

JOHN

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOHN

The author of this Gospel is John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, the brother of James the greater; he outlived the rest of the disciples, and wrote this Gospel after the other evangelists; and in it many things are recorded, which are not in the other Gospels; as various discourses of Christ, and miracles done by him; several incidents in his life, and circumstances that attended his sufferings and death: the occasion of it is generally thought to be the errors of Ebion and Cerinthus, who denied the divinity of Christ, asserted he was a mere man, and that he did not exist before his incarnation; and the design of it is to confute them: and it is easy to observe, that he begins his Gospel with the divinity of Christ; asserts him to be God, and proves him to be truly and properly so, by the works of creation, which were wrought by him, as well as shows that he was really man. Clemens ^{f1} calls this Gospel of John, *πνευματικὸν εὐαγγέλιον* “a spiritual Gospel”, as indeed it is; consisting of the spiritual discourses of our Lord, on various occasions, both at the beginning, and in the course of his ministry, and especially a little before his sufferings and death: and the same writer observes, that John, the last of the evangelists, considering that in the other Gospels were declared the things relating to the body of Christ, that is, to him, as he was after the flesh; to his genealogy and birth as man; to what was done to him, or by him, in his infancy; to his baptism, temptations, journeys, etc. at the request of his familiar friends, and moved by the Spirit of God, composed this Gospel. Moreover, it is observed by some ^{f2}, that the other three evangelists only record what was done by Christ, in one year after John the Baptist was cast into prison, as appears from (◀002▶Matthew 4:12, ◀014▶Mark 1:14 ◀033▶Luke 3:20) wherefore John, at the entreaty of his friends, put these things into his Gospel, which were done or said by Christ, before John was cast into prison. He was called very early by Christ, though young; and was with him throughout the whole of his ministry, and was an eye and ear witness of what he here relates, and his testimony is to be received; he was the beloved disciple, he

leaned on the bosom of Jesus, and had great intimacy with him; and might be privy to some things, which others were not acquainted with; and though he was a Galilean, and an unlearned man, (~~Acts~~ Acts 4:13) yet being endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he was abundantly qualified to write this book: for what some ancient writers^{f3} say of him, that he was a priest, and wore a plate, that is, of gold upon his forehead, cannot be true, since he was not of the tribe of Levi; and besides, only the high priest wore that upon his mitre; unless they mean, as seems most likely, that he was a Christian bishop: perhaps the mistake may arise from John the Baptist, who was of the priestly order, and is called by some Jewish writers^{f4}, John the high priest. When and where this Gospel was written, is not certain; some say in^{f5} Asia, after he had wrote his Revelation in Patmos; and others say particularly, that it was wrote at Ephesus; the title of it in the Syriac version, signifies much, which runs thus;

“the holy Gospel, the preaching of John, which he spoke and published in Greek at Ephesus.”

And to the same purpose is the title of it in the Persic version;

“the Gospel of John, one of the twelve apostles, which was spoken in the city of Ephesus, in the Greek Roman tongue.”

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN 1

Ver. 1. *In the beginning was the word*, etc.] That this is said not of the written word, but of the essential word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is clear, from all that is said from hence, to (~~JOHN~~ John 1:14) as that this word was in the beginning, was with God, and is God; from the creation of all things being ascribed to him, and his being said to be the life and light of men; from his coming into the world, and usage in it; from his bestowing the privilege of adoption on believers; and from his incarnation; and also there is a particular application of all this to Christ, (~~JOHN~~ John 1:15-18). And likewise from what this evangelist elsewhere says of him, when he calls him the word of life, and places him between the Father and the Holy Ghost; and speaks of the record of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, as the same thing; and represents him as a warrior and conqueror, (~~JOHN~~ 1 John 1:1,2,7 ~~REVELATION~~ Revelation 1:2,9 19:11-16). Moreover this appears to be spoken of Christ, from what other inspired writers have said of him, under the same character; as the Evangelist Luke, (~~LUKE~~ Luke 1:2), the Apostle Paul, (~~ACTS~~ Acts 20:32 ~~HEBREWS~~ Hebrews 4:12) and the Apostle Peter, (~~2 PETER~~ 2 Peter 3:5). And who is called the word, not as man; for as man he was not in the beginning with God, but became so in the fullness of time; nor is the man God; besides, as such, he is a creature, and not the Creator, nor is he the life and light of men; moreover, he was the word, before he was man, and therefore not as such: nor can any part of the human nature be so called; not the flesh, for the word was made flesh; nor his human soul, for self-subsistence, deity, eternity, and the creation of all things, can never be ascribed to that; but he is the word as the Son of God, as is evident from what is here attributed to him, and from the word being said to be so, as in (~~JOHN~~ John 1:14,18) and from those places, where the word is explained by the Son, compare (~~1 JOHN~~ 1 John 5:5,7 ~~MATTHEW~~ Matthew 28:19). And is so called from his nature, being begotten of the Father; for as the word, whether silent or expressed, is the birth of the mind, the image of it, equal to it, and distinct from it; so Christ is the only begotten of the Father, the express image of his person, in all things equal to him, and a distinct person from him: and he may be so called, from some action, or actions, said of him, or

