

Reflections upon the Gospel according to St. John / by William Heberden.

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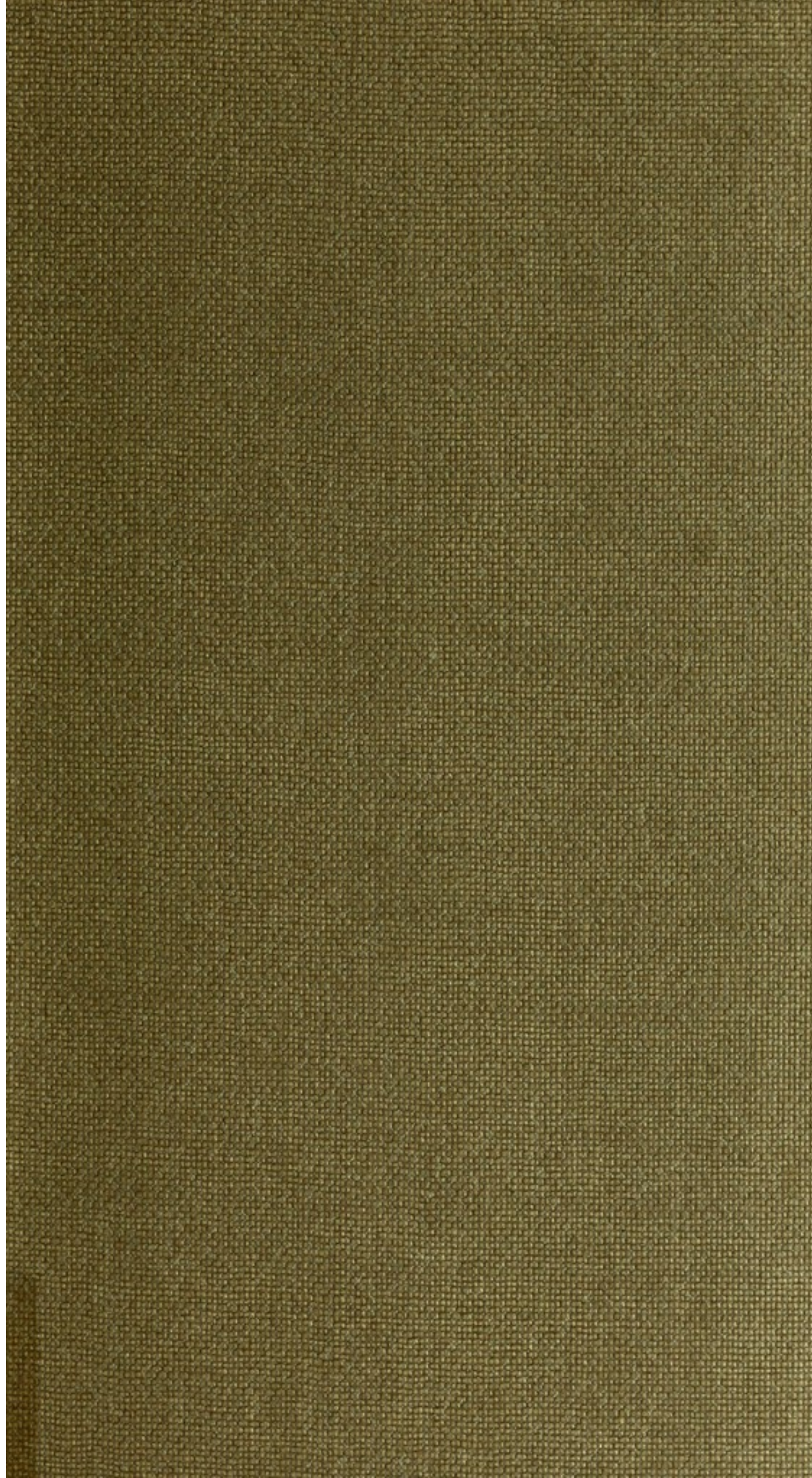
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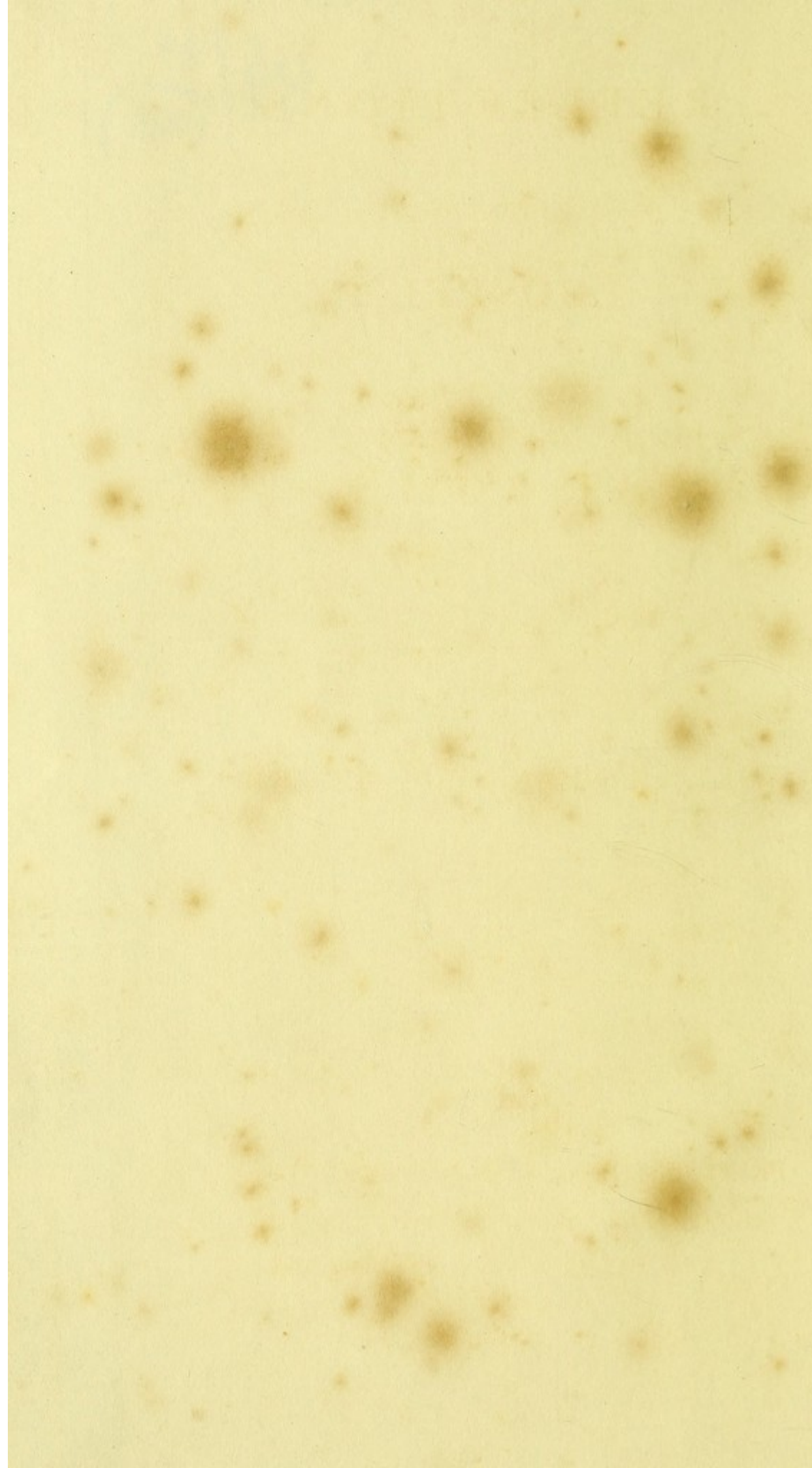


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REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. JOHN.

BY

WILLIAM HEBERDEN, M.D., F.R.S.

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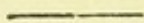
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REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.



NOTHING can be more effectual to excite a just attention to the subject of St. John's Gospel, than the consideration, who it is that wrote it, what were his means of information, and what is the purpose of the communication which he has therein left us.

Now, what he professes to teach us, is no less than the "words of eternal life;" that is, the reality of Christ's coming in the flesh, the certainty of man's redemption, of immortality, and judgment to come, and the conditions upon which alone it is promised that our transgressions shall be pardoned, and that we shall be admitted to the everlasting joys of heaven. These, if any thing can be so, are surely momentous considerations, and demand our utmost attention. Suppose a person

in common life to have laid before him, by some accredited minister, the determination of his master, or sovereign, not only to overlook his faults, but to promote him to great riches and honor upon certain specified conditions; would he not gladly embrace the offer, and acquaint himself thoroughly with the terms appointed, and endeavour to conform himself to them? “Now, he does it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” How much more, therefore, does it behove us to give earnest heed to the things which we have heard?—“which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and were confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.”

The doctrines, the precepts, the example delivered down to us in this Gospel, are the doctrines, the precepts, and the example of Jesus, the Son of God, our Mediator, and our Redeemer. And they are communicated to us by one who had every opportunity of being fully acquainted with them; who “followed no cunningly devised fables;” but declared unto the world “that which he had seen and heard,” having been with Christ, as his disciple and companion, during the whole time of

his ministry upon earth. And he enjoyed not merely human means of observation and memory, to know and to record what had passed, but he enjoyed likewise that "spirit of truth, which should guide him into all truth,—and bring all things to his remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said."—"This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true."

But while each of the four Gospels is engaged in the same office of describing the actions and sayings of Christ, and therefore in some measure repeating the same course of events; that of St. John is on many accounts very distinguishable from the other three. For being written several years later, it contains a relation of some very memorable events, which have been omitted by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; as the healing of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda; and of him that was born blind; also the raising of Lazarus; all which are detailed with so many particulars, as give to these histories a more than ordinary value. His narrative also of the circumstances attending the crucifixion and resurrection of our Saviour, is not merely supplementary to that of the other Evangelists, but derives an additional interest

from the part which St. John himself bare in those transactions, standing, as he did, by the cross of his Lord, and having the afflicted mother consigned so affectionately to his protection; and afterwards being one of the two, who ran to the sepulchre, and witnessed the particulars he has described. Another important addition which St. John has made to the history of our Saviour's ministry, is the relation he has left us of several earnest and emphatical discourses held by Christ with his disciples as the time of his death approached, especially of that affecting and valedictory prayer addressed to his Father, on the evening of his apprehension, "for them, and for us, as many as should believe on him through their word."

It is to be considered also as a consequence of the extended age of this apostle, and the later publication of his Gospel, that he alludes, as he does likewise in his Epistles, to certain heresies, which had already sprung up in the Church. "For," as he says himself, "many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." To correct these wrong notions, therefore, some expressions of St. John are more particularly directed. And it may be,

that in order to prevent the introduction of similar errors at a future time, his Gospel is more copious in doctrine, than those of the other three Evangelists; that is, it has blended with the narrative a greater proportion of information relating to points of faith; such as the pre-existence of Christ; his divine and human nature; the union of the Father and the Son; the redemption of mankind; the mission of the Holy Spirit; and other truths calculated to raise our minds to the love and reverence of the divine economy; that "holding fast the form of sound words," we might avoid the danger of erroneous conceits, which he foresaw would arise in the Christian Church.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. St. John's Gospel opens with a concise account of the existence of Christ with God the Father, before the constitution of the world was formed. This was probably designed to correct certain false opinions, which had already been propagated by some vain and foolish persons, who would pry into things above human capacity, and unable to reach the heights of spiritual matters, wished to subject them to the crude conceptions of their own imagination. But "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*." It is idle, therefore, to reason about such matters: it is our duty to receive them with reverence, and to humble ourselves before the wisdom of God. So, instead of presuming to comprehend the essence of the Godhead, and the mysterious union

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

of the Trinity ; we shall do well to exercise our faith, rather than our reason ; and, being satisfied that such things are revealed, to embrace the truth with gladness, nothing wavering.

By “the Word” is to be understood Jesus Christ in his divine capacity. He is probably called “the Word,” as conveying the expression of God’s will. For as our sentiments are conveyed to each other by words ; so are the sentiments of God the Father conveyed to mankind by Jesus Christ. This, which is supposed to have been the case in the delivery of the laws and communications recorded in the Old Testament, is more manifestly so in the establishment of the new covenant, when Jesus Christ came to dwell among men, and “to give unto them the words which the Father had given him*.” When it is said that the “Word was with God,” it is to be understood, that before the foundation of the world, Christ was with God the Father. For though it immediately follows that “the Word was God,” that is, that Jesus Christ, the revealer of God’s will to men, did himself partake of the divine nature, and is, indeed, both God and Lord ; yet when the term God is

* John xvii. 8.

put absolutely, and by itself, it is rightly interpreted of God the Father *.

Ver. 3. "All things were made by him," by the Word, or by Jesus Christ. At other times it is said that God made the heavens, and the earth, and all things that are in them; but, so far as we are able to comprehend this, we may very well suppose that they were made by the appointment of God the Father, and nevertheless by the operation of God the Son. For "there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all." Therefore in the Nicene creed, when it is said, that "Jesus Christ is of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;" the words "by whom" apply not to the Father, but to the Son, and signify our belief that all things were made by Jesus Christ. Nor is this in any degree inconsistent with that first clause of the same creed,

* Comparing the opening of St. John's Gospel, "In the beginning was *the Word*, &c." with the opening of the book of Genesis, "In the beginning God created, &c.—And God *said*," it seems not improbable that St. John may thence have adopted the term *λογος* to express Him, through whom God the Father spake.

which asserts that God the Father is “the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” God the Father appointed that it should be so : God the Son executed it. For so likewise we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “by whom also (that is, by the Son) God made the worlds *.”

Ver. 4. “In him was life.” Therefore in St. John’s first Epistle, he is called the “word of life,” or, more properly, “the living word.” “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” And Jesus has likewise declared, “I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die †.” In him therefore may truly be said to have been life ; not this short life only, which animates the body for a few years, after which the dust shall return to the earth as it was ; but that, of which it is said, “This is everlasting life, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” The revelation of this life was indeed a most brilliant light exhibiting to the world the appointed means of pardon and peace, of immortality

* See also Col. i. 16.

† John xi. 15.

and glory. Upon men lying in the darkness of ignorance and sin was this gracious light shed ; yet they acknowledged it not, being blinded by their prejudices and passions ; at least they did not generally acknowledge it ; the Jews especially, Christ's own peculiar people, to whom the oracles of God had been entrusted, rejecting the accumulated evidence of prophecies and miracles, and undesignedly fulfilling those very oracles, by "crucifying the Lord of life."

Ver. 6. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." This John is not to be confounded with the author of the Gospel, but is the same who is known by the title of John the Baptist. His birth, his character, and office, had been distinctly foretold* ; and at the appointed time he came, "the chosen messenger to prepare the way of the Lord"—by "turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just"—"to bear witness of that divine light," which coming into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, shone upon the human race, to instruct them, and to lead them to everlasting life. In our translation, it is said, "that was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." But,

* Luke i. 13. Also Isa. xl. 3., and Mal. iii. 1.

though the original is capable indeed of this signification, yet from comparison with other texts of this Gospel *, there is good reason to believe, that the more proper translation would be, “ this light coming into the world, was the true light, which lighteth every man.” And to as many as received it, hath Christ given a title to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name ; “ which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ;” that is, who have obtained the inheritance of the sons of God by no right of descent, no concurrence of human means, nor by any favour of man ; but by the free will of God, through Jesus Christ. “ Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever †.”

Ver. 14. This Word then (according to the appellation given to our Saviour in the first verses of this Gospel), took upon him our nature, and dwelt among men, having condescended to become a real man, though endowed at the same time with the spirit of unerring truth, and filled with the fulness of divine grace. When St. John

* Chap. iii. 19, and xii. 46.

† 1 Pet. i. 23.

asserts that he had “ beheld * his glory, the glory “ as of the only begotten of the Father,” he probably alludes to that glorious scene, to which he had been admitted with two other disciples, when Christ was transfigured before them, so that “ his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light,” and a voice from heaven declared him to be “ the beloved Son, in whom God was well pleased,” and whom they were commanded “ to hear,” that is, to believe, and to obey. It is no wonder that such a magnificent foresight of the “ power and presence of Jesus Christ coming in his kingdom †,” should have deeply impressed the minds of those present. Accordingly we find St. Peter and St. John both appealing to this transaction as a certain ground of confidence in their Lord. I suppose it might be highly expedient that these “ pillars” of the church, as St. Paul has called them ‡, should be favoured with such a supernatural attestation and divine confirmation of their faith.

Ver. 15. Christ coming after John the Baptist

* The word *εθεασαμεθα* properly signifies “ looking at a spectacle,” and is used again in the same sense, ver. 32.; likewise in 1 John i. 1.

† 2 Pet. i. 16., and Matt. xvi. 28.

‡ Gal. ii. 9.

in point of time, is before him in dignity and honor. This is repeated in substance in the third chapter and 28th verse, when, in reply to some observations that were made to him, John again asserts that he is not the Christ, but that he was sent before him ; and adds “ he that cometh from heaven is above all.” (Ver. 31.)

Ver. 16. The words “ fulness” and “ grace,” in the 16th verse, have a reference to verse 14, where it is said that the Word, or Christ, coming into the world, was “ full of grace and truth.” The meaning is, that of Christ’s fulness * we have all received, having our deficiency supplied from the fulness of his perfection ; and grace, or the favour of God, derived to us through the intercession of Christ, according to that abundant grace which he enjoys in the bosom of his Father.

Ver. 17. The Law, which is said to have been given by Moses, is the Jewish Law, contained in

* The Greek word *πληρωμα*, like “ fulness” in English, may be used in different senses according to the context. Here, and in most other texts of the New Testament, it seems to signify “ The fulness of Christ’s perfections supplying the deficiencies of his servants ;” and sometimes it signifies, “ The fulness acquired by his servants, whose deficiencies are supplied out of the perfection of Christ.” See Appendix, No. I.

the first five books of the Old Testament, and including a variety of positive commands, and ordinances to be observed in obedience to the will of the lawgiver, while their purport was often little understood. This Law, embracing the whole system of the religious and civil polity of the Jews, is often contrasted with the gracious dispensation of the Gospel, which “brought life and immortality to light.” This was grace indeed, when the merciful designs of God were fulfilled in Jesus Christ; and this was truth indeed, when the means of salvation, and the hopes of glory, were opened to our view. In reading the Gospels it should not be forgotten, that the transactions and discourses recorded in them, took place among Jews; in consequence of which, frequent allusions are made both to their Scriptures, and to their customs.

Ver. 18. Though God, as a pure spirit, can never be an object of human sight, yet his nature and attributes, his perfect knowledge, unbounded power, and overflowing goodness, have been abundantly declared to us by Jesus Christ.

Ver. 21. We read at the conclusion of the book of Malachi, “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dread-

ful day of the Lord : and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." It was, no doubt, in reference to this text that the Jews sent priests and levites to inquire of John the Baptist if he were Elias, or Elijah, for these are one and the same. Now, though John appears to have been the person here intended ; and is so declared by Christ himself in St. Matthew's Gospel, (xi. 14.) when he said, " This is Elias, which was for to come ;" yet he was not so in the sense in which the Jews understood it. John came indeed the fore-runner of Christ, " in the spirit and power of Elias * ;" but he was not Elijah himself, not he who had been taken up into heaven in a fiery car, and whose return the Jews seem to have expected in its most literal sense. Again, when they ask, " Art thou that † prophet?" they may possibly have had in their mind another scripture, where Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, says, " The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto

* Matt. i. 17.

† So chap. vi. 14. we read " This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."

me ; unto him ye shall hearken." This therefore, which is spoken of Christ, John disclaimed. At length, to their repeated question, " Who art thou ? " he answers in the words of Isaiah, thereby directing their attention to that prophet, who beyond all others had delineated the true character of the Messiah in such distinct and glowing colours, as were peculiarly calculated to prepare the minds of his countrymen to acknowledge their Saviour, upon the evidence of their own Scriptures. It may be asked here, why it should have been added, that they who put these questions to the Baptist were of the sect of the Pharisees ? The true answer to which I take to be, that the Pharisees, assuming to themselves a greater strictness of life, and superior acquaintance with the Scriptures, were supposed to be the best qualified to judge of the pretensions of a new teacher. For as baptism had formerly been commanded in the Law, for the purification of the priests *, and Levites †, previously to their " ministring to God in the priest's office," or " executing the service of the Lord ; " so it is said to have been practised at the reception of proselytes, and might probably be considered as a form of initiation to some new

* Exod. xxix. 4.

† Num. viii. 7.

profession, for which a competent authority was demanded.

Ver. 29. The expression "Lamb of God," no doubt, alludes to the death, which Christ was to undergo, "as a lamb brought to the slaughter," in expiation of the sins of mankind; this death having been prefigured in the ceremonial law by the sacrifice of a lamb at the feast of the passover.

The following verses record the remarkable circumstance of a visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit in terms so simple and unaffected, as carry with them the strongest testimony of their truth. By comparing together the different accounts of this event, it seems probable that the appearance, whatever it might be, was afforded to St. John the Baptist alone; while the voice, which proceeded from heaven declaring Jesus to be the "beloved Son" of God, was audible to the whole assembly. On this supposition, it is easy to conceive, why our Evangelist should have omitted the latter circumstance, because it had been sufficiently attested by the writers of the other Gospels; while the visible descent of the Holy Ghost wanted further illustration, as being indeed the accomplishment of the signal especially promised to the Baptist, by which he might know Christ.

Ver. 35. It may be observed, that the two disciples mentioned in the 35th verse, were disciples not of Jesus, but of John the Baptist; though it is probable that they were afterwards both of them numbered among the twelve Apostles. One of them is expressly said to have been Andrew, Simon Peter's brother; and it has reasonably been conjectured, that the other may have been St. John *, the author of the Gospel, who on this, as on all other occasions, studiously conceals his own name †.

Ver. 39. We have no intimation of what passed at this interview of Christ with the two disciples; but we may fairly collect, that they were in the first instance strongly moved by the Baptist's testimony; and that in consequence they sought, as became them, for further information; and being invited to Jesus's residence, they continued some hours conversing with him, and honestly opened their minds to the conviction of his being indeed

* This derives confirmation from the 15th and 16th verses of the eighteenth chapter, where St. John alludes to himself in terms not very dissimilar: "Simon Peter followed Jesus, and another disciple," &c.

† It is likely that all the apostles, as well as their Lord, may have been baptized by John.

the expected Messiah, as Andrew declares to his brother Simon. It should be noticed that the word Messiah in Hebrew, is equivalent to the Greek word Christ, both of them signifying "anointed." For it is well known that the Jewish kings and priests used to be initiated into their respective offices by a ceremony of anointing with oil, some traces of which are still retained in the practice of modern times. Hence Jesus is rightly called by pre-eminence the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed of God. Not that he was actually anointed by any affusion of oil; but because he came in the united capacities of Priest and King, "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," to offer the sacrifice of his own body once for all; and to erect a kingdom of righteousness, over which he was to preside for ever.

Ver. 42. Our Saviour's salutation to Simon is at once affectionate and prophetic. By pronouncing his name and that of his father*, he manifested his intuitive knowledge; and by the new appellation, which he added, he foreshewed the distinguished part this apostle would afterwards

* The name of his father is added for the sake of appropriating to a particular person a very common appellation. The same custom prevailed likewise among the ancient Greeks and Romans.

bear in the establishment of Christianity. For Cephas, in the language of Judea, signified “a rock;” and it is for this reason that in Greek, which is the original language of the New Testament, he is called Peter, this being the Greek word for “a rock.” In explanation of the name it is elsewhere added, “and upon this rock will I build my church*.” It may further be observed, from the histories of Abraham †, and Sarah ‡, and Jacob §, and others, that it was nothing new to adopt a change of name upon any considerable change of condition. This appears to have been the case also with others of the apostles, and is still very generally practised by the cardinals and popes of the Roman church, to say nothing of the baptismal name added in all Christian countries.

Ver. 43. When we meet in the Gospels with expressions like that of “the day following,” it is not hastily to be concluded, that the circumstance about to be introduced took place literally on the next day. Frequently no more is meant, than “on a subsequent day,” or “at another time.” In this sense we should understand “after this,”

* Matt. xvi. 18.

† Gen. xvii. 5.

‡ Gen. xvii. 15.

