his duty to his neighbour, by the example of a benevolent Samaritan. Luke x.*

As Jesus was teaching, a lawyer, with the design of tempting him, asked him what he should do in order to obtain

eternal life. He referred him to the law ; and on his quoting the two leading precepts of love to God and man, which are an epitome of our duty, he allowed that he had answered correctly: "*Do this, and thou shalt live.*" He who loves God at all times with all the faculties of his mind, and his neighbour, that is, every man with whom he has any concern, as himself, has fulfilled the law, and instead of coming to his Creator as a suppliant for mercy, may appeal to his justice for a recompence. But who of the fallen sons of Adam will presume to rest his claim upon this covenant of works? If any one could in his own strength keep the moral law, he would need no sacrifice for sin, and the precious blood of the incarnate Son of God need not to have been shed for him. The mere statement of such a supposition confutes it. It is plain, therefore, that our Saviour's intention was to lead this lawyer to a discovery of the extent of the law which must be made known to him, before he could feel his need of a more complete righteousness than his own. It should seem as if the lawyer suspected his design, from the expression seeking to justify himself. Accordingly he asked who was his neighbour, passing over the duty to God, conscious perhaps that his performance of that would less bear scrutiny. The Israelites, with the advantage of revelation, had narrowed their definition of neighbour, so as to exclude from it all but their countrymen; while the Roman poet, with no more than the light of nature, could declare, that no human being ought to be indifferent to man. Jesus did not point out how imperfectly they acted up to the commandment, even within the pale which they had drawn round it; but related the parable, or it may be the real tale, of the good Samaritan; the object of which was to enlarge his contracted notions, and to show that beneficence should be universal, not limited to our nation, or our religious or political party. Of the three characters brought before us, the Samaritan alone had acted according to the commandment, and he did every thing that the case required. He treated the unfortunate traveller

according to the most approved method of the times^k, pouring into his wounds the oil and wine which he had provided for his own use ; he dismounted to place him upon his own beast, while he himself walked ; took care of him at the inn ; left with the host what money he could spare, not two, but fifteen of our pence, that is, two days' pay in that age of a soldier and a labourer^l; and promised, if it was not enough, on his return to make up the deficiency. Had their situations been reversed, and a Jew been introduced as relieving a distressed Samaritan, prejudice might have prevented the lawyer's cordial approbation of this act of charity ; but as the sufferer was his countryman, his sympathy was awakened, and Jesus drew from him an acknowledgment, that this despised alien had acted like a neighbour, while both Levite and Priest had failed in their duty. Thus he made him teach himself, that in this instance which he himself had chosen, the demand of the law was more extensive than he had imagined.

86. *Jesus again teaches his disciples to pray, and illustrates by a parable the efficacy of persevering prayer. Luke xi.*

THE disciples having requested Jesus to teach them how to pray, he gave them that well-known form which from this circumstance is denominated the Lord's Prayer. It is recorded both by Matthew and Luke, and in the opinion of most harmonists was given on two occasions. According to Luke it was certainly given as a form to be used, and perhaps, Pray after this manner, οὕτως, the direction in Matthew's Gospel, may convey the same meaning, though taken by others according to the English idiom, as a model to direct us in forming petitions. The Church from the beginning, uni-

^k The treating of gun-shot wounds with hot oil, in consequence of which the majority of the wounded died, prevailed universally in the European armies till the time of Ambrose Parcé, a distinguished French surgeon, who was contemporary with our Henry the Eighth.

^l Matt. xx. 2. Tacitus, A. 1—17.

versally introduced it into its liturgies, but the superstitious abuse of it by Roman Catholics, who repeated it rather as a charm than as a statement of their wants and desires, has driven many Protestants into the opposite extreme; so that though permitted by the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, it has only been used of late in the kirk of Scotland, or by the majority of English dissenters^m. On comparing the two copies, we find these variations, "this day," and "day by day;" and the metaphorical term in Matthew, "debt," exchanged for the plain one, "sin," by Luke, who omits the concluding clause, and the Doxology; which many critics suppose to be no part of the original text of Matthew, but an interpolation from an early liturgy. It does not appear in some of the best manuscripts, nor in the Vulgate. It is found, however, in the Syriac version. Accordingly it is not introduced into the Roman services, and this explains why it occurs once only in our own prayer book, and in that portion of it which was derived from a Protestant source, the liturgy of Polanus.

Our Saviour in this prayer most impressively teaches us, that the glory of God, whom he authorizes us to address as a parent, should be dearer to us even than our necessary food; for as in the sermon on the mount, he exhorts his disciples to seek the reign of God and his righteousness in the first place, and whatever is necessary for their bodily wants shall be added to them; so here we are not permitted to ask for daily, or sufficientⁿ, bread, till we have prayed that his name

^m A great ornament of that body, the amiable and candid Doddridge, exclaims in his Family Expositor, "Excellent is this form of sound and divine words, which our great Master here recommends. God forbid that any of his followers should censure their brethren who think it still proper to use it, not only as a directory, but as a form too." And we may add, Let us in whose formularies it so frequently recurs, beware lest we suffer it to sink into a lifeless form; and attentively study it, that our thoughts and our desires may go along with its petitions.

ⁿ The original term *ἐπιούσιον*, which occurs no where else, rendered *quotidianum* in the old Italic, is translated by Jerome *supersubstantialem*; others consider it as equivalent to to-morrow's bread, which accords with Luke's expression, *καὶ ἡμέραν*, *day by day*.

may be sanctified, the reign of his grace be universally established, and his will accomplished by men with the same willingness as by the angels of heaven. The latter petition is by many taken only *passively*, and offered up as a petition for resignation under distressing, though fatherly, chastisements, as if it were equivalent to our Lord's personal supplication, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." But this, though included in the petition, is far from exhausting it; since it also expresses a desire, that all the faculties and means possessed by men should be actively engaged for the fulfilling of his purposes, with as much alacrity as is done by those perfect intelligencies that excel in strength, and are ever executing his commands. The first three petitions are for the glory of God; the others for ourselves, for necessary maintenance, for forgiveness, on the express condition of our forgiving, and for preservation from temptation, and deliverance in it from sin, or from the devil, the instigator to sin: for the original word may be rendered either *evil*, or the *evil being*. The prayer is concluded with a doxology, by which we declare our conviction that our heavenly Father is able to grant our requests, as we ascribe to him the kingdom, and power, and glory. We previously prayed that his kingdom may come; it is clear then that the word is here used in a different sense; there it means the kingdom of his grace, that is, his sovereignty over willing subjects; here, of his providence, by which he governs all things, and makes them subservient to his pleasure. Having taught his disciples how to pray, he encourages them to persevere by a parable, showing the success of importunity, ἀναίδεια, and argues *a fortiori*, that if an earthly father will not disappoint his son's reasonable request, though he be himself wicked, much more will their heavenly and perfect Parent grant to them that ask him the *Holy Spirit*^o, the desire of whose blessed influence he has himself excited in them.

^o In the corresponding verse, Matt. vii. 11. it is δόματα ἀγαθὰ, *good gifts*. We here see how one Evangelist is made the interpreter of another.

87. *Jesus makes straight on a sabbath day a woman who had been bowed together for eighteen years. Luke xiii.*

WE have another miracle performed in a synagogue on the sabbath day ; and the same objection, raised by his opponents as on a former occasion, silenced in the same manner by an appeal to their own practice. "Thou hypocrite," replied Jesus, marking thereby the character of the ruler of the synagogue, "each of you will loose his ass or bull, and lead him to water on the sabbath day." Now this was attended with some labour, and was only done to preserve an animal from the uneasiness of thirst ; could it then be a question with them, whether or not it was fit on that day to loose from an infirmity of eighteen years' standing a daughter of Abraham ? We may presume, that the phrase was chosen to intimate that she was not only, like them all, a descendant from the patriarch, but a partaker of his faith. His answer shamed them into silence, but the multitude rejoiced in his glorious displays of power. The ruler had exclaimed with indignation, that the sick ought to come on the week days to be healed ; but we have no reason to suppose that this woman came for that purpose ; she came, we may presume, to worship God, which, to one bowed almost double, must have been a self-denying labour ; and while she was seeking spiritual improvement, it pleased her compassionate Saviour to restore her body to straightness and vigour.

88. *His reply to the question, Are there few that be saved? and his declaration, that he shall be put to death in Jerusalem. Luke xiii.*

As he was travelling, he was asked if the number of the saved were few ; and, according to his custom, he availed himself of the question, to introduce a profitable conversation. Without satisfying an idle curiosity as to others, he exhorts them to secure their own entrance into heaven, telling them,

that many would seek in vain admission, and that they must (*ἀγωνίζεσθαι*) make every effort, and force, as it were, a passage through the narrow gate. Thus we learn from the highest authority, what yet few seem disposed to attend to, that notwithstanding conviction, temporary earnestness, and partial reformation, many will at last come short of salvation. The causes of failure are as various as the temptations that beset us ; but none but procrastination is fatal ; for no one will be rejected that applies while opportunity is afforded ; or (as it is figuratively expressed) “ till the Master of the house hath arisen, and *fastened* the entrance.” But as the hour of death is unknown to us, and ill adapted for the business of preparing for eternity, we should, instead of abusing mercy, and despising the “ long-suffering of God, which leadeth us to repentance,” act upon our Lord’s advice in another place, “ Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” Our Lord here so expresses himself, as to teach that many Jews, who thought their admission into the kingdom of God certain, would be rejected, while Gentiles from every land should sit down with their father Abraham.

Jesus was still within Galilee, Herod’s jurisdiction, and was warned by certain of the Pharisees to depart, because that prince was desirous of killing him. Their motive does not appear ; but their advice was not followed. He told them to inform that prince, whose craft he designates by calling him a fox, and who perhaps only wished to frighten him to a distance, that he should proceed in his active course of beneficence for his appointed time ; and that when that was finished, he should be put to death, not in his dominions, but in Jerusalem, which had shed the blood of the ancient prophets, and was thus “ to fill up the measure of its iniquity.” This recollection of his destined place of suffering, however, raised not his resentment but his pity ; and he spoke of his willingness to shelter and protect her inhabitants with the affection of the maternal bird to her brood, not only now, but on former occasions ; language inexplicable in the mouth of

a mere human teacher, but suitable to the God of Israel, who is compared by Moses to an eagle fluttering over her young, and whom the Psalmist entreats to hide him under the shelter of his wings. He had long besought them through his prophets, he now beseeches in person, and afterwards besought by his Apostles ; but all laboured in vain ; they would not, their ruin therefore was wholly from themselves. He then solemnly announced that the Psalmist's imprecation, " Let their habitation be desolate," was about to be verified in the fate of the nation ; and drew their attention to the 118th Psalm, that memorable prophecy of his sufferings and triumph, by quoting from it the words, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ;" thereby declaring, that they should see him no more till they were willing to hail him as the Messiah.

89. *Jesus dines with a Pharisee on the Sabbath, and relates the parable of a supper, which those who had been invited excused themselves from attending. Luke xiv.*

THE Jewish Sabbath, not only as originally instituted, but even with all the additional regulations of the traditional law, was not so burthensome as many suppose. The nation scrupulously abstained from whatever the most rigid interpreter could show to be a manual work ; and the kindling of a fire, and the dressing of victuals on it, are expressly forbidden by Moses ; yet still it was not a fast, but a feast. A chief Pharisee, who is called a ruler, a member therefore of the Sanhedrin, invited our Lord to dine with him on that day, and he did not scruple to attend. It appears to have been a grand entertainment, and that many had been previously invited ; and Michaelis conjectures, that it was a feast of tenths and firstlings, which will throw light upon some of the conversation. According to the Mosaic law, beside the tenth assigned to the Levites, a second tithe was presented as a thank-offering at the great festivals ; and after deducting the parts consumed, and those destined to the priests, the remainder

was appropriated to entertainments, to which they were bound to invite the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. The day was not divided by the Jews as it is by us, but commenced with sunset ; and began with the principal meal, which might be plentiful, without in any degree interfering with the rest required, as the dressing of it would be on the preceding day. There was a man present who had the dropsy, and our Saviour first asked them, if it were lawful to heal on the sabbath. They were silent, and he, laying his hand on him, healed him, and sent him away. He might, as in many other instances, have effected the cure by a word, but he preferred an action, though as little laborious as possible, that he might reprove their superstition and malignity, which he did by the same comparison which he had lately used in the synagogue.

Observing the Scribes and Pharisees openly contending for precedence, he reproved their desire of distinction, and pointed out the impolicy of their conduct in terms similar to those used in the Proverbs, xxv. 6, 7. “ Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men ; for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.” He then, turning to his host, recommended him when he made an entertainment not to invite his rich relations and neighbours, who would ask him in return, but those to whom it would be an act of charity ; but we are not to take the advice so literally as to abjure all exercise of hospitality, which would be in opposition to our social feelings, and was sanctioned on other occasions by our Lord ; but it teaches us, that we cannot innocently expend so much in entertainments to our acquaintance, as to deprive us of the power of making due provision for the wants of the distressed ; and that we confidently affirm is not due provision, which does not require some self-denial. Neither is it required that, in the present state of society, the poor, the lame, and the blind, should be guests at our table. The spirit of the precept seems to be preserved, if we provide them with dinners at their homes, and the command, like

those of requiring mercy and not sacrifice, and of hating father and mother, may be considered according to the well-known Hebrew idiom, merely as representing that the relieving the distressed, and love, ought to take precedence of social entertainments. His declaration that such should be blessed at the resurrection of the just, lead one of the guests to exclaim, how blessed it would be to *feast* in the kingdom of heaven; when our Saviour, to show how little this blessing was really coveted, though men might fancy they wished it, related a parable, in which the rejection of the Gospel by different characters is exhibited under the figure of a marriage feast, which the guests, who had been invited, on various reasons declined to attend. To understand the force of the parable, we must recollect that the invitation did not find them engaged, but had been previously accepted. It is material also to observe, that the guests did not plead amusement, but business. Their occupations were lawful in themselves; but their perverseness appeared by their pursuing them at an improper season; and probably an undue attachment to things in themselves innocent, and even requiring our attention, will be found at last, more than positive sin, to have been the ruin of the great majority of mankind. The invited having excused themselves, the poor, and blind, the maimed, the halt, were brought in from the streets; but still there was room, so that the Master of the feast ordered his servants to go into the roads and fields, that his house might be filled. Those who despised the feast were the leading characters of the Jewish nation; the blind and lame are the minority that welcomed the despised Messiah; the third class, the Gentiles; but in every age it will be found to apply with no less propriety to individuals than to classes of society. Some commentators, who know not what spirit they are of, have caught at the expression, "compel them to come in," in support of the anti-christian doctrine of persecution; but the fair inference from their strained interpretation of a single word in a parable, is the weakness of their cause, and the want of scrip-

tural authority ; and it is evident, from the use of the original term ἀνάγκασον¹ on other occasions, that no other compulsion was designed than earnest entreaty, which indeed was all that one servant could use towards a multitude of beggars. Such would be slow to believe that the invitation could be serious, and would therefore require to be repeatedly pressed.

90. *Jesus requires his disciples to love him more than their nearest relatives, and to be ready to forsake all that they have for his sake. Luke xiv.*

JESUS then declared to the multitude that drew near to him, that no man was able to be his disciple who suffered attachment to his relatives or to himself to interfere with his superior claims upon his love : and that, as his disciple must take up his cross, and be ready at his call to leave his family, his possessions, and occupations, a prudent man, before he engaged in his service, would count the costs, and not expose himself to ridicule like the thoughtless builder, that begins a tower without calculating if he have the means of finishing it ; or the improvident sovereign, who rushes upon war with one who is manifestly more powerful. Salt is good, but if it lose its saltiness, it is worthless, and consequently thrown away ; so the professing Christian, who has the form without the substance of religion, is rejected as perfectly useless.

91. *The parables of the lost sheep, of the lost drachma, and of the prodigal son. Luke xv.*

BEING reproached by the Scribes and Pharisees for associating with persons of bad character, he shows that his motive was not his own gratification, but their reformation ; and illustrates his conduct from that of others in the ordinary

¹ He constrained (ἀναγκάζει) his disciples to go out into a ship," Matt. xiv. 22. "Why compellest thou (ἀνάγκασεις) the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Gal. ii. 14. "With her much fair speech she compelled him, ἀναγκάζει." Prov. vii. 21.

transactions of life ; for the shepherd of a hundred sheep would leave his flock to recover one that had wandered from the fold ; and a woman who owned ten drachma would spare no pains, if she should lose one, till she had recovered it. Both would call upon their friends and neighbours to rejoice in their success, and in like manner the reformation of a sinner would give joy to angels. He proceeded to show the nature of genuine repentance, and the gracious reception which it would find from God's mercy, however vile the former conduct of the penitent had been, by the parable of the prodigal son. The depth of his distress and humiliation could not have been represented more impressively to a Jewish audience, than by the repulsive occupation to which he was driven, and by his longing to partake of the pods which were defiled by the swine, which his education must have rendered to him, as to them, an object of aversion and disgust. His amendment is strikingly expressed by the term of coming to himself, which shows the absurdity and madness of "the excess of riot to which he had run;" and the infinite compassion of our heavenly Father, which is ever more ready to grant than we to ask, is marked by the affecting circumstance that his father does not wait for his return, nor merely forgive him, but as soon as ever he sets out, runs to meet him, embraces and kisses him. His confession of ingratitude and guilt is interrupted by an order given to one servant to exchange his rags for the best robe, and to another to kill the fatted calf. Thus the sins of the penitent will be cast, as it were, into the depths of the sea, (Micah vii. 19. Ezek. xxxiii. 16.) never to be mentioned any more ; God will cause him to be arrayed in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and treat him not as a servant, but as a son. The prodigal's return is the signal for music and dancing, and thus a sinner's reformation adds to the happiness of Heaven. In the primary application of the parable, the prodigal stands for the penitent sinner, such as frequently came to the Saviour while on earth ; the elder brother for the hypocritical and supercilious pharisee. But it has lost

none of its force among the changes that more than eighteen centuries have produced; for under every modification of society we shall find the two characters here delineated, the returning prodigal and the self-righteous formalist, who repines at the forgiveness of the former. It were a great mistake, says Jortin, commenting on this parable, to suppose, that a constant obedience is not to be preferred to the most sincere and active repentance. This is a maxim which no reasonable person will deny; but he begs the question, when he adds, that the Father, in his sedate judgment, makes a wide difference between the penitent and the innocent sons. We have no testimony to the merit of the latter but his own, and all that is recorded concerning him, his sullenness and reproachful reply to his father, show a character proud of its freedom from gross sins, and envious of the kind reception of a converted brother, which cannot be pleasing to Him who rejoices over every soul that was lost and is found. Mac-knight more justly remarks, that the goodness with which the father bore the surly peevishness of the elder brother, whom he still calls son notwithstanding his insolent speech, is little inferior to the mercy shown in pardoning the younger.

92. *The parables of the unjust steward, and of the rich man and the beggar. Luke xvi.*

JULIAN and Porphyry have objected to this parable, and there are even Christians who find a difficulty in reconciling it with the perfect morality contained in whatever other instruction our Lord has condescended to give. One would think that none but prejudiced or very careless hearers would draw improper inferences from it, for he himself points out its applications, and calls the steward unjust, and a child of this world. Perhaps the objection would not have been felt in so great a degree in England, if *φρονίμως* had been rendered *prudently* instead of *wisely*; and if the lord who commends, that is, the steward's lord, or master, was never confounded with the Lord of all, of whom we are apt to think whenever

that word is used in the New Testament. It is the observation of an ancient rhetorician, that "in comparisons it is not necessary that there should be a perfect resemblance in the objects, but only in the qualities for the sake of which they are compared^m. And this is exemplified in similies; for the poet, when he likens, for instance, his hero to a lion, does it merely that he may bring to our mind the idea of courage common to both." Thus our Saviour is compared to a thief, certainly not from any resemblance in character, but from the unexpectedness of his coming; and the parable of the unjust steward is designed to teach us *prudence*, not to recommend *dishonesty*. The object the steward had in view was his maintenance; the means he employed were iniquitous; but they answered his purpose, and he is brought forward to show the greater sagacity and perseverance of the children of this world than of the children of light; and to shame the latter for not pursuing with equal consistency their good aim—the securing a happy eternity. As he by fraudulent dealings with his master's tenants, suggesting to them alterations of his leases, secured to himself a home for life, we are invited to make such an honest use of the perishable goods of this life, that when our stewardship is terminated by death, they may be the means of bringing us into everlasting habitations. As the disciples were poor, they might think themselves unconcerned in the parable; Jesus therefore assured them, that he who is faithful in the management of a little, will be faithful if entrusted with much; and adds, that "if they were not faithful in the unrighteous mammon," (i. e. in the perishable riches of this world, so called, not as unrighteously acquired, but because deceiving the expectation of its owners, both in the enjoyments it promises, and its fleeting and transitory nature, and which is the property of another, that is, God,) how could they expect to be entrusted with the trueⁿ, which might be called their own, because they

^m Ad. Heirenum, iv.

ⁿ This is clearly the meaning of the word *unrighteous*, because it is opposed not to *innocent* but *true*; and unrighteous is also used in other places for what is false, and does not fulfil what it promises.

would not be committed to them as a temporary trust, for which they must render an account, but would be held by an unalienable tenure. He concludes with the alarming declaration, that as no man can at the same time be faithful to two masters, it is impossible to reconcile the service of God and mammon; and this personification of riches shows, that, as the Apostle says, the love of them is a kind of idolatry. This parable was spoken to his disciples in the presence of the Pharisees, who were covetous and derided him; the next was addressed to them, and illustrates an awful truth, on which so many professing Christians wilfully shut their eyes—the guilt of selfishness: for the wealth of the rich man does not appear to have been acquired *unjustly*, nor to have been spent *profligately*; it is merely stated, that he lived splendidly, and enjoyed himself; and Abraham does not accuse him of any wicked abuses of riches; he merely tells him that he had his reward; “Son, thou hast received thy good things.” The rich man lived exclusively for himself; and the parable teaches, that it is not enough to refrain from wasting our master’s property, like the unjust steward; we must not only be negatively innocent, we must be positively good, and must spend to his glory the mammon that is not our own, but lent us by him, that hereafter he may receive it with interest. We must also suppose, that Lazarus had lived a life of faith and resignation; for simple poverty and misery would never have procured his admission into Abraham’s bosom, that is, into the place of the highest distinction; for the metaphor is taken from a feast, where the person most honoured reclined nearest to, and, as it were, in the bosom of, the master: he who not only sits down with the father of the faithful, but is placed next to him, must partake largely of his faith. This parable confutes the notion of the sleep of the soul from death till the day of judgment, entertained by some divines. But if it should be objected, that a dogma requires stronger support than a parable, we reply, that the intermediate state of the departed spirits of the faithful, which has been generally

believed by the church, appears to be acknowledged in the New Testament under the name of Paradise, by St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 4 ; and by our Lord, Luke xxiii. 43. The rich man's request is natural, and we feel inclined to think with him, that seeing and conversing with a departed friend is the best evidence that could be obtained or desired ; but we are assured by Him who knew what was in man, that they who are unconvinced by the Scriptures, would not be persuaded even by an apparition from the dead. This very proof was indeed not long afterwards afforded to many by the resurrection of another Lazarus, and its inefficacy confirms the remark. Such evidence, supposing it not to be rejected as an imposition, might alarm, but it would not change the heart ; it would not therefore effect any real reformation. “ ° Hence, perhaps, we may learn the reason why this sort of intercourse between the other world and this is so very rare, because it could serve no good end ; for God having already given sufficient evidence of all things we are concerned to know, there is no room to expect or hope for such admonitions. He sent the greatest person of the other world to us, his own Son, and sent him too from the dead ; and why he should send a man from the dead to tell what his Son, his apostles and prophets, have already told you, you that can give the reason, give it. Our Saviour's resurrection was something more than merely the apparition of a dead man ; he foretold the time and circumstances of his resurrection, and put the proof of his mission and doctrine upon the performance of this great wonder ; so that his resurrection became the direct proof, that the doctrine he taught was the doctrine of Him who had the power to raise the dead ; so that his authority after the resurrection was not barely the authority of one coming from the dead, but the authority of Him who has power to raise the dead, which authority is greater than that of any man, and therefore proves the divinity of his commission. And here lies the true difference between the resur-

° Sherlock's Discourses, xxxiv. p. 144 and 134.

rection of Christ, and that of those whom he raised from the dead." The parable also teaches, that man's condition is unalterably fixed at death, and consequently that purgatory is "a fond thing vainly invented," and that the punishment of sin in a future state has no purifying quality.

93. *Jesus declares the power of faith, and that the most perfect obedience is due, and cannot be meritorious. Luke xvii.*

JESUS then tells them, that believers will meet with stumbling-blocks, and declares the awful guilt of those who occasion them. He next commands forgiveness to a repenting brother, however often he may have injured us. They perceived the excellence and the difficulty of the precept, and that faith was the only principle from which it could proceed. They therefore besought him to increase it. Now faith is the gift of God, and it is not in the power of any other being to increase it. They must then have had at least an indistinct notion of his divinity. The connection between a vigorous faith full of fruits and humility is exemplified in a parable, showing that they must obey not some, but all his commands. The servant who ploughed, or tended sheep, when he came in was expected to wait at table, nor was he thanked for his attendance; so when they had done all that they were ordered, they could claim no *merit*, as if they had conferred a favour, they were still but unprofitable (*ἀχρηστοί*) servants; that is, they had rendered to him nothing above the service due to him; and if the utmost that a man can do is no more than his duty, the doctrine of supererogation, that is, that the merit of one may make up for the deficiencies of another, is deprived of its foundation^p.

^p The same word in the parable of talents evidently has a worse meaning; here it describes one who has only done his duty, there one who had neglected it, and justifies his omission.

94. *Jesus reproveth the sons of Zebedee, who wished that fire from heaven should destroy the Samaritans. Luke ix.*

THE sectarian bigotry of some of the Samaritans appeared from their refusing to receive Jesus and his disciples, because he was travelling to Jerusalem for the purpose of keeping the passover. Our Saviour met with a very different reception when, in the early period of his ministry, he sat down by Jacob's well. Then he was coming *from* Jerusalem, accordingly he and his disciples were then treated with civility and hospitality⁹. His rebuke of the fiery zeal of the sons of Zebedee, and his leading forward his disciples to another village even without a remonstrance, is a decisive protest against the propagating of the truth by force, and suppressing heresy by the secular power. James and John would have had fire descend from heaven to consume these Samaritans, as it had at the supplication of Elijah (2 Kings i.) to destroy the soldiers sent to apprehend him, probably near the same spot. But the disciples in their resentment overlooked the difference of the cases, and were as yet unconscious that the Gospel breathed a different spirit from the Law. The Samaritans were highly blameable, but their inhospitality arose from national bigotry, not from personal enmity to Jesus; nor did they persecute or ill treat, though they refused to receive him. Above all, the disciples were unconscious that they were influenced more by resentment than zeal for their Master; nor was their indignation probably quite free from bigotry, though that vice disgusted them in those on the opposite side. He therefore assured them that they knew not what spirit they were of, for he was come to promote the temporal as well as the eternal happiness of mankind, as he had proved by his many miraculous cures; to save and preserve the bodies as well as the souls of men. Unhappily this warning prophetic voice has been little heeded amid the turbulence of passion. Men professing to be the followers of Jesus, have kindled fires to burn not only

⁹ Blunt's Veracity of the Evangelists.

idolaters and infidels, but even those who worshipped the same Saviour ; and have designated the cruel gratification of their religious fury, “ *Acts of Faith.*” Papal no less than imperial Rome has been often “drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs;” Rev. xvii. 6. and there are few Churches that have had the power, that can plead not guilty to the charge of persecution even unto death. Our own is not free from the stain, for not a single reign can be named from the Reformation till that of James the First inclusive^r, in which persons were not burnt for their religion ; and the non-conformists of his times, who settled on the bleak and barren shores of New England, that they might enjoy liberty of conscience denied them at home, acknowledged in a synod the coercive authority of the magistrate, and enacted, and in some instances enforced against heretics, the penalty of death. The negative persecution of not permitting the public worship of Dissenters from the national faith, still exists in many Christian states ; toleration is comparatively recent in any. In our own it was condemned by so enlightened a man as Bacon, was first advocated during the civil wars by the independent Owen, and the Episcopalian Jeremy Taylor, but not legalized till the Revolution ; and it is mortifying to know, that in Holland, where it was first sanctioned by the government, it originated not in principle, but in policy.

95. *Jesus cleanseth at their own petition ten lepers, of whom the only grateful one was a Samaritan. Luke xvii.*

As if it were to show that this bigotry was not universal, the behaviour of these Samaritans is contrasted with that of another of the nation, who was one of ten lepers that besought his mercy, but the only one that, when cured, gave glory to God. He threw himself at the feet of Jesus, and thanked him, when he assured him that his faith had saved him. All had been cleansed, all then must have had faith in his miraculous power ; but he alone believed in him as a Saviour, and

^r The last instance was that of an Anabaptist, burnt at Coventry 1612.

alone received the spiritual blessing. This appears to be the explanation of an apparent contradiction. Salvation in Scripture is an ambiguous word, signifying deliverance, and the context only can show when it refers to the body and when to the soul, to this world or to the next. He was saved, or, as it is sometimes rendered, was made whole, is the common phrase in the Gospels, for he was cured. When blind Bartimæus adjures Jesus as the Son of David, and he answers, "Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee;" the restoration of that faculty is the salvation intended. But it is no less plain, that when Jesus said of Zacchæus, "This day is salvation come to this house," he spoke of salvation from sin. In St. Peter's vindication of the miracle wrought upon the lame man, the two ideas are blended together. "Be it known, that by the name of Jesus Christ doth this man stand before you whole;" and then rising from this inferior deliverance to the higher import of the word, he continues, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The apostles, the rulers, and the audience, had the full use of their limbs, but they all needed eternal salvation; and St. Peter wished to persuade them from the proof they had just had of the power of Jesus over the body, that he was also a Saviour from sin, and from the wrath to come. We conclude then that this Samaritan was saved both from leprosy, and from that moral malady, of which it is a significant type, which renders the soul as unfit for communion with its Creator, as a contagious disease does a man for intercourse with his fellow creatures. Our first feeling on reading this history is indignation at the ingratitude of the nine; let us, however, take care that they do not rise up in judgment against us. Deficient as they were in the gratitude, which the Lord who seeth the heart requires, they did more than those in these days, who having received a cure from some dangerous disorder, merely desire the minister to offer up thanks for them in the congregation. The priest was not to certify the cure of a leper, till he had made atonement for him before the Lord; and this

formal service, consisting of purification and sacrifices, which required eight days, and subjected them to some expence, we have reason to suppose the nine performed. It is evident then, that our Lord required from them something more.