ascribed to him; as that he spoke for, and on the behalf of the elect of God, in the eternal council and covenant of grace and peace; and spoke all things out of nothing, in creation; for with regard to those words so often mentioned in the history of the creation, and God said, may Jehovah the Son be called the word; also he was spoken of as the promised Messiah, throughout the whole Old Testament dispensation; and is the interpreter of his Father's mind, as he was in Eden's garden, as well as in the days of his flesh; and now speaks in heaven for the saints. The phrase, *yvd armyym*, "the word of the Lord", so frequently used by the Targumists, is well known: and it is to be observed, that the same things which John here says of the word, they say likewise, as will be observed on the several clauses; from whence it is more likely, that John should take this phrase, since the paraphrases of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel were written before his time, than that he should borrow it from the writings of Plato, or his followers, as some have thought; with whose philosophy, Ebion and Cerinthus are said to be acquainted; wherefore John, the more easily to gain upon them, uses this phrase, when that of the Son of God would have been disagreeable to them: that there is some likeness between the Evangelist John and Plato in their sentiments concerning the word, will not be denied. Amelius^{f6}, a Platonic philosopher, who lived after the times of John, manifestly refers to these words of his, in agreement with his master's doctrine: his words are these;

"and this was truly "Logos", or the word, by whom always existing, the things that are made, were made, as also Heraclitus thought; and who, likewise that Barbarian (meaning the Evangelist John) reckons was in the order and dignity of the beginning, constituted with God, and was God, by whom all things are entirely made; in whom, whatsoever is made, lives, and has life, and being; and who entered into bodies, and was clothed with flesh, and appeared a man; so notwithstanding, that he showed forth the majesty of his nature; and after his dissolution, he was again deified, and was God, as he was before he descended into a body, flesh and man."

In which words it is easy to observe plain traces of what the evangelist says in the first four verses, and in the fourteenth verse of this chapter; yet it is much more probable, that Plato had his notion of the Logos, or word, out of the writings of the Old Testament, than that John should take this phrase, or what he says concerning the word, from him; since it is a matter of fact not disputed, that Plato went into Egypt to get knowledge: not only

Clemens Alexandrinus a Christian writer says, that he was a philosopher of the Hebrews^{f7}, and understood prophecy^{f8}, and stirred up the fire of the Hebrew philosophy^{f9}; but it is affirmed by Heathen writers, that he went into Egypt to learn of the priests^{f10}, and to understand the rites of the prophets^{f11}; and Aristobulus, a Jew, affirms^{f12}, he studied their law; and Numenius, a Pythagoric philosopher^{f13}, charges him with stealing what he wrote, concerning God and the world, out of the books of Moses; and used to say to him, what is Plato, but Moses “Atticising?” or Moses speaking Greek: and Eusebius^{f14}, an ancient Christian writer, points at the very places, from whence Plato took his hints: wherefore it is more probable, that the evangelist received this phrase of the word, as a divine person, from the Targums, where there is such frequent mention made of it; or however, there is a very great agreement between what he and these ancient writings of the Jews say of the word, as will be hereafter shown. Moreover, the phrase is frequently used in like manner, in the writings of Philo the Jew; from whence it is manifest, that the name was well known to the Jews, and may be the reason of the evangelist’s using it. This word, he says, was in the beginning; by which is meant, not the Father of Christ; for he is never called the beginning, but the Son only; and was he, he must be such a beginning as is without one; nor can he be said to be so, with respect to the Son or Spirit, who are as eternal as himself; only with respect to the creatures, of whom he is the author and efficient cause: Christ is indeed in the Father, and the Father in him, but this cannot be meant here; nor is the beginning of the Gospel of Christ, by the preaching of John the Baptist, intended here: John’s ministry was an evangelical one, and the Gospel was more clearly preached by him, and after him, by Christ and his apostles, than before; but it did not then begin; it was preached before by the angel to the shepherds, at the birth of Christ; and before that, by the prophets under the former dispensation, as by Isaiah, and others; it was preached before unto Abraham, and to our first parents, in the garden of Eden: nor did Christ begin to be, when John began to preach; for John’s preaching and baptism were for the manifestation of him: yea, Christ existed as man, before John began to preach; and though he was born after him as man, yet as the Word and Son of God, he existed before John was born; he was in being in the times of the prophets, which were before John; and in the times of Moses, and before Abraham, and in the days of Noah: but by the beginning is here meant, the beginning of the world, or the creation of all things; and which is expressive of the eternity of Christ, he was in the beginning, as the Maker of all creatures, and therefore must be