§ Gen. xxxii. 28.

or “after these things,” with which the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of St. John’s Gospel all begin, meaning “at another time,” or “on another occasion,” not that what is there related followed in immediate succession to what went before *. In like manner St. Matthew uses the word “then †;” and St. Mark employs the term “immediately” no less than ten times in his first chapter; though in the English it is sometimes varied by being rendered “straightway,” or “forthwith.” St. Luke’s language, as it relates to the order of events, is equally vague ‡; the purpose of all the Evangelists being to record, and make public, the most important points of our Saviour’s ministry, independent of any nicety of arrangement. And as in regard to time, so in other matters, the Evangelists record what is sufficient to inform the understanding, without studying to gratify a vain curiosity. Therefore in explaining that part of St. John’s Gospel, at which we are now arrived, it is not necessary to suppose that nothing more took place between Christ and

* In the same indeterminate signification should be understood the expression *ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ*, (Matt. xii. 1. and xiv. 1.) also *ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ*, (Matt. xviii. 1.)

† Chap. xii. 22 and 38; xviii. 21; xxii. 15.

‡ Luke x. 21. *ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ*.

Philip, than what is mentioned in the concise history which St. John has left us. He designs only to give us the sum of the whole, when he comprises the transaction in those few words, "Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me."

Ver. 45. It is generally supposed that Nathaniel, who is here introduced, is the same as Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles; for it may be observed, that it is of the first call of the apostles only that St. John appears to be speaking; Andrew, John, Simon Peter, and Philip, all being of the number of the twelve.

When Nathaniel says, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" by "any good thing," we ought, probably, to understand Christ; for so it is more distinctly stated in the seventh chapter (*ver. 41.*), "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was." Whence we learn that the obstacle to Nathaniel's belief arose from his not knowing that Christ had actually been born in Bethlehem, as it was prophesied of him, though he had afterwards dwelt at Nazareth, in the province of Galilee. Besides, that part of the country still lay under disrepute

since the sedition of Judas the Galilean, which was long kept alive amongst them.

What was before said of Christ's manifesting his divine knowledge in his address to Peter, is corroborated by the still stronger appeal which he makes to the conscience of Nathaniel, telling him that he was witness to his thoughts, while he sat under the fig tree, before Philip called him. However such things may be felt by others, to a man's self there can hardly be conceived a more affecting and sure evidence of supernatural knowledge than this, which is drawn, as it were, from his own heart. Thus from the very first did Christ secure the attachment of his followers, by evincing certain divine and supernatural marks of his wisdom and power. And as all things are written for our edification, let us pause to admire, and while we admire, let us learn to imitate, that character which our Saviour has traced in those few, but amiable words—"behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." There is no disposition so well qualified for the reception of religious truth, as an honest and sincere heart *. And the effect of it is well exhibited in the unhesitating exclamation of Na-

* "Think of the Lord with a good heart, and in simplicity of heart seek him." Wisd. i. 1.

thaniel—" Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." In the subsequent reply of Christ, the change of number in the different members of the sentence seems to indicate that from the particular conversation with Nathaniel, he purposely slid into a general declaration of the powers about to be revealed, when not Nathaniel alone, but all his faithful companions, should have a far more certain knowledge of heavenly things, confirmed by the attestation of God * in the miraculous works of Jesus Christ.



CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. I observed before, upon the mention of " the day following," that much stress ought not to be laid upon the literal signification of the terms, which seem to indicate the order of events.

* By the ascent and descent of the angels of God upon the Son of Man, is figured the communication between Christ and the Father; as in Jacob's dream (Gen. xxviii. 12.), the intercourse between heaven and earth.

In the history of the miracle performed at Cana, "the third day" has, probably, no relation whatever to the interval of time between this and the circumstances related at the end of the preceding chapter. It means only that the transaction took place *on the third day after the marriage*; than which nothing can be more natural, when we are informed that it was customary for a young married couple to come forward into company *on the third day*, on which occasion also the marriage feast was celebrated *. From what follows it must be supposed that Mary had received some supernatural intimation, that she should at this time witness the first display of Christ's miraculous powers. And if there be some little mixture of human vanity in the eagerness shewn by a mother for this "manifestation of her son's glory," it is an innocent and amiable weakness, and forms a natural, and not uninteresting feature in the story. Our Saviour's reply, which may sound harsh to an English ear, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" is only so, because the original is translated quite literally, and the same idiom, which is

* See Toup's Longinus, §. 4. p. 166. also Hesychius on the word *ανακαλυπτηριον*—ὅτε την νυμφην πρωτον εξαγουσιν τη τριτη ημερα.

natural and easy in the Greek*, is no longer agreeable to the forms of polite conversation. The expression which follows, "mine hour is not yet come," occurs three several times in chapter vii. It appears to have been designedly ambiguous; but in its ultimate sense to have meant, that the time of Christ's full manifestation of himself would not be till he should enter upon his kingdom at the expiration of his worldly ministry. Therefore as that time approached we find him, on the contrary, asserting, "the hour is come, that the Son of Man shall be glorified †:" and again ‡, "when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of the world to the Father." Also §, "Father, the hour is come."

In the twelfth verse we find mention of Jesus's brothers, and it may naturally be asked who these were. The answer to which may be gathered from Matt. xiii. 55. "Is not his mother called Mary? and his brothers James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" These were not however, strictly speaking, brothers, but cousins-german to our Saviour, being the sons of Cleophas and

* *γυναι*, in the usual form of address to ladies of the highest rank, in the Greek tragedies.

† Chap. xii. 23.

‡ Chap. xiii. 1.

§ Chap. xvii. 1.

another Mary, sister to the mother of Jesus. This loose interpretation of the term *brother*, is sufficiently authorised by ancient custom. For so Jacob told Rachel that he was “her father’s *brother*, and that he was *Rebecca’s son* *.” Now Rebecca, being sister to Laban, Rachel’s father, it follows that Jacob must have his *nephew*, not his *brother*. In like manner, Cicero in his epistles to Atticus †, uses the word *frater* to signify *cousin*. It may be observed of James, that Josephus has likewise called him “the brother of Jesus Christ;” ἀδελφον Ἰησοῦ του λεγομενου Χριστου, Ιακωβος ονομα αυτω ‡.

Ver. 14. The circumstance of Christ’s driving the traders out of the temple, is related by each of the other Evangelists, as if it had taken place at a later period. We may therefore either suppose that it occurred twice; or that the sacred writers, as I have before shewn, were little solicitous about the exact order of events. The latter seems to me the most probable, and that St. John may have repeated it only for the sake of connecting with it a prophecy omitted by the other Evangelists, and which was important, as foretelling his death and

* Gen. xxix. 12.

† I. 5. and again II. 7.

‡ Ant. xx. 8. 1.

resurrection. For when the Jews asked him what warrant he could produce for the authority he assumed, he replies, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" in which words, as the apostle goes on to inform us, "he spake of the temple of his body." And the effect of this, we are told, was, that the disciples remembered it after his resurrection, and it became an additional argument for their belief in "the Scriptures, and in the word which Jesus had said." What was so convincing an argument to them, loses none of its force by the interval of time which has since elapsed, if only we are assured of the authenticity of St. John's history. Well may he, therefore, have thought it too valuable to be omitted; though in order to introduce it properly, he was obliged to repeat (which he seldom does) the same story which is found in the other Gospels. To revert to the transaction itself, it should be understood, in the first place, that what is called the temple, was more properly the court-yard, within the precincts of which the temple stood; and the things, which are said to have been there bought and sold (as oxen, sheep, and doves) were things used in the service of the temple. The court, undoubtedly, ought not to have been so profaned; and it might

probably have been open to any body to take notice of it. The persons engaged in this traffick may the more readily have submitted to Jesus, seeing the number of his attendants; for Saint Matthew tells us, that the chief priests and pharisees, “when they sought to lay hands on him, feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet*.” His authority cannot be questioned by any who bear the name of Christians. With regard to the temple itself, it may be observed, that it had been rebuilt by Herod the Great, who completed the principal part of the design in eight or nine years, so as to make it useful for the service of religion, though many of the out buildings still continued under the hands of the workmen in our Saviour’s time †.

Ver. 22. There is something peculiarly natural and unaffected in the style of the Gospel histories; and this their general character is visible in the part we are now considering. It describes the readiness with which the people at first acknowledged the Messiah, convinced by the miracles which he wrought before them; though “having no root, in time of temptation they would fall away.” This deficiency and shallowness of their

* Matt. xxi. 46.

† Prideaux, V. 4. 660.

faith, Jesus by his intuitive knowledge well understood; and for this reason he did not trust them, or commit himself unto them. If then it was a reproach to those, who heard the gracious words, and saw the miraculous works of Christ, that they were superficial believers, and persevered not unto the end; the same is a reproach to us also, if we resist the evidence of the truth, and reject those means which are afforded us, and fail to establish in our hearts a thorough belief that Christ is indeed our hope and our salvation, and that the continued observance of his precepts is the only condition upon which we are entitled to partake of the benefits which his blood hath purchased for us. The pattern of a true faith is well delineated in the fervent profession of an apostle; "I am persuaded," saith St. Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord *."

* Romans viii. 39.

CHAPTER III.

NICODEMUS being a man of some distinction, "a ruler," as it is said, "of the Jews," might, without any imputation upon his integrity, be cautious of embracing hastily the opinion that Christ was the expected Messiah. Precisely the same thing is said of Joseph of Arimathea, that he was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews *;" yet we have the testimony of an evangelist, that he was "a good and righteous man †." It is very difficult for a Christian of the present day to appreciate justly the effect of the prejudices formerly entertained by the Jews, who were fond of the superiority of their own nation, and looked for a temporal Messiah, to deliver them from their subjection to the Romans, and to raise them to worldly grandeur. In this way they interpreted the magnificent terms, in which their prophets, animated with the prospect of Christ's kingdom, had declared, that "the Lord should reign, and all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of God ‡." It is reasonable to suppose that Nicodemus, while he honestly inquired after

* John xix. 38.

† Luke xxiii. 50.

‡ Isa. lii.

the truth, was not wholly exempt from the prevailing sentiments of his countrymen. He therefore chose to visit Jesus at a season when he would be least exposed to public observation. From a subsequent part of the history * it appears, that if he did not openly follow Jesus, yet he was so far convinced, as to check the proceedings of the Council, when they would have judged him unheard; and again †, we find that he brought spices to embalm the dead body; there is therefore no reason to doubt his being in his heart a believer. In his very first address to Christ, Nicodemus acknowledges, from the evidence of his miracles, that he was “a teacher come from God.” For of this, miracles, however in themselves contrary to nature, are in truth the most natural testimony. They afford that testimony which we see the Jews demanded, and which every prudent man would demand, as the proper credentials of one sent from God. Nicodemus accordingly confesses that “no man could do those miracles, that Jesus did, except God were with him.” The reply of Jesus was calculated at once to try the sincerity of Nicodemus’s faith, and to withdraw him from worldly considerations,

* Chap. vii. 50.

† Chap. xix. 30.

and to lead him on to further information in spiritual matters. And the explanation he afterwards gives, declares to us, as well as to him, that it is through Christ alone we can enter into the kingdom of heaven. For by water, is signified the being cleansed from our sins, and received by baptism into the church of Christ; and by the Spirit, that reformation of our hearts and affections through the influence of the Holy Spirit, which is, as it were, putting on a new man, or being born again.

The same sentiment occurs in St. Paul's epistle to Titus. "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life *."

Ver. 8. The illustration which Jesus familiarly draws from the wind, is applicable to all spiritual essences, even to God himself, who is "about our bed, and about our path," like the air, which fills all space, and exerts very sensible effects,

* Tit. iii. 5.

though “no man hath seen it at any time*.” So likewise one that is born of the Spirit, enjoys the effects of his regeneration, without the intervention of any external and visible operation.

Ver. 10. The more learned among the Jews might be expected to have carried their views from the things that are seen, to the things that are not seen; and therefore to be in some measure prepared to admit the truth of heavenly doctrines. What was before taken notice of in the case of Nathaniel†, is observable likewise here; that Jesus’s discourse, though it is addressed in the first instance to Nicodemus, yet, by the change of number in the original, as well as by the sense which it conveys, appears to have been designed for general instruction, drawn, as was our Saviour’s custom, from the incidental circumstances of Nicodemus’s conversation, whence he takes occasion to admonish all his hearers, that if they did not receive his testimony on plainer subjects, and things which pass in the hearts of men in this life, it was not to be expected that they would be

* It is remarkable that Socrates uses the very same illustration of the operations of God:—*και ανεμοι αυτοι μεν ουχ ὁρωνται, ἀ δε ποιουσι φανερα ἡμιν εστι, και προσιοντων αυτων αισθανομεθα.* Xenoph. Mem. book iv. chap. 3.

† Chap. i. 52.

in a fit state of mind to hear with faith things of a more exalted kind, as his divinity and office, and the nature of his kingdom, and his sufferings for the redemption of mankind.

Ver. 13. In order to apprehend the just meaning of the 13th verse, we should refer to the thirtieth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, from which the expression is borrowed. There it is said, at the 12th verse, "Who shall go up to heaven to bring the commandment to us, that we may hear it, and do it?" It was probably a text familiar to the Jews, since we find that St. Paul also quotes it in his Epistle to the Romans, (chap. x. 6.) likewise Agur, in Prov. xxx. 4. The meaning of the passage then will be, that Christ alone, who came down from heaven, is qualified to reveal to mankind the will of the Father relating to heavenly things. But we may observe a further peculiarity in that expression, when Christ says of himself, "who is in heaven;" whence we conclude, that while Christ was yet upon the earth, he nevertheless continued to be united to the Father in heaven; agreeably to what he says on another occasion (chap. xvii. 21.), "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee." The term "Son of man," which occurs, likewise, in many

other places, no doubt, alludes to the seventh chapter of Daniel; "I saw," says he, "in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed." It should be added, however, that this name is not exclusively applied to Christ. Ezekiel, in his second chapter, and throughout the whole book of his prophecies, is repeatedly addressed "son of man." It properly signifies one of the race of mankind; and, therefore, as regards Christ, is expressive of that great instance of his love and condescension, when he put off the glory which he had with the Father in heaven, and abased himself to the condition of a man. The title may perhaps have been assumed to avoid either inflaming the ambitious expectations of the Jews, or giving offence to the jealous authority of the Romans.

Ver. 14. What our Saviour says of his being "lifted up," is manifestly prophetical of his cru-

cifixion. And let us duly appreciate the force of that which follows, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." For, as it is said (chap. xvii. 3.), "this is everlasting life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It cannot be too often, or too strongly impressed upon our minds, that it is to those only who believe in Christ, that everlasting life is promised. But this belief, if it be sincere, will not, cannot be a barren belief; for so, we are told, "the devils believe and tremble." If we believe indeed, our belief must show itself by love and obedience to our God and Saviour, giving heed to those things which are revealed, that through good works we may make our calling and election sure.

Ver. 16. The goodness of God, who sent his Son for the salvation of the world; the goodness of the Son, through whom that salvation was effected; are both distinctly pointed out in the subsequent verses; the necessity of our belief is again insisted on, and likewise the guilt, which will be imputed to those, who refuse to receive that light which is come into the world. The great cause also of their refusal is not obscurely set forth; "because their deeds were evil: for

every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Goodness is notoriously connected with religious faith. Good morals naturally draw the mind to religion, as to their proper stock; and religion again is productive of good morals, as its proper fruit. It is the vain, the profligate, the licentious, who alone make profession of their unbelief. Whether this arise from thoughtlessness and inattention, or from depravity and perversion of the understanding, the guilt in either case rests upon them, considering that, upon such objects, to be serious, and to open their minds to conviction, is itself a duty, for the neglect of which they are justly responsible.

It is the observation of the accomplished Massillon, that faith then only begins to waver, when it begins to be troublesome. Either our excesses must be stopped, or we must learn to be at peace under them. And as it would be sacrificing too much to renounce them altogether, and we can only render them easy by discrediting the truths which trouble us, hence we come to consider

these truths as doubtful ; and in order to become tranquil, we try to persuade ourselves that we are unbelievers. Thus the great effort of licentiousness is to make us wish to be infidels.

Ver. 22. When it is said that Jesus baptized, we must anticipate a little the explanation which is added in the next chapter ; that “ Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.”

Ver. 23. In the verse following, by “ they came, and were baptized,” is to be understood that “ the people came to John to be baptized.” And it was upon this occasion of his baptizing, that the subsequent profession of John respecting Christ was delivered. For the purification, about which a question was raised between John’s disciples and the Jews, is the purification by washing, or, in other words, baptism ; a very natural question at such a time, and similar to that described in the first chapter, when the pharisees asked him (chap. i. 25.) “ why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ ?” John’s answer, while it asserts his own divine mission, acknowledges abundantly the superiority of Christ, who is represented as the bridegroom, whose bride is the true church. He it is, who came from heaven, and declares to men that which he had seen and

heard. And whoever receives his testimony, thereby acknowledges the truth of God's word; for that, which Christ publishes, is the word of God. When John says, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" it is as if he had said, "God giveth him the Holy Spirit without measure," that is, copiously and without reserve; in the same sense as, at another time, Christ is said to be "full of the Holy Ghost."

Ver. 36. The chapter concludes with a solemn repetition of the necessity of faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."



CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. JESUS quitted Judea to avoid the malice of the pharisees, because "his time was not yet come;" he had not yet fulfilled the object of his ministry by preaching righteousness and salvation to the people, and confirming the faith of those chosen disciples, who were to be the witnesses

and teachers of his truth to the ends of the world. This remained to be done before he committed himself to the pharisees, and ratified the covenant of grace by the sacrifice of his own body on the cross. Therefore he left Judea at this time, and returned again into Galilee; between which province and Judea lay the country of Samaria. Samaria had formerly been the seat of the kingdom of Israel; but subsequently was inhabited by a mixed multitude of heathens and refugees, objects of peculiar hatred to the Jews*. Hence arose the woman's surprise, that any Jew should ask her even for a draught of water; and from the same cause his own disciples are said to have " marvelled that he talked with the woman †." Jesus, as was his custom, engrafted his instructions upon the circumstances which presented themselves; therefore sitting at this time upon Jacob's well, he introduced the doctrine of salvation under the denomination of " living water ‡; of which " who-soever drinketh, shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlast-

* See chap. viii. 48.

† Ver. 27.

‡ So Isaiah xii. 3. " Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." And Jeremiah (xvii. 13.) calls the Lord, " the fountain of living waters."

ing life.” We see how naturally the discourse is afterwards led to the mention of the woman’s husband, and of those particulars, which convinced her that Jesus was indeed a prophet. From the histories of Rebekah, and of Rachel, we learn that it was usual for women “to come at the time of evening with their pitcher upon their shoulder to draw water*.” The apparent candor and goodness of this Samaritan woman should make us slow to admit any unfavorable interpretation of that expression, “he, whom thou now hast, is not thy husband.” It is probable she may have been betrothed to a fifth husband, but not yet married; in the same manner as the mother of Jesus is sometimes called the wife of Joseph †, and at another time is more accurately described as only betrothed to him ‡. The number of her husbands is less striking to one who is aware of the

* Gen. xxiv. 11. The same custom is alluded to by Homer, where Hector is anticipating the consequences of his own death, and the dread of having his wife made to submit to the drudgery of a slave. *Και κεν ὕδωρ φορεοῖς*, &c. Il. vi. 457. In Herodotus we likewise read, *φοιτᾶν γὰρ αἰεὶ τὰς σφέτερας θυγατέρας τε καὶ παιδὰς ἐπ’ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἐννεακρουνον*. Lib. vi. p. 502. He speaks of it only as an ancient custom before the use of domestic servants in Greece.

† Matt. i. 19.

‡ Ibid. i. 27.

frequency of divorces, not among the Jews only *, but among the Romans, and probably other nations also, at the time of these transactions.

Ver. 20. The woman avails herself of the authority of him, whom she acknowledged as a prophet, to settle a dispute of long standing between the Jews and Samaritans, respecting the proper place of worship †. For it is said that one Manasseh, a levite, having been banished from Jerusalem, more than 400 years before, upon refusing to give up his heathenish wife ‡, the daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria, got his father-in-law to build upon Mount Gerizim a temple similar to that at Jerusalem, and to make him the high priest; whereupon he restored the law of Moses, and the worship of the true God, and Samaria became the refuge of the refractory Jews §. It is observable how Jesus by his reply makes every circumstance a fresh source of edification, gradually withdrawing the woman's view from local

* Matt. v. 31. and xix. 3.

† Των μεν Ἱεροσολυμιτων το παρ' αυτοις ἱερον ἁγιον ειναι λεγοντων, και τας θυσιας εκει πεμπειν αξιουντων· των δε Σαμαριτων εις το γαριζειν ορος κελουντων. Josephus Ant. xii. 1. and again, xiii. 3, 4.

‡ See Ezra, chap. x.

§ Prideaux, Conn. P. 1. B. 6.

to spiritual worship, and opening to her the prospect of salvation ; till at length, in all the brightness of truth, he declares himself to be the expected Messiah.

Ver. 31. As Jesus had before conveyed instruction under the figure of water, so did he now under that of food. For his mind was full of the great purpose of his ministry, and he made every incident subservient “to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work.” Presently we find him again drawing from the corn fields other similitudes applicable to the state of the Samaritans, a company of whom may be supposed to be then in sight, ripe for the reception of the Gospel ; so that the apostles might gather a harvest of converts among a people, on whom they had bestowed no labor, in whom they had sowed no previous seeds of instruction.

Ver. 44. When we consider Galilee to have been the country of Jesus, it may seem extraordinary that it should be alleged as a reason for his going thither, that “a prophet had no honor in his own country.” The obscurity arises from hence, that the words apply not to the country of Galilee generally ; for we are told that “the Galileans received him ;” but they explain the reason of his

avoiding the city of Nazareth, "where he had been brought up," but where the jealousy of the people was such, that, according to St. Luke, "all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things (which Jesus preached unto them) were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong: but he passing through the midst of them went his way *." Therefore "leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum †."

Ver. 50. The simple, unadorned style, in which the Gospel histories are related, is at once a distinguishing excellence of their composition, and a strong assurance of their truth. For native truth, like native beauty, needs no meretricious embellishments to recommend it; but is indeed most lovely, when it is least artificially set forth. No copiousness of language could so well describe the †

* Luke iv. 28, &c.

† Matt. iv. 13.

‡ I have preserved the language of the English Bible, but it would be more correct to translate *τις βασιλικος*, "one belonging to the court," that is, the court of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. Josephus uses the same word in the same sense. (*Ant. x. 7, 5.*) May not this have been Chuza, the husband of Joanna, (See Luke viii. 3.) who is called "Herod's steward," *επιτροπος Ἡρωδου*?

nobleman's trust in Jesus, as that simple assertion, "the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." This implicit trust, not arising from any fond conceit, but founded upon just conviction, is always represented in Scripture as the first of virtues, and is therefore not seldom made to signify the whole of a Christian's duty. "He who believeth in the Son, hath everlasting life *." "If thou confess the Lord Jesus with thy mouth, and trust in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved †." "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thine house ‡."

Ver. 54. This healing of the nobleman's son, is said to have been "the second miracle that Jesus did when he was come out of Judea into Galilee." The first miracle of changing the water into wine, appears to have been wrought before Jesus went up to Jerusalem; but this second miracle was wrought after his return. If so, it should have been translated, "This second miracle Jesus did when he was come out of Judea into Galilee."

* John iii. 36. and again vi. 40. and 47.

† Rom. x. 9.

‡ Acts xvi. 31.

CHAPTER V.

THE story of an angel descending into the pool of Bethesda, and communicating a healing power to the water, may seem at first a circumstance so out of nature, as to throw a degree of doubt over the whole transaction. But it should be observed that the miracle performed by Jesus is altogether independent of this descent of the angel; which, whether it be a real event, or a popular error, signifies nothing to the healing of the impotent man, and is only introduced to account for his lying there. The miracle was the more conspicuous from the length of time, thirty-eight years, that the man's infirmity had lasted, so as to render him an object of general notice. We cannot suppose it to have been merely accidental, that it was wrought on the Sabbath-day. The same circumstance is related afterwards in the case of the man who was born blind: "it was on the Sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes*." So in St. Matthew's Gospel †, and in St. Luke's, we read of other cures performed on the

* Chap. ix. 14.

† Matt. xii. 10.