96. *Jesus answers the question, when the kingdom of God shall come. Luke xvii.*

THE Pharisees enquiring when this reign of heaven, which he had so often announced, should commence, he answered that it would not be ushered in, as they conceived, with any outward display, but that it was in fact already arrived. He intimated that they would hereafter wish in vain for the opportunities which they had neglected; they would desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man. He then warned his disciples not to be deluded, as the nation would be, by false Messiahs, for he would come again after his sufferings and rejection, with the rapidity of lightning, and with the unexpectedness of the flood, and of the overthrow of Sodom. He would come to execute judgment, but he informed them that Providence would interpose to preserve his faithful followers, and to separate them from their companions. When asked the precise time of this visitation, he intimates by a proverb, that like causes will always produce like effects—wherever a dead carcass lies, birds of prey will assemble to devour it; so when the measure of a nation's iniquity is full, Divine justice will reach it.

97. *The parables of the unjust judge, and of the Pharisee and Publican. Luke xviii.*

STRONG encouragement to frequent earnest prayer is held out by the parable of the unjust judge. For if such a character could be wearied and *teased*⁹ into granting the request

⁹ ἑταπεινάζειν, means literally *to strike under the eye*; hence metaphorically, *to mortify*, (1 Cor. ix. 27.) and here *to stun or weary by continual importunity*.

of one whom he neither loved nor feared, by an importunity which annoyed him, the God of love and justice would answer the persevering supplications of his people whom he loveth. He may indeed leave them a long time under trouble and discouragements, but it is only to try their faithfulness, and strengthen it; and he will answer them at the fittest season. He next addressed the Pharisees in the parable of the two worshippers in the temple, and through them the self-righteous of any age, who, proud of their freedom from gross sins, and their exact observance of the external duties of religion, esteem themselves the favourites of heaven. There is neither confession nor petition in the Pharisee's religious act, which consists merely of praise, and that for his own excellence; and he cannot be content with praising himself, except by the depreciation of his fellow worshipper. The address of the Publican, short as it is, contains both an acknowledgment of his unworthiness, and a petition for pardon; and the term he uses in his supplication, *ἰλάσθητι*, seems to be expressive of his hope of obtaining it through a propitiatory sacrifice. Our Lord remarked, that he was the most acceptable of these worshippers; the Pharisee, relying on his merits, and seeking to establish his own righteousness, remained under the condemnation of the law; the Publican, having "that broken and contrite heart which God will not despise," became a partaker of the blessing of the covenant of grace.

98. *Jesus is entertained at Bethany in the house of Martha.*
Luke x.

AT Bethany, near Jerusalem, lived a family to which our Lord was particularly attached, Lazarus, and his sisters Martha and Mary. On this occasion he visited them on his way to Jerusalem, and having entered as usual upon some edifying discourse, Mary, delighted with the opportunity, sat down at his feet, as was the custom of disciples, to profit from his instructions; but Martha, like many others engaged in the bustle of active life, was so immoderately anxious to

provide an entertainment for her illustrious guest, that she would have had every other occupation give way to it, and was displeased with her sister for not coming to help her. She appealed to Jesus, and expostulated with him upon the supposed impropriety of her sister's conduct; but our perfect Teacher viewed it in a different light, and addressing Martha with a tender repetition of her name, observed that she was disquieted about many things not worthy of her regard, and that while she was busy in providing a *needless* plenty, her sister had chosen the better part, by seizing on the opportunity afforded of spiritual improvement, the effect of which was permanent, and would not be taken away. Though Martha was on this occasion faulty, yet she was a true believer, and we may therefore suppose that this affectionate reproof had its proper effect. Jesus was not displeased with her civility, but Mary's listening to his teaching was more acceptable to him, whose meat and drink was to do the will of his heavenly Father.

99. *Jesus attends the feast of the Dedication; but declaring himself and the Father to be one, the Jews attempt to stone him for blasphemy, and he is obliged to retire beyond Jordan. John x.*

AFTER a two months' absence, Jesus, notwithstanding the danger he had been exposed to on his last visit, returned to Jerusalem for the feast of the Dedication. Only three were established by Divine authority, but the law did not forbid the institution of others; and we may infer from his presence, that he does not disapprove of such memorials of special national mercies in his Church. This had been appointed by Judas Maccabeus, in imitation of those of Solomon and Ezra, in commemoration of the cleansing of the second temple and altar, after they had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes; (1 Mac. iv.) and in the time of Josephus it was celebrated with much solemnity^r. It commenced on the fifth of Decem-

^r Ant. xii. 2.

ber, lasted eight days, and was also called the Feast of Lights, because the Jews illuminated their houses on the occasion. The whole time was spent in singing hymns, in offering sacrifice, and in diversions. It being winter, and the weather perhaps stormy^s, Jesus was walking in the colonnade on the east side; (described by Josephus, and mentioned in Acts iii. 11.) the usual place of resort for Jewish worshippers, and considered to be the only remaining part of the original building. The rulers came to him here, and asked him how long he meant to keep them in a painful state of suspense, that is, by speaking of himself as the "light of the world," "the door of the sheep," "the good Shepherd," &c. without plainly avowing without a figure that he was the Messiah. To this he answered, that he had told them, (at least in effect,) but that if he had not, his miracles were a sufficient declaration. But because they were not his sheep, they would not believe, whereas his sheep did "hear and obey him," and would never perish of their own accord, nor would any enemy be able to force them away from him; for his Father, whose power was irresistible, had given them to him, and he was one with him in being, and consequently in will and power^t. His conclusion, that being one with the omnipotent Father, he was able to defend his sheep against all enemies, sufficiently proves that he meant to claim divine power. The Jews deemed his claim blasphemy, as it certainly would have been, if he had been a mere man; and their preparing to stone him is the best exposition of his words. Our Lord, in his intercessory prayer, prays that all his disciples may be one, as He and the Father are one; but there the context shows, that he is speaking of unity of will and disposition, while here it is as plain that the attribute referred to is power. They then expressly declared, that they would stone him, because he made himself God. Our Lord did not deny the charge, but not judging it proper at that time to bring

^s χειμῶν is both a storm and winter, and may be used here in either sense.

^t [ἓν, not εἰς-Θεῶν,] that is, one Deity, not in person but substance.

that mysterious truth into discussion, he showed that in a subordinate sense their law called men gods^u, meaning their priests and magistrates, who were types of him the true God; and therefore they had no right to object to the title being claimed by one whom the Father had consecrated in a higher degree, and for a higher purpose. To this he added, that they might have had some reason for refusing credit to his words, if he did not do the works of his Father; but if he gave that evidence of almighty power, though they disregarded his testimony, they ought not to despise his credentials. The context must decide the nature of the union of which he speaks. He had just said as Messiah, "I do the works of my Father." Therefore, in justifying himself by the Scripture in taking the name of God, he only meant to refute the charge of blasphemy, not to deny that it belonged to him in the higher sense. And that they so understood him appears from their not being satisfied with his explanation, and his being obliged to withdraw from their violence.

The discourse was abruptly closed by their endeavour to seize him; and the mildness and meekness of our Lord's replies, even while they were endeavouring to destroy him, are the more worthy to fix our attention, as we often see even very excellent persons exasperated by malicious opposition, very far short of the violence to which he was continually exposed, and which he always endured with perfect patience. He then retired to Bethabara, where John had originally baptized; and his ministry there of four months, in a part of the country in which he had not taught before, was attended with great success; many of the people, who remembered John's testimony to him, believing on him.

100. *Jesus restores Lazarus to life. John xi.*

HE was recalled into the vicinity of Jerusalem by Martha and Mary, who entreated him to come and cure their brother,

^u As in Psalm lxxii.

who was dangerously ill. On hearing of the sickness of Lazarus, he remained two days where he was, to allow time for his death. His delay would excite anxiety, and perhaps hard thoughts of him in this family which was dear to him, and for a season it greatly augmented their distress. But the event showed the fitness of his proceeding, for the ensuing miracle redounded more to his glory and their benefit, than an immediate compliance with their request. His delay must also have given pain to himself, for on witnessing the sorrow of the sisters and their friends, he wept. On the third day he intimated his purpose of returning; and this surprised his disciples, who doubted whether he would be able to protect himself and them from the rage of his enemies. He answered in figurative language, implying, as men labour and travel securely while the sun affords light, but are liable to stumble in the night, so he was safe, and ought to walk in his vocation during his allotted period. The Apostles accompanied him, agreeing in sentiment with Didymus, who declared his intention to die with him rather than desert him. Jesus did not arrive till the fourth day after the death of his friend. As the village was scarcely two miles from Jerusalem, many of the inhabitants came to condole with the sisters; and this circumstance was over-ruled to make the miracle more extensively known, and more fully attested. Martha, on hearing of his arrival, left the company to meet and welcome him; and expressed her assurance, that he both could and would have cured her brother if he had been on the spot. She seems to have had a faint hope of her brother's restoration to life, but she addressed him only as a prophet who wrought miracles by faith and prayer, not as the incarnate God, who commanded by his own omnipotence. He assured her that Lazarus should rise again, and she declared her belief in the general resurrection. To enlarge her expectations, and to bring her to a right notion of him, he announced himself as "the author of the resurrection and life;" and such was the constraining influence of his conversation, that she acknowledged him for the Messiah. She

immediately went to call her sister, evidently having now a strong expectation excited, that he who had announced himself as the author of life, would restore it to her brother. Mary accompanied her: and her friends, following her to the grave, where they presumed she was gone to weep, brought accidentally, as it were, a numerous party to witness the miracle of Lazarus leaving the grave alive again at the word of Jesus. Many of the spectators believed, but others, who were governed by an implacable enmity, immediately reported the event to the rulers, who (such was their infatuation and wickedness) summoned a council to consider how they might best destroy him, at the very time that they confessed that he had done many miracles. 'This last surprising one was the cause of their coming to this decision, as we learn from St. John, the only Evangelist that records it. There is a tradition, that Lazarus was then a young man, and that he survived our Lord thirty years'; and his history therefore is supposed to have been omitted by the earlier Evangelists, upon the same principle as St. Peter's being the disciple who cut off Malchus's ear, lest it should have exposed him to persecution. Jesus retired in consequence to Ephraim, but continued his usual occupation of teaching and working miraculous cures.

101. *Jesus answers the question of the Pharisees concerning divorces. Matt. xix. Mark x.*

THE next snare contrived by the Pharisees, was to obtain his opinion upon divorce. The Jews of those days were divided into two parties upon this question: the school of Shammah maintaining that a wife ought to be divorced for adultery alone; while that of Hillel, which decided that a wife might be divorced for any cause, was the most followed: even the author of the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus saith, "If a wife go not as thou wouldest have her, cut her

* Recorded by Epiphanius, Hæres. 65. §. 54.

off from thy flesh, give her a bill of divorce, and let her go," xxv. 26. Josephus thus interprets the law, and confesseth that he himself put away his wife after she had borne him three children, because he was not pleased with her manners. Ant. iv. 8. Our Saviour declares adultery, which violates the marriage contract, to be the only justifiable cause of divorce, and proved that his decision was just, by referring to the history of the institution of marriage, which was appointed by God himself in paradise *before* sin and death had entered. "In the beginning," said he, "God created a male and a female." Now if a plurality of wives, or a succession of them at the discretion of the husband, that is, in other words, if either polygamy and divorce, except for adultery, were to be tolerated, God, instead of saying, that this one man and one woman should be one flesh, would have made several wives for Adam. The words in Genesis are supposed by some to be those of Adam, by others those of Moses, because our progenitor could know nothing of the relation of parents and children; they are here said to be those of God, and whether spoken by Him directly, or as inspiring either of the others to speak, they equally contain a divine command. To this our Saviour adds the proper corollary, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." They then asked why Moses had *commanded* divorce. To this Jesus replied, that he had only *permitted* it; that is, they were suffered without punishment by the magistrate to put away their wives, because they might otherwise from their hardness of heart have used them ill; but from the beginning it was not so; it was a departure from the original institution, which should not be tolerated under the more perfect dispensation of the Gospel. Both sexes are put by our Lord upon a level, as it is declared to be as much adultery for the husband to take another wife as for the wife to take another husband. It likewise follows, that where it is lawful to divorce the wife, it is lawful to marry again. The disciples, who partook of the prejudices of their countrymen, supposed, that if marriage was indissoluble except for this one cause, it would be better not to marry. Celibacy is regarded by the Church of Rome

as a council of perfection, and is required by her from the clergy ; but there is nothing in Scripture to disparage matrimony, which was enjoined to the Jewish priests, and is declared in the Epistle to the Hebrews to be honourable in all. St. Paul only supposes that it is good for the present distress not to marry, and adds, but if thou marry thou hast not sinned ; and our Lord's reply shows, that continency is a gift granted only to some, and that none but those can innocently choose a single life^v.

102. *Jesus blesses children. Matt. xix. Mark x.*

CHILDREN were now brought to Jesus by their parents, that he might bless them. Luke calls them βρέφη, *babes*; and we learn from Mark, that they were young enough to be taken up in his arms. As they were in health, they needed no bodily cure; and being too young to learn, they must have been brought to receive a spiritual blessing; and we know that the imposition of hands was used by the Jews in the invocation of the Holy Spirit, by such as stood in any superior relation to children, or were esteemed of peculiar sanctity. The passage is introduced into our baptismal service for infants, and seems to sanction as strongly as any thing can, short of a positive command, the custom which has prevailed from the introduction of Christianity, of admitting the children of believers into the church by baptism under the new dispensation, as they had been by circumcision under the patriarchal and Mosaic, for their parents must have regarded Jesus as a prophet sent from God.

103. *Jesus answers the rich young man, who enquires what he is to do to inherit eternal life, and takes occasion to warn his disciples against covetousness. The parable of the labourers of the vineyard hired at different hours. Matt. xix. Mark x. Luke xviii.*

A YOUNG ruler came running, and kneeling down to Jesus, enquired what good thing he must do to procure eternal life.

^v Heb. xiii. 4. 1 Cor. vii. 26.

Jesus answered him in the same manner as he had done the lawyer, "If thou art desirous of entering into life, keep the commandments." But they were men of different characters; the lawyer spoke to ensnare him, or at best to obtain his praise; this young man is said to have been loved by Jesus; and though he preferred the world to Christ, he went away sorrowful, divided, as it were, between the two; and *might* be humbled and convinced by the conversation, and afterwards make the sacrifice of his great possessions. Our Saviour, in order to show him how low an estimate he had formed of morality, objected to his giving him, whom he conceived to be no more than a man, the title of "good," as all men are naturally evil, and God only is good, strictly speaking. The young man ignorantly enquired which of the commandments he was to keep; whereas a perfect obedience to them all is the indispensable condition, if salvation is not to be bestowed as a gift, but claimed as the recompence of works. The tenth commandment is not cited, but paraphrased by two of the Evangelists—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Matthew; and, "Defraud not," Mark; and by Luke is altogether omitted. Our Saviour recited those of the second table, and the ruler, blinded by self-love, replied, that he had constantly observed them all. To detect the pride and ignorance which lurked under this plausible appearance, he told him that there was yet one thing wanting—he must sell all his property, and give it to the poor, and become his follower. We must not, however, like the founders of the mendicant orders of friars, draw from this speech the conclusion, that a renunciation of property, and the vow of poverty, is the duty of the Christian; which would be in fact the throwing up of our stewardship before the time. Our Lord spoke to the particular case before him; and his words as a touchstone brought forward the young man's besetting sin, covetousness; and taught him, that, notwithstanding his professions, his great property was dearer to him than the commands of a Teacher whom he had just denominated good.

His behaviour is a melancholy illustration of the pernicious

influence of wealth, and afforded our Lord an occasion of stating the extreme difficulty and apparent impossibility of the salvation of the rich. He of course must be understood to speak generally; and the experience of every age has abundantly evinced, that though a few of the opulent may regard their property as a trust for which they are accountable, riches have proved to the majority of mankind an irresistible temptation. The cares they bring with them have a tendency to draw off the affections from their proper object, the Creator; hoarded, they beget covetousness; enjoyed, they encourage self-indulgence, so fatal to spirituality; and on either supposition they nourish arrogance, and, being trusted in for protection instead of God, often make their owners guilty of a practical idolatry. The disciples, who felt only the temptations of the poor, and seem also to have thought that the rich were more favourably situated for the attainment of future happiness, expressed their astonishment. He explains, that he means those who trust in riches; and we know, that through the influence of the Holy Spirit it is possible to adopt the Apostle Paul's advice, 1 Tim. vi. 17, and to transfer this trust to the living God. Even in that age of peculiar difficulty, a Nicodemus, a Joseph of Arimathea, a Joanna, and a Manaen, are proofs that it was not impossible for the rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven. His answer showed, that the mere possession of wealth does not necessarily exclude the proprietor from heaven; yet it was so worded as to rouse the wealthy to a sense of their danger, and to check in others the desire of owning what our poet calls

The wise man's cumbrance, if not snare, more apt
To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,
Than prompt her to do ought may merit praise.

Among the many indirect benefits derived from Christianity, is the correction of our judgment upon moral topics. Though few, perhaps, go the whole length of our Lord's opinion as to the injurious tendency of wealth, none now seem disposed to rank it among those things that recommend us to the

favour of God ; and yet when worship consisted in sacrifice, it was natural to suppose that he whose circumstances enabled him to make more frequent and more costly offerings, would be preferred to his poorer brother. In such an age it would be difficult to persuade men, especially the rich, that the sacrifice required by God was a broken and a contrite spirit, and that praise and thanksgiving should please him better than “ a bullock with horns and hoofs^y.” Psalm lxix. 31.

Our Lord’s speech to the young ruler led the Apostles to reflect, that what had been recommended to him they had done—left all and followed Christ ; and Peter, with his usual forwardness, and apparently with some self-complacency, asked what would be their reward. As his motives, however, were substantially right, Jesus overlooked their alloy, and assured them, that when he should sit on his glorious throne, they should be honoured in a peculiar manner ; and added, that not they alone, but all who for his sake sacrificed their earthly treasure and connections, should even here, notwithstanding persecution, enjoy a hundred-fold greater happiness than others, and in the next world eternal life. To those to whom it was originally addressed, it may be said to have been almost literally fulfilled ; for instead of one house, wherever they made converts, they found many homes ; instead of a few brothers after the flesh, many spiritual ones ; instead of sons, all whom they should convert ; instead of possessions of their own, the use of the property of all believers. He then observed, that some who had been invited first would be found among the last, and others invited last would rank first ; and illustrated his meaning by a parable, the primary intention of which was to shew, that the Gentiles, though

^y If such were the tendency of sacrificial worship under a divine dispensation, which has carefully kept spirituality of mind in view, how pernicious must it practically prove under the corruptions of paganism. A striking illustration is afforded by this passage from a celebrated Sanskrit work, the Hitopades, or original Pilpay’s fables, “ Knowledge produceth humility, from humility proceedeth worthiness, from worthiness riches are acquired, *from riches religion*, and thence happiness.” What a comment upon the words, “ The poor have the Gospel preached to them.”

invited last to enter the Church, would be admitted to the same privileges with the believing Israelites. It applies no less to the conversion of individuals at the earlier and later periods of their respective lives, for thus one man would work in his master's service longer than another. The householder who hires labourers at a stipulated rate for the day, if he acts according to his agreement, cannot be charged with injustice to them, though out of his liberality he bestow the same upon others who work less, even if it be only for one hour. In the same manner our great Master, if he should grant the same remuneration to all, whether called to serve him in his Church in the morning, the noon, or the evening of life, cannot be justly blamed. It is true that some will have more reason to magnify his bounty, but none can have a right to complain. The remark that many are called but few are chosen, deserves our most serious consideration, that, not content with the possession of church privileges, we may "give all diligence to make *our* calling and election sure."

104. *Jesus again foretells his death. Matt. xx. Mark x. Luke xviii.*

THE rulers, immediately on the resurrection of Lazarus, had issued a proclamation against Jesus. His disciples therefore were alarmed, as they were following him to Jerusalem. They were indeed in immediate expectation of the establishment of his kingdom, but they had recently heard of the difficulty of the rich entering into it, and comparing that declaration with the conduct of the rulers, they were alarmed. Jesus reminded them that his ministry drew towards a close, and that, according to the Scriptures, he would be condemned to death by the Jewish nation; but as they had no longer the power of inflicting capital punishment, they would deliver him up to the Gentiles, that is, to the Roman government, and that he would be put to death according to the manner of that nation. Humanly speaking, it seemed far more probable, that instead of making his death a public and a national

act, his enemies would have privately destroyed him; and such we learn was their intention. Matt. xxvi. 4, 5. But it was foretold, that he was to be mocked as a fool, to be scourged as an offender, to be spit upon as a blasphemer, and to be crucified as a criminal. Nevertheless he was to rise again on the third day. His declaration, that all that was to happen to him had been foretold, ought to have strengthened their faith; but they understood him not, though he had spoken so plainly, because they were unwilling to believe in his sufferings.

105. *The mother of James and John begs for them the highest places in the Redeemer's kingdom. Matt. xx.*

SALOME and her children, thinking only of a temporal kingdom, now came to Christ to solicit the highest places of dignity and authority. He answered that they understood not the nature of the request, for the offices and honours he had to bestow would expose those that obtained them to a proportionate share of suffering. Were they able to drink of his cup, and to undergo the sufferings into which he was about to be plunged? Either they did not comprehend his meaning, or were too self-confident when they replied that they were able. In answer he observed, that the honour they coveted would be conferred on those to whom it had been assigned by his Father, but that still their declaration should be fulfilled. James accordingly was the first Apostle that suffered martyrdom, (Acts xii. 2.) and though his brother died a natural death at an advanced age, his sufferings were sufficient to justify the expression, he having been, according to his own testimony, (Rev. i. 9.) "a companion of Christ's tribulation." The application proves, that as yet, at least, no preeminence had been promised to Peter. The other Apostles were as ambitious as James and John, and were in consequence displeased with them. Our Lord condescended to interfere, and point

out the essential difference between the rulers of this world and those of his kingdom. The former domineered and tyrannized over their subjects, but whoever aspired to eminence among them, must be distinguished by humility and self-denial, and by ministering unto his brethren, if required, even to death, of which he was setting the example. He who would be great among you, let him become your *servant*, *διάκονος*, and he who would be the first, your *slave*, *δοῦλος*; and such being the highest dignity in his kingdom, he might well tell these brothers, that they knew not what they asked for.

106. *Jesus restores the sight of Bartimæus. Matt. xx.*

Mark x. Luke xviii.

JESUS now arrived at Jericho, the second city in Palestine, which we do not hear of his visiting before, and which he seems to have passed through, only stopping to perform a miracle of restoring two blind beggars to sight. One only is named by Mark and Luke, but they do not say that there was only one, and the discrepancy may be explained, on the supposition that Bartimæus was better known, either on his own account, or his father's. There is also a difference of little importance, respecting the locality of the miracle, which according to Luke took place when they were near Jericho; according to the other Evangelists, as they left it; but as the three agree that Jesus was then attended by a multitude, it was most probably on leaving the town, where it seems to have collected. The son of Timæus besought Jesus as the Messiah to have pity on him, and though rebuked, he persevered in his cry till he had attracted his attention. Being called by him, he threw off the cloak in which he was wrapped, and rising up ran to meet him. He obtained the blessing that he solicited, with the assurance that he owed it to his faith, and the same faith which restored to him his sight, conferred upon him spiritual illumination, for "he followed Jesus, praising God."

107. *Jesus lodges at the house of Zacchæus, and relates the parable of the pounds. Luke xix.*

ZACCHÆUS, a chief publican, that is, one who farmed the revenues of a district, felt a natural curiosity to see this extraordinary person, and, being very short, climbed into a tree for that purpose. There he not only saw but was seen, for Jesus looking up invited himself to his house, apparently out of the city, upon which he came down, and joyfully prepared an entertainment. The crowd murmured at his selecting the house of this sinner, in preference to that of some person of greater respectability; and our Saviour's speech^z *concerning* him, that he was come to seek and to save that which was lost, shows that he was not only of reputed bad character, but at least in a degree deserved it. His own standing forth in the midst of the company, and publicly avowing his intention of making the most liberal compensation to those he had defrauded, and, as in many cases restitution would be impracticable, of giving half the remainder of his income to the poor, proves his faith genuine, and his repentance sincere. He is said to be a rich man, perhaps in contrast to the rich young ruler, to give us an instance, that what is impossible to man, is easy to Him who can speak to the heart, and turn it as he will. He invites them to make their claims. The Mosaic law required no more than restitution, with the addition, in some cases, of a fifth. Numbers v. 7. The Roman law four-fold, but only after conviction. Several commentators, partaking of the feeling of the multitude, endeavour to show, that he was not so great a sinner as is generally supposed, yet, in proportion as they reduce his guilt, they diminish the Saviour's mercy.

As our Lord was now on his way to Jerusalem, the multitude which followed flattered themselves that he was about to assume his sovereignty; and therefore, to remove this erroneous impression, he related the parable of the pounds,

^z Πρὸς has here this sense, as in Rom. x. 21.

which in its primary meaning represents the conduct and the lot of his own contemporaries, who rejected or acknowledged him ; but is no less applicable to the decision of the last day. The mina, which our translators here render pound, is equal to sixty shekels, which, according to our method of calculating the latter, amounts either to £7. 10s. or £9. So small a sum was probably chosen to illustrate the king's munificence, in bestowing in return so liberal a reward as the sovereignty over as many cities. He describes himself under the figure of a petty king, who sets out for a foreign country to have his title confirmed by a higher power, as was not unusual in that age of Roman pre-eminence, and of which Archelaus, the last sovereign of Judea, was a recent instance. Not only did he visit Rome for the purpose, and succeed, but his countrymen sent an embassy, as in the parable, to defeat the scheme, and were many of them, in consequence, put to death by him on their return, when we may presume he rewarded his adherents. Thus our Lord, instead of taking immediate possession of his sovereignty, would, for a season, ascend to his Father, and after a long time, that is, at the judgment day, come again to punish his enemies, and reckon with his servants. In Matthew we find the similar parable of the talents, but that was only addressed by Christ to his disciples, and takes no notice of his enemies. In the one, the deposits are equal, and the rate of profit different ; in the other, the sums are unequal, and the improvement made the same. Some commentators therefore understand by the pounds, the grace bestowed either upon ministers or private Christians ; and by the talents the natural gifts of intellect, or our respective shares of property, power, and influence, which, it is well known, are unequally distributed, as the dispenser of them sees fit. We learn from both, that the future reward of the obedient will be in proportion to their diligence ; that each servant is responsible only for what has been entrusted to him, and that mean abilities and little property are no justification of neglect ; for the servants who buried the single talent, and laid by the pound,

represent those who deem it sufficient to abstain from positive sin. Such are ever ready to misrepresent the gracious Giver of what they have, as a severe and rigid taskmaster, unreasonable in his demands; like one who should claim to reap the field which he has not sown, or to take up the pledge which he did not deposit. But they will be condemned out of their own mouth; for the very character they falsely ascribe to him, should have stimulated them to exertion; and if they were not able, like the others, to augment their capital by trade, they might at least have put it out on good security to the bankers, who would have returned it with *interest*. In both parables, the neglected sum is given to the servant who traded with most success. This in that of the pounds excites surprise, and probably displeasure; but they are assured, that it was the principle of his government to take away the deposit which had been neglected, and to confer more on those that had improved their talents and opportunities. *Usury*, from the Latin *usura*, originally meant the profit, great or small, made by the loan of money; but when first rendered legal in our country, under Henry the Eighth, which was done with great reluctance, the rate appointed was denominated interest; and usury became an odious term, being restricted to that amount which the law pronounced to be exorbitant. Strange as it may seem to us who live in an age when sounder notions prevail, it is a fact, that the practice was formerly universally condemned, both by moralists and political economists. Aristotle^a and his great rival Bacon^b, were alike unfriendly to this "barren and bastard employment of money," as the latter was pleased to call it; yet in his *Essay on Usury*, he inconsistently suggests regulations for it, observing, that it is better to mitigate it by declaration, than to suffer it to rage by connivance. The School divines brand it as contrary to nature as well as revelation, and the Canon law condemns the taking any interest as a mortal sin,

^a Politics, i. 6.

^b Life of Henry VII.

and punishes it with excommunication. A misconception of the Mosaic prohibition, which was clearly a political and not a moral precept, since it allows Israelites to take interest from strangers; and an excessive deference to the authority of Aristotle, have no less biased the judgment of the earlier Protestant divines; and among our own, I know of none, previous to the Revolution, that do not regard the lending on interest, if not sinful, yet of a questionable character.^c Aristotle's reason, "the natural barrenness of money," is unworthy of that great man, and is as valid against the rent of houses, or taking a recompence for the use of many other articles. His argument was suggested by the etymology of the Greek word for interest, τόκος, which seems to imply, that the principal generates the interest—"a breed of barren metal." The prejudices against usury among the ancient philosophers, was the natural result of the state of society, which fell under their observation. In countries where there is little or no commerce, the great motive for borrowing being necessity, the value of a loan cannot be ascertained by calculation, as it may be where money is borrowed for the purposes of trade, and in such circumstances every money-lender will be regarded in the same odious light that a pawnbroker is now. In countries where it is borrowed for the purposes of commercial profit, the borrowers are often the rich, the lenders the comparatively poor. The prohibition of usury to the Jews in their mutual transactions, was in perfect consistency with the other principles of their political code, commerce being discouraged, and mortgages prevented, by the indefeasible right which every man had to his land. Calvin is, I believe, the first who confuted this sophistry, and maintained that the practice must be determined by the rule of equity. It is satisfactory to observe, that on this as on

^c Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers*, vol. . . p. 180.