before them all: and it is to be observed, that it is said of him, that in the beginning he was; not made, as the heavens and earth, and the things in them were; nor was he merely in the purpose and predestination of God, but really existed as a divine person, as he did from all eternity; as appears from his being set up in office from everlasting; from all the elect being chosen in him, and given to him before the foundation of the world; from the covenant of grace, which is from eternity, being made with him; and from the blessings and promises of grace, being as early put into his hands; and from his nature as God, and his relation to his Father: so Philo the Jew often calls the Logos, or word, the eternal word, the most ancient word, and more ancient than any thing that is made^{f15}. The eternity of the Messiah is acknowledged by the ancient Jews: (~~388D~~ Micah 5:2) is a full proof of it; which by them^{f16} is thus paraphrased;

“out of thee, before me, shall come forth the Messiah, that he may exercise dominion over Israel; whose name is said from eternity, from the days of old.”

Jarchi upon it only mentions (~~3927~~ Psalm 72:17) which is rendered by the Targum on the place, before the sun his name was prepared; it may be translated, “before the sun his name was Yinnon”; that is, the Son, namely the Son of God; and Aben Ezra interprets it, *ḥ b arqy*, “he shall be called the son”; and to this agrees what the Talmudis say^{f17}, that the name of the Messiah was before the world was created; in proof of which they produce the same passage.

And the word was with God; not with men or angels; for he was before either of these; but with God, not essentially, but personally considered; with God his Father: not in the Socinian sense, that he was only known to him, and to no other before the ministry of John the Baptist; for he was known and spoken of by the angel Gabriel before; and was known to Mary and to Joseph; and to Zacharias and Elisabeth; to the shepherds, and to the wise men; to Simeon and Anna, who saw him in the temple; and to the prophets and patriarchs in all ages, from the beginning of the world: but this phrase denotes the existence of the word with the Father, his relation and nearness to him, his equality with him, and particularly the distinction of his person from him, as well as his eternal being with him; for he was always with him, and is, and ever will be; he was with him in the council and covenant of grace, and in the creation of the universe, and is with him in the providential government of the world; he was with him as the word

and Son of God in heaven, whilst he as man, was here on earth; and he is now with him, and ever will be: and as John here speaks of the word, as a distinct person from God the Father, so do the Targums, or Chaldee paraphrases; (^{<B01>}Psalm 110:1) “the Lord said to my Lord”, is rendered, “the Lord said to his word”; where he is manifestly distinguished from Jehovah, that speaks to him; and in (^{<B07>}Hosea 1:7) the Lord promises to “have mercy on the house of Judah”, and “save them by the Lord their God”. The Targum is, “I will redeem them by the word of the Lord their God”; where the word of the Lord, who is spoken of as a Redeemer and Saviour, is distinguished from the Lord, who promises to save by him. This distinction of Jehovah and his word, may be observed in multitudes of places, in the Chaldee paraphrases, and in the writings of Philo the Jew; and this phrase, of “the word” being “with God”, is in the Targums expressed by, $\mu\delta\text{q} \hat{m} \text{rmy}\text{m}$, “the word from before the Lord”, or “which is before the Lord”: being always in his presence, and the angel of it; so Onkelos paraphrases (^{<B22>}Genesis 31:22) “and the word from before the Lord, came to Laban”, etc. and (^{<B19>}Exodus 20:19) thus, “and let not the word from before the Lord speak with us, lest we die”; for so it is read in the King of Spain’s Bible; and wisdom, which is the same with the word of God, is said to be by him, or with him, in (^{<B06>}Proverbs 8:1-36 30:1-33) agreeably to which John here speaks. John makes use of the word God, rather than Father, because the word is commonly called the word of God, and because of what follows;