Sabbath-day*. It was, no doubt, designed to wean the Jews from a superstitious observance of the ritual law, and gradually to lead them from things temporal to things spiritual; for the ordinances of the law were but “a shadow of things to come.” The great object of the institution of the Sabbath was, to be “a sign between God and men throughout their generations †,” to maintain a constant sense of God in the world, by setting apart from temporal concerns a stated time more particularly dedicated to his service, when men might rest from their bodily labors, and instruct, and confirm, and refresh their minds in the knowledge of God, and of their duty, and cultivate the things relating to their spiritual and eternal welfare. And such are still the advantages to be derived from the Christian Sabbath. But while it recalls reflection, and withdraws us for a season from the ordinary pursuits of life, it is not meant to exclude the cheerfulness of a thankful and religious heart; still less to supersede the necessary works of charity and moral obligation.

Ver. 13. It may be thought surprising that Jesus, having first wrought miracles to convince the people of his divine mission, should afterwards convey

* Luke xiii. 10. and xiv. 3.

† Exod. xxxi. 13.

himself away that he might not be known. But for this conduct there are two opposite reasons; one, that the populace, as it is said, “would come and take him by force to make him a king* ;” the other, that the pharisees and rulers, disappointed of their hopes, and jealous of his power, and irritated by his reproofs, “sought to slay him :” but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because his work was not yet finished, “his time was not yet come.”

Ver. 14. When he afterwards found the man in the temple, and bade him “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto him ;” it is, as if he had said, “praise God for his goodness, and let your love of him keep you in the observance of his laws, lest instead of a temporal calamity, like that from which you have lately been delivered, you lose your soul in hell.”

Ver. 17. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”—that is, “God the Father under whom I act, and I who execute his will, cease not even on the Sabbath from the works of Providence, which are unremittingly exerted for the support of the universe, and for the good of mankind.”

Ver. 18. The Jews were so puffed up with their

* Chap. vi. 15.

own conceits, that they would not bear to hear of any other than a temporal Messiah, in whose kingdom that people looked for earthly dominion and exclusive favor; where their rulers still hoped to maintain, or increase, their own distinction, their peculiar prerogative. To persons so disposed it is no wonder that the lowly Jesus was “a stumbling block,” and “rock of offence.” Our Saviour’s assertion of his authority, and at the same time his profession of acting wholly in subservience to his Father’s will, is eminently dignified and pious. When he says, “the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do,” this is equivalent to what had before been spoken of him by the Baptist, “what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth—for he, whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God*.” The meaning in both cases is, that those things, which he declared unto men, he knew, not obscurely, but by certain communication with the Father, “with whom he was in the beginning,” and to whose will he conformed himself in all things.

Ver. 20. “The Father sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and “he will shew him greater

* Chap. iii. 32.

works that these, that ye may marvel:" that is, "the Son is privy to all the counsels of the Father; in obedience to which he doeth the miraculous works, which ye see; and in obedience to which he will do yet greater works, for the conviction and salvation of mankind." Now, though all supernatural works equally manifest the special favor of God, yet that of recalling into life those who are dead, is evidently specified as affording the most natural assurance of that momentous declaration which follows, that "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." For he who can raise the dead to live again in this world, produces the strongest argument to convince men that he may likewise be able to raise them to judgment in the world to come.

Respecting the concluding part of the 20th verse, "that ye may marvel;" it may be right, once for all, to observe that similar expressions, which not unfrequently occur in the Gospels, are by no means designed to point out the cause of what preceded, as if the purpose of Christ's miracles was to make men marvel: it signifies only that in effect they would be such as to excite admiration. In the same manner, when any thing is said to be done,

“that a prophecy might be fulfilled,” we are to understand, not that the thing was done on purpose to fulfil the prophecy, but that eventually what had been predicted was thereby fulfilled. So likewise in that text, at which many have stumbled, respecting blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, the threatening is to be understood not positively, but eventually; not as denouncing any certain punishment, but forcibly exposing the heinous nature of such a wilful and slanderous calumny against God, the ultimate tendency of which must be to preclude all hope of pardon.

In verse 27 we read that God hath given to the Son authority to execute judgment, “because he is the Son of Man.” The reason of this may not at first be obvious; but it receives illustration from the Epistle to the Hebrews†, which shews how God in his judgment still thinketh upon mercy; “for we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”—Therefore all judgment hath been committed unto the Son, that having been himself “made in the likeness of men,” and exposed to the temptations of the world, he might have compassion upon our

* Matt. xii. 31.

† Chap. iv. 15.

infirmities and failings. In verse 24 we learn the principles upon which this judgment will be conducted; "he that heareth Christ's word, and believeth on him that sent him, hath everlasting life." The expression is concise, but awfully momentous; and it becomes us to weigh well its import. It is plain that, "to hear Christ's word," in the sense intended, we must not be "hearers only, but doers of the word," who "having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*." "To believe on him who sent him," is to believe in God, and to believe that Jesus Christ was sent by God, and that "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Thus faith and works, not separately, but jointly, are the conditions (and be it remembered they are the only conditions) to which is annexed the promise of everlasting life. But while "the resurrection of life" is generally made to signify that state into which "they that have done good" shall be received in glory; it is equally true that "they which have done evil," shall likewise be raised "unto the resurrection of judgment†." "For we

* Matt. viii. 15.

† So it should be rendered, not "damnation," as it is in the English Bible.

must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad *.” “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal †.”

Ver. 30. In the exercise of this judgment we find Jesus disclaiming all authority as the Son of Man, but declaring that his authority is derived from God, to whom alone, and not to himself, he ascribes the equity of his judgment.

Ver. 31. “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.” In the eighth chapter and fourteenth verse we read, “Jesus answered and said unto them, though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.” In either case Jesus vindicates his claim to belief, not merely by his own assertion, but by the testimony of God manifested in his miracles, in the prophecies accomplished in his person, and in the attestations from heaven at the time of his birth ‡, his baptism §, and transfiguration ||. It was from such signs that the Baptist was enabled “to bear record that this was the Son of God ¶.” But while Jesus appeals to

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† Matt. xxv. 46.

‡ Luke ii. 10, &c.

§ Luke iii. 22.

|| Luke ix. 35.

¶ Chap. i. 34.

the miracles which he wrought "by the finger of God," as the surest testimony of his truth; yet desiring that men might by any means be saved, he appeals likewise to the witness of John the Baptist, "in whose light they were willing for a season to rejoice." He refers them also to the Scriptures, which they professed to believe, and which testified of him, in whom all the law and the prophecies received their accomplishment. But Jesus Christ came not "to receive honor from men," but to glorify God, and to execute his gracious designs; while the Jews, on the contrary, were worldly-minded, and sought "honor of one another, not the honor that cometh from God," neither loved they God in sincerity and truth. Hence it arose that they rejected the doctrine of Christ, and refused "to come to him that they might have life." They would sooner entertain one who should "come in his own name," seeking to glorify himself, and to advance his own worldly interests by flattering their prejudices.

CHAPTER VI.

THE performance of works evidently beyond the power of man in his natural capacity, is not only the most convincing proof of divine authority, but is more than any thing else calculated to excite the attention of all classes of people. Such awakening of the attention is the first step towards the acquisition of information, especially towards the reception of any new doctrine. Should one preach to the multitude (as many impostors and enthusiasts have done) pretending to deliver doctrines derived from heaven, it may reasonably be asked, "By what authority sayest thou these things? or what sign shewest thou unto us, that we may believe thee?" The authority of Jesus is confirmed indeed by many other proofs besides miracles; but these are the most obvious, and the most open to common apprehension. But then, to bring conviction to a sound understanding, they must not be done in a corner, nor explicable by any prepossession of the mind, or any cunning deception of the senses. See the miracles of Jesus, how many and various they were, exhibited before multitudes, before enemies, and consisting in facts,

of which the multitudes were competent judges. Accordingly we find that "a great multitude followed him."

Ver. 4. "And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh." For what reason is this inserted? To account, I imagine, for the number of people, who are said to have been present at the following miracle. For at the Passover, and two other festivals, it is well known that all the males were commanded to present themselves before the Lord in Jerusalem *. For this purpose, therefore, it is probable they may now have assembled, as the time approached. And the miracle would be the more seasonable, that the people might spread abroad the fame of it in their progress through the country, and thereby prepare the minds of men for the reception of the Gospel. The relation which follows, only differs from that which we read in St. Matthew, and St. Mark, by the insertion of the names of Philip and Andrew. But an acquaintance with such particulars has the effect of bringing the history more immediately before us, making us, as it were, present at the transaction, not merely hearers of the report. The reason however of St. John's repeating the history of this

* Exod. xxxiv. 23.

transaction may not improbably be found in the confession it drew from those who had seen the miracle that Jesus did ; “ This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

Ver. 15. In the fifteenth verse we read that Jesus “ departed again into a mountain himself alone.” St. Matthew has added * that he withdrew “ to pray ;” and this was no doubt his real purpose. It affords a striking example of the propriety of occasional retirement, reflexion, and prayer. For if this was practised by the blessed Jesus, whose whole life was a service to God ; how much more is it requisite for us, who are immersed in the business, the cares, the distractions, and, it may be, the sins of the world ? And what, but such occasional intervals of consideration and prayer, can recall us to a sound mind, and save us from being utterly overwhelmed by the “ deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of the flesh ?” Of such essential use is the observance both of the ordinary, and extraordinary seasons of devotion ; both of public, and of private prayer ; to which is moreover annexed the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of God. “ For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that

* Matt. xiv. 23.

seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened *.” And again †, “Your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Any one, who is not lost to all sense of duty, and all expectation of a judgment to come, must surely acknowledge the importance of these things; and acknowledging them, must wish to practise them. At least he must wish that he had practised them, when that day approaches, which must close this earthly scene to him for ever. At that time, what is to become of the man, who has been so engrossed by the affairs of this world, as to give no thought to that which is to come? Yet come it must, and must continue beyond all conception of duration.

Ver. 19. The next particular recorded of Jesus is his presenting himself to his chosen disciples, walking upon the sea. For it was peculiarly necessary that they, who were to be the lights of the world, and to “teach all nations,” should themselves be in an especial manner grounded and rooted in faith. Therefore upon this, as upon several other occasions, their Lord displayed before them certain evidences of his divine power,

* Luke xi. 10.

† Ver. 13.

beyond what were manifested to the people at large.

Ver. 26. We may observe that to those, who asked him of his coming to Capernaum, Jesus cared not to explain his miraculous passage over the water, but seized every opportunity of instructing them in the things that pertained to eternal life; thereby setting us an example, that we likewise should put away all vanity and self-love, and whatever we do, should do all for the glory of God alone. The people who had so lately witnessed his miraculous power, instead of making it a sure ground of faith and obedience, seem to have looked only to its temporal fruit in satisfying the wants of the body. But Jesus reproving their low and fleshly spirit, directs them not to be careful about the perishable food of a perishable body; but to seek that knowledge, which is the proper food of the mind, and endureth unto everlasting life. This food he offered to give them, his miracles being the seal and stamp of his authority derived from God the Father. They ask him therefore what it was incumbent on them to do as the servants of that God, whom they professed to obey. Jesus replied, that they were to believe in him, whom God had sent to instruct

them. Hereupon we again find them asking for a sign. Not satisfied with the miracle he had so lately wrought in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, they ask him to make bread descend from above, like the fall of manna, which in their scriptures is called "bread from heaven *." To which Jesus again replies, that Moses gave not to their fathers the bread of heaven properly so called; for the true bread of heaven is he, who came down from heaven, and giveth everlasting life to all that receive him. "I am the bread of life," saith he, and he that feedeth upon this bread shall want nothing. And though some among those who saw him, would not be persuaded, yet of those, who were well disposed, none should be rejected; for he came down from heaven to execute the gracious design of the Father, that through him all mankind might be raised to everlasting life. The Jews therefore, offended that he should declare himself to be the true bread which came down from heaven, and thus undervalue the manna which had been given to their fathers, and make himself superior to Moses their lawgiver, began to call in question the pretensions of Jesus, who, instead of descending visibly from the sky,

* Exod. xvi. 4.

had been born and bred among their own people. But Jesus forbids their murmuring, inasmuch as he assumed nothing to himself, but came to execute the will of God, who sent him. The very conditions of attaining "that glory which shall be revealed," are derived from God. By God's word must men be taught, by God's Spirit they must be drawn, before they can come to Christ: that is, they must have teachable dispositions, and religious minds, before they can be admitted into the number of those disciples, whom Christ "will raise up at the last day;" with much earnestness it is repeated, that whoever believeth in Christ, whoever trusts with humble confidence in the promises of the Gospel, and regulates his conduct by its precepts, the same shall assuredly enjoy everlasting happiness in the world to come. As nothing can be more important, so nothing can be more explicit than our Saviour's declaration upon this subject; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life*." It may be, that the magnitude of the object, so far exceeding the comprehension of the human mind, produces in us less effect than might be expected. But however imperfect be our sense

* Ver. 47.

of its full meaning, we see enough to awaken in every sincere heart a resolution to resist, to the utmost of our power, any temptation that would separate us from the love of Christ, who is our glory and our hope. His flesh, which should be sacrificed on the cross, and his blood which should there be poured out, would constitute that living bread, and that expiatory libation, of which as many as partook, should obtain remission of their sins, and have everlasting life. For, as it is argued in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “without shedding of blood is no remission.—So also Christ having been offered once for all to bear the sins of mankind, shall the second time, without a sin offering, be seen unto salvation by those that look for him*.” In a similar sense Christ himself declares, that “except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Of ourselves we can have no title to enter into the kingdom of God; but we must be first purified by the Spirit, and justified by the sacrifice of Christ, and then we may enter therein. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” said the Jews. These things are indeed mysteries, which no man can fully understand till the revelation of

* Heb. ix. 22. and 28.

the great day. But without fully understanding them, we can believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing, we can trust in his promises, and wait for his mercies, and do his commandments; and this is all that is required of us. God, on his part, will not fail to make good his promises, and to justify his ways unto man.

Ver. 60. Some of his disciples thought it a hard saying, that the descent of Christ upon earth should be compared to the fall of manna in the desert; and that as many as eat of his flesh, embracing his doctrine, should live for ever. Upon which he tells them that he not only came down from heaven, but that they should see him ascend up again to heaven, from whence he came; moreover, that as it is the Spirit that giveth life, so his doctrines are spirit and are life.

Ver. 66. Many of Jesus's disciples, when they found that his discourse was directed to spiritual things, teaching them to disregard the flesh that "profiteth nothing,—went back, and walked no more with him." For such is the weakness of men, that they still prefer the riches and honors of the world, before the blessings that are promised to holiness and righteousness.

In the 68th and 69th verses we find Simon Peter standing forward in the name of the twelve to profess their belief and attachment to Jesus. "Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." No character in history is more uniformly maintained, than the honest, and almost intemperate zeal, of this distinguished apostle. But his Lord, while he checked the * fervent confidence of his heart, feelingly demonstrated his own knowledge of "what was in man," by informing him before-hand that even among these his chosen disciples was one who would prove a traitor.



CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1. IT is hardly necessary to observe that "walking" in Galilee, or in Jewry, means no more than "being," or "continuing" there. Jewry is another name for Judea: why the former term was chosen by the translators in this place, does not appear; the original affords no ground for it.

* See chap. xiii. 38.

The reason of Jesus's not going openly to the festival is the same, that has before been explained *. For, on the one hand, there was danger lest a tumult should be raised by the populace in the inconsiderate expression of their favour ; and, on the other, the leaders of the Jews, irritated by his reproofs, might have attempted to put him to death before his appointed time, that is, before he had completed the purpose of his ministry.

Ver. 3. The word "brethren" admits of various interpretations. It is often used to express any near connexions † ; sometimes those, who are united in profession and faith ; and in this place it may perhaps signify those, to whom Jesus was familiarly known in Galilee, where he had resided, though not related by consanguinity. These people seem to have been in a state, not very unusual, of wavering and half belief, unable to resist the evidence of Jesus's miracles, yet unwilling to acknowledge him as the Messiah, because their minds were prepossessed with the expectation of a temporal prince. They urge him therefore to go up to Jerusalem, and display his powers to the world. This they did under the pretence of confirming the faith of his disciples ; but really, to

* Chap. v. 13.

† Chap. ii. 12.

hasten his assumption of the kingdom, if he were indeed the expected Messiah; and to regulate their own conduct by the manner in which he should be received. For, whatever opinion they might entertain, yet “no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.” But though Jesus resisted the importunity of his friends to gather temporal honors by “stirring up the people*,” in his progress towards Jerusalem; yet “about the midst of the feast he went up into the temple and taught.” The people were astonished, as well they might be, to hear him “teach them, not as the scribes and pharisees,” but as one “having authority;” and they said “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” What in this text is called “letters,” signifies “the interpretation of the Scriptures.” For the laws of the Jews, both civil and religious, being comprehended in the Scriptures, their learning consisted in the interpretation of those books †. Hence the scribes, whose office it was not only to preserve uncorrupt, and to transcribe, but also to expound the Scrip-

* Luke xxiii. 5.

† *μονοις δε σοφιαν μαρτυρουσι τοις τα νομιμα σαφως επισταμενοις, και την των ιερων γραμματων δυναμιν ερμηνευσαι δυναμενοις.* Josephus, Ant. 20, 10, 2.

tures, became at once the lawyers *, and the teachers of the country. Jesus again disclaimed all glory for himself, declaring that while he sought only the glory of God who sent him, he ought to be believed, for he taught that which he had been sent to teach. Moreover, every one, who was sincerely desirous of pleasing God, would be sensible that his doctrine was not ambitious and worldly, but spiritual and divine.

Ver. 19. The next part of Jesus's discourse has reference to the miracle of the cripple, who was healed at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day, as it is related in the fifth chapter. For we are there informed that "the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day †." It will be recollected that he then retired into Galilee; and it is to be presumed that he had not since been at Jerusalem until now, upon occasion of the feast of tabernacles. Referring therefore to the subject of their former persecution, he shews the Jews, from their own practice of circumcising their children on the eighth day, even though it were the Sabbath, how unreasonable it was to be "angry at him, because he had made a man every

* Luke xi. 46.

† Chap. v. 16.

whit whole on the Sabbath day.” They ought to interpret the laws, which Moses had delivered to them, not “according to the appearance,” but according to “righteous judgment;” for “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*.” “Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ†.” And to the same purpose St. John, “little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness, is righteous‡.”

Ver. 25. Some of the people, when they heard Jesus, were surprised that the Jews, who had so lately threatened to put him to death, should now suffer him to speak boldly without molestation. They therefore ask one another, “do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?” But they presently check themselves, because they knew Jesus’s family and connexions, whereas when Christ should come, nobody would know whence he is. For so they may probably have interpreted that part of Isaiah’s prophecy, in which it is said, “who shall declare his generation§?”

* 2 Cor. iii. 6.

† Col. ii. 16.

‡ 1 John iii. 7.

§ Isa. liii. 8.

Upon which Jesus, who perceived their thoughts, observed, that they knew indeed his human origin, but understood not his divine origin, nor the dispensations of God, whose will he was come to execute. Then many believed on him, convinced both by the miracles which they had before witnessed, and also by the consciousness of his having at this time manifested his more than human knowledge, by replying to that which was passing in their minds. This sort of evidence has before been adverted to in the case of Christ's first address to Peter, and to Nathaniel, in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel; and it must necessarily carry with it a strong conviction to the minds of those who felt it. We have seen its effect on the Samaritan woman, who, in the simplicity of an honest heart, called the people of her city "to come and see the man, who had told her all things that ever she did *."

Ver. 30. The pharisees and chief priests, seeing how the people were affected, would have apprehended Jesus; but their purpose was over-ruled by the control of Providence, and he continued to address the Jews, who had come up from all parts to attend the festival. What he says of his shortly

* Chap. iv. 29.

leaving them, and going whither they could not follow him, is clearly prophetic of his death and resurrection. But this, like other prophecies, was purposely involved in some obscurity, which the Jews at that time were unable to penetrate; the use of prophecy being partly to awaken present attention; but chiefly to remain a standing testimony to after times, that "when it is come to pass," men may believe.

In verse 35 the Jews say, "will he go unto the dispersed among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?" (for so it is in the original). For the right understanding of which, it is only necessary to remember that Judea was surrounded by the different portions of the Greek empire, which Alexander the Great had established. When therefore they inquired among themselves, if Jesus would go to the dispersed among the Greeks; it is no more than asking (perhaps with some jealousy) if it were to be supposed that he meant to leave Judea, and to instruct the Jews dispersed among the neighbouring nations.

Ver. 37. The festival of tabernacles was celebrated during seven days *, and it was customary, (particularly on the last, which was considered to

* Deut. xvi. 13.

be the great day,) that one of the priests should draw water from the fountain of Siloam, and sprinkle it upon the altar at the hour of morning sacrifice *. This water was symbolical of the Holy Spirit; and being brought in, it may be, at this time, probably suggested the mention of water, and of thirst, under which figures we are told that Jesus exhorted the people now, as he had done upon a former occasion †, to come to him, and to hear his doctrine, and he would give them that true water of religious wisdom, and those gifts of the Spirit, which should be manifested in them for the edification of the world.

Ver. 40. In the fortieth verse we read, that “many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet.” And it may naturally be asked, what particular saying led the people to conclude that Jesus must be the prophet? The truth is, that the passage is not rendered with the usual correctness of our English Testament. The literal translation would be, “having heard the word ‡;” and it should be understood to signify, “having heard the discourses by which Jesus instructed them.”

* Beausobre Introd.

† Chap. iv. 14.

‡ ακουσαντες τον λογον.

I have already offered some observations respecting "the prophet," and respecting his "coming out of Galilee," both of which are mentioned in the first * chapter of St. John's Gospel. It is unnecessary therefore to repeat them in this place.

The pharisees and chief priests, we find, had sent officers to apprehend Jesus ; but they were so struck with his manner, and with his doctrine, that their purpose of taking him was altogether superseded by admiration. I the rather take notice of this, because I shall have occasion to refer to it hereafter †. The rulers therefore, vexed and confounded at this disappointment, abused the people for their credulity ; and when Nicodemus, one of their own body, would have checked their intemperance, they said that he talked like a Galilean, and an ignorant man, for no Scripture had ever taught that a prophet was to be expected from Galilee ‡.



CHAPTER VIII.

"THREE times in a year were all the males commanded to appear before the Lord in the place

* Chap. i. 21 and 46. † Chap. xviii. 6. ‡ See above, p. 17.

which he should choose * ;” in consequence of which it is natural to suppose that not only Jerusalem, but the neighbouring villages must have been crowded with people at the recurrence of these seasons. Of Jesus we are informed by St. Luke, that “ in the day time he was in the temple ; and at night he went out and abode in the mount, that is called the mount of Olives † .” On this hill, which was nigh to the city, appears to have been situated the garden of Gethsemane ‡ , probably an olive garden, through which lay the path to Bethany, a village on the further border of the hill, about two miles from Jerusalem § , where Jesus slept, on one occasion at least, in the house of Simon the leper || . When it is said therefore that he “ abode in the mount,” we shall do right to understand by it, that he lodged at Bethany.

To pursue now the narrative of St. John ; agreeably to the above account we find Jesus early in the morning coming again into the temple, where “ he sat down, and taught the people.” In the history which follows, the Scribes and Pharisees insidiously consult him upon the propriety of stoning to death an adulteress, as the Law of

* Deut. xvi. 16. † Luke xxi. 37. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 36.

§ Chap. xi. 18.

|| Mark xiv. 3.

Moses directs. For they hoped to entangle him in the necessity either of condemning the woman to death, which would be construed into "making himself a king *," and infringing the Roman authority ; or of acquitting her, and thereby exposing himself to the censure of counteracting the law, which the Jews held sacred. " But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not."

Considerable light is thrown upon this action by the relation of a writer of good credit †, who lived ten years in Barbary, and informs us, that " when the Bedouins or Arabs converse, they sit down in a circle : the man who speaks, first makes a smooth place with his hand on the sand, then with his finger continues his discourse ; and again smooths this spot from time to time, to begin again with his strokes." These people derive their origin from Ishmael and Abraham, and still retain several customs mentioned in sacred history. It will be recollected that Jesus is expressly said to have been sitting, probably upon the ground, and instructing the people, who flocked to hear

* Chap. xviii. 31, and xix. 12.