^d Shakspeare's *Merchant of Venice*.

^e In an Epistle quoted in a note in Stewart's *Dissertation on the Progress of Philosophy*, prefixed to the Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

other subjects, the word of God and the dictates of sound reason coincide; and that the former fairly examined will be found to give no countenance to any erroneous position, though the best and wisest of uninspired men have maintained it.

108. *Jesus proceeds from Jericho to Bethany, where he is entertained in the house of Simon the leper. John xi. xii. Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii.*

THE Jews, who had gone up to Jerusalem, to purify themselves preparatory to their eating of the paschal lamb, sought Jesus from various motives, and questioned one another whether he would have courage to show himself or not, since a proclamation for his apprehension had been published. This decree of the council was occasioned by the miraculous restoration of Lazarus to life, and could not have passed unanimously, for we know that neither Nicodemus nor Joseph of Arimathea consented to it; and there might be other members of that assembly averse from so iniquitous a measure. It was obtained through the influence of the high priest, who avowed the maxim, that the end justifies the means, and declared in his official capacity, that it was expedient that one person should die instead of the whole nation. This he meant of their national preservation, and was so understood by the council; but the real import of the speech, which was suggested by the Holy Spirit, (who here, as in the case of Balaam, made use of the agency of a wicked man,) was, that Christ should die to save from eternal death all real believers; not Israelites alone, but his whole people gathered both from them and the Gentiles.

The rulers had determined not to put him to death at the feast, for fear of a tumult, but it pleased divine Providence, that both the mode and time of that event should be contrary to their intention, and that He, the real paschal victim, should be sacrificed in the most public manner during the passover, when Jerusalem was full of worshippers; and the fact of his death decreed by his own nation, and confirmed

and effected by the Romans, would thus be made known throughout the world. Jesus, I apprehend, proceeded direct from the house of Zacchæus to Bethany, before he made his solemn entry into the city, and an entertainment provided in honour of him there, at the house of Simon, who had been a leper, was the occasion of altering their plan. The presence of Lazarus brought a concourse of people from the city, to see a man who had been restored to life, and whatever augmented the popularity of Jesus, at this crisis alarmed the rulers; an incident that occurred at the feast, provided them with the very instrument wanted for their purpose, and our Lord's proceeding to the temple as the Messiah, probably satisfied them that delay would be dangerous. Martha, reported by tradition to be Simon's daughter, waited at table, and her sister Mary, desirous of publicly showing her respect for Jesus, brought forth a vessel of the most fragrant and costly balsam, with which she anointed not only his head but his feet. Some of the disciples murmured at what they regarded as the waste of a precious article; and Judas complained that it had not been sold, and the produce given to the poor, not because he commiserated them, but because he kept the common purse, and (ἐβασταζεν) stole out^f of it for his private use. Three hundred denarii, nearly ten pounds, the price which he stated it might have fetched, must have seemed a considerable sum to him who betrayed his Master and Friend for thirty shekels, that is, three pounds and fifteen shillings. That was the legal fine paid to the owner of a slave who had been killed accidentally by a beast, (Exodus xxi. 32.) so literally did our Lord assume the form of a servant; and it is the precise value which Zechariah had predicted would be set by the people of Israel upon him, who was not only their Prince but their God. "A goodly price that I was prized at of them," saith Jehovah, chap. xi. 13. Our Saviour's reply intimated that they did not duly appreciate him. The poor they had with them always, and at any time they could

^f Carried off.

relieve them, but him they had not always; in fact, his departure was at hand, and the act for which they had heedlessly blamed her, being all she could do to honour him, was so acceptable and so excellent, that it would be mentioned to her praise wherever the good news of salvation should be proclaimed[§]. He added, that in so doing, she had anticipated his funeral, drawing by the remark their attention to his approaching death, and hinting that they would not grudge the use of this costly spikenard, for the embalmment of a friend. Judas in anger retired from the entertainment, and made his bargain with the chief priests and rulers.

109. *Jesus, riding on an ass's colt, proceeds in triumph to the temple, and weeps over Jerusalem. Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xix. John xii.*

OUR Lord now prepared to enter Jerusalem as a Sovereign, and to take, as it were, formal possession of the temple; but he came not to establish an earthly monarchy, but to offer himself as a victim for the sins of mankind; and no one action during the five days, from his entry to his apprehension, was inconsistent with his humble yet sublime character of a spiritual deliverer. He declared more distinctly than he had done hitherto that he was the Messiah. He assumes the office by clearing the temple, and more openly and strongly reproving the Scribes and Pharisees; but that the people might not attempt as before to make him by force a king, after teaching in the day, he retired from the city at night. This meek and lowly Monarch, and though meek and lowly

§ Notwithstanding the opinion of Lightfoot, Whitby, and Macknight, I believe with Michaelis and Doddridge, and with other approved commentators, that this anointing, and that recorded by Matthew xxvi. and Mark xiv. are the same; conceiving it more probable that they should introduce it into another part of their Gospels, than that within the compass of four days Jesus should have been anointed twice by a woman with the same costly ointments, that the same blame should have been cast upon the action, the same value assigned, and the same speech in vindication. I have here deviated from Newcome's arrangement to follow that of Doddridge.

yet a Saviour, entered his capital, as Zechariah (ix. 9.) had foretold four centuries before, riding upon the foal of an ass, and for this there was an especial reason; not only horses and chariots would have been unsuitable to his pacific character, but the kings of Israel had been forbidden to multiply them, because they were to trust in God alone in the day of battle^ε. In the warmer climate of Palestine, the ass is a finer animal than in England; it is used by persons of distinction, and excites none of the contempt with which it is associated in our minds. He stopped at his frequent place of resort, the mount of Olives, and sent forward two disciples to procure an ass and its colt, pointing out precisely where they were to be found, and how they should settle with the owners. When brought, he mounted the unbroken^h colt upon which no one had hitherto sat, which he rendered governable and steady; and the accompanying crowds spread their cloaks and palm branches along the road, as was usual on a triumphal entry, greeting him with hosannas, as the Messiah, the Son of David, their long expected King, and wishing him prosperity and length of days, in the words of the 118th psalm. It was the restoration of Lazarus to life that excited this transient popularity. As the season of his apprehension was so nigh, he no longer declined their homage; and when the Pharisees called upon him to silence them, he assured them, that if these refused to own him, some other method would be taken of declaring him King of Israel, as extraordinary as if the very stones were to speak his praise. As he approached Jerusalem, conscious though he was of the sufferings and death that there awaited him, no personal feeling affected him; but he wept over the infatuation of that cruel and ungrateful city, which had

^ε Sherlock's Dissertations, iv. p. 271.

^h According to Matthew, it seems as if he rode by turns upon both animals, ἔπαιον αὐτῶν; but Beza refers the pronoun to the nearer antecedent *cloaks*, ἱματία; others, who consider this construction as harsh, conceive that the plural is employed for the singular, as in Joshua vii. 1. Matt. ii. 20. xxvii. 44. Luke xxiii. 36. John xix. 29; and the same mode of expression occurs in the Iliad, x. 512. ἐπιβήσατο ἵππων.

neglected the season of his gracious visitation, and foretold its siege and destruction. The event corresponded most minutely with the prophecy; for Titus, to cut off all hope of safety by flight, encompassed it with a trench and mound, though a most laborious undertaking; for it measured almost five miles: and we learn from the Jewish historian, vii. 18, that the Romans so levelled the city, that they who had not seen it before would not believe that it ever had been inhabited. Thus the Jews were literally encircled and pressed in on every side. This King of glory then, Jehovah, as foretold by Malachi, appeared suddenly in his temple, the Angel of the Covenant, where he cured all the lame and blind that came unto him, so as to excite the admiration even of the children, who joined in the general acclamation of Hosannah to the Son of David. The chief priests and scribes reprove him for accepting the homage of those who they conceived to be incompetent to form a judgment on the subject. He answers them by a citation from the eighth psalm, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise," intimating thereby, that their tribute of admiration was his due, and that it justly rebuked the silence of those, who, from age and knowledge, ought to have been the first to acknowledge him.

110. *Certain Greeks request to see Jesus. John xii.*

SOME Greeks applied to Philip to procure them an interview with Jesus; and as they came up to attend the feast, they must have believed in the God of Israel, though probably, from the difficulty they seem to have found in coming to him, they were not avowed proselytes. It is not said whether their request was granted, nor are their motives mentioned; yet from the following speech of our Lord, whether only reported to them, or spoken in their presence, (which I think most probable,) we may infer, that, like his disciples, they expected that he was about to establish a

temporal kingdom. He declares that the hour for his glorification is arrived, but he intimates that he must pass to it through death, and that therefore it must be of a spiritual nature. He might have continued to enjoy his original glory, without condescending to take the manhood into his Godhead, or he might now resume it without suffering; but then the whole human race must perish, and the noblest of his works, formed for an immortality of happiness, and for whose sake this earth had been fitted up, that they might there praise and serve him, would have been created in vain. His philanthropy, therefore, "his delight in the sons of men," made him submit to death; that as the seed which germinating in the earth brings forth a large increase, so he by dying might give eternal life to his people. He added, that he who loved his life should lose it, and he who hated it in this world should preserve it in that which will last for ever, calling upon those who would serve him, to follow him; and assuring them, in return, that they should be where he was, and be rewarded by his Father. He thereby insinuated that these Greeks would be disappointed, if their wish to see him proceeded from the hope of any earthly advantage. He confessed that the prospect before him distressed him, and that if he yielded to the emotions of nature he should pray to be saved from it, (for being a man, he was tempted like unto his brethren,) but he checked his natural aversion to suffering; he remembered that it was the very object for which he came into the world; and as his death would glorify God by exhibiting to the admiration of the universe the union of infinite justice and mercy, which could thus alone be reconciled, he declared his entire acquiescence in his Father's will. The declaration was followed by the Father's own approving voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified my name, and I will glorify it again; referring to God's name having been glorified just before Jesus entered into the temple, among the hosannahs of the people. According to Lightfoot, Christ was attested from heaven in his three offices; at his baptism, when he entered on his ministry, as

the great High Priest; at his transfiguration, as the Prophet, whom all must hear; and now as King, when he had fulfilled the prophecy, "Rejoice, O Sion, behold thy King cometh." This audible voice of God, was generally accompanied, as in this instance, and in that of St. Paul's conversion, with thunder. The Jews, who knew by reading that their fathers were thus accustomed to receive communications from God, said, an angel spake: the Greeks, who were not so well instructed, only thought that it thundered. He then intimates the nature of his death, and its happy and glorious result in the salvation both of Jew and Gentile. The figurative expression, If I be lifted up, was understood by his auditors to signify his death; but this they could not reconcile with their preconceived idea of the Messiah. He answers their question by another figure, by which he directs them to make use of the light of his teaching while they had the opportunity, that they might correct their erroneous notions. He is now said to have concluded his public teaching; yet another short discourse follows, separated from this only by a remark of the Evangelist. Some commentators consider it as a part of the former, but as it does not appear to me likely that St. John would have interrupted it to insert his own words, I agree with those who take it as a repetition of what Jesus had said before. The remainder of the chapter then will contain John's judgment of his Master's ministry, and as showing that neither his miracles or his doctrines induced the Jews to believe in him. In reporting the former, he reminds the reader that this result had been foretold by Isaiah, and in applying the passage he unequivocally asserts the divinity of Jesus. His words are memorable, Isaiah said this when he saw his glory. Now if we turn to the sixth chapter, from which he cites, we shall find that the person, whom the prophet saw upon a throne, was the Lord of Hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth, that is, the everlasting Deity, Creator, and Governor of the world. Let the Unitarian meditate upon this apostolical declaration, and when he refuses to worship Jesus, consider what satisfactory explanation he can offer of

the passage. To me it appears as plain as words can make it, that Jesus is "the Lord of hosts;" and I am well satisfied, (to adopt the language of Newton,) that it will not be a burden to any at the hour of death, nor be laid to their charge at the day of judgment, that they have thought too highly of him, or laboured too much in setting him forth to others as the Alpha and Omega, the true God and eternal life. In summing up the doctrine, he declares that Jesus had said that he had come a light unto the world, and that his words were so distinct and intelligible, that they would condemn those who rejected him, though his object was not their condemnation but salvation, and that no doubt many remains; he adds, that his doctrine was not his own invention, but that he had received it from his Father, that he revealed it without adding to or detracting from it, and that he knew that eternal life depended upon the belief of it.

111. *Jesus condemns the barren fig-tree, and once more purifies the temple. Mark xi. Luke xix.*

THE next morning, coming into Jerusalem early, probably without having eaten, Jesus went up to a fig tree which grew near the road to gather fruit, which from its appearance he had reason to expect, as it is the property of this plant to have the fruit formed before it puts forth leaf, and the season of gathering the fruit had not yet arrived^k. But finding, from its bearing only leaves, that the tree was barren, he exclaimed, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever," upon which it withered to the root. This, like many of his miracles, had a moral meaning; it was in fact the parable of the barren fig tree realized and exhibited to the senses. Like this tree, the Jewish nation, so tenacious of the divine law, had at a distance a promising appearance, but upon a nearer view, it was found not to bring forth its fruits, and would be condemned as unproductive, and cum-

^k Campbell : see a similar transposition, xvi. 3, 4.

bering the ground^a. He again went into the temple, and once more, towards the close of his ministry, turned out the buyers and sellers, as he had done at its commencement, but with a severer rebuke. He continued there the whole day teaching, his enemies watching him, and the whole people earnestly listening to his instructions. At night he again retired from the city.

112. *The discourse of Jesus in the Temple with the chief priests, the scribes, and elders. Matt. xxi. Mark xi. xii. Luke xx.*

THE following day as they passed by, Peter drew his attention to the withered fig-tree, and he availed himself of it, to exhort them to a lively and intense faith, assuring them, that if they had no misgiving, they too should perform even greater miracles than this. He adds, what is of perpetual application, that the prayer of faith will be answered: but that when we pray, if we would obtain pardon, we must first ourselves pardon those that have trespassed against us.

As Jesus now appeared openly as the Messiah, the leading persons demanded on what authority he acted, in having entered the temple with such a train of attendants, and taking upon him to regulate the conduct of those who frequented it; an office beyond the province of a private individual. Instead of a reply which would have occasioned his immediate apprehension, he engaged to tell them if they would first answer him this question, Was the baptism of John a divine or a human institution? This they could not answer in the affirmative without acknowledging Jesus for the Messiah, for as such John had announced him; or in the negative, from prudence, for the people who owned him for a prophet,

¹ Chrysostom observes, that Christ wished to show that punishment would overtake the nation that rejected him, and that he selected a tree rather than a man, because his dispensation was that of mercy. He pre-figured his eternal mercies by numberless miracles of kindness; he expressed the severity of his judgments on the unfruitful by a single sign inflicted on a senseless tree.

would in indignation have stoned them. They therefore affected ignorance, and by this plea allowed their incompetence to judge of such topics. He then proceeded to warn them; but under the veil of parables, which, while it was too transparent to conceal his meaning, rendered it in a degree less offensive, and sheltered him from the consequences which would have followed from a plain and open statement of the truth. The first, that of the two sons, intimated that the profligate part of the nation would be brought to repentance and obedience, while those who had the form of godliness without the reality would reject the Gospel, notwithstanding their specious professions; and experience proves the remark to be generally true. By asking their opinion he makes them condemn themselves, but it seems that they were not aware of it, till he made a direct application of it. The second concerned the nation at large, yet with special reference to their rulers and teachers. The vineyard, or their peculiar church privileges, were entrusted to them, that they might abound in good works; but when God was no longer present among them by external displays of power, as on the promulgation of the law, they forgot their accountableness to him; and the prophets whom he sent from time to time to call them to repentance, they ill treated, and killed out of hatred to their Master; and were now about to fill up the measure of their crimes by the murder of the Son himself. Not immediately perceiving the application of the parable, they answered, that these wretches would be put to a wretched death, and the means of grace be transferred to those who would make a proper use of them. To bring the concession home to their consciences, he called their attention to the 118th psalm, which declared, that the head stone of the corner, the ornament and support of the spiritual temple, would be rejected by the builders, as neither useful nor beautiful. But he warned them, that whoever should fall upon this stone, that is, whoever should reject him, would suffer like one who stumbles and breaks his limbs; but on whomsoever it should fall, it would by its weight grind him to

powder; that is, those who crucified him, and opposed his religion, would draw down upon themselves the heaviest punishment. They now discovered his meaning, but this only exasperated them the more. According to Mark and Luke, Jesus answered the question himself. Macknight reconciles them with Matthew, by supposing that the priests ironically and contemptuously repeated his words.

As they were afraid of seizing him, he proceeded to exhibit their rejection of him, their consequent ruin, and the transferring of their privileges to the Gentiles, in the parable of a marriage feast, given by a king in honour of his son. We have already read a similar one in Luke, but in this we have an additional circumstance to show, that not only the original guests who stayed away, but that some also of those who were admitted in their stead, were unworthy. It hath been the custom in the East, as early as the time of Joseph, Gen. xlv. 22, for kings and others of high rank to bestow robes upon those whom they delight to honour; we read of it in all our books of travels, and the parable of the prodigal son proves it to have prevailed in our Lord's time^m. A wedding garment, no doubt, was provided for each guest; for it could not be reasonably expected, that travellers should be properly habited for an entertainment to which they were so unexpectedly invited. One person, however, satisfied with his own apparel, rejected the proffered robe, and remained unnoticed, till the King entered to view the company. Being questioned how he came there, he was speechless, which he would not have been if he had any excuse to offer; as Calvin observes, God requires holiness in order to our receiving the benefits of the Gospel, but then he is also graciously pleased to work it in us by his holy Spirit, and may therefore justly resent and punish our neglect of so great a favour. He was therefore excluded, and punished for not conforming to the rules of the banquet, by being thrown into a dark dungeon,

^m This custom would lead the wealthy to keep stores of robes, and explains the representing the perishable nature of earthly treasure as being liable to injury from moths as well as from rust, Matt. vi. 19. James v. 3.

where weeping and vexation were his portion. This denotes, that hypocrites will intrude among real believers, and remain till detected at the last day by the heart-searching God. In the Revelation (xix.) we read of the marriage of the Lamb, and that the Church was arrayed in fine linen, that is, personal righteousness; and this many take to be the wedding garment of this parable. I prefer the interpretation of the imputed righteousness of the Saviour, but consider that the difference is scarcely any; since justification and sanctification are inseparable, and seem to differ only as cause and effect. The metaphor is a frequent one in Scripture. The Church is thus described by the Psalmist; the "King's daughter is all glorious within, (in holiness,) and her clothing is of wrought gold," (the Saviour's righteousness.) Psalm xlv. 13. "Put off the old man, and put on the new." (Ephes. iv. 24.) "Put on the Lord Jesus," (Rom. xiii. 14.) are the exhortations of Paul. "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment," says our Lord himself (Rev. iii. 18.) to the Church of Laodicea; and the robes of the saints, their righteousness, are declared in the Apocalypse to have been made white by being washed in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. vii. 14.)

113. *The Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees, and a Scribe, put cases to Jesus for his decision, which he determines without committing himself, and in return, by one question, silences the Pharisees. Matt. xxii. Mark xii. Luke xx.*

THE chief priests, scribes, and elders, had come, by order of the senate, to examine the pretensions of Jesus; but their project of confuting him issued in their own confusion. The very first sentence which he spake in reply silenced them; and his parables so abashed them, that they went away. They differed widely among themselves, yet they agreed in the wish to ensnare him, and therefore having previously consulted together, they came again in succession to put to him controverted cases, which he could not decide without giving offence to some party. First came the Pharisees and He-

rodians, who, feigning themselves to be just and scrupulous, accosted him with an hypocritical semblance of deference, asking, as a case of conscience, if they might pay the Roman tribute without a breach of their law. The Pharisees inferred from the prohibition to make a stranger their sovereign, that any such payment was unlawful, and this was of course the popular opinion. The Herodians, or Herod's partisans, who made religion subservient to politics, maintained the contrary doctrine. Had he directed them to pay the tribute, the former would have represented him as opposing the law, and advocating the cause of idolaters, and even renouncing the office of Messiah, who they expected would deliver them from foreign servitude; had he declared it illegal, the latter would have charged him with treason. He completely baffled the malignant proposers of this dangerous dilemma, affecting his reputation or his life, by taking advantage of their own concession, that the denarius bore the emperor's image, and superscription; and also of their tradition, that wherever any king's coin was current, it was a proof of that country's subjection to his government; for he significantly warned these turbulent and seditious demagogues, the Pharisees, to render unto Cæsar Cæsar's dues, which they resisted; and these licentious and irreligious courtiers, the Herodians, to render unto God his dues, which they neglected; thus publicly, but obliquely, in a way that they could not take any hold of, reproofing both, and conveying important moral instruction of universal application on the duties of man, both to God and to the government, leaving the nature of the latter as he found it.

The Sadducees, who disbelieved not only the resurrection of the body, but the future existence of the soul, now came to puzzle him with a common place objection, found in the old Jewish writers, derived from the obligation in the Mosaic law, for a man to take the wife of a brother that had died childless. When asked by the Pharisees respecting worldly matters, Christ, whose kingdom was not of this world, did not choose to interfere; but when the Sadducees move a question concerning eternal life, he felt that it did

not become him to be silent. He reproved their ignorance on a double account: "ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God." First he removes the ground of their objection, by declaring, that as in the next world men would be like the angels in immortality, they would not marry, as there would be no need of keeping up a number that would not diminish; and, secondly, he shows that the existence of the soul after death was implied in the lawⁿ. Some think that he chose a text out of the Pentateuch, because it was the only portion of the Bible that they acknowledged; but the truth of that opinion is doubtful, and it seems a better reason to assign, that he thought fit to answer them out of the very author from whom they brought their objection. Many passages from the Psalms and the Prophets he might have cited, in which the doctrines they rejected were more clearly revealed; but he applied himself to the clearing up of Moses's sentiments in that article, and he effected it two ways; first, by observing that their quotation did not prove what they wished for; and, secondly, by showing, that what he had taught elsewhere, fully and clearly disproved it. As *maintaining a position*, he might perhaps have chosen a clearer text; but if we consider him in the capacity of *respondent*, and as defeating a subtle and plausible objection, there could not have been a more effectual mode of doing it. Jehovah announced himself to Moses out of the burning bush, as the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob;" and he declared, that that name should be his memorial to all generations. The last of these had then been dead above 170 years, and still he continued to be *their* God. Is he a God of lifeless clay, of dust and ashes? No, surely; when God declared himself to be their God, they were still alive, and capable of enjoyment; therefore the soul survives the body, for he is not a God of the dead but of the living. The Sadducees were silenced, the Scribes applauded, and the people assented to his reasoning; yet to many now, the answer does not seem to go directly to the proof of the

ⁿ Waterland's Sermon on the text.

Resurrection. They forget, that as the Sadducees denied the immateriality of the soul, with them the disbelief of the Resurrection was the disbelief of a future state; and if he proved no more than the soul's subsisting after death, he proved enough for his purpose. But the same thread of argument with which he began, leads by just and clear consequences to the resurrection of the body; for it implies, that their God will finally render them perfectly happy, and therefore it presumes the reality of the resurrection; for as man was originally made a compound being, the body must not be regarded as a prison from which the soul longs to escape, or as a slave to be punished, but as an essential part of our nature; and as death was the punishment of sin, and as every one remaining under that sentence still carries about with him in his mortality the mark of Divine displeasure; the immortal spirit cannot be perfectly happy, till reunited inseparably with its original companion. That companion has received a taint from the fall of Adam; and while the soul sojourns in it, it is too often an instrument of unrighteousness. But it has been ennobled by its union with our Lord and elder brother, who, in complete human nature, is raised to the mediatorial throne: and in heaven, though substantially the same body, it will undergo a greater change than we can now conceive; it will be incorruptible and spiritual; it will not only be purified like that of Adam, as it came fresh from the hands of its Maker, but it will be assimilated to the glorious body of Christ. It will no longer weigh down the spirit with its infirmities, nor tempt it to sin. Our popular literature more often embodies the speculations of heathen philosophy than the truths of holy writ, and therefore our authors, sometimes even those on religion, seem to forget, that the resurrection of the body is, as much as life everlasting, an article of the Creed. This fundamental truth, the exclusive property of revelation, was deemed so incredible, that when Paul preached it at Athens, it exposed him to scorn and ridicule; the latter, though believed by few, was no new proposition in the city of Socrates and

Plato. It was, however, incumbered and injured by its connection with another doctrine, the preexistence of the soul. The heathen philosophers, who allowed that the Deity had brought the universe into form and shape, could not conceive how any part of it could have been created out of nothing. Matter therefore was with them eternal, and spiritual beings, such as the soul, not the creatures of God, but emanations from, that is, a part of, him. The perplexity which the existence of evil occasioned to thinking minds, unenlightened from above, seems to have originated the belief of the inherent imperfection of matter; and this was a prolific source of error, both in doctrine and practice. Hence proceeded the notion, that the union of body and soul was a misfortune, and the punishment of some offence committed in the pre-existent state. It was supposed to be degraded by its confinement in a material dungeon, which cramped its faculties and impaired its purity; it longed to break the chain which prevented it from soaring to its native skies; and as the body was enfeebled by disease or age, it was supposed to improve, in proportion, both in intellect and purity. This Pagan fancy is so interwoven into our language and thoughts, that an irrational importance has been attached to last words, and Christians have often expressed in prose the poet's sentiment,

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.

Hence it followed from this principle, that the body was not only to be brought into subjection by rigorous abstinences and penances, but to be debarred even of its legitimate gratifications; and to those whose lives were passed in mortifying it, and who looked forward with hope to their emancipation from it, the doctrine that it was again to be raised up from the dust, was at once absurd and revolting. Such could never be brought to believe, that the Deity had originally created matter, or that the Son of God had more than an apparent body. Hence they denied both the incarnation and crucifixion, and, like some of the Corinthians, believed that the

resurrection was past already, and was no more than a figurative rising out of sin into newness of life. Yet it is upon the fact of our Saviour's rising in a human body, that our hope of immortality rests; the philosophical doctrine is only a pleasing dream: the earliest scriptural declaration is that of Job, that *in his flesh* he shall see his Redeemer: and the custom among savage nations of slaying the attendants and horses of a dead chief, and the Egyptian practice of embalming, seem to indicate, that before the introduction of philosophy, tradition had handed down the hope of immortality, as connected with the restoration to life of the body. There have been Christians, and among them writers of eminence, who maintain, that even the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was at least generally unknown to the Israelites under the Mosaic dispensation; and that this most powerful motive to obedience, and only genuine source of consolation, while suffered to transpire among heathens, was studiously concealed from the chosen people of God. It is amazing, that any one, recollecting this answer to the Sadducees, could have started this paradox; but no diligent and humble reader of the Bible will be disposed to give it credit. He knows from inspired authority, (Heb. xi.) that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign (γενν) country, looked for a better (πατρίδα) native land, and *therefore* God is not ashamed to be called their God; and that Moses, when he might have enjoyed the pleasures of sin, as the adopted son of the Egyptian princess, despised such earthly treasures, for he looked to the recompence of an eternal reward. He readily allows, that, for wise and obvious reasons, the legislator did not make it the sanction of his *national* laws, yet he cannot think that he would withhold from his people the knowledge of a doctrine that was his own support and principle of action. I gratefully acknowledge with the Apostle, that Christ hath *made clear and distinct* (φωτίσεν, 2 Tim. i. 10.) our notions of immortal life; but I also believe with our Church, (Art. vii.) "that both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life

is offered to mankind by Christ, and that they are not to be heard which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises."

A lawyer, who was a Pharisee, next came forward to try him by inquiring which was the great commandment of the law; a question much litigated among their doctors. Some held it to be the law of sacrifices, some that of the sabbath, others that of meats or of purifications. Jesus answered, that the great command was an entire and perfect love of God, and that this leads to the second, the love of man, a due performance of which must comprehend all positive and negative precepts; for, as the apostle says, "love is the fulfilling of the law;" and the whole is briefly summed up in this precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The Scribe was struck with the propriety of his reply, and answered that he had determined rightly; and Jesus commended him by declaring, that he was not far from the kingdom of God.

And now having baffled their devices, he in his turn, to try their knowledge of the Law, put to them a question—whose son they conceived the Messiah to be. They answered, without hesitation or suspicion of his drift, "The son of David." This he followed up by a second—how David, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, could then acknowledge him for a superior, which he did by calling him his Lord. Had this son been a mere man, with what propriety could he bestow this title on a remote descendant, to whom he could owe no obedience, and who would have no existence till a thousand years after his death? This they were unable to answer; nor will any have better success who deny the divinity of David's Son and Lord, of him, who is both the root and the offspring of his progenitor, the descendant of that king of Israel according to the flesh, but whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. The orthodox scheme alone can solve this seeming paradox. With this question he finally silenced his insidious enemies, whose ingenuity, though not their malice, was exhausted. Jesus thus effected one great object of his public teaching, the exposure of them to the multitude, who heard

him gladly, and to those who had ears to hear, he had afforded matter for meditation on the real character of the Messiah, and on his own title to the office.

114. *He sharply reproves the Scribes and Pharisees, and finally leaves the Temple. Matt. xxiii.*

HE then turned to the multitude, and cautioned them to observe the instructions of the Scribes and Pharisees as authorized teachers, but not to imitate their conduct, as they contrived by plausible pretences to evade the performance of the duties they enjoined. He also warned them against their love of applause, and seeking worldly honours and distinctions, and, as he was no longer under restraint from fear of being apprehended before his time, he exposed, without reserve, the hypocrisy of these blind guides, and the pernicious casuistry with which they explained away the moral law; and endeavoured to compensate for the omission of their highest duties, as justice, charity, and fidelity, by a scrupulous performance of the minutest external injunctions, such as the tithing of garden herbs. While he condemns their dispensing with oaths, he confutes their sophistry by declaring, as in the Sermon on the Mount, that every oath, the matter of which is lawful, is obligatory, because when men swear by the creature, if their oath has any meaning, it is an appeal to the Creator. He reproached them with resembling in character their forefathers, who had killed the ancient prophets, and called upon them to fill up the measure of their national guilt by destroying him. His language implies that there is a certain measure to which a nation's iniquity is allowed to rise, and that before punishment is inflicted, it must be filled up by succeeding generations adding their own crimes to those of them who preceded them. He at the same time declared that their ruin was brought upon them by themselves, for he had sent unto them from time to time prophets and instructors, and had ever been ready to protect them as the parent bird gathers her brood under her wings. He ended with a

solemn assurance, that their house, that is the temple, would be deserted, that they should be cast out of the church, and excluded from the privileges of his people, and should see him no more till they adopted the language which they now condemned in the people, and welcomed him as the Messiah, blessing him that came in the name of the Lord. With this prediction of their rejection and dispersion, and of their future conversion, he closed his public ministry, and for ever quitted the temple.