and the word was God; not made a God, as he is said here after to be made flesh; nor constituted or appointed a God, or a God by office; but truly and properly God, in the highest sense of the word, as appears from the names by which he is called; as Jehovah, God, our, your, their, and my God, God with us, the mighty God, God over all, the great God, the living God, the true God, and eternal life; and from his perfections, and the whole fulness of the Godhead that dwells in him, as independence, eternity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence; and from his works of creation and providence, his miracles, the work of redemption, his forgiving sins, the resurrection of himself and others from the dead, and the administration of the last judgment; and from the worship given him, as prayer to him, faith in him, and the performance of baptism in his name: nor is it any objection to the proper deity of Christ, that the article is here wanting; since when the word is applied to the Father, it is not always used, and even in this chapter, (^{<B06>}John 1:6,13,18) and which shows, that

the word “God”, is not the subject, but the predicate of this proposition, as we render it: so the Jews often use the word of the Lord for Jehovah, and call him God. Thus the words in (⁽⁻⁰²⁸⁰⁾Genesis 28:20,21) are paraphrased by Onkelos;

“if “the word of the Lord” will be my help, and will keep me, etc.
then “the word of the Lord” shall be, **ahl al yl** , “my God” :”

again, (⁽⁻⁰³⁰²⁾Leviticus 26:12) is paraphrased, by the Targum ascribed to Jonathan Ben Uzziel, thus;

“I will cause the glory of my Shekinah to dwell among you, and my word shall “be your God”, the Redeemer;”

once more, (⁽⁻⁰³¹⁷⁾Deuteronomy 26:17) is rendered by the Jerusalem Targum after this manner;

“ye have made “the word of the Lord” king over you this day, that he may be your God:”

and this is frequent with Philo the Jew, who says, the name of God is his word, and calls him, my Lord, the divine word; and affirms, that the most ancient word is God ^{f18}.

Ver. 2. *The same was in the beginning with God.*] This is a repetition of what is before said, and is made to show the importance of the truths before delivered; namely, the eternity of Christ, his distinct personality, and proper deity; and that the phrase, in the beginning, is to be joined to each of the above sentences; and so proves, not only his eternal existence, but his eternal existence with the Father, and also his eternal deity; and is also made to carry on the thread of the discourse, concerning the word, and not God the Father; and to express, not only his co-existence in nature, but his co-operation in the works of creation next mentioned.

Ver. 3. *All things were made by him,* etc.] Which is a proof at once of all that is said before; as that he was in the beginning; and that he was with God the Father in the beginning; and that he was God; otherwise all things could not have been made by him, had either of these been untrue: which is to be understood, not of the new creation; for this would be a restraining “all” things to a “few” persons only; nor is it any where said, that all things are new made, but made; and it is false, that all were converted, that have been converted, by the ministry of Christ, as man: all men are not renewed,

regenerated, nor reformed; and the greater part of those that were renewed, were renewed before Christ existed, as man; and therefore could not be renewed by him, as such: though indeed, could this sense be established, it would not answer the end for which it is coined; namely, to destroy the proof of Christ's deity, and of his existence before his incarnation; for in all ages, from the beginning of the world, some have been renewed; and the new creation is a work of God, and of almighty power, equally with the old; for who can create spiritual light, infuse a principle of spiritual life, take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh, or produce faith, but God? Regeneration is denied to be of man, and is always ascribed to God; nor would Christ's being the author of the new creation, be any contradiction to his being the author of the old creation, which is intended here: by "all things", are meant the heaven, and all its created inhabitants, the airy, stary, and third heavens, and the earth, and all therein, the sea, and every thing that is in that; and the word, or Son of God, is the efficient cause of all these, not a bare instrument of the formation of them; for the preposition by does not always denote an instrument, but sometimes an efficient, as in (~~BOOK~~1 Corinthians 1:9, ~~BOOK~~2 Corinthians 1:1, ~~BOOK~~Galatians 1:1) and so here, though not to the exclusion of the Father, and of the Spirit:

and without him was not any thing made that was made: in which may be observed the conjunct operation of the word, or Son, with the Father, and Spirit, in creation; and the extent of his concern in it to every thing that is made; for without him there was not one single thing in the whole compass of the creation made; and the limitation of it to things that are made; and so excludes the uncreated being, Father, Son, and Spirit; and sin also, which is not a principle made by God, and which has no efficient, but a deficient cause. So the Jews ascribe the creation of all things to the word. The Targumists attribute the creation of man, in particular, to the word of God: it is said in (~~BOOK~~Genesis 1:27). "God created man in his own image": the Jerusalem Targum of it is,

"and the word of the Lord created man in his likeness."