† Letters from Tripoly by one of the family of R. Tully, Esq. the British Consul. Vol. I. page 47.

him. If then we suppose the same manner of conversing to have been familiar in Judea, which we are assured prevails at this day among the Bedouins before mentioned, nothing could be more natural than this conduct of Jesus, who pursued his discourse without seeming to advert to the importunity of those who had interrupted him. His subsequent reproof is another instance of his consummate wisdom, and intimate knowledge of what was in man, carrying to the consciences of those evil-disposed persons a conviction which they were unable to withstand: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Now, though it is very right that offenders should be punished, it is very wrong that we should be forward to accuse them; especially when it is done not with the dispassionate mind of reason and justice, in support of public morals, or public security; but, as in this case, from malice and envy. When Jesus said to the woman, "Go, and sin no more," He, who knew all things, may be supposed to have seen that this sinner was inwardly touched with a sense of her guilt, and might yet repent and be saved. Previous to this it is said, that "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst;" which is only

to be understood as regarding those Scribes and Pharisees, who had brought the woman before him, but now, "being convicted of their own consciences," had silently withdrawn. His other auditors were probably still about him, and to them he continued to address his following discourse, declaring that he was come as a light into the world, to dispel the clouds of superstition and ignorance, and to instruct mankind in the true knowledge of God, and of all things necessary to salvation. To the Pharisees, who objected to him that he brought no witnesses in support of his pretensions, Jesus replies, that God the Father, who sent him, had born ample witness to his truth, by the miracles which were wrought by him, and by the prophecies which were accomplished in his person. But independently of these open attestations, his record was true; for he came from heaven, and knew the truth of what he affirmed; but they were too much blinded by worldly prejudices to comprehend his divine and spiritual character.

Ver. 15. It may be thought extraordinary that He, who was to be the judge of quick and dead, should say, "I judge no man." The meaning is,

that his judgment was not of this world; he did not trouble himself with the things of this world, by which they were influenced. Had they been qualified to admit the doctrines which he taught, they would have acknowledged both Him and his Father.

Ver. 21. Jesus then said unto them, that he should quit this world, while they would in vain expect a temporal Messiah, and in that expectation would die unregenerate, and unable to follow him into the mansions of bliss. For their minds were low and worldly, and incapable of communion with him, who was altogether free from worldly affections. Yet was it only through faith in Christ, that their sins could be pardoned; and what he said unto them, he says unto all, that if they believe not in him, they must “die in their sins.”

Ver. 25. His audience seem to have been struck with the dignity with which he spake, and ask him therefore, “Who art thou?” To which Jesus returns an answer explicit enough not to be misunderstood, yet such as could not be wrested to any malicious purpose; re-asserting, at the same time, that all which he said, or did, was in compliance with the will of God the Father. But the

surest evidence of his being indeed the Messiah would be reserved for that time when he should rise again after having been crucified.

Ver. 30. Then of those who heard him, many, we are told, believed on him ; but many believed not, and began to cavil, as is the manner of unbelievers unto this day ; men, who resisting the truth, invent specious arguments, and bring forward frivolous objections, to mislead the unwary.

Ver. 33. It may seem contrary to all truth to say that the Jews had “ never been in bondage to any man,” considering their long servitude in Egypt, and in Babylon. But the expression probably took its origin from the history of Sarah and Hagar, the free woman, and the bond woman. St. Paul has taught us to understand this in a spiritual sense of the church of Christ* ; but the Jews boasted that they alone were the descendants of the free woman, the children of the promise ; and whatever may have been their condition for a season, they vindicated to themselves the privileges of the true seed, and acknowledged the sovereignty of no man. Upon this plea was raised the sedition of Judas the Galilean, who, when the Roman emperor ordered the nation to

* Rom. ix. 8. Gal. iii. 29. and iv. 22.

be taxed, persuaded the people to stand to their liberties *.

Ver. 41. “ We have one father,” said the Jews, “ one God ;” that is, “ one common to all.” And it may be well to take notice, that this is very generally the proper meaning of the word. Therefore when it is said “ There is one God,” it is to be understood not as one, in contradistinction to more than one (though that is true likewise), but as “ one common to all.” Josephus, himself a Jew, explains it in this manner, “ and to know one God common to all the Hebrews †.”

Ver. 44. “ Ye are of your father the devil,” said Jesus. Instead of being free sons of Abraham, as ye pretend, ye by your sins make yourselves the slaves of sin : by your conduct and the stubbornness of your hearts ye manifest an evil disposition, conformable with the author of evil, at whose suggestion ye seek to take away my life ; for the devil was a murderer from the beginning. By falsehood he deceived Eve, and became the murderer of the whole human race, having brought death into the world through the transgression of

* Josephus, *Antiq. Jud.* book xviii. chap. I. § 6.

† Θεον τε ένα γινωσκειν τον Έβραιους άπασι κοινον. *Antiq.* v. 27. See Appendix, No. II.

our first parents ; and the very next scene is again a scene of murder committed on the person of Abel at his suggestion. Referring back to the expression of “ your father the devil,” it may be observed, that as he, who heareth God’s words, is said to be of God ; so St. John, in his first Epistle says, “ He that committeth sin, is of the devil,” he being the head and counsellor of disobedience and all unrighteousness.

Ver. 47. St. John has said in another place, “ he that knoweth God, heareth us ; he that is not of God, heareth us not *.” For there is no surer sign of an honest and good man, than that he have a tractable disposition, and willingness to receive the truth †. Whoever sets himself obstinately against the truth, can never be one of God’s accepted children.

Ver. 48. That the term Samaritan should be used in a reproachful sense, will excite no surprise to one who recollects in what abhorrence that nation was held by the Jews ‡.

Ver. 51. It is observable how earnestly and

* 1 John iv. 6.

† Διο θειοτητος ορεξις εστιν η της αληθειας μαλιστα της περι θεων εφεσις. Plut. Is. et. Osir. §. 2.

‡ See chap. iv. 9.

unequivocally Jesus declares to his hearers the important truth, that if a man receive his doctrines and keep them, he should assuredly be exalted to everlasting life.

Ver. 55. It might be thought at first sight that the expression of our Saviour in the 55th verse is wanting both in dignity and temper ; “ If I should say I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you.” But this arises partly from the simplicity of ancient language ; and partly from a misapprehension of the sense, which is the same as if it were said, “ I should misrepresent myself, even as ye do misrepresent me.”

Ver. 58. The conclusion of Jesus’s discourse is remarkable from the assertion of his pre-existence ; “ before Abraham was, I Am.” He had before said that Abraham “ rejoiced to see his day ;” the force of which can only be fully appreciated by recollecting that from Abraham, the called of God, the Jews derived all their peculiar privileges. To him therefore they looked up, as to the root and stock of their nation. If then through faith this their great ancestor rejoiced at the prospect of Christ’s coming, when it was yet afar off ; how degenerate were his descendants, who now rejected him from their presence ? But the words,

“I Am,” besides the more obvious meaning of Christ’s existence prior to the age of Abraham, contain likewise a signification of his eternal being, and participation in the divine attributes*. For it will be remembered that this was the name by which God called himself, when he spoke to Moses out of the burning bush: “thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you †.” And in the subsequent part of this Gospel, at the 13th chapter and 19th verse, what is in the English, “I Am he,” would be more correctly rendered “I am he ‡ that exists;” or, as it is in Exodus, “I Am that I Am.” Jesus then seeing that his discourse did but the more inflame his persecutors, so that they took up stones to kill him, made himself to be unperceived by them while he retired from the temple.

* Plato has in like manner designated the Supreme Being by the name of *το ον*, “that which exists,” and is known by its works: *οὕτω ξυν ὅλην τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ γιγνομένου περιακτεον εἶναι, ἕως ἀν εἰς το ον, καὶ τοῦ οντος το φανωτάτον, δυνατὴ γενηταὶ ἀνασχεσθαι θεωμενῃ.* (Plato. De Repub. L. 7. p. 695. Ficin.)

† Exod. iii. 14.

‡ *ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν.* This expression of St. John is in the very words of the Septuagint version of Exod. iii. 14.

CHAPTER IX.

THOUGH the 9th chapter begins, as the preceding one had closed, by saying that "Jesus passed by," it by no means follows that they both relate to the same time, and that the cure of the blind man, which is the subject of this chapter, should have been performed on his way back from the temple, which was the scene of the former chapter. It was more probably wholly unconnected with that occasion. There are many particulars deserving of attention in this history of the blind man, which is given in more detail, than most others. In the very opening we may gather instruction from the precipitate judgment of the disciples, too ready to impute the poor man's calamity either to his own sins, or to those of his parents. But God's ways are not our ways; nay, so far from it, that what seems to be a misfortune, is not unfrequently found to be a real blessing. Could we see events in all their consequences, we should, no doubt, universally perceive the truth of this saying, that "all things work together for good to them that love God *."

* Rom. viii. 28.

Ver. 3. It is not to be supposed that this man had been denied the benefit of sight on purpose that a miracle might be wrought upon him. The expression in the text means no more than that his condition, such as it was, would be made an occasion of displaying the power of God. Jesus was to exert himself in the establishment of true religion, while he yet remained upon earth. The time of his ministry was short, and would soon terminate, when he, who was the light of the world, would shine among them visibly no more.

Ver. 6. When Jesus "spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle," he might probably follow some ordinary practice*, and use it as a trial, or rather an exposition to others, of the blind man's faith; for Jesus himself must have "perceived that he had faith to be healed †;" accordingly the man went, nothing doubting, to the pool of Siloam, as he was directed, and he received his sight. This notorious miracle, like that of the

* See Mark viii. 23. Of the same kind is that of "anointing with oil," (Mark vi. 13.) and "putting his fingers" to the deaf man's ears, and "spitting, and touching the tongue" of him that had an impediment in his speech, (Mark vii. 33.), also laying hands upon the sick to heal them. (Mark xvi. 18.) It is observable that these instances are found in St. Mark's Gospel alone.

† Acts xiv. 9.

cripple related in the fifth chapter, was performed also on the Sabbath day; whence the Pharisees, who made pretensions to superior sanctity and strictness of life, took fresh occasion to accuse Jesus. But it was well replied, "how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" In the discussion which follows, the captious inquiries of the Jews, are finely contrasted with the plain confession of the man's parents, and the honest simplicity of his own grateful heart. The conclusion too of the whole is eminently characteristic of pride and prejudice shutting the ears against conviction, and closing the scene with abuse and violence; "thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" And they "cast him out;" out of their communion as a sinner, whom they would not suffer to frequent the synagogue. "For the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue*." But Jesus comforted him, and made himself known to him as the Messiah who was expected, "the Son of God." Upon which the man professed his entire belief of what he told him, and "worshipped him." This act of obeisance might deserve little regard, were it not

* Verse 22.

contradistinguished from the worship of angels, which is twice expressly forbidden in the book of Revelations, in almost the same words ; “and I fell at his feet to worship him : and he said unto me, see thou do it not ; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus : worship God *.”

Ver. 39. Jesus here, as in former instances, borrows his language from the objects before him ; therefore addressing himself to one, who having been born blind had recently been made to see, he instructs him under the figures of sight and blindness. The purport of the concluding verse is, that in consequence of the preaching of Jesus, some, who were reputed ignorant, would be found wise unto salvation ; and some, who considered themselves to be wise, would be convicted of folly in rejecting their Saviour. If any were indeed uninformed, and erred through ignorance, such would deserve pity, rather than blame ; but such as professed their superior knowledge of the Scriptures, and yet refused to acknowledge him, were justly chargeable with sin, whether they shut their minds against conviction through prejudice, or rejected his testimony through malice.

* Rev. xix. 10. and xxii. 8.

CHAPTER X.

THE tenth chapter has probably without sufficient reason been separated from that which immediately precedes it. There the pharisees were represented as arrogating to themselves superior wisdom and sanctity ; but their pretensions were false and vain, because they were not actuated by right motives. Had they entertained a sincere love of God, and of truth, they would receive Christ, through whom, as through the door, lay the way to the fold of God's elect. Whoever should undertake to teach men without acknowledging Christ, would be as a bad shepherd who sought his own worldly advantage to the neglect and ruin of his flock. The true teacher would cheerfully embrace the doctrine of Christ, and gladly communicate to his hearers the blessings of salvation by that method which God hath appointed. But if one should act towards men as a stranger, seeking his own, not their advantage, him the genuine flock will not hear, because they have never learned to respect him. Jesus proceeds to declare still more explicitly, that through him alone could men be saved. False teachers come for their own benefit ; but he was

come for the benefit of mankind, to offer to the world life eternal. Having before drawn a resemblance from the door of a sheep-fold, he now represents himself as the good shepherd who would sacrifice his life for his sheep. It may be that a flock of sheep just then entering into the sheep-fold suggested these similitudes. He knew and loved his true disciples, and was known and loved by them. As God the Father knew him, so did he know the Father, and understand his dispensations, in conformity with which he would lay down his life for his followers; and not for those of the Jewish nation only, but for all mankind, who should be called from the ends of the world to constitute one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous. He would lay down his life, and take it again, by his own voluntary act, according to the power which the Father had given him.

Ver. 19. The Jews who heard him were differently affected; some acknowledging him to be the expected Messiah; others, blinded by their prejudices and worldly-mindedness, exhorting the people to disregard him, as a madman, or one possessed by an evil spirit.

Ver. 22. The feast of dedication was an annual

festival of no divine origin, but instituted by Judas Maccabeus *, upon his cleansing the temple, and dedicating it anew, after its holy places had been profaned and plundered by † Antiochus Epiphanes the king of Syria. Our Saviour's attendance upon this occasion has justly been considered as a tacit approbation of the authority assumed by the rulers of the state in all ages, to set apart certain days for the more solemn service of God. But this, as a prudent author ‡ has observed, must be done sparingly, moderately, discreetly, and cautiously.

Ver. 27. The true disciples of Christ are such as believe in him, and obey his precepts. Had the Jews been properly disposed to admit the truth, they had evidence sufficient to convince them by the works which he did in his Father's name. To his true disciples Jesus then renews his promise of eternal life, a promise which he was abundantly able to fulfil, inasmuch as God, who is Almighty, had given him the power. For Christ and the Father are one; not one person but one thing, actuated by the same will, for the accomplishment of the same purposes, agreeably to the predeter-

* 2 Macc. x. 8.

† Ibid. v. 16. and vi. 4.

‡ Jortin vol. iv. Sermon. 15.

mination of God. When the Jews therefore would have stoned him for making himself a God, he reminded them that their own Scriptures had called the judges and rulers of the people, unto whom the word of God came, "Gods and children of the Most High *." Again, he refers them to his miracles for the proof of his being "sanctified and sent into the world by the Father." And when they would have apprehended him, he escaped out of their hands, and went away beyond the river Jordan, into the parts where John had formerly baptized. There people continued to resort to him; and many, convinced both by the miracles which he wrought, and by the testimony which John had born † to him, believed him to be the Messiah.



CHAPTER XI.

THE situation of Bethany has already been described. That it should here be designated as "the town of Mary and her sister Martha," could, I suppose, only arise from some notoriety attached

* Psal. lxxxii. 6.

† Chap. i. 29, &c.

to these persons. And from the verse which follows, describing Mary to be her “who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair,” it may be concluded that this was the circumstance which particularly distinguished her. Nor is this surprising, if we consider it, as it is expressly declared to be, immediately connected with the great event of our Saviour’s death; “For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial*.” Hence her name may probably have been transmitted with honor to succeeding generations of Christians; especially as Jesus foretold that “wherever the Gospel should be preached in the whole world, there should also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her†.” Mary appears to have been a common appellation among the Jews. Several persons of this name occur in the Gospels; whence it became necessary to discriminate them by some addition, as Mary the mother of Jesus, the wife of Cleophas, the Magdalene, &c. and in this instance the Apostle has thought fit to specify that Mary, who bare a part in the transactions of the eleventh chapter, by the circumstance from which she was afterwards best known; though

* Matt. xxvi. 12.

† Ibid. xxvi. 13. and Mark xiv. 9.

the anointing had not yet taken place at the time when Lazarus was raised from the grave.

After the many miraculous cures which Jesus had performed, it was very natural for the sisters of Lazarus, with whose family he appears to have lived in great friendship, to inform him of their brother's illness, with the hope that in him also might be exhibited an instance of his healing power. And so indeed there was, but in a manner far more conspicuous than his sisters had contemplated. When therefore Jesus says, "this sickness is not unto death," he did not mean that Lazarus would not die; but that he would not continue in a state of death. Accordingly we find him delaying his journey towards Bethany till Lazarus had expired. Then he determined to go again into Judea, to make this signal display of his Lordship over life and death, not for his own glory, but "to the intent that all might believe." His disciples were afraid of his exposing himself again to the persecution of his enemies by approaching so near to Jerusalem; but he tells them that he knew well what he was doing; for as one, who walketh in the light, stumbleth not; so he, by his clear * knowledge of the divine dis-

* Such a metaphorical use of the word "light" is familiar to

pensations, foresaw that he might go up with impunity. How natural is the mistake of his disciples, when he said to them, that "Lazarus sleepeth." But he presently put them out of all doubt by telling them plainly that he was dead. Thomas, though his apprehensions of danger continued unremoved, yet with a generous warmth of zeal proposes to his fellow disciples that they should go up with him, and share the dangers of their Lord. Lazarus had already been four days in the grave, when Jesus and his disciples arrived. Martha was the first of the sisters who heard of his approach; and she went out to meet him, saying, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Then she goes on, "But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." This is not to be understood as implying that Martha entertained any hope of receiving her brother again from the grave; a sense which is contradicted by the whole tenor of the subsequent discourse. Her meaning is, "But yet my faith is unshaken; and though

St. John, or (may we say?) to Jesus, who asserts (chap. xii. 35.) περιπατεῖτε ἕως τοῦ φωτός ἔχετε. And again (chap. xii. 46.) ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐληλυθα. Hence St. John may probably have adopted the same expression, ὁ Θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶ. (1 John i. 5.)

indeed I have lost my brother, still I retain my confidence in Thee, and my persuasion of thy power."

Ver. 25. There is something inexpressibly grand and awful in the declaration of Jesus, which presently follows; "I am the resurrection and the life;" or, as it is said in the book of Revelation *, "I have the keys of Hades and of Death;" that is, I am the Lord of Resurrection, and can recal the body to life when I will; I am also the Lord of life, and my true servants, though they should have died bodily, shall live spiritually in Hades; and every one that liveth in faith and obedience to my word, shall never die, but shall live with the just in Hades till the day of judgment, and shall then enjoy life everlasting in heaven †. For through Jesus alone can men partake of the resurrection to life eternal. To him is given the power to raise up whom he will; and through his sacrifice of himself upon the cross, the sins of them that believe in him shall be forgiven, and they shall live in that blessed state which alone deserves the name of life. Whether they die, or whether they live, in this world, they shall equally enjoy that happiness which is to come.

* Chap. i. 18.

† See chap. v. 21, &c.

Ver. 27. What is concisely called believing in Christ, is more fully declared in that profession of Martha, “ I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” As soon as Martha had privately informed her sister of Jesus’s arrival, Mary arose without delay, and came to him before he had yet entered the village, and fell down at his feet overcome with sadness, affection, and veneration; and it is remarkable that the first words she addresses to him, are the very same that Martha had used before *, “ Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Some might perhaps take occasion to cavil at this repetition; but in truth nothing could be more natural, if we only suppose them to have been the actual expressions, which the two sisters had repeated to each other while they sat at home regretting the absence of Jesus †.

* *Ver. 21.*

† A repetition of the same kind occurs at the second and thirteenth verses of the twentieth chapter, where Mary Magdalen says, “ They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.” It is of the same kind so far as it is the repetition of a subject strongly pressing upon her mind, to which she gives utterance in the same words; but it differs materially in this, that it is the expression not of two distinct persons, but of one individual.

With minds so impressed, each might be expected to accost their beloved Master in the words, which frequent repetition had rendered most familiar to them. And this may be ranked among those little circumstances, which, instead of invalidating the truth, give an additional grace and air of authenticity to the narration. To the same effect may be noticed the company of Jews, who attended, to compassionate and solace the two sisters; their following Mary, whom they supposed to be going to weep at the grave of Lazarus; the tears which were shed by all present; and the sensibility of Jesus, who was melted at the sight, and wept. The observation also of the Jews, that if he were indeed the Messiah, as his former miracles seemed to testify, he might surely have prevented Lazarus's death, is not without its effect in this interesting scene.

To understand rightly some of the particulars which follow, it should be known that the bodies of the Jews were not buried, like those of our own nation, secured in coffins, and let down into deep pits; but were "bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and their face was bound about with a napkin;" or at other times they were "wound in linen cloths with spices;" and in this condition

they were deposited either in sepulchres hewn out of the rocks *, or in niches cut in the sides of the caverns with which the country abounds, the entrance being afterwards closed with a large stone. So situated, the body of Lazarus would be exposed to view as soon as the stone was removed ; and at the call of Jesus would be able to sit up, while the attendants loosed the cloths confining his limbs, and covering his face. The address of Jesus to his Father is eminent for its simplicity, and for its kindness. For he knew that God always heard him ; but he uttered it for the sake of those who were present, “ that they might believe that God had sent him.” And accordingly we are told, that “ many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.” And well they might ; for if the mere narration of this miracle be so strange and impressive, what must have been the effect of the transaction itself, when he that had been dead, and four days in the grave, heard the voice of his Lord, and arose, and came forth ? Yet were there not some, who believed not ? who resisted this evidence even of “ one who arose from the dead ?” who went to the pharisees to urge on their evil designs

* Maundrell's Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, p. 14.

against Jesus? It is true that the common translation gives some countenance to such an opinion. But a more just interpretation of this passage would be—"Many therefore of the Jews, namely all* those who had come to Mary, believed on him, believed Jesus to be the Messiah. And (for so it should be rendered) some of them went to inform the Pharisees :” To inform them of what? That the miracle which Jesus had wrought, was a most unequivocal proof of his divine power, in consequence of which they were bound to acknowledge him as their Messiah.

The following verses shew how worldly-mindedness can sear the conscience of men, making them reject the offers of salvation itself, when it stands in the way of what they conceive to be their temporal interests. The Pharisees did not pretend to deny the reality of Christ’s miracles, or the necessary inference of his being their promised Messiah ; yet smarting under the reproofs they had received, or fearing to lose their consideration, and feigning an apprehension of insurrection, which

* Πολλοι ουν εκ των Ιουδαιων οι ελθοντες (not των ελθοντων) προς την Μαριαν, και θεασαμενοι α εποιησεν ο Ιησους, επιστευσαν εις αυτον· τινες δε εξ αυτων απηλθον προς τους Φαρισαιους, και ειπον αυτοις α εποιησεν ο Ιησους. (Ver. 45 and 45.)

might call down the vengeance of the Romans, and cause them to be driven from their country, therefore “from that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death.”

It is a maxim which cannot be too strongly inculcated, that “we should never do evil that good may come.” Were an impending calamity ever so near, or ever so great, or ever so certain, it is never, upon any occasion, to be shunned by doing what we know to be wrong. In fact, the calamities we apprehend are often found eventually to be no calamities at all, or are overbalanced by greater good, or may be averted by God’s providence, or at the worst may be born as trials, and converted into graces “by charity, and service, and faith, and patience*.” In every possible case it is our duty to do what is right, and we may safely leave the issue to him, in whose hands are the issues of life and death. But men are apt to assume to themselves a power, which they do not possess, and to say, “I have done it, and my right hand hath gotten me the victory;” and know not that “they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked†,” and that it is God who giveth to all men severally as he will.

* Rev. ii. 19.

† Ibid. iii. 17.

Ver. 49. In the council that was held by the chief priests and pharisees upon this occasion, the apostle has related a circumstance singularly illustrative of the operation of inspiration. For Caiaphas, we are told, being the high priest that year, and therefore endowed with a fuller communication of the Divine Spirit, by the influence of that Spirit was prompted to utter a sentence highly prophetic of the redeeming sacrifice of Christ; and that, without himself intending it, or even being conscious of it; but conceiving that he was only in his own words giving utterance to his own sentiments of the expediency of putting Jesus to death. It is thus that men, while they are permitted freely to follow their own inventions, and to declare their own minds, are, at the same time, instruments in the hands of God, to fulfil his purposes, and promote the general designs of his overruling providence. Let every man therefore “with quietness work, and eat his own bread, and not be weary in well-doing*.” “For this is well pleasing unto the Lord—And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of inheritance; for ye serve the Lord.

* 2 Thess. iii. 12.