This is by far the most animated of our Lord's discourses, and the most likely to give offence. It could not fail of astonishing the people, who looked up to their teachers with reverence. And even those against whom it was levelled were confounded; they knew not what course to take, and so let him go quietly away, without attempting to lay hands upon him, as they had sometimes done before upon much less provocation.

115. *Jesus prefers the widow's mite, because her all, to the large sums given out of their superfluity by the rich. Mark xii.*

HOWEVER, previous to his departure, he noticed the persons who were putting money into the chests, placed for the reception of voluntary contributions towards the expenses of the temple, and in the court in which he had been speaking bore his testimony to the charity of a widow, who threw in two mites, that is, three-fourths of our farthing, being the smallest sum that was allowed to be given, and all that she had earned, and which he pronounced to be a greater gift than the large donations of the rich, who only gave out of their superfluity, while she had retained nothing to purchase necessary food, for which she must depend upon her own labour, or precarious charity. This incident conveys an useful lesson both to the poor and rich; it encourages the poor to do what they can, because God who looks into the heart values the gift according to the disposition of the giver; and it teaches

the rich, that it is not enough that their alms be large, but that they should bear a due proportion to their means^o.

116. *Jesus, on taking leave of the Temple, foretels its destruction, and afterwards on the mount of Olives declares to four of his Apostles the signs that shall precede his coming. Matt. xxiv. xxv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi.*

THE disciples, as they were departing, endeavoured to draw our Lord's attention to the magnificence of the temple, meaning thereby to intimate their regret as well as wonder at its predicted destruction; but he simply replied, that the time was coming when not one of these stones should be left standing upon another. Nothing could appear less probable, for the Romans had as yet no motive to injure one of their own provinces; and even when Jerusalem was taken after a siege of nearly five months, Titus on entering, and looking up at the towers, which the Jews had abandoned, exclaimed, Surely we have had God for our assistant, for what could human hands or machines do against these towers? He was anxious to save the temple out of regard to its sanctity, or the wish of preserving such a distinguished memorial of his victory; but the pertinacity of the infatuated people, and the fury of his soldiers, were the means through which the Almighty defeated his purpose. The Jews themselves first set fire to it, and then the Romans; and his endeavours to extinguish the flames were unavailing. The very foundations were afterwards dug up in search of buried treasure; and the words of Micah (iii. 12.) were literally fulfilled, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed up as a field, and Jerusalem become heaps of stones." Our Lord's prophecy was most exactly verified about forty years after it was uttered; and it is not a simple prediction of the fact, but consists of a variety of minute particulars, such as the city being surrounded with

^o Our liberality is relative to our wealth; it consists not in the value of our gifts but in the habit of the giver; and he who gives the least of all may be the most liberal of all, if what he gives bears the highest proportion to his substance. Aristotle, Nic. Ethics, iv. 1.

a trench, the unparalleled misery of the besieged, and the complete destruction both of town and temple, which could never have been predicted except by a true prophet, and the literal fulfilment of which would never have been known, unless it had pleased Providence to preserve to us the best commentary upon it, in the minute detail of the siege, by Josephus, who was in the Roman camp, who was not a Christian, and had probably never heard of the prediction.

When they had withdrawn to the Mount of Olives, where they were alone, his four confidential disciples asked when these things should be, and what should be the sign of his coming, and of the end of the world which was to follow his advent. Great, says Dr. Hales, has been the embarrassment and perplexity of commentators concerning the meaning of this enquiry, and four hypotheses are still afloat on the subject. The first confines *the whole* enquiry to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem; the second connects with it Christ's second advent in the regeneration, according to Jewish expectation; the third substitutes for this advent the last, accompanied with the general judgment; and the fourth, which unites all the preceding into the three questions, he himself supports. Certainly several of the phrases are, according to our ideas, more suitable to the final and more important coming of the Son of Man at the last day, to judge the whole human race, than his coming through the agents of his providence, the Roman troops, to take vengeance on his apostate people, and to terminate the Jewish dispensation. But our Lord's positive declaration, that the existing generation should not pass away till all these things were fulfilled, necessarily limit such expressions as the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars, and the shaking of the powers of heaven, to the destruction of Jerusalem; nor is the use of these figures to denote a temporal calamity, so harsh and bold as it may appear, to persons not so familiar as the disciples were with the language of ancient prophecy^o. The

^o Isaiah describes the future fall of Babylon in the same imagery, (chap. xiii.) "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, for the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be

most satisfactory interpretation to my mind is that of Bishop Porteus, that the whole twenty-fourth chapter in its primary acceptation relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, but that the images are for the most part applicable also to the day of judgment, and that an allusion to that great event, as a kind of secondary object, runs through almost every part of the prophecy. In Isaiah, he continues, there are no less than three subjects, the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the call of the Gentiles to the Christian covenant, and the redemption by the Messiah, so blended together, that it is extremely difficult to separate them; and in the same manner our Saviour seems to hold out the destruction of Jerusalem his principal subject as a type of the dissolution of the world, which is the under part of the representation. By thus judiciously mingling together these two important catastrophes, he gives at the same time a most interesting admonition to his immediate hearers, and a most awful lesson to all his future disciples; and the benefit of his predictions, instead of being confined to a few believers of his age, is by this admirable management extended to every subsequent period of time. It is certain that the Jews, and even the early Christians, believed that the destruction of Jerusalem and the general judgment, if not cotemporaneous, would only be separated by a very small interval, and this idea led the Apostles to put the questions together. Our Lord, after answering the first, avails himself of it to prepare them for his final judgment; and this transition, about which commentators are so much divided, and so generally mistaken, I humbly conceive, says Doddridge, commences with, *Therefore be ye also ready. Matt. xxiv. 44.* The prophecy was of peculiar importance

darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine; therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place:" and chap. xxiv. 23. xxxiv. 3. Joel says, (ii. 31.) that before the great and terrible day of the Lord, the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. Coming in the clouds sometimes means not the personal appearance of the Deity, but his manifestation, by some signal act of providence. "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt." Isaiah xiv. 2 Sam. xxii.

to believers of that generation, since their own preservation from death, and the miseries of a protracted siege, depended upon their observing the signs of the times, and acting on the Saviour's advice, to escape with the least possible delay. It is therefore recorded by the first three Evangelists; and attention to Daniel's corresponding prediction is called for by two of them, "Whoso readeth, let him understand." As John wrote after the event, he has no allusion to it. By the special providence of God, when the Romans first advanced against Jerusalem under Cestius Gallus, they suddenly retired again, at which Josephus expresses his surprise, as the place might have been taken immediately; but there was a purpose to be answered by his irresolution, unknown to the Jewish historian; for the Christians, mindful of their Lord's admonition, withdrew to Pella, and other places beyond the Jordan; so, as ecclesiastical history informs us, not a Christian perished in the siege.

He begins with naming the signs that should precede his coming to take vengeance upon Jerusalem, and which we know were also all fulfilled;—false messiahs, who deluded many to their destruction; wars, rumours of wars, famine, pestilences, and earthquakes; but these were only (*ἀρχαὶ ἀδύων*) the preludes to the national misery, like the pangs and throes of a woman in labour before her time is come. He then passes on to the calamities that awaited themselves, persecution, the treachery of some of their own body, and the abounding of false teachers, the effect of which would be to cool the love of Christians both to Christ and to one another; and he adds, that notwithstanding opposition and apostacy, the Gospel will be first proclaimed throughout the world, or empire. The signal for their flight was to be the appearance of the Roman standards within sight of the holy city, the desolating abomination, as they are called by Daniel with the strictest propriety, for the eagles, being an object of worship, were in Hebrew phraseology an abomination, that is, an idol; and none could be more destructive, for the Roman armies plundered and devastated without mercy, and, to use

the indignant expression which one of their historians puts into the mouth of a hostile chieftain^p, "where they have made a desert they call it peace." This was fulfilled to the letter, for the Romans, on the capture of the town, brought the eagles into the temple, and sacrificed to them there. Before, the governors used to respect their scruples, and when they came up to Jerusalem, left the eagles behind at Cæsarea^q. He informs them that there never had been, and never should be again, so great tribulation. He himself had wept upon the foresight of these scenes of horror, and the reader of Josephus, who will find in that historian a similar remark, will allow that it is fully borne out by the event. Eleven hundred thousand persons are computed by Josephus to have perished in the siege; so that even allowing his numbers to be overstated, and considering how many must have died during the war, the expression is amply justified, that unless a limited season had been assigned, no flesh could have been saved, that is, the whole nation would have been exterminated; but those days were shortened as he promised, for the sake of the elect, or of those Jews that should hereafter be converted. Luke adds the remarkable fact, that Jerusalem should remain trodden down by the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled; that is, it should seem, till the celebrated period of 1260 years, announced by Daniel and St. John, which is to usher in the universal prevalence of Christianity, is completed. This also has been accomplished; the town, with the exception of part of the wall,

^p Speech of Galgacus in Tacitus's *Life of Agricola*, 30.

^q How strange and offensive a spectacle the approach of these "abominations" must have been to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will appear from the following incident: Pilate was the first governor that introduced them into the city; and he did it privately, the army making their entry in the night time. But as soon as the people knew it, they went in a vast body to Cæsarea, making earnest supplications that the images might be removed. He surrounded them with his guards, and threatened them with immediate death if they did not return home; but they threw themselves on the ground, and offered their necks to the sword, saying they could more easily die than act contrary to their laws. Upon which Pilate, surprised at their firmness, immediately complied with their request. Josephus, *Ant.* xviii. 4.

and three towers which were kept for a garrison, was demolished, and when restored by Hadrian, with the name of *Ælia* in honour of himself, no Jew was permitted even to enter it. The Apostate Julian commanded in vain that the temple should be rebuilt; and since the fall of the eastern empire, Jerusalem, except during eighty years after the first crusade, has been under the government of Mahomedans.

He then, from the fate of the antediluvians and of the Jews, exhorts them not to be taken by surprise, but to watch, and be ready for their Lord's coming, which he will to each individual at his death; and the ensuing parable of the faithful steward, which, though a warning to all believers, is more especially addressed to the ministers of religion, has clearly no reference to the fall of Jerusalem, for there is no reward to be bestowed after that event. That subject, therefore, is now altogether dismissed, and the transition to the final judgment begins verse 45. The time cannot be defined; I shall return *suddenly*, therefore watch, and discharge your respective duties. Peter, fervid in his disposition, and full of affection to Jesus, breaks out into this question, Sayest thou these words unto us, that is, dost thou exhort only us thy Apostles to vigilance, or does the caution concern all thy followers? The answer shows that it was designed for every generation, What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch. And certainly it concerns us as much as the believers of past ages, and equally whether we shall be found by him alive at his second advent on earth, or go unto him by death.

The same lesson is presented in another form in the parable of the prudent and foolish virgins. Even the former had fallen asleep, for the best have sins of infirmity and omission; but when aroused by the midnight cry, they had only to trim their lamps, for their oil or stock of grace, though not in use as it ought to have been, was not exhausted. The foolish ones had, when it was wanted, no oil, no principle of holiness and virtuous conduct; they discovered their deficiency, but too late; and while they went in search of some, the others had entered with the bridegroom, the palace door

was fastened, and they were shut out for ever. We learn from the answer of the prudent ones, that the best of Christians have no superfluous works of merit, the benefits of which can be made over to others⁹.

Sudden unexpected arrival after long delay is implied in both parables, and still more plainly in that of the talents, which a king delivered to his servants to trade with, in which it is positively stated, that he did not return to reckon with them till after a long time. Luke omits it, because it is substantially the same as that of the pounds. The moral is the same in both; in that the deposits were the same, in this different, but to save the justice of the owner it is stated, that both pounds and talents were intrusted to every man, according to his ability.

117. *Description of the day of judgment. Matt. xxv.*

OUR Lord, having made this gradual transition from the destruction of the Jewish city and polity to his personal coming to judgment, describes the ultimate lot of genuine and hypocritical disciples at the day of final retribution; for though the whole race of mankind must then stand at his judgment-seat to give an account of the things done in the body, this parable of sheep and goats only comprehends the professors of his religion. The former are invited into everlasting happiness, the latter are sent into everlasting misery; but there is a remarkable variation in the language: the kingdom is said to have been prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world; but hell, though it will be the habitation of impenitent sinners, is said to have been prepared, not for them, but for the devil and his angels. The *evidence* here given of the

⁹ " Voluntary works besides over and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety; for by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required." XIVth Article of our Church.

fitness of the elect for their reward, is benevolence. We must not, however, hence hastily conclude, that charity will purchase, as it were, heaven, and make amends for sin and the omission of other duties. One distinguishing and conspicuous virtue is brought forward to illustrate the Christian character, which cannot exist alone, and which springs from a saving faith in the Redeemer, "working by love;" for we must observe, that the quality selected is not general, but Christian benevolence; love to the brethren, for the sake of their common Master, "Inasmuch as you did it" (not merely to your fellow creatures out of pity, but) "to the least of these *my brethren*, you did it unto me." We here perceive the Judge not only noticing the works of his people when they make no mention of them, but when he is pleased to recount them with satisfaction, they seem to have forgotten that they ever performed them; a plain proof that they did not build upon them their hope of salvation. But the self-righteous, we learn from his words in another place, will plead their merits and usefulness, "Lord, have we not prophesied" (that is, taught) "in thy name, and in thy name done many miracles?"

118. *Jesus foretels that he shall be delivered up to be crucified. Matt. xxvi.*

HE next informed his disciples, that at the ensuing passover he should be delivered up in order to be crucified, for he had all along a foreknowledge of his sufferings, peculiar to himself. Thus we find futurity concealed even from his most favoured servants and martyrs, as appears from the case of Paul, who says, "I go up to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there," Acts xx. 22. but Jesus had from the first a foreknowledge of the ignominious and painful death which was to close his ministry, and this knowledge, while it vindicates him from the imputation of being an impostor, and exalts his character as a man, is also evidence to his divine nature.

PART VI.

119. *The disciples prepare the passover. Matt. xxvi.
Mark xiv. Luke xxii.*

THE resort of strangers to Jerusalem at the seasons of the festivals, often doubled the ordinary population, and it was customary for householders to allow them the gratuitous use of rooms, for the celebration of the passover^a. Jesus directed Peter and John to the house which he wished to use, in a circuitous manner; to a place where they would meet a servant of the owner, who, we presume, was one of his favourers. It is supposed that this manner was chosen that his enemies might be ignorant of the house, and so he might institute the commemoration of his death without interruption. He appears not to have been in Jerusalem in the morning, which he probably passed alone in meditation and prayer. This supper is perplexed with critical difficulties. It is evident that it took place on the Thursday, on the night of which Jesus was seized; and yet St. John informs us, that on the following morning the Jews would not enter the governor's palace, lest they should contract such a defilement as would prevent their eating the passover. According to this Evangelist, our Lord expired at the very time appointed for feeding upon that eminent type of him, the paschal lamb. Some distinguished Roman Catholic divines, as Toinard, Calmet, Lamy, and Dupin, maintain, in consequence, that Jesus did not keep the passover, but only partook of a farewell supper with his Apostles. But our Lord's words, in instituting the Sacrament, seem to imply, that the preceding supper was the paschal one; and the contrary opinion is hardly reconcilable

^a Κατάλυμα, here translated *guest chamber*, is the same that is rendered *inn* in the account of the Nativity, and is there supposed to answer to the modern term *caravansary*, meaning a place provided for travellers, without any charge for the use of the apartments.

with the question, "Where wouldest thou that we should prepare the passover?" and with his own declaration, "I have earnestly desired to eat with you this passover." I therefore, with Grotius, Hammond, Macknight, and other commentators, conceive, that our Lord anticipated the feast by one day: this I conceive St. John, with his usual accuracy, intended to state; and as he wrote with a knowledge of the preceding Gospels and with the design of explaining them, I consider his testimony as decisive. As our paschal victim was sacrificed for us, it became Christ to suffer at the hour when the lamb was eaten; and I think with Greswell, that the message he sent, recorded by Matthew, "My time is at hand," was designed to remove any surprise at his celebrating the passover at an unusual hour. It may be objected, that as the animals were not to be killed in any private dwelling, but "in the place which the Lord should choose, to put his name there," that is, in the temple of Jerusalem, our Lord could only keep the passover in the imperfect manner of the modern Jews, with bitter herbs, and unleavened cakes, omitting the lamb. But Philo, our Lord's contemporary, informs us, that in this instance alone, each Israelite was permitted to act as a priest, and kill his own victim; and though our Lord did not conform to the practice of the Pharisees, and therefore of the majority of the nation, he was not singular, but followed the calculation of the Sadducees, which several distinguished chronologists maintain to be correct. The best statement of the several opinions which I know, is an elaborate note in Townsend's Arrangement^b.

This ordinance was instituted by divine command, the night before the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, for a perpetual memorial of their signal deliverance, and of the mercy of God in *passing over* their houses, and sparing them when he slew all the first-born of Egypt. It was called also the feast of unleavened bread, because no other was to be used during the seven days of its continuance. It was bind-

^b Life of Moses, &c.

ing upon every Israelite, except under particular circumstances, (Numbers ix.) but no uncircumcised person was permitted to partake of it. The victim might be either a lamb or a kid, but the former was preferred; it must be a male of the first year, and without blemish. It was to be selected out of the flock four days before; and was (after the erection of the temple) slain in one of its courts, between what they called the two evenings, that is, three and five o'clock in the afternoon. The lamb was to be roasted whole, and none of it was to be left till morning, so that two families joined together for the occasion, when one was too small. In the time of Josephus, a paschal society consisted of not less than ten, nor more than twenty individuals. They then reclined round the table, that it might be known, as one of their Rabbis observes, that they had passed from bondage into liberty. The ceremony of eating it in haste, with their loins girded and ready to depart, was given up after their settlement in Canaan^c. They began with drinking a cup of wine diluted with water, as was the general usage of antiquity, and ate a little of the sallad. The supper, consisting of the lamb, the remains of the peace offerings of the preceding day, and two unleavened cakes, was then removed, that they might explain to their children the meaning of the ordinance. When it was replaced, a second cup was sent round while they repeated the 113th and 114th psalms. The master then broke and blessed one of the cakes, reserving half an one to eat with the last morsel of the lamb. The cake was eaten with the bitter herbs, or sauce made of dates, raisins, and vinegar, beaten to the consistence of mustard, and it was into this that Jesus dipped the piece of the cake, which we render the sop, which he gave to Judas. The peace offerings were eaten next; and lastly, the lamb, which was followed by two cups, that of blessing, equivalent to our saying grace, and that

^c This may teach us not to overrate the importance of the posture in which we communicate, which has unhappily divided Christians, since our Lord and his Apostles conformed to established custom, by reclining at the paschal supper.

denominated *hallel* or praise, because they sung over it the remaining psalms, from the 115th to the 118th inclusive, and ended with a prayer. Commentators do not agree in the precise time at which our Lord instituted the commemoration of his death, because the Evangelists do not all record the same particulars, nor in the same order. In Luke we read of another cup (ver. 17.) previous to the sacramental one, which last, according to Lightfoot, who was deeply versed in Hebrew literature, was either the third or fourth of the passover, for he varied in opinion. Others take Luke's words "*after* supper" literally, and suppose that the cup to be drank in memory of his precious blood-shedding was a *fifth*; and this is at least strongly countenanced by the words with which he accompanied it, "Drink ye all of this;" for the former paschal cups they would taste of necessity, but this they might otherwise have declined. Another more important question depends upon our settlement of this, whether or no the traitor partook of the Eucharist. It is the general opinion of the fathers that he did, as it was also of the formers of our Communion Service, as implied in their first Exhortation; yet it seems more probable, if we may presume to judge, that he who knew what was in man, would not admit into this intimate sign of communion one who he was aware intended that very night to betray him. In the two first Gospels, the declaration, that he who dippeth his hand into the dish would betray him, precedes the institution of the Sacrament, and we may suppose, though not mentioned there, that Judas then immediately went out, as we learn from St. John. In Luke, the remark follows, but he seems to have misplaced both that and the contention among the apostles for preeminence.

The mystical signification of the Jewish sacrament is declared by Paul, 1 Cor. v. 7. who calls Christ our Passover, and the Baptist referred to this type when he pointed him out as the Lamb of God; on this account Peter (1 Ep. i. 19.) calls him a Lamb without blemish and without spot; and the beloved disciple, "the Lamb that was slain," Rev. v.

The benefits derived from his death are visibly prefigured in this ordinance. The Israelites were preserved from the destroying angel by the blood of the lamb sprinkled upon their door-posts, and upon eating their first passover, were delivered from the house of bondage. Thus only can sinners escape the wrath of a just and holy God, by taking refuge at the foot of the cross, and pleading the sprinkling of the blood of Him, of whom the paschal lamb was the type; (1 Pet. i. 2. Heb. xii. 24.) and through his death alone are believers liberated from the service of sin, and brought "into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Heb. ix. 12. Rom. viii. 21. We have no difficulty in understanding, that the eating of the lamb means our feeding in faith upon the Saviour, because he has himself employed this metaphorical language. None of the lamb was to be left; and this may signify that we are not to rely in part upon what he has done for us, and in part upon ourselves, but that we must ascribe to him our whole salvation, and acknowledge him in all his offices, that is, not only take him as our teacher and our guide, or as our priest and our sacrifice, but also obey him as our sovereign. The bitter herbs are said to denote repentance, and our willingness, if necessary, to take up our cross and follow him; and to those who treat such interpretation as fanciful, we may answer, that they seem to be borne out by the example of St. Paul, who explains the unleavened bread as a type of sincerity and purity, in contradistinction to malice and falsehood, (1 Cor. v. 7.) qualities that must accompany faith in Christ, if we hope he will prove our passover, that is, our protector from the wrath of God, and our redeemer from the worst thralldom, that of the soul; and as none who were legally impure might eat the paschal supper, it behoves us to cleanse ourselves from all iniquity, and to be pure in our desires as well as our conduct, before we presume to partake of the pledges of a Saviour's love^d.

^d We must consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves before they presume to eat of that bread and

120. *Supper being ready, the Apostles having again contended for preeminence, their Master washes their feet as an example of humility. Matt. xxvi. Luke xxii. John xiii.*

THE supper was now *ready*^e, but it was suspended by a discussion among the apostles concerning preeminence. Our Saviour once more endeavours to suppress this spirit of ambition by an expressive example of humility. Although all things had been given by the Father into his hands, he laid aside his mantle, girded himself with a napkin, and washed their feet, a customary ceremony^f in the East in that age previous to eating; thus significantly showing that he had been among them as one that serveth. If He then, whose superiority they allowed, and whom they emphatically and justly styled *the Teacher* and *the Lord*, had condescended to perform to them this menial service, they ought readily, in imitation of him, to undertake the meanest and most laborious offices to their fellow-servants. His speech to Peter shows that he had a further design in this act, for he takes occasion from external washing, to advert to internal purity. Bishop Hall thus explains it; “Ye are, in respect of the main business of regeneration, washed from your sins; yet there are some remains of worldly affections which must still be purged away in the best, and such is your condition at this time.” “Ye my disciples are clean; and yet not all of you;” for Judas’s feet were washed as well as the rest^g.

There is no ground for taking this injunction literally; nor is there any trace of its having been observed as a religious ordinance among the primitive Christians. A formal re-

drink of that cup; which, be it observed, he still calls bread and wine, while he speaks of not discerning the Lord’s body.

^e Γενομένου, not *ended* as in our translation. John xxi. 4.

^f Luke vii. 36. “If she have washed the saints’ feet,” 1 Tim. v. “Let me be a servant to wash the feet of my Lord.” 1 Sam. xxv. 41.

^g The distinction between the two Greek verbs λούω, and νίπτω, the first meaning a complete, the latter a partial, ablution, is strongly marked.

presentation of it is kept up by the pope and Roman Catholic sovereigns, who still wash the feet of twelve poor men on the day before Good Friday ; but this was not introduced before the fourth century. A change of dress has long since abolished the custom, which was not designed for servile imitation ; but, under all the variations that time produces, the spirit of the precept may be observed ; for we shall never be at a loss for ways of condescending to relieve and comfort our Christian brethren.

121. *Jesus foretels that one of the twelve shall betray him ; and, on Judas's leaving the room, declares that now he is glorified. Matt. xxvi. Luke xxii. John xiii.*

JESUS, having resumed his place, and explained this lesson of humility, informed them, that as they had remained with him during his trials, his Father, having assigned him a kingdom, he assigned to them the privilege of eating and drinking at his table, and granted them the office of judging the twelve tribes of Israel ; but he excepted one, whom he denounced as a traitor, expressing his ingratitude in the figurative language of David, to intimate that his treachery had been foretold. John, who sat next to his Master, tells us, that he was troubled when he said that one of the twelve would deliver him up ; and it must doubtless have heightened his affliction, that this event was brought about through the agency of a confidential friend. Each inquired if he were the person ; and John, who at Peter's suggestion asked Jesus, leaning over it should seem that he might not be overheard, declared that it was the one to whom he was about to give the sop. At length Judas himself inquired if it was he, fearing perhaps that if he alone were silent, suspicion of him would

^h The ceremony ceased in England at the Reformation ; but our King still retains the charitable part of the custom, by giving alms and providing a dinner for as many poor men as he has years of age.

be excited. Our Lord's speech, "What thou doest, do quickly," sufficiently intimated to him, that his purpose was understood. But it was couched in language unintelligible to the rest; and Judas, instigated perhaps by anger that he was detected, retired almost immediately to make his arrangement with the priests. Satan is said to have entered into the heart of Judas; but he had no power to compel him against his will, which was free to follow its own choice. Before he left the room, his Lord gave him the alarming warning, that it would be better for the man by whom he should be betrayed to have been never born; and if he had suffered the warning to have had its proper effect, he would have relinquished his guilty design. The scriptural prediction interfered not with his free agency: his Master warned him of the consequences. Satan tempted him by covetousness, perhaps by ambition, and he chose to yield to his instigation. The sum for which he agreed was so small, that it is difficult to conceive that it could be an adequate temptation; perhaps he hoped, by ingratiating himself with the priests, to obtain future advantages beyond the stipulated remuneration; or believing Jesus to be the Messiah, he might wish to force him to assume his sovereignty, thinking that he might then be readily forgiven, and enjoy the wealth he coveted. Whatever were his motives, he seems not to have anticipated his Master's condemnation to death.

His departure was, as it were, the commencement of our Lord's sufferings, who now commences his last discourse, by which he intended to infix in their minds truths, which, ignorant as they were and overcome with affliction, they could not at the time fully comprehend, but they would afterwards, and by which they would even then be consoled and fortified. None were present but the eleven; to them therefore they are specially addressed. But though the promise, that they should perform greater works than he had done, that is, be more successful in their ministry, is made to them as the future propagators of his religion, we must not conclude that

it does not at all concern ourselves, for to all believers is granted, in some measure, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and mutual love is the duty and ought to be the characteristic of private Christians as well as of the Apostles themselves. He first speaks of his death, and gives them to understand that it is approaching, and that, however ignominious it might appear to man, it would eminently display both his own glory, and that of his Father. He affectionately takes leave of them, and enjoins them to show their regard for him, not by ineffectual sorrow, but by his new commandment of mutual love. He had shown on a former occasion, that the law of Moses required them to "love their neighbour as themselves," including under that term all mankind. He could not therefore mean philanthropy by a new commandment; though this is maintained by almost all the commentators, who suppose that new is used as equivalent to excellent; or that the expression is justified, because the duty is enforced by new *motives*. In fact, the virtue he recommends is brotherly love, "A new commandment I give unto you, Love"—not your neighbour, but—"one another; by this," he adds, "shall all men know that you are my disciples:" and we find, long after, that it was a common remark among their enemies, "See how these Christians love one another." We must feel a love of good will to all men; to the wicked, and even to our enemies; but our special regard is to be reserved for the genuine followers of our Redeemer, who are the heirs of the same inheritance, and members of the same body. "Let us do good unto all men, but specially to the household of faith." "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten," 1 John v. 1. In countries where all *profess* Christianity, the two virtues are apt to be confounded; but St. Peter carefully marks the distinction, "*add* to brotherly kindness, charity;" and above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: and St. John hangeth upon the performance of this duty the assurance of our being in Christ. (1 John iii. 14.) They proceed from different

principles; *approbation* is the source of the former; *compassion* of the latter^h.

122. *Jesus foretels the fall and recovery of Peter. Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. John xiii.*

PETER wanted to know whither Jesus was going; but he told him that he could not follow him then, though he should follow him hereafter. His work was not accomplished, nor had he yet the martyr's spirit. He then declared that they would all be overcome with temptation that night, and desert him, as Zechariah (xiii. 7.) had predicted; but that after he had risen from the dead, he should go before them into Galilee. Peter, confident in his own strength, persisted in maintaining, that whatever others might do, he would never desert him. Our Lord replied, that Satan had sought to sift them all; but that he had prayed for him in particular, that his faith might not fail, (that is, not finally like that of Judas; for it was overcome for a season,) and admonishes him, when recovered, to strengthen his brethren. He assures him, when he declares his readiness to follow him to prison or to death, that he knew himself so little, that, to avoid the possibility of danger, even that very night he shall thrice deny him. Peter only renewed his asseveration; and this self-confidence was the first step to his fall. He then reminded them all, that when he had sent them out before, he had not allowed them to make any provision for their journey, yet they had every where found an hospitable reception. Now, on the contrary, they must look forward to hardships, and even to persecution; they must take whatever they had, purse and bag, for few would be disposed to assist them, and a sword for their protection would seem even more necessary than a cloak. Upon this they showed him two swords which they happened to have, (arms being probably then carried by travellers for their security,) and he replied, "It is enough."

^h Sanderson's Sermon: text, Honour all men, love the brethren.

Two swords were not enough for the approaching attack, if he had meditated resistance; and this we know, from his reproof to Peter for using one of them, was not his intention. It follows therefore that he spoke figuratively; his meaning, however, was not taken, but he did not deem it necessary to explain it. His language is ambiguous; the best explanation seems to be, that he meant to close the conversation, as they had misconceived him, and the event would soon correct their inferences. It is a common Hebrew phrase, when one wishes to stop the inappropriate remarks of another¹.

123. *Jesus institutes the Sacrament of the commemoration of his death. Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xx.*

THE paschal supper being finished, Jesus took the loaf, and divided it among them, and commanded them all to drink of the cup, thus instituting the Lord's supper; a name which reminds us both of the person who instituted it, and the hour when it was originally celebrated. It is also called the *Eucharist*, because the act which it represents above all others demands our gratitude; the *Sacrament*, from the Latin word for the military oath, which bound the Roman soldiers, because it pledges the participant to allegiance and obedience to his Master, "who has bought him with a price," "whose he is, and whom he ought to serve;" and the *Communion*, because, as St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 17.) expresses it, we are therein partakers of the same loaf; and are so reminded, that all Christians, whatever may be their external differences, should regard themselves as members of one family, of which Christ is the head. His appointment of this solemn commemoration of his death, is in itself a strong presumption that he was the Messiah; for what impostor or enthusiast would wish to perpetuate the memory of the ignominious termination of his life by the decree of the

¹ This speech is considered by some as justifying self-defence against robbers, though not in opposition to the civil power.

magistrate? It is, however, more than this, for why should not his followers rather commemorate his miraculous birth, or his triumphant resurrection? The mode of keeping it is still more extraordinary, for it is not by a fast but by a feast; not with mourning, but with joy and thankfulness. Deny the atonement and its consequences, and this manner of showing forth the Lord's death is inexplicable; admit it, and the ordinance is natural, and in the highest degree significant.

The institution of this Sacrament has been described by the first three Evangelists; and as it has been passed over by the fourth, we infer from his silence, that they had transmitted all the necessary information. We have another account of it in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xi. which he received immediately from the Lord; and this special revelation proves both the importance and the perpetuity of the ordinance. His words, "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye show forth the Lord's death till he come," demonstrate that this Sacrament was designed not for the Apostles only, but for believers in every age; and, accordingly, with the solitary exception of the Quakers, all denominations of Christians, though some exalt it too high, and others degrade it too low, agree in retaining it as an indispensable part of divine service. It is indeed "a badge of Christian men's profession;" for though we may attend a place of worship, we cannot be considered as members of the Church, unless we sometimes comply with this last command of its founder, who hath been pleased to unite "his people into a society by two Sacraments, most easy to be observed, most important in their meaning; the one of which, Baptism, admits into covenant with Him; the other, a devout commemoration of his death, marks continuance in it." He has left each national branch of his Church to adopt or reject rites and ceremonies, as appears to it most conducive to edification. But the Sacraments being ordained by Christ himself, Christ alone has the power to abrogate. No particular form having been enjoined by him, the manner of administering and receiving, and all that is circumstantial, may vary in

ferent times and places, but the essential parts, the water the one, and the bread and the wine in the other, no church can have a right to omit. And yet that corrupt church, which arrogates to herself exclusively the title of catholic, and is distinguished by so many doctrinal errors, long before the Reformation, taken away the cup from the laity. It has no custom more difficult to defend; for its enemies confess, that they cannot plead antiquity in their favour; and a sufficient confutation is conveyed in the twentieth Article of our Church, which affirms, that both parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christian men and women. It naturally arose out of the doctrine of transubstantiation. To prevent any profanation of what was considered to be the real body of the Lord, small wafers were substituted for bread, which were put at once into the mouth of the communicants by the officiating minister, instead of being delivered into the hand; but no expedient could be devised against the occasional spilling of the wine. The practice of withholding it began in the twelfth century, but it was first acknowledged by authority in 1414, by the Council of Constance. One of its decrees allows, that the faithful in the primitive Church did receive in both kinds, yet the practice of giving to the laity only in one being reasonably introduced to avoid some dangers and scandals, it appoints it to continue. It is remarkable, that Pope Gelasius, in the fifth century, having heard that the Manichæans, who held it a sin to taste wine, partook not of the cup, decreed, that all persons should either communicate entirely, or be entirely excluded, for that such a dividing of one and the same Sacrament could not be done without a heinous sacrilege. In the Council of Trent the offer of granting the use of the cup to any nation, and the conditions of the grant, were finally left to the Pope, as a question not of doctrine but of discipline. To meet the objection of Pope Gelasius the modern Romanists assert, that the Apostles took of the bread as laymen, and were constituted priests by the act of receiving the cup. This gratuitous supposition

is confuted by our Lord's command, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins;" for the words show that they were to drink not on account of their office but their sins; and the reason applies in every age to all believers who are sinners. It appears also, that they were not made presbyters till after the resurrection, when their Master breathed upon them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." St. Paul's language shows that the Sacrament is to be received in both kinds; and He himself, in the synagogue of Capernaum, spake as much of the necessity of drinking his blood as of eating his flesh. To vindicate the practice the Romanist assumes, that Christ is received whole and entire in the bread alone, so that those to whom that only is given are defrauded thereby of no saving grace; but this argument proves too much, as it would equally answer for withholding the cup from the clergy. Enthusiasm¹ naturally seizes upon metaphor, and gives it a literal sense; and we may easily conceive, that when writers for a succession of ages have spoken in a declamatory way of the necessity of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, and then kept trying to surpass each other in flights of devotion, they might come at last to profess as a doctrine, that the consecrated bread and wine were without a figure converted into what they represent. The doctrine is called transubstantiation, because it asserts, that the bread and wine on consecration lose their own substance, and become the body and blood of Christ; yet, as they still appear to be the same as before consecration, this hypothesis is helped out by another, that though the *substance* be changed, the *accidents* or *qualities* remain. If our Lord had not used the words, "This is my body," preceded sometime before by a discourse, in which he declared that he who did not "eat his body and drink his blood had no life in him;" so extraordinary a notion could hardly have prevailed. And as it is, it is surprising that any should

¹ Hey's Lectures on Divinity.

have adopted a conclusion as revolting to the feelings, as it is contradictory both to reason and the senses, since a complete solution of any difficulty may be found in figurative language. Cicero says^k, “when we call grain Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we only use an ordinary figure of speech; but do you think,” he adds, “that any one is so devoid of sense as to believe that what he feeds upon is God?” It is lamentable to think, that an opinion which a heathen considered as too absurd to be received, should be maintained by a large body of Christians as an article of faith. A doctrine so monstrous could only be brought into a regular form in an age of darkness and superstition. The invention of it is ascribed to Paschasius, a French monk of the ninth century; it was introduced into our country in the reign of the Conqueror by Lanfranc, whom he had made Archbishop of Canterbury, but the name was not heard till the thirteenth century, when the doctrine was confirmed by the third Lateran Council. And it was fully established by that of Trent, which maintained, that there is no contradiction between Christ’s body being always *naturally* at God’s right hand, and *sacramentally* in other places; that the whole body of Christ exists in every particle, both of the bread and of the wine; and that the same worship that is paid to the true God, is due to the elements after consecration. The Romanists appeal both to the written word, and the unwritten, as they call tradition; and certainly some of the Fathers have expressed themselves in what, with our experience, we should call incautious language. By giving prominence to their strongest passages, and keeping out of sight others that would qualify them, they certainly may be shown to favour the literal interpretation. Yet what Protestant would desire a more decisive statement than this rule, given by Augustin to the Western Church. “If a precept command a crime, it must be understood figuratively^l.” “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” This

^k De Natura Deorum.

^l De Doctrina Christiana, iii. 16.

seems to command a crime, it is therefore a figure, enjoining us to lay up in our memory that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us. And, in his tract on the 98th Psalm, speaking of these same words, he says, "They understand them foolishly, carnally, and thought that he was about to give them portions of his body, but they were hard, not the discourse. He instructed the twelve who remained: Understand spiritually what I have spoken. You are not about to eat this body which you see, and drink the blood which those who are about to crucify me will shed. I recommend to you a sacrament; spiritually understood it will give you life." The same rule was delivered to the Greek Church, by Origen, who says, "The understanding our Saviour's words of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, according to the letter, is a letter that kills^m."

The chief argument of the Romanist lies in these words, "This is my body;" yet it is remarkable, that Bellarmine, their most eminent controversialist, grants that transubstantiation cannot be proved from Scripture, though their later writers quote those words as an incontrovertible proof. Cardinal Caietan too went so far as to say, that there is nothing in the Gospel which obliges us to take the words in a proper and not a metaphorical sense; but that the Church having understood them in the former, we are bound to abide by her determination. Common sense, however, requires a figurative interpretation, for otherwise our Saviour must have held himself in his own hands, and distributed his body while he was speaking, and before it was broken. And if we may not take words figuratively, then we must maintain also that Christ was really a vine, as he called himself that very evening. The Roman Catholics themselves are obliged to quit the letter for the spirit in explaining the other part of the same sacrament; for our Lord does not say *this wine*, but "*this cup* is my blood;" and speaking of it again he calls it, though according

^m Homily on Leviticus x. Tillotson's Discourse against Transubstantiation.

to their doctrine the change had previously taken place, this product of the vine. St. Paul also, after mentioning consecration, speaks of the material substance as still bread. Our Saviour uses a figure, because in the language which he spake there is no verb equivalent to signify or represent. Examples of this are frequent both in the Old and New Testament, and the very ordinance which they had just been celebrating must have accustomed the Apostles to such expressions; for the Lamb itself is called, Exodus xii. 11. the Passover, though it was only the sign of it. They do not appear to have been perplexed by the declaration, nor did desire it to be explained. They had been reprov'd before for a literal interpretation of our Lord's warning, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," Matt. xvi. 6—9, and had seen how their countrymen had erred at Capernaum, when upon his calling himself bread from heaven, they exclaimed, How can this man give us his flesh to eat!

That discourse has been often brought forward in support of transubstantiation; yet many of the Roman Catholic writers reject this application, and in this they show prudence; for that interpretation would furnish a strong argument for infant communion, which they have long left off, and would be directly opposed to their refusal of the cup to the laity. It is surprising, that when our Saviour himself supplies the key to unlock his meaning, any who read his words, "The flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life;" should still cling to the literal sense, which does not, if we could pass over the impossibility, afford a reasonable doctrine, as, real flesh is only fit food for the body, and cannot nourish, for it cannot be conveyed into, the soul. Body and blood must therefore be taken in such a sense, as a soul can feed on; but this can be no otherwise food for the soul than as the spiritual benefits of that body and blood, that is to say, the virtue and effects of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, are communicated to it, and the mouth whereby we thus eat and drink, that is, the means whereby we are made partakers of these benefits, is our true and

lively faith. It is material also to observe, in confutation of this extraordinary position, that the Romanist endeavours to escape from one of the difficulties, by suppressing an important part of the institution. Thus, in the mass the Priest stops at "This is my body," whereas our Saviour proceeds to add, "given," or, as reported by St. Paul, "broken for you," that is, offered up to God in sacrifice. Dr. Hales maintains, that these present participles are to be understood in the future sense, for Jesus was speaking of what had not yet taken place. He supports his position by the authority of the Missal, which retains the whole of the words respecting the blood, and renders ἐχυνομένον, *effundetur*, shall be poured out. Those who are not acquainted with the Missal, will learn with astonishment that it cannot be reconciled with transubstantiation, no doubt because it is substantially anterior to that doctrine. It is in the ceremonies required in the Rubric that we find it, for in the prayer *after* consecration God is besought to accept the *bread and wine*, as he did the gifts of Abel and Melchisedek. I conclude then in the words of Augustin, "How shall I send up my hands to heaven to take hold of Christ sitting there? Send thy faith, and thou hast hold of him. Why preparest thou thy teeth and thy belly? Believe, and thou hast eaten: for this is to eat the living bread. He that believeth on Christ eateth Christ, he is invisibly fed^a."

Transubstantiation is declared in our twenty-ninth Article to overthrow the nature of a sacrament, which, according to the ancient definition, consists of a sign, and the thing it signifies. This has never been disputed in the sacrament of Baptism; but the Roman Catholic doctrine excludes from the Lord's Supper its outward visible sign. According to our Church Catechism, our souls are strengthened and refreshed in this sacrament by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. The body and blood of Christ, therefore, are only the benefits of Christ's passion, and our eating and drinking of that body and blood our

^a Tract. 50 in Evang. Joan.

being made partakers of those benefits, and the mouth whereby we thus eat and drink is our true and lively faith. "This," says Archbishop Sharp^o, "is plainly the sense of our Church in this matter. This is certain, because she hath expressly affirmed that Christ hath but one body, and that that body is now in heaven, and not here; and she declares further, that the body which we eat is for the nourishment of our souls, which the body of Christ in a proper literal sense, though it were here present, could not do.

The Roman Catholic, defeated in argument, takes refuge in mystery; and lays open the vital doctrines of our holy faith to the attacks of infidels, by classing them with this dogma as equally indefensible by reasoning, and incredible except to faith. This demand of an implicit assent is one of the main causes of the notorious prevalence of infidelity in Roman Catholic countries; for persons in communion with Rome, not having been taught to "give a reason of the hope that is in them," perceiving the absurdity of this dogma, and being told that the exercise of the understanding in matters of religion is forbidden, if they do not upon the authority of the Church receive this and whatever other tenet it requires from them with as much confidence as the truths of holy writ, reject the whole of Christianity as a fable. They have never learnt, and infidels will not see, the difference between being above, and contrary to, reason. That the wafer, used instead of bread, while to the eye and taste it seems to have undergone no alteration, is human flesh; and that the same identical body can be offered up at the same instant in several places; are positions irreconcilable to reason; nor is it less so, we grant, that the same Being can be three and one, in the *same* sense of the words. But the true doctrine of the Trinity, which, while it maintains the unity of the Divinity, affirms that in that unity are three personal distinctions, though like our own nature, and many other things in the natural world, of the existence of which we cannot doubt, it is above the power

^o Vol. vii. Sermon XV.

of our intellect to fathom, is not contradictory to it. Transubstantiation, however, is not only to many a stumbling-block, and has driven them from the privileges and consolations of the Gospel into infidelity : to those who acquiesce in it, it is not merely a harmless error, but brings in its train pernicious consequences unfavourable to real holiness, and the full development of the Christian character. When the wafer is believed to be changed into the actual body of our blessed Redeemer, we cannot wonder at nor blame the piety that enshrines it, carries it about in procession, and elevates it as a present deity, for the adoration of the kneeling worshipper. With this change is connected the doctrine of its being offered up as a sacrifice, and therefore it is called from *hostia*, the Latin for victim, *host*. Hence naturally followed an undue exaltation of the minister's office, for a victim requires a sacrificer ; nor is it extraordinary that one who, it is believed, can convert a wafer into God, and then offer him in sacrifice, should be regarded with greater reverence than is due from one fallible mortal to another. The fatal effects of this delusion, both upon laity and clergy, is a matter of history ; but the worst of its bad consequences does not seem to have been considered so much as its political : I mean, that it eclipses the glory of the intercessory office of our Lord, the only Priest of the new covenant, (in the proper acceptation of the term, a sacrificer, *ιερεὺς*, not an elder or presbyter, *πρεσβύτερος*,) and brings us back by an unexpected road to a Levitical priesthood, and the beggarly elements of the law. To do away these erroneous notions, our reformers substituted for altar, *communion table*, and have carefully avoided all phrases that might foster superstition. From transubstantiation has proceeded the belief avowed by the Roman church of what is technically called *opus operatum*, that is, that the body and blood possess an intrinsic virtue, which does not depend upon the disposition of the receiver, but operates upon all who do not obstruct the operation by mortal sin. It is difficult to conceive a tenet more destructive to the soul. Its obvious tendency is to substitute the form of religion for its power,

and to quiet the alarm of an awakened conscience, which, if suffered to take its course, would have ended in the only real peace of mind, that which is the result of genuine repentance. So deeply rooted is this fatal error, and so congenial a soil has it found in our fallen nature, ever ready to evade, if possible, the necessity of a holy life, that an indefinite feeling of this kind has in our country survived the downfall of popery; for unhappily too many professing Protestants seek in death the sacrament they have neglected during life, not from a just appreciation of it, but as a charm or preservative from evil: an error which derives no countenance from the Church of England, which expressly declares, (Art. xxv.) that the sacraments have a wholesome effect in such only as worthily receive the same.

Having shown^p, as I hope satisfactorily, that, to speak with Chrysostom, Christ honoured the visible symbols with the name of his body and blood, not changing the nature but adding grace to nature, I proceed to consider the design of the institution; and this we learn from our Lord's command, "Do this in remembrance of me." But in what does this remembrance consist? Clearly it requires a correct notion both of what our Lord is, and what he has done for us. And we learn from other passages in Scripture, that He is the only-begotten Son of the Father, "of glory equal, of majesty co-eternal," and that his death was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Such a remembrance, when made with a proper disposition, is at once an act of gratitude for this inestimable benefit, and an act of humiliation; since by these visible words, to use an expression of Augustin, we declare that this all-sufficient sacrifice can alone procure our acceptance. A due commemoration of our Lord's death includes therefore a public avowal of the leading doctrines of our religion, and is a protest against infidelity, and even the natural tendency of such a commemoration cannot fail to be beneficial. But our Lord also said of the bread, "This is my

^p Usher's Answer to the Challenge of a Jesuit. Waterland's Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist.

body given for you," and of the cup, "This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you, for the remission of sins." New covenant, of course, suggests the recollection of a former one, and the occasion when it was instituted after the Paschal Supper, consisting of a lamb eaten to commemorate the destroying Angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites, which were sprinkled with the blood of that animal, carries our thoughts to that great national deliverance, which we are thus taught to consider as a typical one. Our Lord says in effect, This is the blood not of the paschal lamb, but of myself; not of that old covenant which was ratified by the blood of bulls and of goats, which could never take away the guilt of sin, but by that blood which is accepted by God as a real expiation, and that not for one favoured nation, but for the whole race of mankind. When we consider also, that it was the custom of ancient nations to drink blood, or wine instead of blood, for the ratifying of covenants, we are led to regard this ordinance as more than a mere commemoration, though we cannot, like the Romanist, regard it as a real sacrifice. That doctrine is expressly and strongly renounced in the thirty-first Article of our Church, entitled, "Of the one oblation of Christ finished upon the cross," a title which implies that it is not to be repeated on an altar. It opens with this proposition, taken with some additional words from St. John's first Epistle, ii. 2. "The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone; and if this can be established, the sacrifice of the mass cannot be maintained, for if the death of Christ upon the cross was a perfect satisfaction for all sin, it would be absurd to argue for another." That such a sacrifice would be offered but once we might reasonably expect, but as if it were to protest against this pernicious error of a future age, of the continually repeating this sacrifice, the fact of its taking place but once is prominently brought forward in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Thus we are sanctified through the offering of the body of

Jesus Christ *once for all*." (x. 10.) "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins and then for the people, for this he did *once* when he offered up himself." (vii. 27.) "Christ entered in *once* into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (ix. 12.) "Christ was offered up *once* to bear the sins of many." (ix. 28.) "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sin; but this man, after he had offered up *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." (x. 11, 12.) "And now *once* at the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (ix. 26.) St. Peter also writes to the same effect; "Christ also hath once suffered for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." (1 Ep. iii. 18.) We may therefore adopt the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (x. 26.) "that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

The Council of Trent lays down, that though Christ was a Priest for ever, he did not mean that earthly priesthood should cease. Accordingly, the night before he was betrayed he offered up to his heavenly Father his body and blood, under the symbols of bread and wine, and ordained his apostles priests, that they and their successors might afterwards offer him up; still there was to be but one Priest, the apostles acting only for their Lord. The appointed sacrifice was to represent the original one, both being real, but the former bloody, the latter unbloody. Yet the appointed was to be considered as one and the same with the original one, differing only in the *mode* of offering; strictly propitiatory, capable of gaining remission of even great sins, and therefore to be offered for the dead as well as the living. The doctrine was first established in the dark ages, yet like other errors it grew gradually, and might originate from the strong and unguarded language of the Fathers, who sometimes called it the unbloody sacrifice; but in their most declamatory sentences, something always appears which shows that the expression was not to be taken literally; for the Christians were reproached

by the heathen for belonging to a religion which had no sacrifice, and the Fathers in their Apologies allowed that they had none. Thus Justin Martyr^q says, “that God has no need of any material oblation from man, but that the Christian manner was to offer him prayers and thanksgivings.” “That we ought not to offer unto God earthly but spiritual services,” says Tertullian^r, “we may learn from what is written, The sacrifice of God is an humble and contrite spirit: and elsewhere, Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” And when Celsus had objected to Christians their want of altars, Origen^s replies, “the objector does not consider that with us every good man’s mind is his altar, from whence truly and spiritually the incense of perfume is sent up, that is, prayers from a pure conscience.” Dr. Waterland, who from his intimate study of the Fathers is of the highest authority, declares, that they will all be found constant and uniform in one tenor of doctrine, rejecting all material sensible sacrifices, and admitting none but spiritual ones, as prayers and praises. The whole of the matter, as he says, has been well summed up in a sermon of Abp. Sharp; “we offer up our alms, we offer up our prayers, our praises, and ourselves; and all these we offer up in the virtue and consideration of Christ’s sacrifice, represented by way of commemoration, nor can it be proved that the ancients did more than this: this whole service was their Christian sacrifice, and this is ours.” “We do not deny,” says the Abp. in this discourse^t, “that the Communion Office may be called a sacrifice, nor do we scruple to call this service the Christian sacrifice by way of eminence, because we find the ancient Fathers frequently so styling it; but then it is only upon these three accounts; first, that we bring our offerings to God for the use of the poor, with which kind of sacrifice St. Paul tells us God is well pleased, which alms and oblations made up one great part of that unbloody sacrifice that the Fathers so often speak of; secondly, we offer up our prayers for ourselves, and our intercessions for the whole

^q Apol. i. p. 14. ^r Adv. Jud. v. p. 188. ^s Contra Celsum, p. 75.
^t Vol. vii. Sermon XI.

church, our thanksgivings, and ourselves; and thirdly, to complete the Christian sacrifice, we offer up both with a particular regard to that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered upon the cross, and which is now lively represented before our eyes in the symbols of bread and wine. What then do we not offer every day, says Chrysostom? Yes, we offer by making a commemoration of his death; and we do not make another sacrifice every day, but always the same, but rather a remembrance of that sacrifice. And in the same sense, says Eusebius, we sacrifice a remembrance of the great sacrifice." In these three things consisted the whole of the Christian sacrifice, as it was held by the primitive Church, and so we in our Communion-service having offered up our sacrifice of alms, and our sacrifice of devotions for the rendering these two acceptable, we plead before God the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Fathers, accustomed on the one side to the temple service, on the other to heathen sacrifice, were naturally led to adopt metaphorical language, which appears strange and forced to us who know of both only from books. In this they follow the Bible, in which St. Paul declares in sacrificial language, that he would willingly be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of his Philippian converts, (ii. 17.) and calls upon the Roman Christians (xii. 1.) to offer up themselves to God as a living sacrifice. Praise and good works are called a sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xiii. 15, 16. xii. 1.); and in Hosea, (xiv. 2.) the calves, that is, the offerings, of the lips are put for prayer.

The early Church offered not only alms, but oblations; and though the practice has ceased, we retain in the Liturgy the word. The oblation formerly was the bread and wine contributed by the congregation, of which, after it had been solemnly presented to God, the priest took a part, and by consecration made it, according to the language of that time, the body and blood of Christ; which being done, he distributed, so that the people, having offered to God, were by him feasted at his table with part of their own offerings, as the manner was in the Jewish peace offerings. And this was

much more strikingly the case when the Lord's Supper was followed by the love-feast. From this custom may be traced the doctrine of a sacrifice offered in the Sacrament.

The reasoning in the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to prove, that the sacrifice once made was sufficient, and therefore is not to be repeated ; also, that no one can be a priest in the room of Christ to offer up the Christian sacrifice ; and that whatever sacrifice is repeated cannot take away sin. It is evident also, that this doctrine depends upon transubstantiation ; for if, as we hope, we have disproved that, then at the utmost, the bread and wine can be no more than a commemorative sacrifice. There are two texts in the Old Testament to which Romanists appeal. The first is the Lord's declaration by Malachi, i. 11, that in every place a pure offering shall be offered ; but the word *mincha*, so rendered here and in other places meat offering, means an unbloody sacrifice. If, then, it is to be taken literally, it will contradict transubstantiation ; and, to use St. Paul's words, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, Heb. ix. 22. and where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin, Heb. x. 18. The other is Melchizedek's bringing forth bread and wine when he met Abraham, after his victory over the kings, connected with the Apostle's explanation of him as a type of the great High Priest of our profession, who was not a temporary priest after the order of Aaron, but a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek : but the bread and wine he brought forth was not for the purpose of sacrifice, but to refresh Abraham and his followers ; and the reasoning shows, that as Christ is a priest for ever now pleading the merits of his sacrifice formerly offered, and interceding for his people, there is now no victim to be offered ; and consequently, since every priest must have something to offer, that there are no successors to Christ in the priesthood, that is, in the sacrificer's office. While, however, we strenuously maintain that Christ alone can offer up Christ as a sacrifice, and that his ministers are only authorized to commemorate this sacrifice offered once for all, and not by man but for man, we regard the Eucharist as

a federal rite, carrying with it on God's part the force of a contract, that (fit qualification on our part presumed) this symbolical communion shall be as a deed of conveyance instrumentally investing us with the benefits of Christ's death. If we make the Lord's supper a mere commemoration, we make it a strange and unintelligible rite; for what can be more strange than the eating the flesh of one who is only to be regarded as a benefactor. But conceive it to be a feast upon a sacrifice, and all is easy and simple. When sacrifices were in use, part of the victim was served up at a religious feast, and all who partook of it were understood to partake of the spiritual benefits of the sacrifice. Christ now was our victim; on his body we do not literally feast, because it is in heaven; but he appointed bread to represent it, on that we can feast, and so partake of his body: and such bread is the bread of life, because by his own appointment it represents his flesh. This notion was first illustrated by Cudworth, and was adopted by Warburton as an effectual answer both to the Roman Catholic system, which exalts the Eucharist into a sacrifice, and the Socinian, which considers it as no more than a discharge on men's part of a positive duty, throwing out that essential part of a Sacrament which belongs to God, who, according to the Homily herein embraces, and offers himself to be embraced by us. I apprehend that in receiving the Eucharist we not only commemorate, but obtain remission of our sins, and the gift of sanctifying grace by which "God doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him;" and this seems to be acknowledged in the final prayer of our Communion-service; "Thou dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son."

It is a painful consideration, that, notwithstanding the general improvement both in the knowledge and practice of religion, there are still many regular attendants in our churches who rarely or ever partake of these holy mysteries, which our Master and only Saviour hath instituted as pledges

of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. This systematic neglect of an ordinance so solemnly enjoined must arise from some misconception of its nature, or of the qualifications of a communicant. All know that it was grossly abused by the Corinthians, who perverted this feast into an occasion of intemperance, and the language in which (1 Cor. xi.) St. Paul reproves them, many without examining it apply to themselves. The lapse of time since the English translation was made, by affecting the meaning of a word he employs, has increased their alarm; for, reading that the Corinthians ate and drank to themselves damnation; they fear lest, by participating, they should incur eternal punishment; though reflection might satisfy them, that damnation is no more than condemnation, and that from the context we must learn whether it refer to this world or the next. If they would read the whole chapter, they could not fail to observe, that the Apostle was speaking of temporal judgments, and that while some slept, (from the use of which term we may conclude that even they had departed in the Lord,) others were chastened that they should not be condemned with the world. None can now be guilty of not distinguishing the Lord's body from a common meal; and the fear itself which keeps such away from the Sacrament, is a proof that they would not willingly receive it in an unworthy manner. Their absence is rather to be ascribed to a mistaken humility, which fears that they are not included in the invitation, and that it would be presumption in them to come till they had made themselves better. But however specious the form may be that it assumes, it must be a false scruple that keeps them from obeying their Lord's positive command. That degree of goodness which some would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the use of it. The feeblest aspiration after holiness, and after the power of obeying the divine will, is a sufficient warrant for us to come; for we may be assured, that all such desires are excited in us by the Holy Spirit, in order to draw us to God, and if they be followed,

more assistance will be given, so that the weakest may proceed from strength to strength, till, in the use of this means of grace, he becomes gradually more and more conformed to the image of Him who instituted it.

124. *The last discourse of Jesus, in which he comforts his disciples, especially with the promise of the Holy Spirit. John xiv.*

WHAT Jesus had already said could not fail to distress the Apostles: he therefore directs them to the only real source of consolation, reliance upon God^a and upon himself. They were looking forward to an earthly kingdom; he therefore says, to comfort them under their disappointment, that in his Father's house are many mansions; that is, as I understand him, that in the universe are other worlds besides this, more desirable to live in, and that he goes, not to solitary enjoyment, but to prepare a place for them, (which could be done only through his death.) Lest they should distrust the promise, he adds, that they know the place, and cannot be ignorant of the way. Thomas, still clinging to the notion of the Messiah's visible kingdom, confesses ignorance, and this leads Jesus to announce himself as the true and only way to the Father. And not only does he declare that he is the way, but that he is so united with him in counsel and action, that he who has known him, may be said to have known the Father. This declaration perplexed a second disciple, Philip; he therefore confirms and explains it, and he speaks of his union with the Father in terms which imply his partaking of his nature; and assures them that they shall do greater works than he hath done^b, and

^a "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," is the authorized version of πιστεύετε εἰς Θεὸν καὶ πιστεύετε εἰς ἐμὲ: but I think with Campbell, that the verb should be rendered in both places in the same mood, and that this should be the imperative seems probable from the 11th verse, πιστεύετε μοι ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ.