But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done ; and there is no respect of persons *.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE period was fast approaching, which embraced the last great scene of Christ's ministry †. Therefore, “his time being now come,” he no longer refused to declare himself openly, and to admit the honors and acclamations of the people. Six days before the passover he came, as on former occasions, to lodge at Bethany, in order to be near Jerusalem. And at Bethany he was entertained at dinner by one Simon ‡, distinguished by the name of “the leper,” probably because he may formerly have been cured of a leprosy by Jesus ; and Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, “was one of them that sat at table with him.” Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, were likewise there, and shewed every mark of their love and gratitude to their Lord, for his late

* Col. iii. 20, 23, &c.

† See Appendix, No. IV.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 6. Mark xiv. 3.

mercies towards them. Martha, we are informed, served at table, as she had done also on a previous occasion *; for this, as well as some other servile offices, might perhaps not unusually be performed by women of condition, as it is now in some parts of Asia and Africa, in token of their submission and affection. "Then Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." People at that time used not to sit at their meals, as we do now, but to recline on couches, in such a manner, that the body of the first lay behind the second, and the head of the second came even with the breast of the first, their legs being supported on the hinder part of the seat. In this situation, it is easier to conceive how Mary should anoint the feet of Jesus (as it is said by St. John), than his head (according to St. Matthew and St. Mark). But, I conclude, that both took place; which might very well be, if Jesus occupied the "uppermost place" of the couch; so that nobody lay behind him. St. Luke has likewise recorded an instance of a woman, who, while Jesus sat at meat in the house of a cer-

* Luke x. 40.

tain pharisee, “brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment *.”

Though in some respects this nearly resembles the account of John, Matthew, and Mark, (who all speak of the same event); yet it differs so much in time, and place, and persons, and observations, as to make it probable that it was altogether a separate transaction; which, if it be so, only shews that such a practice was not singular, and might perhaps be no uncommon expression of respect. It is well known that perfumes were formerly in great request, and are still much used in some eastern countries.

Ver. 4. Judas Iscariot is called “Simon’s son,” not for the sake of pointing out the father of one so infamous; but to distinguish this Judas from any other of the same name, especially from “Judas the brother of James †,” who was likewise one of the Apostles. Therefore, in a subsequent place, St. John describes Judas the brother of James by the addition “not Iscariot ‡,” because afterwards Judas Iscariot became the most no-

* Luke vii. 37.

† Ibid. vi. 16.

‡ Chap. xiv. 22.

torious. Perhaps Simon the leper may have been the father of Judas Iscariot, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus; and it may have been at his house in Bethany that Jesus usually lodged when he went up to attend the festivals at Jerusalem.

Ver. 7. “Against the day of my burying hath she kept this.” From these words of Jesus we are not to understand that any embalming was necessary, or had been foretold as appertaining to the character of the Messiah. They shew only that his mind was at this time strongly impressed with the sense of his approaching death, of which he took this opportunity to warn his disciples, not without a gentle reproof against making the poor a pretence either for covetousness, or for calumny.

Ver. 9. The report of the miracle lately performed upon Lazarus had deservedly excited much attention in Jerusalem; and many of the Jews, upon hearing that Jesus was at Bethany, flocked to see him, and likewise to satisfy their curiosity respecting Lazarus. For they must have contemplated his death and resurrection, if it were found to be true, as a strong confirmation of Jesus being the promised Messiah. Accordingly we are told that many of the Jews “went away, and

believed on Jesus ;” that is, they returned from Bethany fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. But the chief priests persisted in their opposition, and, with the true spirit of persecution, thought to root out all further inquiry by cutting off at once both Jesus and Lazarus.

Ver. 12. “The hour being now come that the Son of Man should be glorified,” he forbad not the people, as before ; but suffered them to conduct him into Jerusalem in a sort of triumph. And they “took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord.” It should be known that these words are taken from the 118th Psalm, and used to be sung by the Jews at the festival of the passover. It had been prophesied by Zechariah *, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem ; behold, thy king cometh unto thee ; he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Accordingly Jesus came “sitting on an ass’s colt.” This appears to have been in imitation of a ceremony of distinguished honor. For so Solomon made his public entry upon king David’s mule † ;

* Chap. ix. 9.

† 1 Kings i. 89.

so likewise Mordecai was “brought on horseback through the street of the city*.” Many of the circumstances preceding, and accompanying the crucifixion, had been foretold by the Holy Spirit with increased minuteness as the event drew nigh; but such is the nature of prophecies, that they were not at first understood; “but when Jesus was glorified, then the disciples remembered that these things were written of him.”

Ver. 23. There is something very affecting in the concluding discourses of Jesus previous to his death. This is in some degree true of every body at that time, when the prospect of death opens to his view, and the world is closing fast upon him for ever. Therefore the last words of a dying man have always been held sacred, and remembered with fondness. But in the case of Jesus, how is the interest increased! Who can comprehend the mystery of God dying for us? How precious should be the last accents that flowed from his mouth! They are full of dignity, of resignation, affection, instruction, and earnestness. His very first address to his disciples at this time is drawn from the sense of his approaching death; intima-

* Esth. vi. 11. See also Judges x. 4. and xii. 14. likewise 2 Sam. xvi. 2.

ting to them that the hour was at hand, when all men should see his glory ; but that as a corn of wheat produced no crop, unless it were first buried in the ground and regenerated ; so his own death and burial was necessary in order to produce the fruit of salvation. Again he teaches, that whoever was attached to this life, and placed his happiness upon it, would forfeit the life eternal ; but he that would secure the life eternal, must detach himself from the things of this world, and be ready to lay down his life, as Christ was going to lay down his. If any would serve Christ, he must follow Christ's example ; and he should be honored in the presence of God the Father, whither Christ was going before. All these sayings have immediate reference to the scene of sufferings which he was presently to undergo. But while his human feelings, as the Son of Man, "troubled his soul," so that he cried to the Father to "save him from that hour ;" yet he immediately checked himself, because it was for this very purpose that he came into the world ; he therefore only prays that his death may be the means of promoting the glory of God. This is an example, which we ought also to imitate in seasons of trouble and danger ; that when the body shrinks from the

apprehension of pain and death, the spirit may still lead us to repose in God, and to rejoice if our sufferings can be made instrumental to his glory. This is the third instance recorded, when a voice was heard from heaven in attestation to the Son of God. And Jesus assures us that it came "not because of him, but for his disciples' sake."

Ver. 31. He proceeds still in contemplation of his crucifixion, which was to ratify, as it were, the covenant of grace, by which the redemption of mankind should be purchased, and the kingdom of Christ gradually established over the world. Even from the period of his death should that dispensation begin to take effect, which in the end would destroy the power of the devil, the prince of this world, by whom men are seduced from the love of God to the love of vanities. Again Jesus refers not only to his death, but to the manner of it, saying, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to me." "Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, and desireth that all men should be saved*." And if all are not actually saved, at least all are thereby made capable of salvation. Jesus Christ, we are told, is "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world†."

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

† 1 John ii. 2.

Again, " God hath given his Son the utmost parts of the earth for his possession." There always was dispensed to all men a certain measure of instruction from above, which although it came from a more occult and sparing grace, did yet suffice to some for remedy, to all for testimony. What they have is an effect of God's mercy procured and purchased by their Saviour *.

To his hearers, who, ignorant of what was going to happen, did not at that time understand him, while he varies his expression, he continues to dwell upon his approaching death, comparing himself to a light, which would soon be taken from them ; and he urges them to believe on him, that they might be the children of light : that is, that they might be accepted of God by adoption and grace, and might inherit the promises made to the righteous through the glorious light of the Gospel.

Ver. 37. Many yet, notwithstanding the miracles he had wrought before them, believed not on him ; as Isaiah had foretold. Many however among the chief rulers also did believe him to be the Messiah ; but were afraid openly to confess it, through fear of incurring the reproaches of the

* Barrow, vol. iii. p. 321. fol.

Pharisees, and of being put out of the synagogue ; “ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” But God hath no fellowship with the world ; and requires an undivided service ; “ if the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him *.” For although in matters of indifference it be wisdom and good manners to yield to the humour of our company, and conform to the will of others ; yet where duty is concerned, there courtesy hath no place †.

Ver. 44. The concluding verses of this chapter bear a strong resemblance to some preceding parts of St. John's Gospel, particularly to the eighth chapter. Jesus's audience, consisting of Jews, who prided themselves upon being the peculiar people of God, he probably on that account the more frequently ascribes all power and glory to the Father, directing them to make God the great object of their faith, in conformity to whose will he conducted himself in all things ; for “ whatsoever he spake, even as the Father said unto him, so he spake.” And “ he that believeth on me,” saith he, “ believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.” Whoever therefore denied him before men, did in effect deny the Father. Which seems

* 1 Kings xviii. 21.

† Barrow.

to be more immediately addressed to those who believed, yet feared to acknowledge him. Christ however came not to punish men upon the earth, but to save them. Their punishment would be inflicted at the last day, if they continued wilfully to reject him, and refused to hear the words which God had commanded him to deliver to them. Then Jesus emphatically adds, "And I know that his commandment is life everlasting."



CHAPTER XIII.

THE words "before the feast of the passover," with which the thirteenth chapter opens, indicate the beginning of the last great scene, which was to consummate the redemption of mankind. Christ knew with unerring foresight that the time of his suffering was at hand. And under the influence of this feeling he seems to have redoubled the marks of his kindness; as men exhibit most strongly their affection to their friends previous to a long separation. For "having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the

end," and demonstrated his love by that condescending act of washing the disciples' feet. This he did, not when supper was ended, as our translation would lead us to suppose, but "at supper * time," when they were just going to eat, at the commencement of the day of preparation preceding the Passover. For the Jews began their day, as they still do, in the evening. Such washing of the feet may have been no unusual service; therefore, Jesus said to the Pharisee, who had invited him to eat with him, "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet †." Jesus did it under a perfect consciousness of his own dignity, "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." The zealous character

* The word *γίγνομαι* signifying "to happen," it follows that the participle will properly be rendered "having taken place;" not expressing thereby either the beginning, or the end of supper, but that they were together upon the occasion of supper. This likewise explains a passage of St. Matthew's Gospel (chap. xxiv. 34.) *ἕως αν παντα ταυτα γενηται*, which means not, "till all these things be fulfilled," but, "till the period of the gospel dispensation, including all these things, be entered upon." So Rev. i. 1. *α δευ γενεσθαι εν ταχει*. Therefore Matt. xxvi. 6. *του δε Ιησου γενομενου εν Βηθανια*, is rightly translated, "when Jesus was in Bethany."

† Luke vii. 44. See also 1 Tim. v. 10.

of St. Peter is strongly pourtrayed by his first refusing to let his Lord perform so servile an office to him ; and afterwards, when Jesus had observed to him, “ If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me ;” Simon Peter, with a mixed emotion of humility and love, saith unto him, “ Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head.” Jesus told him that he knew not then the meaning of this action, but he should understand it afterwards. Accordingly he explains it a few verses after, teaching them that it was not a mere cleansing of the body, but an example of condescension and benevolence, which if he, their Master and Lord, exhibited towards them, much more ought they to exhibit towards each other ; and such charity would purify their hearts from all iniquity. But it is not enough to know these things, unless we do them also.

Ver. 18. In the verses which follow, Jesus specifies more particularly, than he had done before, that one of those, who were at table with him, would betray him ; and he warns his apostles of it before-hand, that, instead of discouraging them, this event, which he had foretold, might be an additional proof of his divine knowledge, and a confirmation of their belief in him as their Mes-

siah, the "I Am" of the Old Testament. He then anticipates the time when he should be removed from them, and comforts them by assuring them with great earnestness, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," that whoever received those his apostles, should be considered as receiving him; and by receiving him, they would in effect receive God the Father who sent him.

Ver. 21. Again we hear of Jesus being "troubled in spirit." As the Son of man he may be supposed not to have been unaffected with the prospect of his approaching crucifixion; but his anxiety ought more especially to be attributed to the distress and difficulties which he foresaw awaited his apostles in the execution of the great work upon which they were to be sent. And being of so gentle a nature, he must surely have felt also the cruelty of being betrayed by one of his chosen disciples; for "it is not an open enemy that hath done this, for then I could have born it; but it was even thou, my companion, and mine own familiar friend." Judas, no doubt, dissembled, while the other apostles understood not of whom he spake, and, as the evangelist most naturally relates it, "looked one on another." Now John happened to be situated next to Jesus. To

him therefore Peter beckoned to ask softly who it was that Jesus meant. The manner of reclining at meals has already been explained; so that by “leaning on * Jesus’ bosom” will readily be understood the occupying the seat next below him on the same couch, whereby his head came opposite the breast of Jesus, and afforded an opportunity for such secret inquiry. Nobody has hesitated to admit that John was himself the person, who is called “one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.” But I apprehend it is a mistake to suppose that he intended by this expression to arrogate to himself any superiority as one who enjoyed the partial favor of his Lord. Such a sense is hardly compatible with the dignified character of our † Saviour, and is quite inconsistent with the singular modesty of the apostle, who studiously withholds all mention of his own ‡ name, even in

* So Plinius Ep. iv. 22. Cœnabat Nerva cum paucis, Veiento proximus, atque etiam *in sinu recumbebat*.

† God maketh no arbitrary or groundless discriminations. He neither loveth and favoreth, nor loatheth and discountenanceth any person unaccountably. Impartiality is a divine attribute and perfection of God. (Barrow, fol. vol. iii. Serm. 38.)

‡ In the 15th and 16th verses of the eighteenth chapter we find St. John concealing his own name under the general expression of “another disciple,” without any further addition.

his Epistles. The same feeling may probably have influenced him to suppress also the mention of his mother among the women who attended at the crucifixion, though we know from the other evangelists that she was there *. The more probable interpretation of St. John's words appears to me to be, "a disciple, to whom, unworthy as he was, his Saviour had deigned to extend his regard †." John's question, and the answer of Jesus, must be supposed to have been made privately. Besides the probability of the thing, we find that in fact the others who were present, did not understand with what intent Jesus presently afterwards said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." These words, which might have convinced Judas that his Lord was privy to his designs, ought to have produced contrition and repentance on a mind less obstinate in wickedness. But Judas seems only to have been provoked thereby to accelerate his purpose; and he immediately went out, and offered himself a guide to the enemies of Jesus, that they might waylay him on his return from Jerusalem across the

* Matt. xxvii. 56. Mark xvi. 1.

† See this more fully explained in Appendix, No. III.

Mount of Olives to Bethany, whither he was accustomed to retire every night to sleep *.

Ver. 31. Jesus, whose mind had long been occupied with the idea of his death, as the moment drew nigh, shewed increased solicitude for his Apostles, and increased care to instruct them, and increased earnestness to confirm, and to comfort them. And no sooner was Judas gone upon his wicked purpose, than Jesus anticipates the glory that would accrue to God, by the great sacrifice about to be offered in his person, for the redemption of mankind, and the establishment of this last dispensation in the world. The expression of "little children," is at once indicative of endearment, and what may be called the infancy of a Christian life, while the Apostles had as yet but recently been made acquainted with the mysteries and secret counsels of God, developed in the Gospel †. It was a very short time that Jesus was now to remain with them, and he exhorts

* Luke xxi. 37.

† Such may probably be the more exact meaning of the same term (τεκνια), 1 John ii. 12.; and it derives confirmation from the 13th and 14th verses of the same chapter, where the words παιδια, νεανισκοι, πατερες, seem rather to denote different degrees of proficience in Christianity, than different ages.

them by the love he bare to them, that after his departure they would continue to love one another with that mutual love and benevolence, which should constitute the distinctive character of his religion. For though it is indeed an old law, coeval with the world itself *, that we “love one another † ;” yet may it justly be called a new law, inasmuch as it was now enforced by new sanctions, and explained in new perfection, being made the very test of our obedience, the condition of our acceptance.

In the succeeding discourse with Peter, we see another instance of that Apostle’s zeal in offering to lay down his life to serve his Lord. But Jesus thought fit to reprove his confidence, and at the same time to afford a singular proof of his own supernatural knowledge, by that memorable cir-

* Lev. xix. 18.

† 2 John 5. The command “to love one another” may be considered as implied in the blessing pronounced upon our first parents, Gen. i. 28. It is more distinctly expressed, Lev. xix. 18. ; and is declared by our Saviour to be one of the “two commandments, upon which hang all the law and the prophets.” Matt. xxii. 40. Therefore St. John calls it an “old commandment,” 1 John ii. 7., and in the following verse again describes it as new, “because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

cumstance, which he foretold, contrary to all probability, that “the cock should not crow till he had denied him thrice.”

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the fourteenth chapter Jesus reverts to the subjects connected with his crucifixion, strengthening the faith of his disciples, which would be exposed to so severe a trial, and telling them that his departure was expedient for them, and preparatory to their reception in the mansions of bliss. After he should have been taken from them by death, he would come again by his resurrection from the dead, and would “dwell in their hearts by faith *,” that they might live with him to all eternity in the heavens, whither he was going before. He was himself the way. By him they had been taught the doctrines that would conduct them to happiness “through the blood of the everlasting covenant †.” For by the sacrifice of Christ alone could any man be cleansed of his sins, and come to the Father. The Apostles appear throughout to have been possessed with the

* Eph. iii. 17.

† Heb. xiii. 20.

prejudices of their countrymen respecting a temporal Messiah; and previous to the resurrection of their Lord, and the affusion of the Holy Spirit, to have been slow in comprehending the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of the way, or of knowing the Father, they were fain to understand a common road, and a common object of sight, asking him to "shew them the Father, and it would suffice." But he informs them, that whoever had seen and known Jesus, had in effect seen and known the Father, by whose will he acted in all things. For, as he says, "he is in the Father, and the Father in him;" or, as it is elsewhere, he is "the express image of the invisible God *,—in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily †." There is so strict an union between the Father and the Son, that whoever seeth the works of the Son, seeth the works of the Father; and whoever heareth the words of the Son, heareth the Father ‡.

Ver. 12. When Jesus declares, that he, who believeth in him, should do yet greater works than he seeth him do; these expressions probably have reference to the increased propagation of the

* Col. i. 15.

† Ibid. ii. 9.

‡ Clarke on the Trinity.

Gospel under the ministry of the Apostles ; a work which Jesus goes on to assure them he would prosper, and would attend to the petitions they should offer up for that purpose ; “ whatsoever ye shall ask in my name (that is, for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom upon the earth), that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (that the worship and honour of God may be promoted through the Gospel).” For, to ask, or to do any thing in the name of another, is a form of expression not unusual in profane *, as well as in sacred writings †, and signifies acting in another’s support, or for his sake ‡.

Ver. 16. The promise of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, is not made to the

* “ Ab amicitia Q. Pompeii *meo nomine* se removerat Scipio,” that is, *on my account*. (Cic. de Amicitia.) And in a letter from Antonius to Cicero, “ inimicitias *Reipub. nomine* susceptas,” that is, *in supporting the cause of the republic*. Cic. ad Att. 14, 14.

† ‘Ο ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου is, “ he who cometh to accomplish the work of the Lord.” (Matt. xxi. 9.). And when we are directed to “ do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” (Col. iii. 17.), it must mean, that we should do it “ to promote the honor of Jesus.” St. John has, in another place, expressed the same sentiment with a limitation of similar import, “ if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us.” (1 John v. 14.)

‡ See Barrow, Vol. iii. Sermon 1., also Clarke, Sermon 75.

Apostles only, but to the Church of Christ; to all them that love him, and keep his commandments, to the end of the world; for it is added, "that he may abide with you for ever;" which how could it be applied to individuals, who would die in the course of a few years? The world cannot receive this Holy Spirit, because they, who are addicted to the things of this world, being "choked with its cares, and riches, and pleasures *," are incapable of attending to the spiritual suggestions of his counsel; but he dwelleth with those of a religious and good heart, and shall be in them. Not that such persons are to expect any extraordinary illumination, any sudden change of their affections and passions. These are but the dreams of enthusiasts. But the operations of the Spirit are secret and gradual, co-operating with men's own endeavours, confirming their faith, assisting them to think, and to do, what is good and right, and enabling them to grow from grace to grace in the Lord Jesus.

Ver. 19. Jesus thought fit repeatedly to prepare his disciples for his quitting the world; and, as at other times, so now, comforts them with the assurance of his living again. Moreover, his resurrec-

* Luke viii. 14.

tion should be to them a sure pledge, that they also should rise to the life immortal. "At that day," that is, after the resurrection of Jesus, they should more certainly know that he was "in the Father," was intimately united with God the Father, supported by his power, and actuated by his will; and that they likewise were supported and directed by Christ dwelling in them, and imparting to them the gifts of the Spirit. It is probable the Apostles might feel a more than ordinary glow of affection towards Jesus, as he talked with them; and that hence might arise the observation which follows, that they, who loved him indeed, must shew their love by keeping his commandments. Then would the Father and the Son love them, and come to them, and make their abode with them; would shed abroad in their hearts the comforts arising from a steady faith, and a more perfect knowledge of divine truth. In taking leave of them, he promises that he will not leave them comfortless, inasmuch as the Father would send the Holy Spirit to instruct and assist them in all things. He was indeed going away; but this ought not to grieve them; for, as he had said, he would shew himself again to them. Nay, if they loved him, they would rather rejoice, be-

cause he was going to reside in glory with the Father. And he tells them before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, they may not “sorrow, even as others which have no hope *,” but may the more believe him to be the Messiah. He should have little further opportunity of talking with them; for the devil, that prince of this world, having prepared his instruments, was already at hand; and though he would find no sin in Jesus, to give him any power over him; yet would Jesus voluntarily lay down his life, to shew his perfect love towards men, and ready obedience to the will of God the Father.



CHAPTER XV.

As the trunk and stem of a tree transmits its juices and vigour to the branches; so Christ describes himself as the genuine stock, whence alone his disciples could derive the principles of eternal life. And God the Father is represented as the husbandman, whose care provides for the fruitful growth of the plant, pruning off the unprofitable

* 1 Thess. iv. 13.

shoots, and cleansing from impurities all such as are healthy. These sentiments are but introductory to the earnest exhortations of Jesus to his Apostles, that after his departure they would continue stedfast in their love towards him, and towards each other. If they would be indeed his disciples, and bear much fruit, they must remain firmly united to him in faith, and in affection; and they must manifest their affection by keeping his commandments; then, says he, “ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” What! shall every foolish, every worldly petition, that men may offer, immediately be granted? Observe who they are, to whom this promise is made. They are not the foolish, they are not the worldly minded; but those “whom Jesus had chosen out of the world *.” Whoever has shaken off his attachment to the world, and is rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, will ask nothing, will think nothing worth asking, but what will tend to the glory of God, and the promotion of true religion. We are not indeed forbid to address ourselves to God on subjects relating to our present state; on the contrary, we are directed “in all things, by prayer and supplication

* Verse 19.

to make our wants known unto God." But this must be done in perfect submission to the will of him, who alone knoweth what is best, and most expedient for us. For so Christ himself prayed to God in his agony; but prayed at the same time, that not his own will, but his Father's will might be done. We have an example too, nearer to our own condition, in the Apostle Paul, who tells us that thrice he besought the Lord to deliver him from some bodily infirmity (though even this he probably did, thinking that it might enable him more effectually to prosecute the work of the Lord); but as soon as he was informed, that "Christ's favour was sufficient for him," and that "the power of Christ was perfected through weakness," was rendered the more manifest through the weakness of his instruments; he immediately adds, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me *."

Nothing can be more affectionate, than the parting admonitions of Jesus to his Apostles, enjoining it as his command, that they should love one another, as he had loved them. The greatness of his own love towards them was going to be sig-

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

nally evinced by his laying down his life for them, whom he called not servants, but friends, having considered them not as slaves under the law, but as friends, to whom he had freely communicated the gracious purposes of the Father, by which “they are delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God *.” He admonishes them to disregard the insults of the world, knowing that the world had previously insulted him. For they must not expect that the servants will be treated better than their Lord. Had not the Jews had ample proofs that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of God,” they might have pleaded ignorance in excuse for their persecution of him. But now they had “no cloak for the sin” they were about to commit by putting him to death in open defiance of the testimony of God towards him. But the Holy Spirit would still bear testimony to the truth, by the supernatural works he would display through them, his chosen witnesses and Apostles.