^b It must, however, never be forgotten, that their works were wrought through the Spirit which he imparted, and therefore demonstrate the power not of the doer but of the giver.

that he will grant whatever petitions they put up for the success of his religion. He adds, that he will pray the Father, and that he will send them another Advocate, even the Spirit of truth, who shall abide with them, not as he had done for a season, but for ever, and whose indwelling influence should be more beneficial than his own personal presence^c. He says, that he will not leave them destitute like orphans, but that he himself will soon come to them again, and will manifest himself to those who show their love to him by keeping his commandments. A third disciple, Judas, showed that their carnal notions of his kingdom prevented them from understanding him. He does not reply to them directly, but turned their attention to what it especially concerned them to know and believe, that if they loved and obeyed him, both himself and the Father would love them, and make their abode in them, and that the Holy Spirit would explain what they could not now understand. He then leaves them the precious legacy of peace of mind, which he calls his peace, because it can only be obtained through him, which he gives not as the world gives, a gift but in name, no better than an ineffectual wish, whereas his is an actual grant; and he subjoins, that if they

^c The term *Παράκλητος*, *Paraclete*, by which the Holy Ghost is here designated, is peculiar to St. John. It is rendered *Comforter* in our version, and *Monitor* in some others, and both ideas are comprehended within the more direct meaning of it, *Advocate*, that is, one who undertakes to act for another, and to plead his cause. The latter term is used in the Epistle, in which it is applied to God the Son, "We have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Both the Son and the Spirit then are called by the same title, and the same office of intercession is ascribed to each. "The Son ever liveth to make intercession for us;" (Heb. vii. 25.) "the Spirit maketh intercession for us." (Rom. xi. 2.) But they are advocates in different courts; the Son pleads his own merits in his Father's presence, and thereby propitiates him, and renders him gracious to us. The Spirit has for his province the human heart, and pleads with men, convincing them of sin, and constraining them by the terrors of the law, and the mercy of the Gospel, to lay aside their enmity against the Father, and seek him at his throne of grace. Having excited in such the desire to pray, he helpeth their infirmities by interceding for them, "with groanings that cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26.; and these earnest longings after spiritual blessings, which they know not how to express, are understood and approved by God who searcheth the heart, and looketh not to the language or manner but to the matter of their petitions.

loved him they would rejoice at his departure, because he was going to the Father, who was greater than he^d.

125. *The Discourse concluded. John xv. xvi.*

JESUS breaks off the discourse by saying, that they must arise, as it is time to depart. It is, however, immediately resumed, according to some commentators, on the way to the mount of Olives, but it appears to me before they quitted the room. He illustrates the union that exists between himself and his people, by a comparison which, from its frequent recurrence in the Old Testament, would be familiar to them. The Jewish Church had been symbolized by a choice vine, but when it degenerated and brought forth wild grapes, it was threatened with extirpation. By calling himself the true vine, he intimates that it was to be superseded by one founded upon himself, and warns them that it was to be subject to the same discipline as the Jewish. As the husbandman cuts off every barren branch, and pruneth every bearing one so that it may produce more and better fruit ; so God, who is glorified by the good works of his people, will remove the useless members of his Church, and by fatherly chastisements improve the good. The branch that is cut off from the parent stock withers ; and so the believer can do nothing who is separated from the Saviour, the author of his spiritual life. He charges them to continue to possess the love with which he then loved them, by keeping his commandments, especially his new one of mutual love, even to the degree in which he had shown it of dying for one another, and he condescends to call them his friends. He forewarns them that they must expect to suffer from the same hatred which he had experienced from the world, and that it would proceed to such a length that their enemies

^d Greater, in the sense that he who sends is superior to him who is sent ; for throughout this Gospel, Jesus speaks of himself as a legate, acting and teaching according to his Father's instructions. Thus an earthly monarch is greater than his ambassador in office, but not in nature, because both are men.

would not only excommunicate them, but would even consider the putting them to death as acceptable to God as sacrifice. He repeats for their consolation his promise of another Advocate, who would enable them to teach the whole truth, and who would, by conferring miraculous powers on them, convince the world of its sin in putting him to death, of his own righteousness as vindicated by his ascension to his Father, and of judgment, by his triumph over the prince of this world. This might suffice to comfort them for the loss of their advocate and teacher, but the deprivation of instruction was not their only cause of sorrow; the most afflicting one was the approaching departure of their friend. In order, therefore, that they may not be overcome with grief, he joins with his departure an assurance of his return, when their sorrow shall be converted into joy, and that joy shall be permanent. His discourse produced the desired effect, and satisfied them that he came forth from God. To check their self-confidence, he forewarns them of their approaching desertion of him, though even then he tells them that he shall not be alone, since the Father was with him. These things, he concludes, I have spoken, that in me you might have peace: he adds, In the world ye shall have tribulation, but, as I have overcome it, you have no reason to despond.

These may be considered as our Lord's dying words to his friends; yet he does not mention by name his death, or his cross; the first he calls his departure to his Father, the latter, his glorification. The discourse contains direct evidence of his divinity; for he saith, that he who seeth him, seeth the Father, and that what the Father doeth, he doeth.

126. *Christ's intercessory prayer for his people. John xvii.*

OUR Saviour, having closed his instructions, now commends himself, his apostles, and his cause, to his heavenly Father in prayer, which, together with the preceding discourse, has been recorded by St. John, and is perhaps the most interesting portion of the sacred volume, since it admits us into a more

intimate knowledge of our great High Priest than any other, and may be considered as a specimen of the intercession which he is ever making in heaven in his human nature for his brethren.

Intercession is part of our Saviour's office as a *Priest*, and of his priesthood, which involves the more profound and the more consolatory truths of religion, we have here and in other places a partial view ; but a connected and influential statement of it was reserved for the Epistle to the Hebrews. That exposition of the shadows of the law exhibits to us, under the type of Aaron entering within the veil into the most holy place, this our true Priest converting heaven itself (of which the earthly sanctuary was but the figure) into a temple. For as the Aaronitic priest on the great day of atonement sprinkled the mercy seat with the blood of the victim which had been slain in the presence of the people in the court without ; so this Priest, after the order of Melchizedec, whose office as Intercessor is perpetual, having offered upon the altar of the cross his one sacrifice of himself, now appears continually in his Father's presence to plead the merits of that oblation. And with a reference to this part which he now sustains, he showed himself to John in Patmos (Rev. i. 13.) in the sacerdotal garment, and is described as mixing with the prayers of the saints incense, that is, his own intercession.

The Priest's (*ιερεὺς*) office consists of two parts, sacrifice and intercession. Christians are now happily nearly unanimous in admitting the first, namely, the necessity and efficacy of Christ's expiatory death ; but the second is by too many overlooked : and yet it is the more important, as giving efficacy to the former ; for the sacrifice *then* offered, is *now* applied to believers, and therefore he did not lay aside his priestly functions when he entered into glory, but remains a "priest for ever," and leads a mediatory life in heaven for the benefit of his people. This is their strong consolation, the anchor as it were to their souls, which though tossed on the stormy sea of life, still feel secure, since Jesus their fore-runner hath fixed it within the veil ; and this expectation encourages and authorizes them to come boldly with filial

confidence to God, as seated upon a throne of mercy. His present intercession, to which what he underwent on earth was but preparatory, ought to be more frequently in our thoughts; and its supreme importance is strongly expressed by the apostle, "Being reconciled by his death, we are saved by his life," Rom. v. 10. "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. viii. 34. That our High Priest not only intercedes for his Church, but for each individual member of it, appears from St. John's first Epistle, ii. 1. "If any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." The declaration is well qualified to cheer the timid believer with the hope of his final perseverance; for if "He whom the Father heareth always," is ever interceding for him, why should he apprehend that the suggestions of his spiritual enemy, and the fascinations of the world, should tempt him to fall away? And let it be carefully observed, that the comfort offered is guarded against every Antinomian abuse; for the sins here spoken of are evidently not wilful deliberate ones, but such as the pious believer may be betrayed into by inadvertence, and the force of unexpected temptation, as appears by the context, (it is not, any man, but any one of you little children, who are described as confessing their sins,) as well as from the whole tenor of the Epistle, which is addressed to those who evidenced themselves, by their conduct, to be born of God.

As the typical high priest, after the order of Aaron, was required (Levit. xvi. 17.) to make annual intercession for himself, the priests, and the whole nation, so our eternal High Priest, on this his great day of atonement, performs both parts of his office; he intercedes, and he consecrates himself as the victim. While he supplicates as the mediator, the man Christ Jesus, he speaks with the majesty of the Son of God; and though upon the point of meeting a cruel and ignominious death, there is no mention of his approaching sufferings; but his thoughts are solely intent upon the great work given him

to do, the salvation of men. His prayer was heard as respected himself, for his Father glorified him both in heaven and on earth; on earth, by the prodigies attending his crucifixion, by the conversion of the penitent thief, and by the testimony borne to him by Pilate and the centurion; in heaven, by his ascension and exaltation to the mediatorial throne, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him. And the Son also glorified the Father, in magnifying his law and righteous government, in his own humiliation, and in the glory that followed it. He prayed first for himself, that, as he had glorified his Father upon earth, by making known to as many as he had given him the doctrine that leadeth to eternal life, he would glorify him with the original glory which he had enjoyed in his immediate presence before the foundation of the world. He then prays for his apostles, that God would preserve them in his name, or the true religion, and protect them from the evil world, and sanctify or consecrate them by and for the truth, as he had consecrated himself for their sakes. The term when applied to him must mean, that he, a Priest, consecrates or dedicates himself as the sacrifice; for of increase of moral sanctification, as already perfectly holy, he was incapable. His intercession is only for his people, but it is not limited to his personal followers; for he proceeds to pray for all who shall hereafter through their teaching believe, that they all may be united into one body by the closest union, and be one, even as He and his Father are, that is, in disposition, character, and pursuits; and this he asks, not for their good alone, but that this edifying spectacle of unanimity and brotherly affection may convince the world that he came forth from God. He concludes with expressing his desire, that all who have been given to him may be with him, that they may behold his glory, and may share in his and his Father's love.

By saying that he would not pray for the men of the world, Jesus did not mean to say that he would by no means pray for his adversaries, for this was actually done by him on the cross; but the nature of the case did not permit him to

pray for the opposers of his religion, in the same sense that he did for his disciples, that is, for their concord and perseverance. The main object too of his prayer is for his disciples, not so much as *individuals*, as *apostles*; not so much for their personal benefit, as for the propagation of the truth through them. From the express words of the prayer it follows, that Jesus, before he came to this earth, nay from all eternity, had been with his Father in heaven, and that on his departure from it, he returned to the majesty which he had enjoyed as Son of God before the foundation of the world; that by his death was manifested both his own glory and that of his Father; and that the only way to attain eternal felicity was to acknowledge the Father as the fountain of salvation in decreeing it, and the Son as bestowing it, by his voluntary submitting to death.

The subject of this prayer, the unity of Christians, and the reason assigned for it, the conversion of the world, puts in the strongest light the guilt of schism, and ought to be considered with self-examination and with supplication for guidance to their heavenly Father, by all who separate from any branch of Christ's Catholic and Apostolic Church, since separation can only be justified by the departure of that Church, as in the instance of the Roman, from some essential article of faith. Christianity is here defined by him who is the author of it to consist in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent; that is, that Jehovah is the true God in opposition to the gods many of the Gentiles, and that Jesus is the Apostle of God in opposition to the false messiahs that would lay claim to the office. This declaration must of course be guarded against the Socinian interpretation, that the speaker hereby disclaims divinity, because the titles true God and eternal life are assigned in St. John's Epistle to the Son; and in this very prayer he speaks of himself as possessing power and glory, which can only belong to God. He reveals his Father in his real character, not as he is in nature dwelling in unapproachable light, but as the author of man's salvation, and reveals himself as the Lord

sent into the world to accomplish it. Such knowledge is the only way of salvation, and real knowledge will of necessity be practical, and be followed by the worship of the Son as well as of the Father.

127. *Our Saviour's agony. Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. John xviii.*

HAVING sung hymns, that is, as is supposed, the psalms from the 113th to the 118th inclusive, which the Jews still use on this occasion, Jesus led out the eleven over the winter torrent Cedron to Gethsemane, a hamlet between the town and the mount of olives, and entered with them into a garden which they were accustomed to frequent. Here he intended to wait for the son of perdition, and to prepare himself for his approaching sufferings by prayer. Leaving the others at the entrance, he took with him, to witness his distress of mind, only the three who had been favoured with a sight of his glory on the mountain of transfiguration, and withdrew about a stone's throw even from them. This agony or struggle of mind is one of the profound mysteries that we are unable to comprehend; and this is well acknowledged by the Greek Church, which, pleading with the Saviour his own merits, conjures him to aid his worshippers among other appeals by his incomprehensible agony. Still it is profitable to meditate upon it with the light which the word of God affords. As many of his followers in different ages have encountered the severest sufferings and most cruel deaths in his cause, not merely with composure, but with peace and joy; and as no comparison of excellence can be attempted to be drawn between the Saviour and the very best of his followers; we must conclude, that there were some bitter ingredients mixed in his cup which were not in theirs, and some cordial infused into theirs which was denied to him. And yet from his mental agony, we must exclude the two that it should seem must give the severest pang—remorse and despair. We are told, in the memorable prophecy of Isaiah, liii. 10. that it

pleased the Lord to bruise him. His human nature, though supported by its union with the Deity to endure his inconceivable anguish without sinking under it, was left destitute of all consolatory communication. He must have had the clearest perception of the sinfulness of sin, and of the expiation it required; and he must have felt more exquisitely than any inferior being, the hiding of God's countenance, in whose favour alone there can be happiness or even tranquillity for a soul that can appreciate it. Without presuming to speculate farther, we may be sure that the Saviour underwent as much misery as was compatible with a pure conscience, perfect virtue, and the knowledge that his sufferings would terminate in a complete victory over the spiritual enemy; so that we may affirm with truth, that there "never was a sorrow like unto his sorrow." Lam. i. 12. This mysterious narrative shows that human nature, even in its perfect state, is averse from suffering; and we learn from it, that we may innocently pray to be delivered from calamities, provided we are disposed to bear them patiently, if God's better wisdom should assign them to us. "He suffered," says the Apostle to the Hebrews, ii. 18. "being tempted;" nor is it improbable that the great enemy of man, after having been foiled in his seductive trials in the wilderness, now assaulted him with terrific temptations, in the hope of deterring him from the work which he had undertaken. He is described as amazed or perplexed. He says of himself, that he was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; and such was his conflict, that an angel was sent to strengthen him. His agony produced a bloody sweat, and that in the open air, and in a night unusually cold. The expression is explained by some of the size, not the nature, of the drops; yet there is no reason why we should not take it literally, for bloody sweats have been recorded by physicians and historians; and the possibility of it is proved by the death of Charles the Ninth of France, who died of a malady in which the blood gushed out of the pores of the body. Jesus prayed three times that this cup might pass from him if it were possible;

but he concluded each time with perfect resignation, "Not my will, but thine be done." What was this cup? In the opinion of most, the painful and ignominious death he was about to undergo; but others say, the agony he was now enduring: and this seems to me more in harmony with his character and office, for he had before said, that for this very purpose he had come to this hour; and it appears to be confirmed by the Apostle's declaration, Heb. v. 7. that he was heard on account of his piety, or delivered from what he feared; for he was not delivered from dying, but was delivered from the distress of mind which dictated "his supplications with strong cryings and tears;" and he became calm and composed under his sufferings, going forward to meet the danger that approached him with entire self-possession. "Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that delivers me up." This is supported by his remonstrance against Peter's interference to rescue him from the guard, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Great as his sorrow was, it did not absorb him, for he enjoined his three disciples to pray also for themselves, telling them that prayer and watchfulness were the best preservative from temptation. "The spirit is ready," he added, "but the flesh is weak;" not saying this to excuse the past, but to warn them for the future, that this neglect of duty would leave them defenceless in the hour of temptation, and that they would fall, notwithstanding their wish and determination to stand. Peter's self-confidence, almost immediately after, induced him, notwithstanding this warning, to enter into temptation, by going into the court of the high priest's palace, which made way for his fall.

128. *Jesus is delivered up by Judas. Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. John xviii.*

JESUS, finding them sleeping, after he had finished his devotions, tells them that the hour of his arrest is at hand, and that the opportunity was lost. And while he was yet

speaking, Judas entered with a multitude, armed with swords and *clubs*^a, being chiefly the servants of the chief priests, and with the band a detachment of Roman soldiers. He was not seized by force, but voluntarily surrendered himself, and stipulated that his disciples should be permitted to retire without molestation. His appearance so overawed them, that when he replied, "I am he," they not only drew back, but fell to the ground; and they attempted no violence against the eleven, not even against Peter, though he had drawn his sword, and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus, showing at once his prudence and composure, requesting leave to advance as far as him, miraculously healed him; and protested against his disciples employing violence against the magistrate or his officers, telling Peter, that he needed not his feeble arm to rescue him, for if he chose to decline his voluntary sufferings, he might have commanded the services of as many legions of angels as he had of followers; that is, of more than seventy thousand beings that "excel in strength," one of whom would have been irresistible by mortals. The apostles all took to flight, no attempt being made to detain any of them; so that our Saviour's late prediction, that he had lost none of them, was literally fulfilled.

Mark alone informs us, that a young man (*νεανίσκος*) followed him, clothed only with a linen wrapper, who perhaps might have been roused from sleep, and that the soldiers (*νεανισκοί*) laying hold of him, he left it in their hands, and escaped. The tradition is, that it was St. John, or another apostle; but this cannot be, for they had all fled before. It is thought by others, that he might be the owner of the garden, or of the house where they ate the passover, or a soldier, such being the ordinary meaning of the Greek term. At all events, we may presume that he was a disciple, perhaps, as supposed by Townson and Greswell, the Evangelist himself.

^a ῥάβδων, not ζύλων, *staves*.

129. *Jesus is brought before Annas, who sends him immediately to Caiaphas, the high priest. Peter, as foretold, denies his Master thrice.*

JESUS, being bound, is taken in the first instance to the house of Annas, who had been himself high priest for eleven years, but had been deposed about nine by the Romans. His influence, however, was such, that the office was filled successively by five of his sons, and several of his sons-in-law, one of whom now held it, and it is shown by the fact, that Jesus was brought to him first. He sent him, bound as he was, to Caiaphas, without having examined him, and Peter and another disciple, thought to be St. John, recovering from their panic, followed at a distance; and, as the latter was known to the high priest, they obtained admission into the open court, from which they might see what was going on in the council room above. This was another false step, for, by striking Malchus, Peter had rendered himself more obnoxious than the rest; and as he had not courage to own his Master, he ought to have kept away. A young woman who kept the door, seeing Peter warming himself at the fire, challenged him with being a follower of Jesus; and the dread of detection made him break his resolution and promise. He denied, and went out into the portico, in order to escape if possible; and here the crowing of the cock reminded him of his Master's prediction. Still, however, fear prevailed; he a second time denied, either to the same or another maid^b; and when, about an hour after, a relation of Malchus declared that he had seen him in the garden, and the by-standers observed, that his Galilean pronunciation confirmed the

^b According to Matthew, he was asked the second time by another maid; Mark's phrase is ἡ παιδίσκη ἰδοῦσα αὐτὸν πάλιν, which our translators render "a maid saw him again," as if it had been τις, a sense which, according to Grotius, the words may bear. But though Peter only denied thrice, he might be questioned oftener; and it seems that this was not the same damsel, because Luke here uses ἄλλοις, another person, and John the plural number.

charge, he denied with an oath, cursing himself if he had any knowledge of Jesus, adding perjury to his lie. Immediately, while he was speaking, the cock crew again, and our Saviour turning round and looking at him, softened his heart, and brought him to a godly sorrow, so that he rushed out, and wept bitterly^c. The incident is recorded by all the Evangelists. The time of these denials was the space of the third Roman watch, or from midnight to three o'clock in the morning, which was called the cock crowing. John, however, we may presume, remained; and thus Divine Providence arranged that one of our Lord's historians should be an eye-witness of his trial before the council.

130. Jesus, on his trial, adjured by the high priest, acknowledges himself to be the Messiah, and is condemned as guilty of death.

It was not till day-break that the council and the witnesses could be brought together to the palace, and in the interval the high priest examined Jesus concerning his disciples and his doctrine, hoping to be enabled to condemn him out of his own mouth; but he objected to this unjust mode, and replied, that he had spoken publicly to the world in the synagogue and in the temple, and desired him to interrogate those that had heard him. The answer was thought disrespectful, and one of the officers that stood by smote him with the palm of his hand. He meekly replied, "If I have spoken ill, show wherein it lies;" thus becoming an example of his own precept, (Matt. v. 44.) to bear with patience a sudden and unprovoked injury; an example which few of his followers have imitated, and is remarkably contrasted by St. Paul's reproof of the high priest, under a similar trial. Wishing

^c "Rushed out." This is the rendering of *ἰπιβαλῶν* by Beza and others, and "throwing his garment over his head in confusion," Lev. xix. 19. that of Macknight: but authority may be found for that of our translators, "when he thought thereon."

to preserve the semblance of justice, the council sought out witnesses to charge him with a capital crime; but though many were produced, none could be found whose evidence was consistent; and to condemn a person to death, their own law required two witnesses, and it was also necessary to produce evidence sufficient to satisfy the Roman governor. At last two came, and all that these could advance was a perversion of his words, when he purified the temple at the commencement of his ministry. Nothing could be brought against him for the three following years, though he had constantly taught in public, and even these two witnesses did not agree in their report. The high priest then questioned him, hoping he might say something to criminate himself; but he answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I inquire your opinion of me, you will neither reply nor release me." The high priest, every other hope of crinating him being frustrated, adjured him by the living God; and being thus put upon his oath, according to the manner of that tribunal, he felt himself bound to break his silence, and acknowledge that he was the Messiah. And as his actual appearance and situation did but ill accord with a character of such high dignity, he proceeded to assure his judges, that what he affirmed was true, and that they themselves should in due time have proof of it, referring them to the fulfilment of two prophecies of David, Psalm cx. 1. and Daniel vii. 13, 14. which they themselves applied to the Messiah. Ye shall see the Son of man sitting as described by the first on the right hand of power; ye shall see the sign ye have so often demanded, the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. This declaration was what they wished; and it having been decided, that he was by this reply guilty of blasphemy, (a capital offence,) they proceeded with him as soon as it was fully light (perhaps about four o'clock) to the Roman governor, without whose consent they had no power to enforce their sentence. First, however, the men who guarded him, insulted, mocked, and beat him, and thus fulfilled unconsciously predictions, the literal accomplishment of which seemed most improbable. "I gave my

back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair ; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isa. l. 6.

131. *Jesus is brought before Pilate the governor. Matt. xxvii. Luke xxiii. John xviii.*

THE whole council, to give the greater weight to their accusation, delivered up their prisoner to Pontius Pilate the governor ; but though they had no scruple in seeking a death-warrant, they would not pollute themselves by entering his palace, that they might not be prevented from eating the passover that evening ; so he came out to them, on a contiguous platform, in the open air, called in their language, from its elevation, Gabbatha, and in Greek, from its tessellated flooring, the Pavement. Pilate wished to decline interfering ; " Take ye him, and judge him according to your law ;" intimating that the crime laid to his charge was not of a capital nature ; but they asserted that it was, and urged that it was not lawful for them to execute him ; thus unwittingly bringing about our Lord's own prediction, that he should die not by a Jewish death, stoning, but by a Roman, crucifixion. During their accusation, Jesus continued silent, to the governor's amazement ; and they, knowing that he would care little for the charge of blasphemy, accused him of treason to the emperor. Pilate then could no longer refuse to examine him ; and being asked, Jesus allows that he was a king, but he added, that his was not an earthly sovereignty ; and the proof was, that if he had been, his servants would have anxiously exerted themselves to prevent his being apprehended. He solemnly declares, " To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." 'This is what Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, (vi. 13.) calls the good confession which Jesus Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate. It is remarkable, that his owning himself a king, produced no effect upon the governor. His explanation of the nature of his sovereignty, no doubt, satisfied him that it did not involve the guilt of treason ; and he probably, knowing the lofty

titles and chimerical royalty ascribed by the Stoics to their wise man, their model of ideal perfection, conceived that he was some harmless philosophical visionary. "What," said he, "is truth?" meaning not so much to inquire into his opinions, as to declare that such language was nothing to the purpose; for he immediately went out upon the pavement, and publicly declared to his accusers, that he found no cause to condemn him. They, exasperated, cried out, "He stirreth up the people to rebellion, beginning at Galilee, and coming even to Jerusalem."

131. *Pilate, being informed that Jesus is a Galilean, sends him to Herod.*

THE mention of Galilee suggested an expedient, by which he hoped, without offending his accusers, to avoid condemning an innocent person. Finding therefore on enquiry that Jesus was called a Galilean, he sent him to Herod the sovereign of that district, whom the passover had brought to Jerusalem. Herod had long wished to see him; but as he performed no miracle to gratify him, nor even answered any of his questions, he was disappointed, and despised him as an insignificant person. Still, though the priests had followed and urged their complaints, he did not choose to have any concern in his death, but sent him back to Pilate. Previously, however, he joined his soldiers and officers in coarsely deriding his pretensions, by clothing him in a royal robe; and this act has been considered by some as equivalent to a declaration of innocence, as he did not substitute for his own dress the black suit of one capitally condemned. The only result of Pilate's complaisance to Herod, was his reconciliation with that prince, with whom he had been upon bad terms, probably on account of the massacre of some of his subjects, while sacrificing in the temple. (Luke xiii. 1.) It however afforded him a topic in favour of the prisoner's innocence; and Herod's concurrence

in his opinion, that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death^d, had the more weight from his being a Jew.

132. *Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate, who seeks in vain to release him.*

PILATE, having failed in his endeavour to transfer the judgment of Jesus to Herod, again took his seat upon the tribunal, and the reluctance which he felt to pronounce sentence must have been much increased by a message communicated to him by his wife, who charged him to have nothing to do with that just person, concerning whom she had suffered much in a dream. Her name appears from ecclesiastical writers to have been Claudia Procula; and the incident confirms the Evangelist's veracity, for it was not till the reign of Tiberius that governors were permitted to take their wives into their provinces. It had been the governor's custom for some years at this feast, to please the populace by releasing whatever prisoner they chose to ask for; and he now gave them the option of Jesus or Barabbas, who, beside the very crime of which they accused the former, had been guilty of murder. As he knew the chief priests had delivered up Jesus from envy, he hoped that the populace would decide in his favour. He would thus save his life, and the priests would be less irritated if he were set at liberty by an act of grace, than if he acquitted him. But they had sufficient influence over the people, to make them ask for the liberation of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus; and though the third time Pilate declared that he had committed no capital offence, they only cried out the more vehemently, "Crucify him."

^d Such seems to be the sense, and it is so translated by Beza; but our own, (*παραγεγμένον αὐτῷ*), "nothing worthy of death done *unto* him," is perhaps a more accurate rendering, and may mean he had not been treated by Herod like a person guilty of a capital offence.

133. *Pilate orders Jesus to be scourged, and, after another fruitless attempt to move the pity of the people and declaring his innocence, reluctantly delivers him to the soldiers to be crucified.*

PILATE now ordered Jesus to be scourged, hoping to appease their fury by this punishment. The bodily pain which it produced was heightened by the cruel mockery of the whole band, who put on him a purple robe and a crown of thorns, and gave him a reed for a sceptre. They then knelt before him as a sovereign, till, wearied of this assumed deference, they struck him with his mock sceptre, and spat upon him^c. Pilate next exhibited him to the people in the garb of royalty, and again declared his innocence. Still the chief priests and their attendants persevered in the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" "Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him," replied Pilate. "He ought to die according to our law," they answer, "because he made himself to be the Son of God." He had hoped, by thus bringing Jesus before them, to have excited their compassion; but finding them inexorable, and that they now brought forward a new charge, he once more retired, and asked Jesus whence he was. But he, not choosing by revealing his dignity to influence a judge who was concerned only with the question of his innocence, gave him no reply. The governor

^c An instance of mockery occurred not long after in the reign of Caligula, which, for its striking similarity to the conduct of the soldiers to our blessed Lord, deserves to be cited. "When Agrippa, who had been appointed to his uncle Philip's tetrarchy with the right of wearing a crown, came to Alexandria on his way to his new dominions, the inhabitants, among other ways of showing their ill will, brought into the Gymnasium, Carabas, a sort of distracted fellow, who at all seasons went naked about the streets, the common jest of boys and idle people; placed him on a lofty seat, put a papyrus wreath on his head instead of a diadem, gave him a short stick of it for a sceptre, picked up from the ground, and dressed him in a mat instead of a robe, *χλαμύς*. Having thus given him a mimic royal air, several young men with poles on their shoulders acted as his guard; and others did him homage or solicited justice; while loud and confused acclamations from the crowd of Maris, (that is, in Syriac, lord,) intimated whom they meant to ridicule by this mock show." Philo in Flaccum.

expressed his astonishment at his silence: "Knowest thou not that I have authority to crucify or to release thee?" He then answered, "that he could have had no authority over him except it had been given him from above." Therefore he (the Jewish high priest) who had delivered him up to him, and had not this authority, had the greater sin. This made Pilate still more anxious to save him; but the Jews exclaimed, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar;" thus intimating a threat of accusing him to his jealous and suspicious master Tiberius. He now came out to the Pavement, and had Jesus once more brought forth, and expostulated with the people; "Shall I crucify your king?" They answer, "We have no king but Cæsar," thus publicly renouncing their national faith in their Messiah. Seeing that the people grew tumultuous, and apprehending that his acquittal of Jesus might be represented as treasonable, he sacrificed his conscience to his fears. But first he appealed to their religious feelings, by transferring the guilt of the compulsory sentence he was about to pronounce from himself to them, in washing his hands in token of innocence. This he might do either agreeably to heathen rites, or in imitation of the law of Moses, which, in the case of an unknown murder, ordered the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood," Deut. xxi. 6. Not only the priests but the people showed themselves eager to take the responsibility upon themselves and their posterity; but though they could not exonerate Pilate, they thus made the condemnation of the Messiah completely a national act; and the weight of this blood lies heavy on their dispersed and despised posterity, even at this distant day! It is unprecedented in the annals of mankind, that a person at the very time that he is capitally condemned, should be declared to be innocent by the person who delivered him up, by the judge who passed sentence, and by the officer who superintended his execution; while those who so clamorously demanded his crucifixion, could prove no charge against him. So wonder-

fully were all the circumstances arranged, to make it evident that Jesus suffered unjustly. We may also observe, that as the various methods taken by Pilate to save his life were unsuccessful, they only served to aggravate and protract his sufferings. At first sight it seems scarcely credible, that a whole people should cry out for the putting to death as a malefactor one who had miraculously healed so many diseases, removed so many bodily defects, and even restored the dead to life. But our astonishment will cease on recollecting, that miracles, which we justly regard as decisive proof of a divine mission, were in that age only considered as indicative of the agency of angels, either bad or good; therefore, according to them, the agent was to be inferred from the nature of the doctrine, not the truth of the doctrine from the miracle. And according to their prejudices, his doctrine was blasphemous.

134. *Judas returns the bribe he had received; and, after declaring his Master's innocence, hangs himself in despair. Matt xxvii.*

JUDAS, finding that Jesus was condemned, and that he wrought no miracle for his deliverance, repented, but not like Peter, with a godly sorrow; for his grief produced not contrition but remorse, which drove him to despair and suicide. Still, however, he offered the only reparation in his power. He wished to return his bribe to the priests, declaring that he had sinned in delivering up an innocent person; but they unfeelingly answered, "What is that to us? thou art to see to that." Hereupon he flung the thirty pieces of silver into the *sanctuary*, (*ναός*), and withdrew and hung himself, even before his Master's crucifixion. Peter's description of his death (Acts i. 18.) may be reconciled with that of the Evangelists, by supposing that after he had suspended himself, the bough of the tree broke; and that, falling from a considerable height, he burst asunder. The wood of the Judas tree, so called from the tradition that it was the one on which

he hung himself, is very brittle. The rulers consulted what was to be done with the money which he had rejected. They scrupled to lay it out for religious uses ; but, wishing to spend it in some way that might appear charitable, they purchased with it a field for the burial of strangers ; and so inadvertently fulfilled an ancient prophecy, *Zech. xi. 12.*

135. *Jesus is led away to be crucified. Matt. xxvii.
Luke xxiii.*

JESUS was now taken to be crucified. We read of crucifixion in the Egyptian, Grecian, and Carthaginian history ; but it was not a Jewish punishment, and would not therefore have been suffered by our Lord, if the Romans had not been in his time the sovereigns of Judæa. Among them it was the mode of executing slaves, and was deemed so disgraceful, that Cicero, enlarging upon the crimes of Verres, describes his crucifixion of a Roman citizen as the highest conceivable enormity ; and declares, that no language is adequate to express the horror he feels at the infliction upon such of this most cruel and most shocking punishment^f. To the ancients, the cross of Christ was a stumbling-block in a higher degree than can well be conceived by us ; for the use of it, which Constantine abolished, out of respect to the Saviour, has never been revived ; and it is dignified and sanctified in our imagination, by having been made by him the very instrument of his triumph ; (*Eph. ii. 16.*) but to a Roman, who saw in the cross nothing more than the legal mode of punishing strangers and slaves, it was only associated with ideas of guilt and ignominy. “The Pagans,” says Justin Martyr, “are fully convinced of our insanity, for giving the second place, after the immutable and eternal God and Father of all, to a person who was crucified^g.” To the Jews it was still more

^f Juvenal, vi. 218. Cicero in Verrem, v. and pro Rabirio.

^g Apol. ii. 60.

odious; for they esteemed him who suffered by it as not only condemned by men, but forsaken by God. "The person whom you call the Messiah," says Trypho the Jew, "incurred the lowest infamy, for he fell under the greatest curse of the law, he was crucified; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree^b." The very same text had been previously brought forward by an apostle, (Gal. iii. 13.) to magnify the Saviour's love, in suffering for our sakes as an execrable malefactor; and we see, from this consent of Jew and Gentile, that when it is said that "Christ endured the cross," (Heb. xii. 2.) it might be truly added, that he "despised the shame." Crucifixion was likewise, from the pain it gave, and its long duration, a most cruel punishment; so that the Romans, to express the greatest degree of suffering, borrowed from it the term, which we retain, *excruciating*ⁱ. The prisoner, having first been scourged, was fastened to the upright beam, by tying or nailing his feet; and on the transverse by his hands, wounds in which, from the abundance of the nerves, are peculiarly painful. Thus suspended, he hung sometimes for days, until he perished through agony and want of food. Jesus, worn out by his previous sufferings, (for he had been kept up all the preceding night, hurried from place to place, and buffeted in derision by the soldiers, as well as scourged according to the custom,) expired after six hours.

The place of execution, from the bones that were suffered to accumulate there, was called Golgotha, or the place of skulls; and is, through the Vulgate, better known to us by the Latin name of Calvary. It was usual for a condemned person to carry the transverse beam of his own cross; but Jesus was already so exhausted, that, after bearing it beyond the gate, he sunk under the burden, and they were obliged to transfer it to another. Simon the Cyrenian, whom they met coming out of the country, had this service imposed upon him, probably because he was a disciple.

^b Justin, p. 271, 90.

ⁱ Cowper's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 209.

A great multitude of the people followed, and women, who beat their breasts, and lamented him. Jesus took this last opportunity of directing their thoughts to the guilt and impending ruin of their nation: "If they do these things to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?" that is, if the Romans inflict this punishment upon the innocent, how awful will be the fate of this sinful nation. Two malefactors (who were also *robbers*, *λησται*, not *κλεπτοὶ*, *thieves*) were led out to suffer with him; and thus was literally fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, (liii. 12.) that he was numbered among the transgressors. They were probably associates of Barabbas, whom the infatuated people preferred to the Lord of life and glory. It was permitted to give the condemned a portion of wine mingled with myrrh, of a stupefying quality; and some charitable person seems to have prepared this cordial. But, having tasted, he declined drinking it; for his purpose was to suffer death in all its bitterness^k.

136. *The Crucifixion.* *Matt.* xxvii. *Mark* xv. *Luke* xxiii.
John xix.

FOUR Roman soldiers nailed him to the cross, and while they were so employed, he "interceded for the transgressors," (*Isa.* liii. 12.) pleading their ignorance, the only circumstance that could be urged in extenuation. They next elevated the cross, and the violent precipitation of it into the cavity prepared for it, must have given a convulsive shock to his whole frame. Above his head, as was customary, was written the cause for which

^k When Fructuosus, bishop of Taragon, and his two deacons, were led to be burnt in the amphitheatre, their friends offered them spiced wine, which they, in imitation of their Saviour, refused. *Ruinart Acta Martyrum*, p. 220. and the Hymn of Prudentius. The wine mixed with myrrh of Mark, and the vinegar mixed with (*χολῆ*) gall of Matthew, appear to be two names for the same cup, for the latter word means any bitter herb. *Jeremiah* xxiii. 15. viii. 14. This wine of stupidity (*οἶνον κατανύξιως*, *Psalm* lx. 3.) is the same as that which is called, with apparent contradiction, *οἶνος ἀπρατον κικιρασμένος*, that is, wine unmixed with water, but mixed with poisonous and stupefying ingredients. "Give strong drink unto him who is ready to perish." *Proverbs* xxxi. 6.

he suffered, in the three languages that were in use; and Pilate had so worded it, that it expressed what he really was; nor would he alter it at the request of the chief priests to suit their view of him. The soldiers shared among them his dress; but as his inner vest was of a kind that would be useless if divided, they cast lots for it, whereby they fulfilled a prediction in that wonderful Psalm, (xxii.) which is a prophetic history of the Saviour's final sufferings and ultimate triumph, and to which he drew the attention of the bystanders, and of future ages, by repeating the opening of it while on the cross. In this painful state he continued from about nine o'clock in the morning to three in the afternoon, exposed to the mockery of both people and rulers, who insulted him in the very language which David, a thousand years before, had put into the mouths of the murderers of the Messiah. One, too, even of his fellow-sufferers joined in reviling him; but the other acknowledged that he was the Messiah, and received in return an assurance that he should accompany him that very day to Paradise, or the place of departed spiritsⁱ. His petition was to be remembered when he came in his kingdom; but he grants him more than he asked, an immediate reward; and thus, in the moment of his greatest degradation, performs an act of Sovereignty, by the forgiveness of sins. This case is a solitary instance which can never occur again; recorded to preserve the awakened dying sinner from despair, by shewing that even those that at the last extremity throw themselves upon the Redeemer's mercy, will be admitted into his kingdom. At the same time it holds out no encouragement to those who sin against conviction, and presumptuously flatter themselves that they shall have time and inclination to repent upon their death

ⁱ This distinction, familiar to the Jews, is observed by St. Paul, who tells the Corinthians (2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.) that he was caught up to the third heaven, that he might contemplate the scene of supreme felicity which awaits the just after the resurrection; and that he was caught up to Paradise, that he might be acquainted with their immediate enjoyment of the intermediate state.

bed. Probably no one ever so improved a dying hour as this robber, or under such unfavourable circumstances; for he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, when one disciple had betrayed, another had denied, and all had forsaken him; when the nation had rejected him, and his crucifixion seemed to prove that he was disowned not only by them but by God. He acknowledged the justice of his own sentence, and bore testimony to the innocence of Jesus; and was only anxious for salvation; for he had nothing to hope and fear in a world which he must leave so soon; and therefore he must have believed in the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. His faith then we see was of that saving kind which would have expanded into all the actions of a Christian life, if time had been afforded. One instance only of the acceptance of a dying repentance is recorded, that none might despair; and only one, that none might presume.

In the height of his sufferings, Jesus still showed his affection for his mother, who, accompanied by her sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary of Magdala, and the beloved disciple, stood near to him. To the care of the latter he bequeathed her, and she henceforth shared his home. About three o'clock, under the influence of the same feelings as during his agony, he cried out in the Psalmist's words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" showing that the withdrawing from his spirit of his consolatory presence was more dreadful to him than all the sufferings that the malice of his enemies could inflict. A centurion with some soldiers were in attendance; and Jesus, complaining of thirst, a natural circumstance arising out of his state of pain, one of them, filling a sponge with vinegar and water (the usual beverage of soldiers) out of a vessel that happened to stand near, raised it up to him upon a reed. Having received the vinegar, and thereby fulfilled another prophecy, Psalm lxix. 21. he cried out with all the energy he could exert, "It is finished;" and then, the horror which had oppressed him being removed, he again, in a loud

voice, exclaimed, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ;" and, leaning his head upon his bosom, expired.

This circumstance is mentioned by the first three Evangelists, to mark, as asserted by Doddridge, that his surrendering his spirit was a voluntary act ; but the conclusion drawn from the expression, he dismissed his spirit, only shows ignorance of the language, for it means no more than a peaceful departure ; and the opinion itself I consider as highly objectionable, since it would make our Lord's death his own act, not that of the Jews and Gentiles. The intention was, I conceive, that all might hear his dying declaration of confidence in his Father, and, for this purpose, his mind, triumphing over his body, rallied for a final effort.

137. *The prodigies that ensued. The body of Jesus is granted by the governor to Joseph of Arimathæa, who deposits it in his own new tomb.*

OUR Lord's death was accompanied with miracles sufficient to convince all that did not wilfully shut their eyes, that he was the Christ ; and we read that the centurion who was in attendance was so affected by some of these signs, and also by his dying behaviour, that he exclaimed, " Truly this was the Son of God !" As the article is wanting, some would render it a son, as if the centurion, an idolater, took him for one of his own deities. But since the cause of his condemnation was his claiming this appellation in a higher and peculiar sense, it is more reasonable to understand it as a confession of being the Messiah ; and the corresponding passage in Luke, " Certainly this was a just man," meaning that he really was what he professed to be, with the remark, that the centurion glorified, that is, praised God, confirms this interpretation. These miracles were, 1. a preternatural darkness ; 2. the rending of the veil which divided the inner sanctuary from the outer ; and 3. an earthquake, and the rising of the dead bodies of the

saints^k. Commentators are not agreed whether the term, the whole earth, is to be taken in the most extensive sense, or restricted to Judæa. The early Christian writers appeal to the Roman archives in confirmation of the fact, which they consider as universal; but the expression does not necessarily mean more than the whole land of Judæa, and the darkness was probably like that brought by Moses upon Egypt. Its duration, and the period of full moon at which it occurred, prevent our ascribing it to an eclipse. The rending of the veil, which threw open to view the inner sanctuary, intimated that the Mosaic dispensation should cease when the great High Priest entered into heaven, of which this building was typical; and that believers now have the privilege through him of drawing' as nigh to God on his mercy-seat at all times, as the high priest did on one day in the year. As Christ the true victim expired at the time of evening sacrifice, some of the priests must have been present; yet we do not hear that any were affected by the prodigy. A curtain hanging at a doorway would most naturally be rent from the bottom *upwards*; the rending of it from the top to the bottom is therefore noticed by the Evangelist. The third sign was an earthquake, which rent the rocks and threw open graves; out of which, (but not till after the resurrection of Him who was the first-fruits of them that slept, 1 Cor. xv. 20.) "the bodies of departed saints arose, and appeared unto many, as an earnest of the resurrection of all." Commentators are not agreed whether they were saints of past ages, or persons who had lately died. The latter seems most probable; for David is soon after mentioned by Peter (Acts ii. 29.) as still buried; and we can

^k It hath been observed to me by an intelligent friend, that it will be found on examination, that the scoffs and insults which were levelled at our Saviour on the cross were all during the first three hours of the crucifixion, and that a manifest change of feeling towards him, arising, as it should seem, from a certain misgiving as to his character, is discoverable in the bystanders after the expiration of that time. Is not this change of conduct very naturally explained by the awe with which they contemplated the fearful darkness that came on? *Blunt on the Veracity of the Gospels.*

hardly suppose if the saints of the former dispensation had risen, that he would have been left in the grave ; besides, the resurrection of personal acquaintance would more effectually confirm the faith of believers. The multitude, we find, rightly interpreted these prodigies as testimonies from God to the innocence of Jesus, and returned with the strongest demonstrations of sorrow ; for their rage, which had been artfully raised, had given place to regret and self-reproach, and their conviction of his innocence thus attested prepared the way for the conversion of the three thousand, on the ensuing feast of Pentecost.

The Mosaic law requires, that the bodies of persons hanged should be taken down on the same day ; nor was it a Roman custom, in ordinary cases, to deny them the rites of sepulture. Ulpian, on the Duties of a Proconsul, states, that the bodies of executed malefactors ought to be given up to their relatives ; and Tiberius's withholding them is represented by Tacitus and Suetonius as one of his uncommon cruelties. The approaching sabbath was a great festival, on which the first sheaf of the harvest was reaped, and from which the fifty days to the feast of weeks was reckoned. The rulers, therefore, waited upon Pilate to request that the legs of these persons might be broken to hasten their deaths, that they might be removed before the evening. Thus our Lord's enemies were instrumental to the fulfilment of his promise to the penitent thief, that he should *that day* be with him in Paradise ; and their not breaking his limbs, was an additional evidence that he had already expired. Even if he had been then alive, the wound of the lance, with which one of the soldiers pierced his side, and which is supposed to have penetrated the heart, would have produced death. St. John, who saw the wound given, bears witness to the fact ; and some think, (from his use of the pronoun *ἐκεῖνος*, instead of *αὐτός*,) that he appeals to his Master, as the Searcher of hearts, to vouch it also. From the mode in which in his Epistle he refers to the water and the blood which gushed out of the Redeemer's side, he appears not only to have brought forward

the fact as an evidence of his Lord's death, but as emblematical of the two-fold salvation which he thereby wrought for believers deliverance both from the guilt and from the dominion of sin ; in other words, of justification and sanctification, of which the two Sacraments are the signs, memorials, and pledges.

Crucifixion is a lingering punishment, and proves fatal by gradual exhaustion. To live on the cross three days was a common occurrence ; and Timotheus, and Maura his wife, who are among the martyrs of Upper Egypt, under the Decian persecution^k, are said not to have expired till the ninth. Many perished, not from the punishment itself, but from hunger ; some were devoured by birds of prey ; and there are instances of persons, who, being taken down alive, recovered. Pilate, therefore, and the centurion on duty, were surprised, that Jesus, after hanging only six hours on the cross, should be dead ; and the surprise of the centurion was the greater, because he expired with loud exclamations, which proved his strength to be entire at the time. A desire to ascertain, or ensure his death, was the motive that led the soldier to pierce his side ; and the solemnity of the Evangelist's words, occurring as they do in the middle of a narrative, and almost interrupting the connection of a sentence, show that he considered the fact of the water and the blood gushing forth as most important. " Commentators," says Dr. Burton, " have generally agreed, that the fact here so earnestly stated as a matter of belief, was the death of Jesus ; and modern commentators will add, that the presence of water mixed with blood, proves that the pericardium was pierced ; and it has been asserted, that in the case of persons dying from torture, the quantity of water is increased. With respect to the fact, I do not presume to offer an opinion ; I believe, however, that the notion will be found not to be correct. This, at least, I have no hesitation in asserting, that to prove the death of Christ from this fact, is an idea entirely modern.

^k Baronius, A. D. 253.

And when we consider the very general success which the Gnostic doctrines had met with in Asia, it seems more natural to suppose, that St. John recorded this fact, with a view to confute the Docetæ. Of all the circumstances which attended the crucifixion, none would be more conclusive for the corporeal nature of Jesus; and it was natural that the Evangelist should dwell with particular emphasis upon a fact which he had seen with his own eyes, and which so powerfully confuted the arguments of his opponents¹." I think the Professor has shown, that, in recording the fact, the Evangelist intended to confute the Gnostics; but I see no necessity for concluding, that this was his only design; and I insert, from the Evangelical Register of 1829, some interesting observations by a physician, who writes under the signature of Jason. "It has been supposed from our Lord's previous declaration, that no man took his life from him, but that he laid it down of himself; but the repeated declaration, that he was put to death by his enemies, shows that the former language meant no more than that he might, if he pleased, have declined to die." The record concerning the blood and the water, this writer considers as explaining, (at least to a more scientific age,) that the real cause of the death of Jesus was rupture of the heart, occasioned by mental agony. Such rupture is usually attended by instant death, without previous exhaustion, and by the effusion into the pericardium of blood, which in this particular case, though scarcely in any other, separates into its two constituent parts, so as to present the appearance commonly termed ^m blood and water. A degree of mental distress, far inferior to that endured by him who was emphatically styled, "the man of sorrows," has a tendency to produce bloody sweat, oppression of the chest, incapacity of exertion, and, finally, rupture of the heart. These symptoms are expressed, or implied, throughout the narrative of the sufferings of Jesus. Thus, on entering the garden, he exclaimed, "My soul is ex-

¹ Bampton Lectures, p. 170.

^m Bonnet gives two examples, vol. i. p. 585, 887.

ceedingly sorrowful, even unto death ;” and it seems to be intimated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, (v. 4—9.) that death would have been the speedy result of his agony, if he had not been strengthened by supernatural aid : yet, though supported by an angel, his sweat was as clots of blood falling to the ground. This implies excessive palpitation, and on his way to Golgotha, although, as appears from the sequel, his inward strength was unimpaired, he required another to bear his cross. Sudden death is also sometimes occasioned by passions of the mind, without the intervention of rupture of the heart ; but, in that case, the blood, instead of coagulating, remains liquid, and in mere dilatation of the heart from grief, the mode of death is not so rapid, nor if the side were pierced, would the effusion be so immediate, or so abundant. The prophecy, “ Reproach hath broken my heart,” and “ I am full of heaviness, I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart like wax is melted in the midst of my body,” would on this supposition be literally fulfilled. (Psalm xxii. lxix.) This fact the writer considers as giving a peculiar propriety to the passages, in which the Saviour is described as “ pouring out his life’s blood unto death. (Isaiah liii. 12.) The sacrifices that typify his death imply that it was an atonement for sin. This doctrine is continually asserted in the Epistles, and appears from the peculiarity of his behaviour. He who sustained with firmness every other trial, was destined to endure an infliction of overwhelming severity, in which the very perfection of his character was to prove the principal cause of distress. To advance the divine glory by magnifying the law, and to accomplish the salvation of mankind, Christ consented to lose the light of God’s countenance, including the sense of his favour, and the comfort of his communion, although fully aware that the misery thus incurred would occasion his death. We may deduce from his agony in the garden, and the revival of his mental sufferings on the cross, that the death of Jesus was not merely that of a martyr in a righteous cause, which would have been, if not triumphant, yet without dismay, but that of an atoning

victim. It was the only death worthy of him to suffer, who was the spotless "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," and of him to accept, who had announced the sacrifice of God to be a broken and contrite spirit. It was the death of a pure and perfect man, sustaining and discharging the penalty due to human depravity, thereby acquiring an equitable claim to see of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied, and demonstrating, as was designed, that God is at the same time both just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. At this time was verified in the true paschal Lamb the injunction, "a bone of it shall not be broken;" and this command is quoted, that we may learn that the minutest points of the ceremonial law were previously contrived, in order to direct the spiritual worshipper to Christ.

Isaiah had foretold what appeared to be incompatible, that the Messiah should suffer an ignominious death, and yet receive an honourable interment. Both predictions were, however, accomplished in Jesus. Two men of rank and fortune, Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, disregarding the shame of the cross, even before their Master's resurrection had shed a glory over it, testified openly their respect, the first by requesting his body from the governor, the second by assisting him in depositing it honourably in a tomb; while the Apostles, with the exception of John, were afraid of showing themselves. The request was granted; and as Joseph had prepared for himself a sepulchre in the vicinity of Calvary, that circumstance, as well as the approach of the Sabbath, decided where they should place the remains of Jesus. Had the tomb been distant, they would naturally have taken the corpse in the first instance to a friend's house; and as the Sabbath was coming on, it must have remained where it was till the day of rest was over. It was certainly, we may affirm, a providential concurrence of circumstances that induced them to take it directly from the cross to the place which best suited the event that was reserved for the third day, where it was left under the custody of enemies, who by the very precautions they took to prevent imposition, provided decisive evidence of

the fact of the resurrection. Whatever was requisite to fulfil the prediction, "With the rich man was his tomb," (Isaiah liii.) was done, and no more; for the body was not embalmed; that last tribute of respect was intended, but this which was not needful, and though piously intended might be improper, was prevented by the intervening of the Sabbath. It was for that purpose that the women visited the sepulchre so early in the morning of the resurrection; and their hastening thither was a blessing to themselves, and an advantage to the Apostles; for though they treated their reports as idle tales, yet the intelligence had an effect upon their minds, and when the proof was brought home to them by the Lord's appearance to themselves the same day, they were prepared to see him with less surprise and perturbation. Previously, however, Nicodemus and Joseph had bought no less than a hundred pounds weight of a mixture of myrrh and aloes^a, on a bed of which they laid the corpse, and swathed it in linen bandages with these dry spices^b. Having then rolled against the tomb a large stone, they withdrew, as did Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Cleophas, the virgin's sister, who had sat over against it till the Sabbath admonished them to retire. As Zebedee's wife, Salome, though generally mentioned with them, is not named on this occasion, it is a reasonable conjecture that she was in attendance upon our Lord's mother; and had, with the beloved disciple, prevailed upon her to leave the afflicting spectacle of his sufferings, while the sword was piercing through her own soul, soon after he had consigned her to his care as a son. These women were then too much absorbed in sorrow to make any preparation for the embalmment; consequently they could not (as the Sabbath soon commenced) procure spices till after sunset

^a The aloes mentioned here and in Psalm xlv. was not the purgative drug now known by that name, but an aromatic gum, the agallochum.

^b We learn, both from the history of King Asa in the Old Testament, (2 Chron. xvi. 14.) and of Herod the Great in Josephus, (book xxxiii.) that at grand funerals the Jews were accustomed to lay the deceased upon a bed filled with spices, part of which was afterwards burnt at his burial.

on Saturday evening; whereas Joanna and their other friends might have been ready with their share before the Sabbath. The observation, that the tomb was a new one, and hewn out of a rock, is not a trivial one, for it shows that there could be no other entrance through which a body might be secretly conveyed away; and as no other had been ever deposited in it, there could be no doubt of the identity of the person that rose again. His enemies also who had procured his death, unconsciously, by their precautions, defeated their own scheme; for they requested, and obtained from the governor, a guard, probably not less than sixty men, and secured the sepulchre with a seal, so that there could be no fraud on the part of the soldiers, whereby they have supplied to future ages the most unexceptionable evidence of the reality of his resurrection.



PART VII.

138. *The visit of the first party of women to the sepulchre.*
Matt. xxviii. Mark xvi. John xx.

THE resurrection of the Saviour is the pledge and earnest of our own. It is at once the substance and the evidence of Christianity: the substance, because as in Adam we all died, eternal life is through Christ the gift of God to all who believe and obey him; the evidence, because it sets God's seal to the reality of his divine mission, and to the truth of his doctrines. No one who believes the resurrection of Jesus to be a fact, can doubt his veracity or power; but belief to be reasonable must be built upon evidence, and the more extraordinary any event is, and the more important in its consequences, the stronger is the evidence that we require, before we give to it our assent. St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 14.) allows, that if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins; we might therefore expect that all the Evangelists would

bear testimony to this fact; and accordingly we find, that it is not only recorded by each, but is proved by the narration of several appearances of their Master after his resurrection. Jesus had himself foretold, that he should rise again the third day after he had been put to death; and before that day had closed, he ate and conversed with ten of his Apostles together. He had previously appeared to Mary Magdalene, to some other female believers, to two disciples who were walking in the country, and to Peter. To the fact itself there was no human witness; and no one knows the hour when Jesus broke the bonds of death. We know, however, that it was (*πρωί*) very early, and before sun rise, and it could not be long before; for the women who set out for the tomb, while it “was yet dark”—“as it began to dawn,” found it open, and were informed by angels that Jesus was risen. Mary Magdalene was first honoured with a sight of the Lord, and soon after he showed himself to the other women; so that they proclaimed the joyful tidings which revived their hopes to the Apostles themselves; and perhaps they were distinguished by this preference, because the women both stood by at the crucifixion, and were then designing to pay him the only mark of respect and affection in their power; whereas the men had all forsaken him in the hour of his distress. The women were many, and their reports are preserved, not with contradictions, but with variations, each Evangelist recording what best suited his own object in writing, or seemed necessary to supply the omission of the others. Their minute discrepancies have been exaggerated by infidels; nor is it of so much importance, as they would wish us to believe, to reconcile them, for it is not upon the testimony of these women that we receive the fact of the resurrection. The chief use of it seems to be the refutation of the fabricated story of the guard; for the apostles were convinced by the Lord’s appearance to themselves, and the women are not reckoned in the Acts, or in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, among the witnesses of the resurrection. Yet their reports, by which the first rays of hope glanced upon

their minds, however imperfect and confused they might be, seemed to them worthy of lasting remembrance, and consequently they committed them to writing. Such discrepancies instead of diminishing increase the credibility of the Evangelists, for they prove their scrupulous accuracy; and Grotius, who has discussed them, shows, that though in some circumstances they seem not to correspond, there is no absolute diversity. The events were nearly coincident, or rapidly succeeded each other; they are told briefly, each Evangelist adding some particular, and therefore it is not surprising that harmonists have pursued different methods of reducing them into one narrative. Many of these have succeeded so far, as to show, that there are no characters of disagreement in the facts recorded; but the only scheme which seems to me to unite the whole related of the women, and of the angels seen by them, into one consistent history, is that of Mr. West, which assumes, that the women went in two parties to the sepulchre, and consequently that there was an appearance of angels to both. This scheme, which Doddridge candidly acknowledges that he prefers to his own, is now generally adopted, and the Diatessaron in this section deserts the Archbishop's Harmony, to follow this as exhibited with some variation by Townson. "Mary Magdalene," he says, "is mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and John, as going early to the sepulchre on the first day of the week. Mark joins two others with her, and his context will not allow us to suppose that there was any other person of the party. Luke, who speaks of a greater number of women, has so guarded his account of them, as not to include the three just mentioned; and what is said by him of their vision and behaviour at the tomb, is totally unlike any thing that is related of the two Maries and Salome. If these things can be made to appear evident, from a comparison of the Evangelists, we must then in justice to them consider the women as going successively in a less and a larger company; and this arrangement corresponds exactly with the history of that memorable morning, embraces all the circumstances related

of the women and the angels, and unites the whole into one intelligible and consistent history." For the advantages of this hypothesis, and for an answer to objections, I must refer to the works of West and Townson, and to Townsend's Chronological Arrangement of the Bible, who, with his usual diligence and ability, has condensed into a small compass whatever was required to enable the reader to form his own judgment. Macknight, who is not satisfied with it, suggests a scheme of his own; but he agrees with West and Townson, in making Peter run twice to the tomb without seeing more than the linen clothes, first in company with John, (John xx.) and secondly alone. (Luke xxiv.)

According to Macknight, " 1. The two Maries go out to see the sepulchre on *Saturday evening* about sun set, as soon as the Sabbath was over; but are turned back by an earthquake and storm. 2. Very early on the Lord's day morning *all the women went out together*, and arrive before sun rise. Mary Magdalene runs into the city to tell the apostles that the body was taken away. 3. A while after she is gone, the women at the sepulchre see a vision of angels, then run to the city. 4. As the women enter the city, Mary Magdalene, with Peter and John, are coming out of the apostles' lodging to go to the sepulchre; but *taking a different street*, they miss the women. 5. Peter and John, having searched the sepulchre, depart, but Mary stays behind. 6. As Peter and John are entering the city, the company of women leave the apostles' lodging (having a message to Peter) along with some of the brethren, who were dispatched to examine the truth of their information. They wished to see Peter, but *miss* him and his companions, who are coming in by a different street. 7. The brethren, running faster than the women, leave them behind; they follow as quickly as they can, till Jesus meets them. The brethren arrive at the garden just as Mary Magdalene is leaving the sepulchre, after having seen the Lord; but they do not meet with her, because they go in by a different walk. 8. Mary running towards the city comes up to the company of women just as

Jesus leaves them. They then all proceed in a body to the city. 9. While they are talking or returning, the brethren, who had gone forward to the sepulchre, see the angels there. They instantly depart in great haste; arrive at the apostles' lodging, and tell what they had seen, in the hearing of the two disciples, who set out for Emmaus, before Mary and the other women come up. 10. After their departure, the women arrive in a body. 11. On hearing their report, Peter runs to the sepulchre a second time; and as he returns, he also sees the Lord. 12. In the evening, the disciples arrive from Emmaus, and while they are telling their story, Jesus himself appears. If the space of the time should appear to be too short for so many journeys to the tomb, we may reply, that the period was longer than many suppose. If that year the passover fell late in April, the sun must have risen to the inhabitants of Jerusalem about twenty-three minutes after five; and the dawn would have been about three. At Emmaus the disciples observe, that it was towards evening, that is, three o'clock; for had it been later, they could not have returned time enough to have been present when Jesus showed himself the first day of the week, which ended at *sunset*; and as it was not eight miles from Jerusalem, it must have been late in the morning when they set out."