* Rom. viii. 21.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE is reason to believe that the Apostles, though full of affection, and zeal, and confidence in Jesus, believing him to be the very Messiah, which was to come into the world; were however by no means free from the prejudices of their countrymen respecting the nature of that kingdom, which he was about to set up. And in proportion to their misconceptions, and false hopes, would be their disappointment, when “the chief priests and the rulers should deliver him to be condemned to death, and crucify him, who they trusted was he which should have redeemed Israel *.” Therefore Jesus repeatedly forewarns them of what would come to pass, that when it was come to pass, they might not be offended, might not be reduced to despair, and relinquish their trust in him. For though they would be persecuted, even unto death, for his sake; yet ought they not to be discouraged, but should remember that he had taught them to expect these things; which would happen through the perverseness of those, who knew neither the Father, nor the Son. The in-

* Luke xxiv. 20.

troductioꝛ of the Father in this place has the more force, because, as it has before been observed, the Jews entertained a national pride, derived from the notion of their being God's peculiar people. But Jesus declares, that notwithstanding their pretences, they knew him not. These things it was unnecessary for Jesus to state while he remained with his disciples; but the time being now come, when he should be removed from them, it was requisite to prepare them for that event. The disciples appear to have been deeply affected by his manner and discourse, particularly by that part of it, where he said that he was going to leave them; so that in the present disordered state of their minds they dared not ask him to explain himself. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and perceived their sorrow, and comforted them, by assuring them that it was expedient he should go, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit would not descend upon them till after his departure; but when he was gone, he would send him unto them, to lead them into all truth, and to shew them the things that are coming *; that is, to open unto them a fuller insight into that dispensation which was about to be established. And, first, the Holy

* Τα ἐρχόμενα.

Spirit would reprove the world of sin, by convincing men that he, whom they had crucified, was the Messiah; 2dly, He would prove the righteousness of Jesus, by the evidence of his resurrection and ascension; and, 3dly, He would confirm the doctrine of a judgment to come, by the present judgment of Satan, and restriction of his power, especially by the erection of Christianity upon the ruins of idolatry and superstition, and the check which would thereby be given to his influence in the world.

Ver. 12. Many things which he had yet to tell them, would be supplied by the ministration of the Holy Spirit at a time when they would better be able to comprehend them. He must very shortly be taken from them by death; but again shortly they should see him risen from the dead, previous to his ascent into heaven.

Ver. 17. The disciples, though they understood not the just meaning of his words, yet abstained from asking him. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, proceeded to inform them that the rulers of this world would rejoice, while they, his followers, wept and lamented his death as the extinction of all their hopes. But their sorrow should be turned into joy as soon as they should

behold him again risen from the dead, and have their expectations not only revived, but converted into a sure and steady confidence, which no man should take from them. Jesus then comforts them by repeating his assurance, that though absent in body, he would be present with them in spirit, and would hearken to their petitions, and supply all their wants, that their joy may be complete.

Ver. 23. “In that day, *after that I am risen*, ye shall ask me nothing, *ye shall not need my presence to instruct you, for the Spirit shall guide you into all truth.* Verily, verily, I say unto you, *that instead of the Jewish ordinances of sacrifice and incense, ye shall draw near to the Father with a true heart in full assurance of faith**; and whatsoever *spiritual aid* ye shall ask the Father in my name, *for the promotion of my religion*, he will give it you, *will hear your prayers offered up through faith in Christ, as effectually as through the forms prescribed by the law; and he will grant them as far as to his wisdom shall seem expedient.*” If he had hitherto spoken to them obscurely of his death and resurrection, he would soon instruct them without disguise, and open to them a clearer view of the gracious designs of the

* Heb. x. 22.

Father for the redemption of mankind. In conclusion, he reverts to what he had before said; that as he came forth from the Father, and was come into the world; so he was about again to leave the world, and go to the Father.

His knowledge of what passed in their minds had been so plainly manifested by this unasked explanation of his former words, that the disciples were greatly struck with it, and professed that this was of itself sufficient to convince them that he "knew all things, and that he came forth from God." The reply of Jesus is pregnant with affection and pity, consolation and reproof. For while he heard with satisfaction this honest expression of their hearts, he saw their weakness with compassion, and checked their confidence with the gentlest reproof, foretelling that they would be separated every man to his own, and would leave him alone: and "yet he would not be alone, because the Father was with him." These things our Saviour said to his chosen disciples, that they might have peace in him; that in the midst of the troubles that would beset them, they might still maintain their faith unshaken, and enjoy the present satisfactions of a religious mind, and the future promise of eternal happiness. "Be of good

cheer" therefore, saith he, and learn of me ; learn to disregard the afflictions of this life, as he, the Author and Finisher of their salvation, set them an example ; for, added he, "I have overcome the world."



CHAPTER XVII.

THE seventeenth chapter contains that fervent and affectionate prayer of Jesus to the Father in behalf of his disciples, whom he was going to leave. It may be regarded as the last solemn act, the dying benediction of our Saviour, immediately preceding his apprehension. His very attitude is brought before us, when he is described as "lifting up his eyes to heaven." The manner in which God the Son addresses the Father ; his zeal for the glory of God ; the resignation, as it were, of his commission, and the account he renders of his office, and of the instructions he had given to his Apostles ; his regard for them ; his supplication on their behalf, that they may be sanctified, and confirmed in the faith, and enjoy the favor of God ; these constitute the interesting topics of this

prayer, which is unexampled in kind, in purpose most gracious, most affecting from the occasion, and most eminent from the person who delivered it.

Throughout St. John's gospel it may be observed, that God is seldom mentioned under any other name than that of the Father. This is the title by which Christ has taught us to address him in the Lord's prayer; and which he himself employs on the occasion before us. And no doubt it is designed to soften his severer attributes of power and justice by the endearing image of parental love, more especially exhibited in the gospel dispensation.

Ver. 1. "The hour is come," that is, the appointed time was now arrived, when Jesus was to close his ministry, and complete the mighty scheme of redemption, by the offering of his own body on the cross. He therefore yields himself up a willing sacrifice, that the glory of God may more and more abound by the establishment of true religion, and that covenant of grace, by which as many as believe in God, and in Jesus Christ, should obtain eternal life.

Ver. 4. Jesus professes before God that in all things he had studied to glorify him on the earth.

“ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self,” let thy glory embrace me, as in the beginning, when “ the Word was with God,” before the foundation of the world. He had already made known to his disciples the salvation of God ; and they had received his word, and known, and believed, that he “ came out from God, and that God did send him.” It is for these his apostles that he now particularly offers up his prayers, animated by the near approach of his crucifixion, and a full sense of the troubles which awaited them ; that when they should be left in the world without him, they might be maintained in the true faith, and united as one body, under one head, Jesus Christ. These things he spake for their satisfaction, that they might not be amazed at his leaving them, but might have their joy in the Gospel perfected by the contemplation of his glory with God in heaven. He prays not that his apostles should be taken out of the world, but that God of his goodness would preserve them from the corruptions of the world. “ They are not of the world,” that is, they have been taught to “ set their affections on things above, not on things in the earth ;” even as Jesus had himself despised all worldly goods. But do Thou, says he, purify

them from the dross of the world, sanctify them with the spirit of true religion, which thou hast revealed through thy Son.

Ver. 19. For their sakes did he present himself an holy victim, that they might be sanctified through him, according to the truth which he had declared to them. And he prays not for his apostles only, but for us also, as many as should be converted to the faith through the preaching of the apostles and their successors ; that all Christians may form one body, one church, united in spirit and in truth, as the Father is united to the Son, and the Son to the Father ; that the whole world may believe Jesus Christ to have been sent by God, and that his apostles enjoy the special favor of God ; for which purpose Christ had communicated to them those spiritual powers, and that prospect of eternal glory, which God had given him, and of which he prays that they also may be made partakers in heaven. “ O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,” those who are addicted to the things of this world cannot understand the dispensations of God, cannot love him as they ought. But Jesus had not so instructed his disciples. He had taught them the knowledge of the truth, and would confirm it by

his death and resurrection; that being made perfect in faith, to them also might be extended the affection, which God had born to his Son; and that the Spirit of Christ might dwell in them, to animate and support them in the work of the Lord.

Such is the substance of our Saviour's prayer to God for his disciples. Cold indeed must be the heart, in which some spark of religious feeling, some return of affection is not excited by the perusal of an address so full of dignity and love; love, not from one man towards another, but from the Creator to his creature. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out *!"



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE concluding chapters of St. John's Gospel are taken up with a more particular relation of the circumstances attending the crucifixion and resurrection of our Saviour; some of which had been

* Rom. ii. 33.

omitted, or less explicitly stated, by the other evangelists. The narrative itself is so plain, that in general it needs, or indeed admits of little illustration. But wonderful as these things are, they are not related to excite our admiration; but to settle our faith. For this is, as it were, the seal and ratification of our salvation. "If Christ be not raised," saith St. Paul, "our faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins*." It is not possible for the mind of man adequately to conceive the greatness of the sacrifice, or the importance of its effects. These things are mysteries for angels to admire.

Ver. 1. There are in this part of the subject also some particulars, to which it may not be improper to advert. And first, respecting the time, and place, in which Jesus was taken. To a superficial reader it may seem extraordinary that he should be found walking in a garden after it was dark, so that they, who were sent to apprehend him, came "with lanterns and torches." But we have seen before, that when he went up to attend the Jewish festivals, it was his custom to reside at Bethany, a village about two miles distant from Jerusalem, whither he retired at night after the religious ceremonies of the day were finished†.

* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

† Chap. viii. 1. from Luke xxi. 37.

Judas therefore, having undertaken to deliver Jesus secretly into the hands of his persecutors, could not have chosen a more favorable opportunity for the execution of his purpose, than by waylaying him on his accustomed path over the brook Cedron, through the garden of Gethsemane* (perhaps an orchard of olives) bordering upon the hill, on the other side of which was situated Bethany. Jesus's agony, and prayer for deliverance, accompanied by his most perfect submission to the will of the Father, are omitted by St. John, probably for no other reason, but that they had already been recorded in the well-known histories of the three other evangelists.

Ver. 6. At the sixth verse we read, that as soon as Jesus had said to those, who came to apprehend him, "I am he; they went backward and fell to the ground." Those who look for a miracle in every occurrence, have no difficulty in attributing this to some supernatural effect of divine power. But a juster interpretation may perhaps be drawn from the ordinary language of Scripture, in which the same words †, with little variation, are used

* Matt. xxvi. 36.

† ἐπεσεν ἐπὶ προσωπον—ἐπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν—πέσων χαμαὶ προσεκυννῆσε. These expressions occur in many passages of the

to signify “bowing down in act of reverence.” So our Saviour himself, as it is related by St. Matthew, “fell on his face, and prayed *;” or, as it is in St. Mark’s Gospel, “fell on the ground, and prayed †.” In like manner the disciples who were present at the Transfiguration, and heard the voice out of the cloud, “fell on their faces, and were sore afraid ‡.” In the Old Testament, Job, it is said, “fell down upon the ground, and worshipped §;” and Balaam, when his eyes were opened, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, “bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face ||.” Now, of those who came with Judas some might have been believers, or half believers, or certainly were not unacquainted with the character and pretensions of Jesus. Thus prepared in their minds, they might very naturally have been struck with the dignity and simplicity of his confession, and unable to restrain this ex-

Septuagint, and of the New Testament. In all of them *προσεκυνησε* is either put in, or understood. The same is found also in Josephus, *οἱ δὲ πεσόντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν προσεκυνήσαν.* (Ant. 7, 14, 11.) And similar to this is the use of the word *προσπιτνω* familiar to the Greek tragedians, in the sense of supplicating.

* Matt. xxvi. 39.

† Mark xiv. 35.

‡ Matt. xvii. 6.

§ Job i. 20.

|| Numb. xxii. 31.

pression of their respect, or fear, which, to such among them as were Jews, may have been heightened by the use of the very terms in which God had formerly been made known to them *. Something very similar to this has already been noticed on a former occasion, when the officers sent by the chief priests and pharisees to apprehend Jesus, returned without effecting their purpose; and being asked "Why have ye not brought him?" The officers answered, "Never man spake like this man †." That the "band of men" should have been miraculously thrown down upon the pronouncement of Jesus's words, may, without presumption, be thought an unnecessary and unprofitable display of miraculous power. Immediately follows the account of Simon Peter drawing a sword in defence of his Master, and cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant. St. John only adds that the servant's name was Malchus. But St. Luke informs us besides, that Jesus "touched his ear, and healed him." Now, if this miraculous cure preceded the question of Jesus, "whom seek ye?" and his subsequent declaration, "I am he;" which the order of the narrative in the other Gospels renders not improbable; it might afford

* Chap. viii. 58.

† Chap. vii. 45.

an additional cause of awe in the beholders, and more powerfully call forth this involuntary mark of respect. Considering the cure that was effected upon Malchus, it seems most natural to suppose that the ear was not literally separated from the head, but only so deeply divided as to justify the use of a familiar expression*. I cannot help observing that several little particulars, which St. John has supplied, do from their very minuteness give a new interest and credibility to this important part of our Saviour's history. Such are the insertion of Annas's name, and his connection with Caiaphas, which, if they add little else, add an air of animation and reality to the principal story.

Ver. 15. In the fifteenth verse St. John, no doubt, alludes to himself under the modest designation of "another disciple." And from the circumstance of his being "known to the high priest †," and "to her that kept the door ‡," and to another "servant of the high priest §," and probably to Malchus ||, one might almost be tempted

* Plutarch has used the same word in a sentence where it can only have a general signification, *τη βακτηρια παταξας τον οφθαλμον απεκοψεν*. (In Lycurgo.)

† *Ver. 15.*

‡ *Ver. 16.*

§ *Ver. 26.*

|| *Ver. 10.*

to infer that St. John had himself been in the high priest's service.

Ver. 16. To us it may appear extraordinary that the high priest's porter should have been a female ; but there is some reason to think this was no uncommon practice at that time, since we are informed by Josephus, and by the writers of the Septuagint, that the same was the case in the house of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, though the circumstance is not specified in the English Bible*.

Ver. 17. There cannot be a more striking example of the fore-knowledge of God, than is recorded in the case of Peter's denial ; yet nobody will pretend that St. Peter was forced into this behaviour, or that he was not at perfect liberty to act as he chose. Whatever difficulty there may be then in conceiving how God's fore-knowledge can be consistent with man's free-will ; yet it must of necessity be admitted that both are true. The one is demonstrated externally, by the whole course of sacred history ; the other is felt internally, by the conscious working of every unprejudiced mind.

* 2 Sam. iv. 6. and Josephus, Ant. 7. 2. 1. In Burder's Oriental Customs, I find Pignorius (de Sacris, p. 454), quoted in support of the same practice.

Ver. 28. Jesus had been bound, and taken first to Annas, and thence to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose palace he was detained through the night, and exposed to the insults of the servants *. On the morrow as soon as it was day †, he was brought before the Sanhedrim, or Council, consisting of the chief priests and elders ‡, which appears at that time to have assembled in the temple; for in the temple it is said that Judas threw down the thirty pieces of silver, the price of his treachery §. Here then Jesus was questioned upon the subject of his being the Messiah: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God ||." But when the chief priests and elders had determined to put him to death, and for that purpose had brought him to the judgment hall of Pilate, the Roman governor, they artfully shift their accusation ¶, and charge him with making himself a king, which would be treason against the emperor of Rome. Jesus by his reply to Pilate, "Thou **

* Luke xxii. 63.

† Luke xxii. 66.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 59.

§ Matt. xxvii. 5.

|| Matt. xxvi. 63.

¶ Luke xxiii. 2.

** Many instances of a similar form of assent might be produced from ancient authors—as, λεγεις (*Æschylus, Eumen. v. 717*).

sayest that I am a king," acknowledges the title, but not in a worldly sense. He came into the world not to exercise temporal dominion ; but " to bear witness to the truth," to erect a kingdom of righteousness, to establish true religion, and to confirm it by the testimony of signs and wonders. When Pilate says to him, " what is truth ?" it is as if he had said, " what do you mean by truth ?" And in the conclusion of the same verse, when he says, " I find in him no fault at all," the meaning is rather, " I find in him no crime deserving of death ;" for so it is explained by St. Luke *, and by St. Paul in his address to the people of Antioch in Pisidia, " though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain †." It was by this determination of the priests and elders to procure the execution of Jesus, that were fulfilled his own prophetic words recorded in the twelfth chapter, " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to

And in Latin, Tu dixti. (Plaut. Merc. 1. 2. 52). So, *αυτος, εφη, τουτο λεγεις*—"you say the truth." (Xenoph. Mem. 3. 10. 15.) For it is notorious that they very seldom used any word corresponding to the "yes" of modern languages ; but rather expressed their assent by some periphrasis.

* Chap. xxiii. 15.

† Acts xiii. 28.

me." For this, adds the Evangelist, he said, signifying what death he should die; the "lifting up" being intended of his crucifixion.



CHAPTER XIX.

SCOURGING appears to have been generally inflicted by the Romans previous to the execution of criminals, and was probably originally intended as a means of extorting confession. Therefore it may be observed to be after the scourging of our Saviour, that Pilate tells the people he finds "no fault in him," that is, "nothing deserving of death." And in the Acts of the Apostles it is said, "the chief captain commanded Paul to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know wherefore they cried so against him *." This scourging, and the putting on "a crown of thorns," are usually looked upon as superfluous cruelties exercised upon the person of Jesus. I have endeavoured to suggest some reason for the former of these actions; and, in respect to the latter, would observe that our

* Acts xxii. 24.

idea of “a crown of thorns” has been heightened partly by a generous indignation at the treatment of our Lord and Saviour; partly by the representations of distinguished painters, who have been fond of displaying their own powers in the portraiture of a bleeding Christ, with those mingled expressions of pain and patience which they conceived to be appropriate to this occasion. That the crown of thorns was a mockery and insult, I am very far from denying; it was a part of the royal dress designed to ridicule the “King of the Jews.” But while the soldiers indulged a malicious humour, which appears to have been usual with them upon similar occasions *, there is no reason to suppose that they could have any particular enmity towards Christ, or any wish to hurt him by cruelly binding his temples with thorns in the manner in which it has been the custom to portray it on canvas, whence it has been transferred to our imaginations. But the original word does by no means necessarily convey this sense. The Greek language has no term corresponding to the English “weeds.” In consequence of which, the same word is employed to signify thorns,

* See Bishop Pearce’s note upon Matt. xxvii. 26. And, in the same spirit, Virgilius, *Æn.* ii. 65. “Certantque illudere capto.”

straws, or any useless herbs *. In our Bible the word is generally, perhaps always, translated “thorns;” but the latitude in which this is to be understood, is in many instances apparent from the context; as when it is said that “some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked it †;” likewise, “the earth, which beareth thorns and briars ‡.” In these instances it only means weeds and useless herbs. And in the case of our Saviour, it is most probable this mock crown was composed of straw, rushes, or any weeds that might happen to be at hand. Of the same kind, it may be supposed, was the wisp of rushes §, with which Jesus drove the traders out of the temple.

Two circumstances deserve consideration in this

* *γη εκφερουσα ακανθας.* Heb. vi. 8. *αλλα δε επεσεν επι τας ακανθας.* Matt. xiii. 7. also Mark iv. 7. and Luke viii. 14. And in the Septuagint, *εξεκαυθησαν ως πυρ εν ακανθαις.* Psalm cxviii. 12. In Homer it seems to signify straws, or any light substances,

*‘Ως δ’ ότ’ οπωρινος βορεης φορησιν ακανθας,
Αμπεδιον, πυκιναι δε προς αλληλησιν εχονται.* Od. 5, 328.

† Matt. xiii. 7.

‡ Heb. vi. 8.

§ In the Greek it is *ποιησας φραγελλιον εκ σχοινιων.* John ii. 15.

place. For it may with reason be asked, how it happened that the Jewish populace, who had so lately hailed their Messiah's entrance into Jerusalem with branches of palm trees, and acclamations to the "King of Israel *," should now join in the cry, "away with him, crucify † him ‡." Again, if Pilate, as he said, found no fault in Jesus, why did he nevertheless accede to the wicked purpose of the rulers to crucify him? And first, with regard to the Jews, their hostility is not entirely to be ascribed to the notorious fickleness of a mixed multitude; but was greatly owing to the false ideas they had all along cherished, that their Messiah would come in the character of a temporal prince, to deliver their country from the power of the Romans, and to establish among them the seat of universal dominion. When therefore they saw Jesus quietly submit to the judgment of the Roman governor, their fond hopes were lost in disappointment, and the memory of

* Chap. xii. 12.

† An example of the same kind occurs in the history of St. Paul at Lystra, where the same people, who would have offered him sacrifice as to a God, were presently afterwards persuaded to stone him. Acts xiv. 19.

‡ Ver. 15.

his miracles faded in the persuasion of his being no more than an impostor, and their veneration was converted into rage.

To account for Pilate's inconsistency, we ought for a time to divest ourselves of our Christian feelings, and to look upon him as a heathen, and a man of little conscience, or regard for justice, in a cause, where his own personal interest, or that of his master, did not appear to be concerned. To save his prisoner he made indeed some feeble attempts, extorted by the irresistible force of innocence ; but too easily yielded to the importunity of the inflamed Jews, not without some suspicion of being influenced by the fear of impeachment for former acts of misconduct, if he should provoke them too far *. A threat of this kind seems to be concealed in their cry, " If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend."

Ver. 11. When Jesus says to Pilate, " Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," we read the same sentiment that was expressed twice before nearly

* Such accusations against the Roman provincial governors were by no means uncommon, and were generally well deserved. In fact we are told that Pilate was some years afterwards impeached and banished.

in the same words—"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from above * ;" and again, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father †." The meaning is, that all power is derived from God. Jesus therefore goes on to say that Pontius Pilate having, by the permission of God, been invested with legal authority over him, an equal degree of sin did not attach to him for the wrong exercise of that authority, (which was, as it were, extorted from him by violence,) as to the Jews for their false accusation, and wilful perversion of the truth, in order to accomplish his death.

Ver. 14. When we read of the sixth hour, this is to be reckoned, according to the manner of the ancients, from sun-rise, or six o'clock in the morning, making the time of the crucifixion to correspond with noon ‡.

* Chap. iii. 27.

† Chap. vi. 65.

‡ It has been supposed that the sixth hour has got into this text instead of the third hour; and it has been shewn how easily such a mistake might arise. This is besides countenanced by the authority of some manuscripts. But I suspect that the whole has arisen from a wish to make St. John's account tally with that of St. Mark. "It was the third hour, and they crucified him." Mark xv. 25. It seems to me more probable that St. Mark meant to apply "the third hour" to the time of Jesus being

Ver. 16. At the 16th verse it is said, “they took Jesus and led him away.” We learn from St. Matthew that they, who led him away, were “the soldiers of the Governor*,” not the Jews. For the Jews had neither authority to do it, nor probably would they have defiled themselves †, by such an act on the day of the preparation ‡.

Ver. 17. And he went forth bearing his cross. For it was the usual practice to make the condemned carry part of their cross to the place of execution §. In this instance, however, we learn from the other Evangelists that the cross, that is,

brought before Pilate, with which the chapter begins; and that the darkness, which he afterwards mentions to have occurred from the sixth to the ninth hour, (Mark xv. 33.) prevailed from the time of the crucifixion to the death of Jesus. (Matt. xxvii. 45. Luke xxiii. 44.) This is further supported by a law of the Twelve Tables, according to which, judgment was given *after mid-day* (Adam’s Rom. Antiq. p. 249.); but the trials began *at the third hour*. (Ibid. p. 226. See also Grotius upon Matt. xxvii. 45.)

* Matt. xxvii. 27.

† Ch. xxviii. 28.

‡ Ch. xix. 31.

§ *Και τῷ μὲν σώματι τῶν κολαζομένων, ἕκαστος τῶν κακούργων ἐκφέρει τὸν αὐτοῦ σταυρὸν.* (Plutarch De sera numinis vindicta.) And Maundrell observes, that in the barbarous punishment of empaling, which is still exercised by the Turks, the stake is laid upon the back of the criminal, who is made to carry it to the place of his execution. (P. 141. Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem.)

the transverse beam of the cross, was presently transferred to Simon, a man of Cyrene, whom they compelled to bear it after Jesus; either because Jesus was too much exhausted to support the weight; or, more probably, because this Simon was a disciple of Jesus *, and voluntarily undertook to relieve his Lord from this sad burden.