I will now state, nearly in his own words, Townson's arrangement of these visits to the sepulchre.

"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary set out as soon as it began to dawn on the Sunday morning, calling upon Salome in their way; and before they reached the tomb, the Saviour had risen; and an angel rolled inward the stone that had closed it, and sat upon it within the outer division of the tomb, which was divided into two apartments. The guard fled in dismay; and soon after, about sunrise, the women drew near. They had expressed a doubt as to their ability to remove the stone, for it was very great; but perceiving that it was gone, they were alarmed; and Mary Magdalene, surmising that the body had been taken away,

without staying to inquire further, ran back to inform Peter and John, leaving her two friends to watch till her return. After a pause, they ventured into the outer division of the sepulchre, and saw the angel, who encouraged them, saying, 'Fear not *ye*;' intimating thereby, that it was for the enemies and persecutors, not for the friends, of Jesus to be alarmed: announcing to them for their consolation, the unhoped for though predicted fact, "He is not here, for he is risen. Tell his disciples and Peter," continued the angel, "that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." On the night of his apprehension, Jesus had assured the eleven, that "after he had risen again, he would go before them into Galilee." The sending therefore of the same words to them on the morning of the resurrection, was a clear token to them from Christ himself that it was his message. If they did not attend to it as such, the fault was not that of the gracious sender. The mention of Peter's name in particular (for after his three denials, he might doubt if his Master intended to include him under the former title) was an instance of special kindness; at the same time it was calculated to remind him of the prediction of these denials, and to put him upon reflecting, whether the same Lord, who had foretold his fall, might not with equal truth have spoken of his own resurrection. The angel invited them to enter into the inner division, that his report might be confirmed by the sight of the clothes in which he had been enveloped; but they withdrew in haste, with mixed and indescribable sensations of fear and joy; and were unable from agitation to communicate their tidings to the disciples if they met them; but they might take another road. Peter and John, on learning from Mary Magdalene what had happened, hastened to the sepulchre; but the latter, running quickest, probably from being younger, came first. Peter, however, was the first to enter, and examine the place, and his example was followed by John; and when he reflected upon the orderly manner in which the linen clothes were arranged, faith in his Lord's resurrection dawned in his breast, and he became entitled to

the blessing of those "who have not seen, and yet have believed." At the same time he candidly acknowledges his slowness of heart, in not understanding from the Scripture that Christ must rise from the dead.

The disciples then went away again to their home. Mary Magdalene on her return stood without the tomb, but near it, weeping; and as she stooped to look down into it, she saw two angels sitting, the one where the head, the other where the feet of Jesus had lain. Soon after she turned back, and saw Jesus himself standing, but mistook him for the gardener, till at the sound of his well-known voice, she recognised him. Her first impulse was to embrace him; but he checked her, saying, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God." By the first clause he seems to mean no more than that she should not at present detain him, for she would have other opportunities of seeing him before his ascension; because, soon after he suffers Salome and the other Mary to embrace his feet. The latter part is a plain allusion to his own words in the last discourse he had had with them, to which none were privy but themselves; and therefore, like the message of the angel, offered evidence distinct from the testimony of those who reported it. Jesus next showed himself to Mary of Magdala's companions, and repeated the angel's information, that the believers should see him in Galilee, with the endearing substitution of the word brethren for disciples.

139. *The guard bear testimony before the rulers to the fact of the Resurrection, and are bribed. Matt. xxviii.*

WHILE these women were hastening to the apostles, the soldiers came to the chief priests to exculpate themselves for having abandoned their post, by a statement of facts. A council was immediately summoned, and the result of the deliberation was, to give them a large sum of money, on

condition they would spread abroad a rumour, that the disciples of Jesus had come by night, and taken an opportunity to steal away his body while they were fallen asleep; and, because this was to confess themselves guilty of a capital offence, they promised that if it should reach the governor, means should be found to pacify him, and save them from punishment. An impartial observer, however, would find much in the rumour to excite suspicion. The believers were few, friendless, and dispirited, and in expectation of arrest themselves; for when they met together, they fastened the door from fear; the time was the passover, when the moon was full, and the town was crowded; and the sepulchre was just without the walls, and open to observation. Could the whole guard, probably of sixty men, be sleeping, and if sleeping, competent witnesses? If awake, could they be overpowered by persons so weak and few, or bribed by those so poor? It might be asked, Why were not the accused examined, and why was no notice taken of the avowed misconduct of the soldiers? But the council did not themselves believe the story, to which they endeavoured to give currency; for when the apostles were brought before them twice, and boldly declared, that Him whom they had put to death as a malefactor, God had raised, they did not venture to make this charge.

140. *The second party of women visit the sepulchre.*
Luke xxiv.

MEANWHILE another set of women arrived at the sepulchre. Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, was the chief of this party, which was the more numerous one. The delays incident to their assembling from different parts of the city, and the slowness of their progress with the spices, so retarded them, that the other three were out of sight before their arrival. These also observed that the tomb was open, but did not express any astonishment, supposing that some of their friends had been before them and removed the stone. But

when upon examination they could no where discover the body, they were perplexed, till two angels showed themselves to them, asking why they sought for the living among the dead; and reminding them, that their Lord had foretold his resurrection as well as his crucifixion. They withdrew to report what they had seen and heard; but, though the other company of women had likewise communicated a message from angels, so desponding were the apostles, and so slow to believe the prophecies, and this their accomplishment, that they regarded both accounts as no better than idle tales. Still the report had sufficient weight with Peter to make him run a second time to the tomb. The angels, however, were not visible to him, and as he saw there no more than he had seen upon his first visit, he departed wondering; unable to reconcile the report with appearances, and at a loss what to think, till it pleased Christ to remove his suspense by appearing to him. Had his Master shown himself to any of the other men first, he might have thought his repentance ineffectual, and have been plunged into despair. No particulars of this appearance have been recorded; but it seems to have been the first vouchsafed to any *man*; and we may conclude, that it took place after the two disciples set out for Emmaus, it being evident that they knew nothing of it till their return. One of them was Cleopas, father of two of the Apostles, and the Virgin's brother-in-law.

141. *Jesus converses with two of his disciples, who are walking to Emmaus, and makes himself known to them, and immediately after disappears. Luke xxiv.*

JESUS showed himself to these on their walk, in another form [or dress], and was taken for a stranger. He led the conversation to the subject nearest their hearts; and that they might open their thoughts more freely to him, and afford him better opportunity for instructing them, he held their eyes from discerning him. Having heard the confession of

their perplexity, he reprov'd them for their want of faith and misconception of the Scriptures; and then, beginning with Genesis, explain'd to them in order the predictions and types concerning himself, showing that Christ must suffer before he enter'd into glory. During this conversation they drew nigh to Emmaus, and they, unwilling to lose so instructive and interesting a companion, press'd him to stay, observing, that it was advancing towards sunset, and that little of the day remained. He yielded to their solicitation, and their meal being ready, Jesus acted as the master of the family, and bless'd the loaf, and gave it to them. Some peculiarity in the manner of doing this probably undeceiv'd them, for they instantly recognis'd in this mysterious stranger their lamented Master. But he gave them no opportunity of declaring their feelings, for he vanish'd out of their sight, ἀφαντος ἐγένετο. The same phrase occurs in the Classics; and a nearly similar one is used by Josephus, xx. 8; and it is render'd in the margin of our Bible, "he ceas'd to be seen of them." There is therefore no necessity of supposing with some, that his body was essentially different from what it had been before his resurrection; and we know from his passing unseen through the multitude at Nazareth, that he possess'd previously the power of preventing men from seeing him, when he pleas'd. On missing him, they immediately rose from table, and hasten'd back to Jerusalem to communicate the joyful intelligence to the brethren. They found them privately assembled with the doors bolted, from apprehension of the rulers, it should seem, after supper; and on gaining admittance, were themselves inform'd, that Jesus was ris'n, and had appear'd unto Peter. They then relat'd his appearance to them; and while they were yet speaking, Jesus himself stood in the midst, and salut'd them.

142. *Jesus shows himself the same evening to his Apostles, who, with the exception of Thomas, are assembled together. Luke xxiv. John xx.*

SEVERAL of the fathers, and some modern commentators, imagine, that the door was still fastened, and that Jesus passed through it by a miracle, from his rendering himself visible and invisible at pleasure. This, however, is not mentioned, and is not necessary, since he might order the doors to open to admit him, as an angel did afterwards that of Peter's prison; and they seem to forget, that the proof of his resurrection, and the hope of our own, rest upon the identity of his crucified and raised body. This he is anxious to demonstrate to his disciples, declaring that it is he himself, and that a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as they see him have. He offers them all the evidence the case admits of; he shows them the marks his crucifixion has left upon his hands and feet; he invites them to handle him; and he eats in their presence. To this very evidence St. John afterwards appeals in his first Epistle; "We declare unto you that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and *our hands have handled* of the word of life." And his writing to confute the Gnostics, explains why he relates more circumstantially than Luke, the proofs which our Saviour gave of his having resumed his real body. Bishop Horsley supports the contrary opinion, I think unsuccessfully. That is opposed by Bishop Sherlock, as an infidel objection; and the fourth Article of our Church maintains, that our Lord rose and ascended with the same body, in which he was incarnate, with flesh, bones, and all things pertaining to the perfection of man's nature.

The joy of the assembly was now complete, for they could not resist the evidence of their senses. The object, therefore, of Christ being attained, he withdrew; but first he renewed his appointment of them as his ambassadors to the world, and breathed upon them as a token of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, which they were to receive in order to

qualify them for their commission, the noblest and the most important that had ever been delegated to men. Thus did our Lord show himself four times at least during that ever memorable first day of the week, on which, by rising as the first fruits of the dead, he triumphed over him that had the power of death, thus bruising the head or vital part of his enemy, who could only bruise his heel. "This is," as the Psalmist (cxviii.) prophesied, pre-eminently "the day which Jehovah has made," and Christians should say with him, "we will rejoice and be glad in it." It has been designated ever since as the Lord's, and has superseded the seventh as the day of public worship, and of rest from secular business and diversion, according to Isaiah's prediction, that the new creation, that is, the restoration of man to holiness and the divine image, procured through the death and resurrection of the Saviour, would be commemorated in preference to that inferior work, the creation of the material world and its inhabitants. (lxv. 17, 18.)

143. *After the interval of a week, Jesus appears to all the eleven, and Thomas, who had not believed the report of the rest, now acknowledges him for his Lord and his God. Mark xvi. John xx.*

CHRIST seems to have left his disciples to their own reflections for a week; for it was not till the next Lord's day (to anticipate a term that was soon substituted for that of the first day) that we hear of another visit. In the interval, Cleopas, and the other disciple, and the eleven, were engaged in communicating information of the event to the remaining believers; but they found many of them as little disposed to credit it, as they had been themselves; among whom was one of the eleven, Thomas, whom some circumstances had kept from their late meeting. Their unanimous assurance of the fact was unavailing; and it is supposed that the resurrection

of the body was with him the insuperable difficulty. "He might deem it not impossible," says Origen against Celsus, ii. "that the soul of a departed person might be seen; but he could not believe that Jesus had risen again with the same body; and therefore he said not, Except I shall see *him*, I *shall*^a not believe; but, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put^b my hand into his side."

The following Sunday morning they were assembled in the same place as before, and employed the same precaution of fastening the entrance, when Jesus stood in the midst of them, and saluted them. Then turning to Thomas, who was now with them, he offered him the very criterion he had required; and his speech showed at the same time his knowledge of his incredulity. He added, "Be not faithless, but believing." Thomas probably stayed not to make the offered examination; he felt conviction, and addressed Jesus both as his Lord and his God; his Lord who had been crucified, and who had by his resurrection shown himself to be God. Those who deny the divinity of our Saviour are forced to wrest this reply, as they do other texts from their obvious and received meaning, and put upon it a sense of their own, which had been brought forward by an early heretic, and condemned in the fifth Council, 553. Still there are Christians who say, that it is no more than an exclamation of astonishment, or at most of thanks to the Father; but this does not suit the idiom of the language, and the Evangelist informs us, that it was spoken to Jesus, and he considered it as an acknowledgment of conviction, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; happy are they who without seeing me believe." A happiness limited at

^a The authorized version "will not believe," according to the modern use of the tense, conveys the notion, not of inability, but of unwillingness to believe.

^b *ἔβαλε*, in the same verse, is rendered both *put* and *thrust*. The first appears to be most accurate, and *ἐν* might as well have been translated *on* as *into*.

that time to the beloved disciple who records the saying, but modestly leaves it to the reader to apply it. How encouraging has been this declaration to millions, who have since believed upon testimony! and such it will still prove to multitudes till the second advent of our Lord. It may well check any repining that might arise in the hearts of those who would have delighted to have seen him in the flesh. And they know that this happiness is not denied, it is only deferred, and shall be enjoyed without interruption by all who now believe and obey him, when faith shall be exchanged for knowledge. It is remarkable that this is the only explicit confession of Christ's proper divinity from a disciple, and it is not rebuked but approved.

144. *Jesus shows himself on a mountain in Galilee to the disciples, and again on the shore of the lake to seven of them who had been fishing. Matt. xxviii. John xxi.*

THE next appearance of Christ was not, like the former ones, unexpected, but by appointment and promise. It must have been of great notoriety, and was probably witnessed by all believers who found it practicable to attend. The time Hales conjectures, was like his former appearances, on a Sunday, the second, probably, after that of the resurrection. Matthew, passing over all the former except that to the women at the sepulchre, directs our attention to this, which is thought to be the one recorded by Paul, at which above five hundred brethren were present; the greater part of whom were alive, when he wrote to the Corinthians nearly thirty years after; but what a small company was this compared with the thousands who must have heard his discourses, and witnessed his miracles! The spot selected was a mountain (according to tradition, Tabor) in Galilee. In that division of Palestine he had principally resided; and at that distance from Jerusalem the disciples might assemble with less fear of the Jewish rulers. Here he was seen in an open space and light; and some, we are candidly informed,

doubted, (but certainly none of the apostles,) and even these, it seems, as he approached, and they had the advantage of a nearer view of him, were satisfied. He comforted them with the assurance, that all power in heaven and in earth had been given to him.

His appearance to seven disciples at the lake of Galilee is placed by some harmonists before the preceding one, but seems to have followed it; for Jesus in his discourse appears to take leave of Peter, and the apostles returned to their home and original occupation. We may naturally place it on the ensuing Sunday, and the day after the Sabbath was a likely one to want provisions. Only five of the persons present are named; and if the prevalent opinion, that Nathaniel is the same as Bartholomew, be true, they were all apostles, and Cleophas will be the only man not of the eleven mentioned by name, as having seen Christ after the resurrection. The reason is, that the Evangelists wish to fix our attention upon those who were chosen before of God to be the witnesses of that fact. Thus when the apostles assembled soon after the ascension to fill up the vacancy occasioned by the death of the traitor Judas, the capability of being a witness of the resurrection is the point insisted on in a successor; and when Paul was to be added to the number, he was favoured with the sight of the Lord in glory, and appeals to the fact as evidence of his apostleship. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ?" 2 Cor. ix. 1. "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." 1 Cor. xv. 8.

They had been fishing the whole night, but in vain. At the dawn of day Jesus was standing on the shore, and asked if they had any fish on board, as if he had been desirous of purchasing some. He advised them to cast out on the right side, and although they did not recognise him, yet they followed his direction; and their compliance was rewarded with such success, that they could not, from its weight, draw up the net, but were obliged to drag it to land. They caught one hundred and fifty-three large fishes, the sale of which would contribute to their support, while they yet continued

in Galilee. According to Oppian, in his poem on Fishing, this was the number of species then known, and perhaps the reason of naming them was to indicate thereby, that in their new vocation, the Apostles should catch men of all nations, ranks, and characters. The beloved disciple, astonished at this wonderful draught, and recollecting the similar one, after which Jesus had called them to a regular attendance on him, exclaimed, "It is the Lord!" upon which Peter, with his accustomed eagerness, leaped into the lake, that he might be the first to salute him. There they found a fire already kindled; fish broiling, and bread provided. The stranger ordered them to bring some of the fish now taken, and invited them to breakfast, when he was recognized by them as their Master in the act of breaking bread. Peter's case required especial notice, both that he and others might derive benefit from his fall and recovery. To humble and to prove him, Jesus inquires of him who had declared, Though all men forsake thee, yet I never will, if he loved him more than the others did; and as he had thrice denied, the question was put to him thrice. Peter's failure had subdued his confidence; and he is consequently content with declaring that he loves him, without drawing an offensive comparison between his affection and that of the rest. Each time Jesus answers, "Tend my sheep," or "Feed my lambs;" and we learn from this, that love to the Saviour is the grand qualification for his ministers, and that the proper evidence of this love is care of the flock committed to their charge^c. Peter, mortified at the repetition of the question, appeals to his Master's omniscience, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Having by these three repetitions of the commission reinstated him in his apostleship, which he had abdicated by his denial, he prepares him to expect and endure hardship as his faithful soldier, and to

^c Whitby's interpretation, "Lovest thou me more than these—boats and nets?" that is, "wouldst thou rather pursue thy business or mine, wouldst thou rather catch fish than men?" is a sense that should ever be present to the mind of a minister, but is not so suitable to the context as the more obvious one.

prove his love not by labours and privations only, but by death. In figurative language, drawn probably, according to our Lord's custom, from the act of Peter, who was then girding himself, he intimates that he should glorify God by crucifixion; and walking on a little, he calls upon him to follow, that by so doing, he may signify his consent. Peter's martyrdom took place about forty years after, and appears to be referred to by St. John as a past event. He is supposed himself to allude to this intimation in his Second Epistle, in this passage, "Knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me," (chap. i. 14.) Peter obeys, and John also, without waiting for a command, follows; expressively, yet modestly, showing his own readiness uncalled, to prove his love by martyrdom. This led Peter to inquire concerning the lot that awaited John, but Jesus did not think fit to gratify his curiosity^d. His answer evaded the question, and was misconceived; for as John long outlived the destruction of Jerusalem, to which the phrase of the Lord's coming is often applied, and was far advanced in years when he wrote the Gospel, a notion prevailed that he was never to die, which he takes this opportunity of contradicting.

St. Paul is our authority for an appearance to James, (which of the two that bore the name we are not informed, but it is supposed to be the author of the Epistle,) which he interposes between that to the great body of believers, and the final one to the apostles. Others, which are not recorded, might have been granted in the interval between the resurrection and the ascension, and St. John seems to intimate as much when immediately after the speech to Thomas (chap. xx. 30.) he adds, that "many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:" for he ends his Gospel with a similar observation: (chap. xxi. 25.) and it seems most reasonable to refer the first to this period, the second to the whole course of his ministry.

^d Doddridge, Family Expositor.

The language of the Acts also favours the same conclusion. "To whom he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days." (i. 3.) Those only, it is suggested by West, are specified, which answered the purpose of their conviction, and are enough for ours; the others were for their instruction in the faith. Be this however as it may, and satisfactory as the evidence he afforded was, it was afforded only to friends; as St. Peter candidly states, (Acts x. 40.) "Him hath God shown openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God." It may be, and it has been asked, why was he not shown to all, if the identity of his person would stand the test. The most incredulous of his enemies had declared that they would believe in him, if they might but see him descend from the cross; and would they not much more have believed, had they seen him the third day arisen from the grave? In such a case, the choice of witnesses may be thought to bring a suspicion on their whole testimony, a surmise that they were chosen not of God, but of themselves and their confederates. This objection, an obvious one, which has been repeated by modern infidels, did not escape Celsus, the earliest opponent of Christianity. It is plausible, but upon examination will be found to be of no weight; for those to whom Jesus was known in his life-time, were the only competent witnesses of his personal identity, and their number was quite sufficient; for the fact does not rest merely upon that of the eleven apostles, or even of Paul, (1 Cor. xv. 6.) but on that of five hundred persons, most of whom were alive many years after. Even the evidence, which unbelievers call for, might not have answered the purpose, for it is well known that the understanding is much under the influence of the inclination; and in vain had a succession of miracles (among them the restoration to life of Lazarus) been exhibited, as signs to those who had no heart to believe. Had the evidence amounted to demonstration; had, as a modern infidel arrogantly and absurdly demands, the fact of the resurrection been made as certain to their conviction as the presence of

the sun to their eyes; none truly could have contradicted it, but then none could have only believed, (accurately speaking,) they must have known it, and certainty would extinguish faith. To his contemporaries, then, overpowering and irresistible evidence would have of necessity done away the moral nature of their assent, while to many of subsequent times, the national reception of this truth would have been a stumbling block, for it would have been easy for Celsus and other adversaries to have represented it as "a state trick, a Jewish fable, a mere political contrivance."

There was, however, another reason, which has not been sufficiently noticed, but on which alone Origen rests his reply—the unseemliness of the thing required, constituting what we may call a moral impossibility. "None but the pure in heart shall see God." Our Lord, therefore, now recompensed as Mediator, with all power in heaven and on earth, could not renew the familiar intercourse of the Son of Man with the world. His presence henceforward, like his manifestations under the old covenant, was a privilege vouchsafed to those who were distinguished by their godly dispositions from the corrupt mass. The atonement once made, the form of a servant was to cease. Christ was to resume his glory, and to appear only as the only-begotten of the Father. His appearance accordingly, after the resurrection, was a favour granted to his friends, and justly withheld from the nation at large, who, by their rejection of him, had proved themselves unworthy of this distinction. He had solemnly taken leave of them on quitting for the last time the temple, when he declared that they should see him no more, till they were disposed to acknowledge him as their king. He now opened a new commission, addressed to the whole world, and that once opened, there was no ground to demand special and particular evidence to the Jews*. The world, he had told the Apostles, should see him no more, but they should see him again; their hearts should rejoice, and their

* Sherlock's Trial of the Witnesses.

joy should no man take from them. It was, however, a joy tempered with reverence; there was now a more reserved dignity in his deportment, on their part a more humble and less familiar intercourse. He showed himself to them, and even ate with them, but it was for the purpose of convincing them, that though restored to life, he had still a real body, for his time was no longer passed as heretofore in their society; they knew not his goings out and his comings in, and none of them, for instance, could say to Thomas as Nathaniel did formerly to Philip, "Come and see." On the journey to Galilee, he was not their companion, but went before them; they were not to seek him at his former residence in that province, (Capernaum,) but at a certain mountain; and when they saw him there, they worshipped him^f.

145. *Jesus instructs his Apostles, who had now returned to Jerusalem, to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Matthew xxviii. Mark xiv. Luke xxiv.*

HIS first message to the Apostles after his resurrection was, that they should go into Galilee. When they saw him there, he must have commanded them to return to Jerusalem, for it was in the capital that he took leave of them. At this last meeting, having opened their understandings that they might comprehend the prophecies concerning him, he commanded them to proclaim repentance and pardon through his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and to baptize them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that is, into the religion, the characteristic tenet of which is belief in the existence, offices, and operations of the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier^g. We learn from the Acts, that at

^f Horsley, Sermon xiv. on the Evidence of our Lord's Resurrection.

^g As long as these words shall stand in Holy Scripture as a commandment, to persist in the endeavour, either personally, or by aiding the

this last meeting, though he had spoken to them concerning "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," they were still under the influence of their carnal prejudices; from their question, "Wilt thou, Lord, at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" his reply conveyed not the information they sought, but a reproof; "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." But, that they might not be discouraged, he subjoined a promise, well fitted to comfort them; that they should receive miraculous power after the Holy Ghost had come upon them; and he contrasts his baptism with that of John, to intimate its superior efficacy.

146. *The ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven, and his sitting down there on the right hand of God. Mark xv. xvi. Luke xxiv. John xx. xxi.*

JESUS had now fulfilled all the designs of his mission. He had offered himself upon the cross as the sacrifice for sin, and having triumphed over death, he had given his disciples sufficient opportunity to assure themselves of the truth of the fact, "I have glorified thee upon earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." There was no reason, therefore, why he should prolong his stay, and it was necessary, that, as our High Priest, he should enter into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, and to take possession of the mediatorial throne. He had both before and since his death forewarned his disciples of his departure; and lest they might suppose, when they heard of his resurrection, that he meant to associate with them as formerly, he sent this message to them by Mary

missionary in evangelizing the world, will be the duty of Christians; and as long as the concluding words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," stand in Holy Scripture as a promise, nothing but want of faith can make us think at any time, that our labour in such undertakings can be "in vain in the Lord."

Magdalene, "I ascend unto my Father." He now led them out, therefore, to their accustomed place of resort, the mount of Olives, and proceeding as far as Bethany, blessed them. While blessing them, a cloud received him out of their sight, and he ascended, as he had declared he should, into heaven, there to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, till the prophecy be fulfilled, (Psalm cx.) that his enemies shall be made his footstool. It appears from Mark and Luke, the only Evangelists that record the ascension, that he was passive in the act, and therefore that it was effected by the power of the Father. It was not sudden, but gradual, the disciples having full leisure^h to observe it. The resurrection required not to be seen, because it was proved by his appearance alive repeatedly, after his passion; but it was desirable that he should ascend in the sight of the apostles, because they could have no evidence of that fact, while they continued on earth.

A human body is, we know, prevented by its gravity from rising into the air; but the universal principle of attraction which pervades all matter was either now suspended, or had ceased to affect the body of the Saviour, which we may suppose as he ascended underwent a change, and put on incorruption, becoming a spiritual and glorious body, such as by his almighty energy (Phil. iii. 21.) he shall render, in due time, the vile bodies of all who shall hereafter, in answer to his prayer, be with him where he is, and behold and share his glory. (John xvii. 24.)

The apostles gazed intently upon their ascending Lord, till he was out of sight, when two angels standing by them declared, that as they had seen him taken up into heaven, so should he in like manner descend. They worshipped him as their God, (for though the word be equivocal, there can be no doubt, after all that had passed, that it is here used in the sense of adoration,) and then returned to Jerusalem, not in sorrow on account of this separation, but in great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God;

^h Dick on the Acts.

for all their doubts had vanished, their prejudices were subdued, and they were at length satisfied that it was far better that Jesus should be their intercessor and sovereign in heaven, than their companion and teacher, or even the Lord of an earthly kingdom. We have no reason to suppose that they ever saw him any more, till they themselves were removed in due time from this state of trial, except John, to whom he showed himself at Patmos; nor are any subsequent appearances of our Redeemer on record, except that to the first martyr Stephen, and those to the apostle of the Gentiles.

Thus terminates the history of our Saviour's life in the flesh, and the arrangement of it in one continuous narrative, exhibits in his discourses and actions an unity of design, which might not strike so forcibly the ordinary reader of the four Gospels. His human character, as it results from the account of his inspired biographers, (for they have not formally drawn it,) is peculiar to himself, as he alone, whether considered as a man or as a teacher, "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His whole life was "holy, harmless, undefiled," and free from sin, and no less remarkable for positive virtue. But never to have committed the least fault, though tempted like unto others, and never to have uttered a word that could be justly condemned, and that during a life passed in action, proves perfection beyond the reach of human nature. The evidence of this being undeniable, Jesus himself publicly appealed to it before all the people in the temple, (John viii. 46.) "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" and if in making this affirmation I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me? Such a character being above the nature of man, could not have been invented by one; it follows, therefore, that the Gospel narrative must be an accurate transcript from a true original, and that Jesus of Nazareth must have actually lived, and spoken, and acted as he is described to have done. His character, superior to that of the ideal sage of the Stoics, and the just man of the Platonists, has been admired even by those who reject his authority, and has extorted from the

infidel Rousseau^c the memorable declaration, that if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.

The Christian then hath an incalculable advantage over all who draw their rules of life from the imperfect conduct of fallible men, on the unauthoritative deductions of reason, because, in the "author and finisher of his faith," he has both a perfect teacher, and a perfect example of morality. It is, however, to be lamented, beyond the reach of language to express, that any who bear the name of Christ should rest in this inadequate conception of their obligations to him, and while they profess to honour him as their guide, should "deny the Lord who bought them." May it please our heavenly Father for his sake to remove from their hearts the veil which conceals his glory, that they may believe with the Catholic Church, in every country and in every age, that Jesus is God as well as man, and is by his two-fold nature as one Christ entitled and enabled to fulfil the office of a Saviour; which, unless he were the only-begotten Son of God, could be no more than a name. Happy are they now, who not only acknowledge him as their Teacher, but rely upon him as their Priest, and study to obey him as their King; but happier far shall they be hereafter, when permitted to "see him as he is," (1 John iii. 2.) and coming in like manner as his apostles saw him go into heaven. All who have received the truth in the love of it are satisfied, that it is impossible to stand in judgment with the just and holy and heart-searching God; and such will thankfully rejoice, that Jesus, having offered himself upon the cross a willing sacrifice to reconcile God to man and man to God, is now ever interceding in heaven, where he has sat down upon his Father's throne, which through his intercession has become a throne of grace. Upon that throne he reigns over angels as well as over men, as the reward of his obedience unto death, and is made the Head over all to the Church,

^c Emile iv.

not only to the body, but to all the members; for when he ascended up on high, he obtained for them individually as well as collectively the gift of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten their understandings, and to purify their hearts. “^d Grant we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend;” for we renounced, when baptized into his religion, the pomps and vanity of the world, and “our^e life is hid with Christ in God;” may we then, “when Christ who is our life shall appear, also appear with him in glory!”

^d Collect for Ascension-day.

^e Col. iii. 3, 4.

THE END.

