The exact fulfilment of some minute prophecies is no where more striking, than in the history of the crucifixion; which being the sum and essence of the Christian dispensation, has been foretold with more than ordinary precision, and established by evidence more incontrovertible than can be found in support of any historical fact of ancient or modern times. Such is the prediction of parting our Saviour's raiments, and casting lots for his vesture; such are also the giving him vinegar to drink, the preservation of his legs unbroken, the piercing of his side, and depositing his dead body in a rich sepulchre. For the conviction arising from prophecy depends not upon the magnitude of the circumstances foretold, but upon the certainty of their accomplishment. Besides, no

* Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus, (Mark xv. 21.) of whom Rufus at least was afterwards "chosen in the Lord." (Rom. xvi. 13.)

prophecy, however distinct, can possibly be of such force, and so unobjectionable, as a concurrence of many prophecies, perhaps inconsiderable when taken individually, but all meeting in one object, and, in the language of the poet, "bending one way their precious influence*."

Ver. 18. Some minor particulars are introduced also, which contribute not a little to complete the picture and produce a juster conception of this last interesting scene. Such is the exact position of the cross, between those of the two malefactors executed at the same time; likewise the superscription in three different languages, with the observations of the chief priests thereupon.

Ver. 25. The enumeration of different women, who attended at the cross of Jesus, is another circumstance which does of itself give a degree of credibility to the history, while it produces, as it were, its witnesses before us, and opens the scene not merely to our understanding, but to our view. Of the persons here named, "his mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Cleophas," are one and the same. With us it is not usual to give the same name to more than one of a family; but it may have been otherwise among the Jews. It is for

* Milton's Hymn on the Nativity.

this reason that the second Mary is distinguished from her sister, the Mother of our Lord, by the adjunct of "wife of Cleophas." In another place she is called "the other Mary *;" and again, "the mother of Joses †;" or "of James ‡;" or of both together §. In some of these passages she is discriminated by her sons, rather than her husband, probably because James, being of the number of the Apostles, might be more generally known; and where the name of Joses is added, it seems likely that it may have been with the purpose of distinguishing this James the younger, from the elder Apostle of the same name, the brother of St. John. Besides the women mentioned by St. John, Salome was likewise there ||, but her name may have been omitted by the Apostle through modestly declining to speak of his own mother. In the following verse he was probably actuated by the same motive in omitting his own name, who has been supposed to be the only one of the Apostles present at the crucifixion. He designates himself, as he had done before, "the disciple whom Jesus loved;" the true explana-

* Matt. 27. 61.

† Mark xv. 47.

‡ Mark xvi. 1. and Luke xxiv. 10.

§ Matt. xxvii. 56.

|| Matt. xxvii. 56. and Mark xv. 40.

tion of which I attempted to give in my observations on the thirteenth chapter. Our Saviour's commendation of his mother to the care of this Apostle, is an instance of affection and humanity peculiarly touching at such a moment. This is the last we hear of the Virgin Mary, excepting that she "with the other women continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the Apostles and the brethren of Jesus *," after the ascension. May it be that all knowledge of her, as of the body of Moses †, was divinely intercepted, to prevent the danger of false worship ‡.

Ver. 29. If any body think it strange, that there should have been set a vessel full of vinegar, of which some was offered to our Saviour upon the cross; let him understand that vinegar was of very frequent use with the Romans; that mixed with water, in which state it was known by the name of *posca*, it was a common beverage §; and more particularly, that "in bleedings from an operation, or from any other cause, it was applied externally upon a sponge, or swallowed in a con-

* Acts i. 14.

† Deut. xxxiv. 6.

‡ Tillotson, vol. iii. fol. p. 240.

§ *Alii ebrii sunt, alii poscam potitant.* (Plautus *Mil. Glor.* 3, 2, 23.)

centrated state *.” It was not indeed offered to Jesus, for this latter purpose; but hence a sufficient reason is suggested for there being both a vessel of vinegar, and a sponge, in the place.

Ver. 31. The breaking the legs of those crucified, seems to be a cruel method of accelerating their death; but from this Jesus was exempt, owing to his being dead already. However, in order to render his death the more certain, “one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.” Some have endeavoured to explain this phenomenon from the piercing of the pericardium, in which it is true that there is found a certain quantity of watery fluid. But in a healthy man the amount of this is so inconsiderable, hardly exceeding two or three teaspoonfuls, that it could not without a miracle be discernible after passing through a bleeding wound. We should do better to consider the whole as a miracle significant of the purity and justification derived from Jesus Christ. For water and blood were the indispensable instruments of cleansing and expiation under the

* In sanguinis fluxione post excisos calculos, et omni alia, foris in spongia impositum, intus potum cyathis binis quam acerrimum. (Plin. N. H. 23, 27.)

law; and they were typical of the real cleansing of the conscience by the water of baptism, and the real expiation of guilt by the blood of Christ. The flowing therefore of this water, and this blood, immediately upon our Lord's death, from the wound opened in his side, was a notification that the real expiation was now complete, and the cleansing fount set open *.

The manner of the Jewish sepulture was before described on the occasion of Lazarus's death and resuscitation. So likewise in the case of our Saviour, we are not to imagine that his body was deposited in a hole dug in the ground; but that it was laid in a niche, or chamber, excavated in a rock in a garden near the place where he had been crucified. And the body was wrapped in fine linen †, with spices ‡, and buried with every mark of honour usually paid to persons of distinction at that time; so that it might justly be said, "he was with the rich in his § death." The entrance to the sepulchre was then closed by a large stone ||.

* Horsley, Serm. IX. vol. 1.

† Mark xv. 46.

‡ John xix. 39.

§ Isa. liii. 9.

|| Matt. xxvii. 60. See Appendix, No. IV.

CHAPTER XX.

NOTHING can be more plain and simple, than the account of the resurrection which follows, accompanied by those natural touches, which it would be as hard to invent, as to discredit. Yet it must not be concealed that there is some difficulty in reconciling the narrations of the several Evangelists on this subject. For, first, St. John, giving a particular account of the part which Mary Magdalene bare in these transactions, has taken no notice of the other women, who certainly went with her to the sepulchre; though it is observable that when he represents her as carrying to the disciples the news of what had happened, it is put in the plural number, "They have taken the Lord out of the sepulchre, and *we* know not where they have laid him *." But on a subsequent occasion, when she was left alone at the sepulchre, it is said, "and *I* know not," &c †. Again, Matthew does not distinguish the angel who rolled back the stone from the sepulchre and sat upon it ‡, from the two angels who, St. Luke

* John xx. 2.

† John xx. 13.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 2.

says *, were seen in the sepulchre; though the concomitant circumstances prove that these Evangelists are speaking of the same occurrence. And Mark, relating the same event, mentions one angel, not two, perhaps because one only addressed the women. Again, Luke, when he says that Peter † arose and ran to the sepulchre, makes no mention of John, who has told us himself that Peter and he ‡ ran both together. Again, from Matt. xxviii. 9, it would seem as if all the women had seen Jesus; while Mark §, and John ||, more accurately inform us that it was Mary Magdalene alone.

Many instances of similar inaccuracies may be pointed out in the Gospel histories. Thus from reading of the dove-like descent of the Spirit, as described by Matthew ¶, we should be led to suppose it was exhibited to Christ himself; but there

* Luke xxiv. 4.

† Luke xxiv. 12.

‡ John xx. 4.

§ Mark xvi. 9.

|| John xx. 14. The identity of the appearances related by Matthew and John may be inferred partly from the unusual sense of the words *ἀδελφοί μου*, which are found in both Gospels; but more particularly from the agreement of Matthew, saying that the women "clung to Jesus's feet," with that of John, *μη μου ἀπτου*, "do not cling to me."

¶ Matt. iii. 16.

can be little doubt of John's account being more accurate, when he informs us it was a signal specially given to the Baptist, and probably to him alone, by which he was to know Jesus *. In another place, Matthew mentions two demoniacs †, while Mark ‡, and Luke §, in reporting the same story, speak only of one. Likewise in the case of the malefactors, who were crucified with Jesus, St. Matthew attributes to them collectively that railing, which St. Luke more accurately restricts to one. Precisely the same thing has been done upon another occasion, when Matthew ||, speaking of the ointment which was poured upon Jesus as he sat at meat, says, "But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, to what purpose is this waste?" St. Mark ¶ reports that "some had indignation." But St. John ** assures us it was "one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot." And it is not improbable that when St. Matthew †† says, "some doubted," he may have alluded to the single case of Thomas ‡‡. On the other hand, Mark, when he relates the case of Bartimeus §§, omits all

* John i. 32.

† Matt. viii. 28.

‡ Mark v. 2.

§ Luke viii. 27.

|| Matt. xxvi. 8.

¶ Mark xiv. 4.

** John xii. 4.

†† Matt. xxviii. 17.

‡‡ John xx. 25.

§§ Mark x. 46.

notice of the other blind man, who was cured at the same time *. In fact the sacred writers, while they faithfully record "all things necessary to salvation," seem to have been solicitous about little else, that one great concern overwhelming all inferior considerations.

The sum of the history then will stand thus. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Salome †, and Johanna ‡, came to the sepulchre early on Sunday morning with spices § to anoint the body of Jesus. They find the tomb open, and the body gone. Then appeared to them two angels within the sepulchre, who bid them tell the disciples that Christ is risen, and that they should see him in Galilee. Thereupon they hasten to the disciples to report all that had happened, and Mary Magdalene goes to Peter and John, who run back with her to the sepulchre; whence the Apostles soon after return again to their own home, while Mary Magdalene remains at the sepulchre weeping. Presently she again sees two angels in the sepulchre, to whom she repeats, in nearly the same terms she had used to Peter ||, that they had taken the Lord out of the sepulchre,

* Matt. xx. 30.

† Mark xvi. 1.

‡ Luke xxiv. 10.

§ Mark xvi. 1.

|| John xx. 2.

and she knew not where they had laid him. Then turning round she is the first who sees Jesus after his resurrection *.

Among the many natural incidents, which give a beauty to the history of these transactions, should not be overlooked that of the two Apostles running together to the sepulchre, when St. John's youth, and St. Peter's zeal, are well characterised by John's outrunning his companion, and Peter's being the first to enter in.

The same day likewise, being the day of his resurrection, Jesus shewed himself to Cleophas, and (probably †) Peter, on their way to Emmaus; whence they presently return again to Jerusalem, and find the Apostles and others assembled, to whom they relate what had happened; and while they are conversing on these events, Jesus unexpectedly appears amongst them. On the Sunday following he again shews himself to them, probably in Galilee. Then, at the lake of Genesareth, he appeared to Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two more. Again on a mountain in Galilee ‡, where he had appointed them to meet him; and here it is probable he was seen by

* See Appendix, No. V.

† Appendix, No. VI.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 16.

above five hundred at once *. Then he appeared to James †; then to all the Apostles † previous to his ascension near Bethany ‡; and last of all to St. Paul at the time of his conversion.

Ver. 8. To return to St. John; in the eighth verse, when he says that “he saw and believed,” we must not conclude that he believed Christ to be risen from the dead: quite the contrary. For St. Mark tells us that his disciples, “when they heard that he was alive, and had been seen of Mary Magdalene, believed not §.” What he believed was, the testimony of Mary mentioned in the second verse, “they have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.” “For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead ||.”

Ver. 17. When Jesus says, “Touch me not,” the meaning is, “Do not hold me by the feet and worship me ¶,” as if he were now going to put himself at the head of the Jewish nation, and to vindicate to himself the sovereignty of the world.

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

† 1 Cor. xv. 7.

‡ Luke xxv. 51.

§ Mark xvi. 11.

|| Ver. 9.

¶ Matt. xxviii. 9. For it was customary to embrace the knees in the earnestness of intreaty.

For his disciples still entertained the expectation that Christ would erect himself the head of a temporal kingdom; “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom * to Israel?” But he goes on to inform Mary that his kingdom was of another kind; and that it behoved him to ascend into heaven, there to establish his throne, and to prepare a place for his disciples, that where he is, there they may be likewise †. This she was enjoined to communicate to his apostles, whom he still condescends to call his brethren, thus manifesting his unaltered affection towards them; while he gradually withdraws from their minds the veil of earthly ambition, and opens to them the dawn of a spiritual and heavenly state.

Ver. 19. It cannot have escaped the notice of any attentive reader, that the manner, in which Jesus thought fit to shew himself to his disciples, is very different before, and after his resurrection. On all former occasions he presents himself in the character and capacity of a man; but now he appears, and disappears, unexpectedly, so that they know him not ‡. It would be presumptuous to

* Acts i. 6. † Clarke, Sermon. LXXXI. vol. i. fol. p. 505.

‡ John xx. 15.; xxi. 4. Luke xxiv. 16. Therefore Origen describes him as on the confines of a substantial body and an in-

attempt to account for this, or to draw from it any conclusions respecting his nature and mode of existence, of which we can know nothing beyond what is revealed. It is sufficient for us to be assured that they, who saw him, had ample and repeated proofs that he was the very Christ, the same who had died, and rose again. Even the doubts of some * were converted into fresh arguments for the conviction of succeeding ages.

Ver. 22. Though the Holy Ghost was not fully manifested till the day of Pentecost †, nevertheless it may be supposed to have been given to the apostles in some measure at this time, when Jesus sent them forth, and breathed on them, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” For so it had been on a previous occasion, when he first sent the twelve to preach the Gospel ‡. The power of remitting and retaining sins, which is then conferred on them, seems to be the fulfilment of the promise formerly made to Peter §; and probably

corporeal spirit, *ην γε κατα την αναστασιν αυτου, ὡςπερει εν μεθοριῳ τινι της παχυτητος της προ του παθους σωματος, και του γυμνην τοιουτου σωματος φαινεσθαι ψυχην.* Contra Cels. L. 2. p. 98. Ed. Camb.

* Ver. 25.

† Acts ii. 1, &c.

‡ Matt. x. 1.

§ Matt. xvi. 19. “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom

means no more, than that whoever receiveth the doctrine, which Jesus sent them to preach for the remission of sins, his sins shall be forgiven; but whoever rejecteth this doctrine, and complieth not with the conditions therein offered him from God, his sins shall be retained, and he must consequently perish; for, “By the terms of that doctrine, which I commission you to preach on earth, shall every man’s sentence be finally and judicially determined of God in heaven*.” But while this be acknowledged to be its ultimate signification, yet, like the expressions of the prophets, it may also have a present reference to the removal, or retention, of sickness, and other penalties of sin, which appear to have been inflicted in that first age of Christianity, for the conviction of strangers, for the correction of the wicked, and for the confirmation of all good men†. In conformity with this doctrine, which appears to have been generally received among the Jews‡, our Saviour, in of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”

* Clarke’s Serm. fol. vol. ii. p. 457. See also Serm. LII. and LXXXIX.

† See Acts v. 5.; xiii. 11. and 1 Cor. xi. 30.

‡ John ix. 2.

the cure of the paralytic, recorded in each of the three first Gospels, says to him, "Thy sins are forgiven." And to him, who had been cured at the pool of Bethesda, he says, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*."

Ver. 26. The second appearance of Jesus to his apostles just eight days after the former, brings us to another Sunday, and may be considered as a tacit approbation of their assembling themselves together on that day in prayers and praises to God, and an illustration of what he had said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you†."

The twentieth chapter closes with an admonition that these things were but a part of many signs and assurances of his identity, which he afforded them for forty days; and they were written, not for the purpose of vain speculation, or idle criticism; but "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name;" might secure to ourselves eternal happiness through faith in his redemption, and obedience to his word.

It is pleasing and profitable to pause here for a little space, and to look back, as from an emi-

* John v. 14.

† Matt. xviii. 20.

nence, upon the steps, by which this great event of Christ's resurrection was gradually developed to the eyes of his apostles; the subject unfolding itself by just degrees, and breaking upon them insensibly, as in the successive scenes of some well ordered tragedy, calculated to raise the expectations, and excite a lively attention, and lead to the grandest termination. While they yet lay overwhelmed with sorrow and despair, they hear the first tidings of their Lord's body being gone; and at the same time a message, which they knew not how to credit, of his having risen from the dead. In their anxiety they go themselves to view the sepulchre; but return full of perplexity and amazement. Presently they are informed that to one of the female mourners Christ had actually shewn himself alive, and had bid her tell his apostles. It may be supposed that some hope would then at least begin to dawn in their minds; yet even so they believe it not. Next he appeared to two of the disciples as they walked to a village a few miles distant from Jerusalem; nevertheless he shewed not himself openly, but thought fit to make himself known to them by degrees, while their hearts burned within them as he talked with them. As soon as Jesus had left them, they

eagerly return to Jerusalem to add their testimony to the accumulating evidence of his resurrection. At length the sun of truth rises upon them in unclouded majesty, and Christ himself appears amongst them. After eight days he again shews himself to them, and removes all their doubts. Five times more his appearance to some, or all of the apostles, is recorded; and on one occasion to above five hundred disciples at once. Without pursuing further these particulars, we may contemplate in respectful admiration the gradual steps by which his followers were conducted to the full conviction of this important event, without which all our faith were vain.



CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 7. IT is said of St. Peter, that when he heard it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, "for he was naked." This expression might deceive one, who did not know that "being naked" was frequently used to signify "being without an upper garment." Therefore when we read of "a young man having a linen cloth cast about his

naked body, and that he afterwards “ fled away * naked” from those who came to take Jesus; it is not to be supposed that he was literally naked; but only that, instead of his usual robe, he had hastily thrown round him a loose cloak, which he quitted in his flight. This is still more evident in the case of the sons of Sceva, related in the Acts of the Apostles †, upon whom a demoniac is said to have leaped, and prevailed against them, “ so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.” Here nobody can imagine that they were otherwise naked, than that they were glad to make their escape leaving their outer garment behind them.

Ver. 12. It has been justly observed that the incidents of any story, or representation, to be strongly felt, should be natural but not obvious. Eminently entitled to this praise are the narratives of the Evangelists generally; and, in this place, the simple remark, that “ none of the disciples ventured to ask Jesus, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.” These few words do more

* Mark xiv. 51. There is a striking resemblance between this history, and what is related of Tiberius Gracchus—*αντελαβετο τις των ιματιων· ο δε την τρεβεννον αφεις, και φευγων εν τοις χιτωσιν, εσφαλη.* Plut. 4to. vol. iv. p. 378.

† Acts xix. 16.

strongly impress the mind with a mingled sense of love and fear, of humility, conviction, and attachment, than could be produced by the most labored description.

Ver. 14. After the history of the draft of fishes, it is said, "This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead." But this must be understood to mean the third time that he had shewn himself to them collectively. For he had before shewn himself to Mary Magdalene, to the two disciples going to Emmaus, to the disciples assembled in Jerusalem, and again to the eleven on the following Sunday. St. John has himself taken notice of three of these appearances previous to this, which he calls the third. But understand him to speak of Christ's appearing to the apostles collectively, and the whole becomes consistent and agreeable to the history *.

Ver. 15. In the short, but very remarkable address of our Saviour to Peter, we ought to feel the greater interest, because we do ourselves constitute a part of that Christian Church, the lambs and sheep of the Lord, which he recommends with so much earnestness to the care of the apostle,

* Appendix, No. V.

making it the very test of his love towards Christ, to nourish and instruct his flock. And it is thrice repeated, to impress it with peculiar emphasis, as the great purpose of his ministry, which, if he loved him indeed, he was bound to execute.

Ver. 18. It is with an affectionate concern that Jesus, drawing his expressions from Peter's girding on his coat and stretching out his hands towards him, looked forward to the death of that apostle, saying, "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This he spake, signifying by what death he should glorify God." And it was accomplished by the crucifixion of this apostle, as it is generally believed, about thirty years afterwards at Rome.

Ver. 19. The term "Follow me," with which the prophecy of Peter's death is concluded, may probably have both a natural and a figurative interpretation; and while it summons the apostle to go after his Lord, may be understood to signify that "he should go and teach all nations *;" that as his "Father had sent him into the world, even so he also sent his apostles †;" moreover, that as Peter should follow him in the likeness of

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† John xvii. 18.

his ministry, so should he follow him also in the likeness of his death. Jesus seems to allude to the same thing, but more distantly, when on a former occasion he said, "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards *." Peter having received this prophetic, but obscure intimation of what was to befall him, takes occasion to ask Jesus what fortunes awaited St. John, who seems to have been standing near. The question is quite in unison with our feelings, and not unmixed with affection towards a friend and fellow-labourer. But what says Jesus in reply? "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." We are told that, at the time, this was understood of the day of judgment, and that from these words arose an opinion that John would never die. Modern interpreters, judging from the event, have generally considered them as prophetic of John's surviving the destruction of Jerusalem. But I incline to believe that Jesus had no intention to indicate any thing respecting the duration of John's life, but only to repress Peter's curiosity †, prying into matters with which he had no concern. As if he had

* John xiii. 36.

† Chap. vi. 70. and xiii. 38.

said, "What if I choose that he should live to eternity? Mind you your own business *."

The apostle concludes his Gospel with saying, that if every action of our Saviour were to be recorded, "the world itself would not contain the books that would be written." This hyperbolical expression must, no doubt, be regarded as a familiar phrase; as when it was told Abraham that his seed should be as the dust of the earth †; or, as we might now say, "there would be no end to it." Nor is it any sufficient objection, that such expressions, which might be admissible in colloquial language, are hardly to be found in grave and dignified writings. For the Gospels are far from being studied compositions, and the writers far from elegant scholars. Nor is this any disparagement; but rather enhances their value to every unprejudiced mind, that this gracious dispensation should have been published "not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ

* An answer of a similar kind is given to the person who asked Jesus, "are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate." (Luke xiii. 23.) On which Sherlock observes, "the answer is in effect, what is that to you? mind your own business, and strive to enter in at the strait gate." (Serm. XIX.)

† Gen. xiii. 16.

should be made of none effect.—But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty *.”

* 1 Cor. xvii. 27.

APPENDIX.

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APPENDIX, No. I.

THE following texts illustrate the signification I attach to the word πληρωμα; viz. "The fulness of the perfections of Christ, supplying the deficiencies of his servants;" or sometimes, "the fulness acquired by his servants, whose deficiencies are supplied out of the perfection of Christ."—*τας ενδειας αναπληρουντες.* (Plutarch. Compar. of Lycurgus and Numa.)

John i. 16. *Και εκ του πληρωματος αυτου ημεις παντες ελαβομεν, και χαριν αντι χαριτος.* "And of his fulness have we all received, and grace, or favor from God, bestowed upon us out of his abundant favor towards Jesus Christ."

Rom. xi. 12. *Ει δε το παραπτωμα αυτων πλουτος κοσμου, και το ηττημα αυτων πλουτος εθνων· ποσῳ μαλλον το πληρωμα αυτων;* "If the fall of the Jews hath proved the riches of the world, and their failure the riches of the Gentiles; how much rather their fulness, after that their deficiencies shall have been supplied out of the perfection of Christ."

Eph. i. 23. *Και αυτον εδωκε κεφαλην ὑπερ παντα τη εκκλησια, ἣτις εστι το σωμα αυτου, το πληρωμα του παντα εν πασι πληρουμενου.* "God hath constituted Christ the head over all things to the church, which church is, as it were, his

body, deriving its fulness from him, who filleth all things in all men, supplying their deficiencies out of his perfection."

Eph. iii. 19. *Γνωσαι τε την ὑπερβαλλουσαν της γνωσεως αγαπην του Χριστου, ἵνα πληρωθητε εἰς παν το πληρωμα του Θεου.* "And to comprehend the love of Christ, which surpasseth all comprehension, that ye may be filled, and have your deficiencies completed, to all the fulness of perfection required by God."

Eph. iv. 13. *Μεχρι καταντησωμεν οἱ παντες εἰς την ἐνότητα της πιστεως και της επιγνωσεως του υἱου του Θεου, εἰς ἀνδρα τελειον, εἰς μετρον ἡλικιας του πληρωματος του Χριστου.* "Till we all arrive at the same faith and acknowledgment of the Son of God, at the condition of a perfect man, at an entire measure of the fulness of Christ, having our deficiencies supplied from his perfection." Like that of Phil. i. 11. *Πεπληρωμενοι καρπων δικαιοσυνης των δια Ιησου Χριστου.*

Col. i. 19. *Εν αυτω ευδοκησε παν το πληρωμα κατοικησαι.* "In Christ it pleased God that all fulness and perfection should reside."

Col. ii. 9. *Εν αυτω κατοικει παν το πληρωμα της θεοτητος σωματικως, και εστε εν αυτω πεπληρωμενοι.* "In him resideth all the fulness of godliness substantially, and through him have ye been filled and made perfect."

APPENDIX, No. II.

A VARIETY of texts may be produced both from the Old and New Testament in confirmation of the signification I have given to the word *εις*. “The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one *.” “Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us †?” “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith ‡.” “There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all §.” “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth: for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all ||.” “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one ¶.” In the neuter gender we find it more than once expressed at length, *εν και το αυτο*, “one and the same thing **.” “One and the same spirit ††.”

I have the more insisted upon this, because it enables us to clear up some passages otherwise obscure; as in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians ††, “Now a mediator is not

* Zech. xiv. 9.

† Mal. ii. 10.

‡ Rom. iii. 29.

§ Eph. iv. 4.

|| 1 Tim. ii. 3.

¶ Heb. ii. 11.

** 1 Cor. xi. 5.

†† 1 Cor. xii. 11.

‡‡ Gal. iii. 20.

a mediator of one ; but God is one." That is, Moses is not the mediator of *one common* covenant to Jews and Gentiles ; but God is *one and the same* God to all people. As it is said *, " there is the same Lord over all." Again †, " When Rebecca had conceived by one, &c." the meaning is, having offspring by *one and the same* husband, and so far all equally entitled to the promises made to Isaac. For though Jacob and Esau both sprang from Isaac, to whom the promises were made ; yet of these God did, by his especial will, choose Jacob, from whom Christ should derive his human descent.

APPENDIX, No. III.

Of the beloved Disciple.

Ἦν δὲ ἀνακειμένος εἰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κολπῷ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς †.

Ἰησοῦς οὖν ἰδὼν τὴν μητέρα, καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν παρῆστώτα, ὃν ἠγάπα §.

(Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ) τρέχει οὖν, καὶ ἐρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον, καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν, ὃν ἐφιλεῖ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ||.

Λεγεί οὖν ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς, τῷ Πέτρῳ, ὁ κύριος ἐστὶ ¶.

Ὁ Πέτρος βλέπει τὸν μαθητὴν, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἀκολουθουντα, ὃς καὶ ἀνεπέσεν ἐν τῷ δειπνῷ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ **,.

* Rom. x. 12.

† Rom. ix. 19.

‡ John xiii. 23.

§ John xix. 26.

|| John xx. 2.

¶ John xxi. 7.

** John xxi. 20.

The above are all the passages in which mention is made of the "disciple whom Jesus loved." There is no doubt of this being St. John; and the expression has been supposed to indicate that he enjoyed, in a degree above the other Apostles, the love of Christ, so that in later times he is frequently called "the beloved disciple." That he was admitted to greater familiarity, than some others, may be inferred from his being present at the transfiguration, and some other scenes; but so likewise was Peter, and so was James. These three were in some sort distinguished above the rest, and, as St. Paul says *, "seemed to be pillars," and might therefore with some reason be called the beloved disciples; but there is no reason, that I am aware of, for supposing St. John to have been beloved beyond the other two. And had that been the case, and had it constituted a well known designation of this Apostle then, as it has done since, we might have expected to see it noticed also by some other of the writers of the New Testament, and perhaps by any other rather than St. John. For such is his modesty and reserve, that he seems studiously to avoid any mention of his own name, even in his epistles. And in the same spirit he has suppressed also the name of his mother Salome among the women who went to pay the last offices to the body of Jesus in the sepulchre, though we know by the testimony of the other Evangelists that she was there †. But in fact may not the appellation of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," have a very different signification? a signification more in accordance with the modest character of St.

* Gal. ii. 9.

† See Matt. xxvii. 56. Mark xvi. 6.

John, and (may I add?) more suitable to the divine character of our Saviour; for, as Barrow justly observes *, “God maketh no arbitrary or groundless discriminations. He neither loveth and favoreth, nor loatheth and discountenanceth any person unaccountably. Impartiality is a divine attribute and perfection of God.” But, according to the common acceptation, the expression is hardly elevated above the idea of “a favorite.” I would therefore understand it to mean, “one of the disciples whom, unworthy as he was, Jesus deigned to love.” And if we would know the nature of this love, hear the Apostle’s own explanation; “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him: herein is love, not that we loved him, but that *he loved us*, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins †.” So likewise St. Paul; “the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me*, and gave himself for me ‡.”

Now, St. Paul would have been the last person to arrogate to himself any superior claim to the love of Christ. He calls himself “the least of the Apostles, who was not worthy to be called an Apostle.” But in proportion to his sense of his own unworthiness, so was the sense of his obligation to his Saviour, who had vouchsafed to extend his love to him.

But if it be objected, that the prefixing of the article does still point it out as a distinctive character of St. John, I

* Vol. iii. Serm. 38. fol.

† 1 John iv. 9.

‡ Gal. ii. 20.

would observe, that, where it first occurs, it is not said "the disciple," but "one of the disciples." And the subsequent passages, all relating to the crucifixion, or resurrection, which quickly followed the occasion upon which the expression is first used, probably have reference to that text of John *, and to that only. Therefore in one of these passages it is added, "which also leaned on his breast at supper." But what need of this, unless to explain what otherwise might not have been understood? Thereby tying down the application to the particular time when it was first mentioned. I would propose then to interpret the four last of the five passages, in which alone the expression is found, as pointing out "*him who had before been called the disciple whom Jesus loved;*" loved as his Saviour and Redeemer, who was the propitiation for his sins; in that term the Apostle acknowledging at once his own unworthiness, and the infinite goodness of Christ.

In treating this subject, it ought to be born in remembrance that the word *αγαπη*, and its derivatives, or synonyms, is so frequently used by St. John, as to constitute a marked feature of his style. In his first epistle and fourth chapter, it occurs fifteen times in the space of six verses. And in his Gospel, only a few verses anterior to the first occasion on which it is appropriated to St. John, we find it applied to all the Apostles without distinction, "having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end †." That is, He continued to regard them as the peculiar objects of his care, and by his example to inculcate

* John xiii. 23.

† Ibid. xiii. 1.

the necessity of humility and mutual kindness after that he should cease to dwell among them; for it is said on the occasion of his washing the disciples' feet. Further, it may be observed that an expression very similar to that by which St. John has thought fit to designate himself, is in a former part of his Gospel applied to Lazarus, κυριε, ιδε, ον φιλεις, ασθενει *. Had it been at that time an acknowledged appellation of St. John, as it has been since, this could hardly have been admissible.

APPENDIX, No. IV.

The Order of Events at the last Passover.

ON the Sunday † previous to the Passover, Jesus comes to Bethany, and is entertained at dinner (or supper) by Simon ‡ the leper. There Mary anoints his head § and feet ||.

Monday ¶, Jesus rides into Jerusalem in triumph, and turns out the traders ** from the court of the temple; but returns to Bethany ††, where he lodged. The same day it is probable that Judas Iscariot covenanted with the chief priests ‡‡. (So the Paschal lamb was selected four days before it was killed §§.)

Tuesday |||, Jesus goes again to Jerusalem, and on his way curses the fig-tree. On this and the following day

* John ii. 3. † John xii. i. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 6.

§ Matt. xxvi. 7. || John xii. 2. ¶ John xii. 12.

** Matt. xxi. 12. †† Matt. xxi. 17. ‡‡ Matt. xxvi. 15.

§§ Exod. xii. 3 and 6. ||| Matt. xxi. 18.

must have occurred the discourses related by Matthew *.

Wednesday, Jesus more explicitly foretold his crucifixion †.

Thursday, being the first day of unleavened bread ‡, he sends Peter and John § to make preparation for keeping the festival. The same evening at sun-set began the day of the Preparation ||, when Jesus eats with his Apostles in Jerusalem. Then it was that he washed the Apostles' feet immediately before dinner (or supper); and at that meal instituted the Sacrament, Judas having left the table ¶ to accomplish his treachery. Then followed those affectionate discourses contained in the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John's Gospel. Afterwards Jesus set out, as usual **, on his way towards Bethany; and in a garden called Gethsemane †† on the Mount of Olives ‡‡, through which his path lay, sustains the conflict of his agony, at the conclusion of which he is way-laid by Judas and his company, by whom he is bound, and brought first to the house of Annas §§, thence to Caiaphas the high-priest |||, in whose palace he is detained throughout the night, and exposed to the insults of the servants ¶¶. And there it was that Peter denied him ***.

* Chap. xxi. to Chap. xxvi.

† Matt. xxvi. 2.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 17. (See Grotius.)

§ Luke xxii. 8.

|| John xix. 14. ¶ John xiii. 30.

** Luke xxi. 37.

†† Matt. xxvi. 36. ‡‡ Luke xxii. 39.

§§ John xviii. 13.

||| John xviii. 24. ¶¶ Luke xxii. 63.

*** John xviii. 15.

Friday, as soon as it was day *, the high-priest assembled the Sanhedrim, consisting of the chief priests and elders †, in the temple ‡. There after a mock trial Jesus was found guilty, and at nine o'clock § was taken to Pilate, who having scourged him, sent him to be examined by Herod Antipas, by whose attendants together with the soldiers he was mocked, and arrayed in a royal robe with a crown of thorns ||; and in this condition ¶ he was sent back to Pilate, who about noon ** delivered him up to be crucified. At that time there was darkness over all the land till three †† o'clock in the afternoon, when Jesus expired, it being the hour of the evening sacrifice ‡‡. The same evening, after the burial of Jesus, the Paschal supper was celebrated §§, the day of Preparation having ended with the setting sun.

APPENDIX, No. V.

Of the Resurrection.

PAINS have been taken in other parts of the history of Jesus Christ, as well as those relating to his resurrection and subsequent appearances, to reconcile the order of events,

* Luke xxii. 66. † Matt. xxvi. 59. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 5.

§ Mark xv. 25. (See note on John xix. 14.

|| Luke xxiii. 11. ¶ John xix. 5. ** John xix. 14.

†† Matt. xxvii. 45. ‡‡ Exod. xii. 6. Acts iii. 1.

§§ John xix. 31.

as they have been delivered down by the several Evangelists. But (as was observed on chap. i. 43.) it may be doubted if the sacred writers themselves were at all solicitous about it. They were content to establish the faith of succeeding generations on a foundation never to be shaken, without caring to satisfy their curiosity in matters of little moment, knowing that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;” and being “determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” With minds so disposed, and elevated so far above all excellency of speech, and worldly wisdom, it is not to be wondered if they sometimes employ terms, which, interpreted by the rules of precise language, might convey a meaning that was never contemplated by them. To the passages referred to in the former part of these reflexions in illustration of this, may be added Acts ix. 20, and xvii. 10; in the latter of which places, *ευθεως δια της νυκτος* must, at the soonest, mean “the night after;” and in the former, relating to St. Paul’s preaching at Damascus after his conversion, we have that Apostle’s own testimony, that a period intervened, during which he had retired into Arabia, and again returned to Damascus *. In the same manner, when it is said *και ελεγεν αυτοις †*, it must not be understood that the circumstance which follows, took place immediately after what had just been related, but “at another time ‡.” And this consideration enables us to clear up an apparent disagreement between St. Mark and the other Evangelists respecting the time of the crucifixion. For it is said by

* Gal. i. 17.

† Mark iv. 21.

‡ See Matt. v. 15.

St. Mark *, “it was the third hour, *and* they crucified him.” But Luke and John say, it was “about the sixth hour †.” Therefore, taking these things together, we may reasonably conclude that Mark intended to express, not the time of the crucifixion, but the time when the council of the chief priests and scribes sent Jesus bound to Pilate ‡, and that the word *καί*, *and* they crucified him, means no more than *afterwards* §. Very like to this is that of St. Luke xxiv. 50, *ἐξηγαγε δὲ αὐτοὺς*, “*and* he led them out;” which relating, as it does, to Christ’s ascension, must have taken place a month after the events mentioned in the preceding verses. St. John’s Gospel is open to the same observation. In chapter ii. 13, is related a transaction, which probably happened but a short time before the crucifixion ||, and was only introduced in that place, because it happened on one occasion of Christ’s going up to the Passover, though it was not in fact the same occasion of which the Evangelist is speaking. Of the same kind is the expression *μετὰ ταῦτα*, of which notice was taken before on John i. 43. But enough has been said to shew the want of exactness in the writers of the Gospel history, whose minds were too full of the greatness of their subject, to stoop to the minutiae of language. Their object was to perpetuate the testimony, and deliver down the doctrines of the Gospel uncorrupted to distant ages. For St. Luke, in his introduction, has informed us that many accounts had already

* Mark xv. 25.

† Luke xxiii. 44. John xix. 14.

‡ Mark xv. 1.

§ See note on John xix. 14.

|| See Matt. xxi. 12. Mark xi. 15. Luke xix. 45.

been currently reported, and written, probably not without some mixture of error, in those parts where Christianity had been received. But the order in which the events are related, or the language in which they are transmitted, appears to be no further considered, than was necessary to communicate to the growing church the "certain knowledge of those things, wherein they had been instructed."

It seemed desirable thus to represent the language of the New Testament in what I conceive to be its true character, that we may be the better prepared to understand the accordance and truth of the circumstances relating to the resurrection and subsequent appearances of Christ, as they have been described by the several Evangelists; neither multiplying the scenes unnecessarily upon every apparent variation, or partial omission; nor, on the other hand, pressing into one story such discordant materials, as properly mark distinct transactions. And that the correspondence, or discrepancy, of the several accounts may be the more clearly seen, I have exhibited them side by side, and so briefly, as to be readily comprehended in one view.

MATTHEW XXVIII.	MARK XVI.	LUKE XXIV.	JOHN XX.
1. Mary Magdalene, and Mary wife of Cleophas,	1. Mary Magdalene, and Mary mother of James, and Salome,	10. Mary Magdalene, and Mary mother of James, and Johanna, and others,	1. Mary Magdalene,
to the sepulchre.	to the sepulchre.	to the sepulchre.	to the sepulchre.
5. They see an angel, who bids them tell the disciples that Christ was risen, and would see them in Galilee.	5. They see an angel, who bids them tell the disciples that Christ was risen, and would see them in Galilee.	4. See two angels, who tell them that Jesus was risen, as he had foretold.	
8. They run to inform the disciples.	8. They went out quickly and fled from the sepulchre.	9. They returned from the sepulchre, and told these things to the disciples.	2. She ran to Peter and John, saying, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.
		12. Then arose Peter and ran to the sepulchre, and departed.	3. Then Peter and John ran to the sepulchre, and went away again to their own homes.
			11. But Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping.
			12. She sees two angels, who ask her why she weeps.

9. As they went, Jesus met them; and they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. And he bid them inform the disciples that they should see him in Galilee.
9. Now when Jesus was risen, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene.
12. Appeared again to two disciples as they walked.
13. Two disciples going to Emmaus see Jesus.
13. They went, and told it to the residue, and Jesus appeared to them as they sat at meat.
33. They return to Jerusalem, where Jesus appeared to the Apostles and others assembled together.
19. The same evening he appeared to the disciples assembled together, Thomas being absent.
26. Again after eight days he appeared to them, and to Thomas.
- Chap. xxi. 1. Again at the sea of Tiberias.
16. On a mountain in Galilee.
- 1 Cor. xv. 6. Was seen by above five hundred at once.
7. Then by James.
- Then by all the Apostles.
50. On the day of his ascension near Bethany.
14. Then turning herself back she sees Jesus, who bids her not to cling to him, but to go to the disciples, and tell them he was about to ascend into heaven.

Hence I collect the following series of events respecting the appearances of our Saviour after he rose from the dead.

- Matt. xxviii. 1. The first day after the Jewish Sabbath, as it began to dawn on Sunday morning, came Mary
 Mark xvi. 1. Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleophas,
 Luke xxiv. 1. and Salome, and Johanna, to the sepulchre,
 John xx. 1. bringing spices, which they had provided to anoint the body of Jesus. They found the
 Luke xxiv. 2. stone rolled away from the sepulchre; and entering in they found not the body. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two angels stood by them, like to young men in shining garments. And as they were alarmed, and bowed their faces to the earth, the angels said unto them, "Fear not, ye seek Jesus, which was crucified; he is not here, but is risen, as he said when he was yet in Galilee. But go, tell his disciples, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him." And they departed quickly from the sepulchre, and told all these things, some to one, some to others of the Apostles, but Mary Magdalene to Peter and John, saying, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." Peter therefore and John hastened back together with Mary Magdalene, and came to the sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes lying in the grave. Then those disci-

ples went away again unto their own homes ; but Mary staid behind at the sepulchre weeping. And as she wept, she stooped down, and saw, as before, two angels, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain ; and they say unto her, “ Woman, why weepest thou ? ” She saith unto them, “ Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. ” And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing. And when she knew that it was Jesus, she embraced his feet, and worshipped him. Jesus bid her not to cling to his feet embracing him, but to go to his disciples, and tell them that he must ascend into heaven, but that they should previously see him in Galilee. And Mary Magdalene came and reported to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. This was the first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection. The same day he shewed himself to Peter * and Cleophas on their way to Emmaus ; whence they return promptly to Jerusalem, and find the Apostles and others assembled together, to whom they relate what had passed ; and while they are conversing on these events, Jesus unexpectedly appears amongst them. On the

Matt. xxviii.
9.

John xx. 17.

Matt. xxviii.
10.

Mark xvi. 9.

1 Cor. xv. 5.

Luke xxiv.
13.

* See Appendix, No. VI.

- John xx. 26. Sunday following he again shews himself to them, probably in Galilee. Then at the lake
- John xxi. 1. of Genesareth he appeared to Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two more. Again
- Matt. xxviii. 16. on a mountain of Galilee, where he had appointed the disciples to meet him; and here it
- 1 Cor. xv. 6. is probable he was seen by above five hundred
- 1 Cor. xv. 7. at once. Then he appeared to James; then to
- Luke xxiv. 50. all the Apostles previous to his ascension near
- Acts i. 5. Bethany. Last of all he was seen by St. Paul,
- 1 Cor. xv. 8.
- Acts ix. 5. at the time of his conversion, near Damascus.

Some points require to be more particularly adverted to. As first, that what we read in the 2d, 3d, and 4th verses of St. Matthew's 28th chapter, (respecting the rising of Christ, and the angel, who rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it) though it is not separated in the narration, yet must, from its nature, have been derived from the guard who were there, not from the women who were not there; so that it can with no propriety make a part of their report to the disciples, but ought rather to be regarded as a parenthesis. The angel therefore mentioned in the fifth verse, is not to be confounded with the agent in that previous scene.

2dly. It was before observed * that Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary the mother of James, are one and the same person. She appears to have been sister to Mary the

* Chap. xix. 25.

mother of Jesus *, and is therefore sometimes called “the other Mary †,” to distinguish her.

3dly. What Matthew ‡ has put in the plural number, as if Jesus had been seen by all the women, who went to the sepulchre, is by St. John related of Mary Magdalene alone ; because Matthew having been previously speaking of several women, was not afterwards careful to distinguish what properly applied only to one of them. On the other hand, John, in his relation of the circumstances which followed the resurrection, hastening to give an account of Christ’s first appearance to Mary Magdalene, has omitted to mention the other women, who certainly went with her to the sepulchre, and thence to the Apostles, but may be supposed to have returned to their homes after relating what they had seen and heard. Several instances of similar inaccuracies have already been produced §, to which may be added what Mark relates ||, that “one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, *Let alone, &c.*” but this must, from the nature of the circumstances, have been the observation, not of the person himself who presented the vinegar, but of others who were standing near, as Matthew rightly represents it.

4thly. The following are the only discordances of any moment in the relations of the different Evangelists ; some of which have already been explained, and the rest admit of answers equally satisfactory. 1. Matthew does not distinguish between the angel who opened the sepulchre, and the

* John xix. 25. † Matt. xxvii. 61. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 9.

§ Page 160.

|| Mark xv. 36.

two angels who, St. Luke says, were seen in the sepulchre. 2. Mark, in relating the same event, mentions one angel, and not two ; which may be because one only addressed the women. 3. Luke takes notice of Peter alone running to the sepulchre ; though we know from John himself that he also went with him. 4. From Matthew it would seem as if all the women had seen Jesus ; while Mark and John with more accuracy inform us that it was Mary Magdalene alone. 5. Though John, from his silence about the other women, might lead us to suppose that Mary Magdalene had alone gone at day break to the sepulchre, and thence to the Apostles ; yet it is observable that on this occasion he represents her as speaking in the plural number, “ They have taken the Lord out of the sepulchre, and *we* know not where they have laid him.” But on a subsequent occasion, when she was left alone with the angels in the sepulchre, she uses nearly the same words, excepting that she now says “ *I* know not, &c.” And this difference may probably not be undesigned. On the supposition that, while others of the women proceeded to other disciples, Mary Magdalene alone came to Peter and John, it is most natural for the Evangelist to give the report which he had himself received. There is a propriety in the repetition of the same terms, (of which notice was taken in the case of the two sisters on the subject of Lazarus’s death *), arising from its being the expression of the same feelings strongly predominant in the mind of the same individual. 6. It might be supposed from Matthew’s account †, not only that all the women had seen

* John xi. 32.

† Matt. xxviii. 9.

Jesus at his first appearance, but that the single injunction to them was to bid the Apostles go into Galilee, where they should see him : on the other hand, from John it might be inferred that Mary Magdalene alone had seen him, and that he had given her a very different message to the Apostles, namely, that he was going into heaven. Yet there is reason to believe that these are but descriptions of one and the same occurrence. For it is nothing extraordinary that one Evangelist should mention one circumstance, and one another ; nay, it were rather to be expected, if we believe that St. John's Gospel was intended to be supplementary to the others. But that in this instance Matthew and John are speaking of one occurrence, is rendered highly probable from the correspondence between Matthew, when he says, "they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him ;" and John, "Touch me not ;" that is, Do not hold me by the feet worshipping me. Respecting the different messages said to be given by Christ, I conclude that both are true ; that he desired his Apostles might be told to go into Galilee, where they should see him ; and also, that he was to ascend into heaven, there to establish a kingdom into which they might be admitted. The identity of these relations derives some additional confirmation from the introduction of the same word *ἀδελφοίς* into both texts in a very unusual signification.

APPENDIX, No. VI.

*Of the Disciples going to Emmaus *.*

SEVERAL reasons may be produced for believing that Peter was one of the two disciples who went to Emmaus. For, 1st. It is so asserted by Origen †. 2dly. If Peter was not with Cleophas upon this occasion, then Jesus must have shewn himself to Peter elsewhere at the very time that we hear of his going to Emmaus. For St. Paul informs us that Peter saw him before the other Apostles ‡; and had it been before the disciples set out to Emmaus, it is to be presumed they must have known it. 3dly. St. Mark observes that the disciples assembled at Jerusalem did not credit the report of Cleophas, and the other, respecting the resurrection of Jesus §; yet St. Luke represents them as informing the two disciples, on their return, that Jesus was certainly risen, and had appeared to Peter. Now, suppose only that Peter had been with Cleophas, and that they had hastily announced it as soon as they came in, and before they entered upon the detail of the circumstances ||, and nothing can be more natural than this expression of the other disci-

* Luke xxiv. 13. † Contra Cels. p. 98 and 102. Ed. Camb.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 5. § Mark xvi. 13.

|| A similar address upon first entering must be supposed in the case of Mary Magdalene, when she hastily tells the Apostles that Christ's body was removed from the sepulchre, they know not whither (John xx. 2.). For though no more is expressed, yet we may presume that she went on to deliver the message of the angels, with which the women were charged. (Matt. xxviii. 7.)

ples, who, while they labored under the same doubts as Thomas *, yet struck with this increasing evidence, exclaim, "Christ then is risen indeed, and has appeared to Peter !" the authority of Peter staggering their incredulity. The reason why Cleophas's name is mentioned by St. Luke, and not Peter's, is evidently because Cleophas was the speaker upon that occasion †; and for this an obvious cause suggests itself in Peter's being yet abashed by the sense of his denial. 4thly. If Mark's Gospel be indeed derived from Peter, as is commonly supposed, it is hardly credible that a circumstance so peculiarly interesting to that Apostle, as his Lord's first appearance to him after his resurrection, could have been wholly omitted; which however is the case, unless we suppose it to be comprehended in Mark xvi. 12. "After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." 5thly and lastly. In the Beza Manuscript we find λεγοντες, instead of λεγοντας ‡; which, if it be the true reading, would make the two disciples inform the others, not hear from them, that "Christ had been seen by Peter, so that there could be no longer any doubt about the reality of his resurrection."

* Luke xxiv. 38.

† Luke xxiv. 18.

‡ Luke xxiv. 33.

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