And (~~BOOK~~Genesis 3:22) "and the Lord God said, behold the man is become as one of us", the same Targum paraphrases thus;

"and the word of the Lord God said, behold the man whom I have created, is the only one in the world."

Also in the same writings, the creation of all things in general is ascribed to the word: the passage in (^{<RSZ>}Deuteronomy 33:27) “the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”, is paraphrased by Onkelos,

“the eternal God is an habitation, by whose word the world was made.”

In (^{<SHB>}Isaiah 48:13) it is said, “mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth”. The Targum of Jonathan ben Uziah on it is,

“yea, by my word I have founded the earth:”

which agrees with what is said in (^{<SHB>}Hebrews 11:3, ^{<GRZ>}2 Peter 3:7,5), and the same says Philo the Jew, who not only calls him the archetype, and exemplar of the world, but the power that made it: he often ascribes the creation of the heavens, and the earth unto him, and likewise the creation of man after whose image, he says, he was made^{f19}. The Ethiopic version adds, at the end of this verse, “and also that which is made is for himself”.

Ver. 4. *In him was life*, etc.] The Persic version reads in the plural number, “lives”. There was life in the word with respect to himself; a divine life, the same with the life of the Father and of the Spirit; and is in him, not by gift, nor by derivation or communication; but originally, and independently, and from all eternity: indeed he lived before his incarnation as Mediator, and Redeemer. Job knew him in his time, as his living Redeemer; but this regards him as the word and living God, and distinguishes him from the written word, and shows that he is not a mere idea in the divine mind, but a truly divine person: and there was life in Christ the word, with respect to others; the fountain of natural life is in him, he is the efficient cause, and preserver of it; whether vegetative, animal, or rational; and proves him to be truly God, and that he existed before his incarnation; since creatures, who have received such a life from him, did: and spiritual life was also in him; all his elect are dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot quicken themselves. Christ has procured life for them, and gives it to them, and implants it in them; a life of sanctification is from him; and a life of justification is upon him, and of faith is by him; all the comforts of a spiritual life, and all things appertaining to it, are from him, and he maintains, and preserves it. Eternal life is in him, and with him; not the purpose of it only, nor the promise of it barely, but the gift of it itself; which was granted in consequence of his asking it, and which he had by

way of stipulation; and hence has a right and power to bestow it: now, this being in him proves him to be the true God, and shows us where life is to be had, and the safety and security of it:

and the life was the light of men; the life which was in, and by the word, was, with respect to men, a life of light, or a life attended with light: by which is meant, not a mere visive faculty, receptive of the sun's light, but rational knowledge and understanding; for when Christ, the word, breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul, he filled him with rational light and knowledge. Adam had a knowledge of God; of his being, and perfections; of the persons in the Trinity; of his relation to God, dependence on him, and obligation to him; of his mind and will; and knew what it was to have communion with him. He knew much of himself, and of all the creatures; this knowledge was natural and perfect in its kind, but loseable; and different from that which saints now have of God, through Christ, the Mediator; and since this natural light was from Christ, the word, as a Creator, he must be the eternal God. The Socinians are not willing to allow this sense, but say that Christ is the light of men, by preaching the heavenly doctrine, and by the example of his holy life; but hereby he did not enlighten every man that cometh into the world; the greatest part of men, before the preaching, and example of Christ, sat in darkness; and the greatest part of the Jews remained in darkness, notwithstanding his preaching, and example; and the patriarchs that were enlightened under the former dispensation, were not enlightened this way: it will be owned, that all spiritual and supernatural light, which any of the sons of men have had, since the fall, was from Christ, from whom they had their spiritual life; even all spiritual light in conversion, and all after degrees of light; through him they enjoyed the light of God's countenance, and had the light of joy and gladness here, and of glory hereafter.

Ver. 5. *And the light shineth in darkness*, etc.] Which, through sin, came upon the minds of men; who are naturally in the dark about the nature and perfections of God; about sin, and the consequences of it; about Christ, and salvation by him; about the Spirit of God, and his work upon the soul; and about the Scriptures of truth, and the doctrines of the Gospel. Man was created a knowing creature, but, not content with his knowledge, sins, and is banished from the presence of God, the fountain of light; which brought a darkness on him, and his posterity, and which is increased in them by personal iniquity, and in which Satan, the god of this world, has an hand; and sometimes they are left to judicial blindness, and which issues in worse

darkness, if grace prevents not: now amidst this darkness there were some remains of the light of nature: with respect to the being of God, which shines in the works of creation and providence and to the worship of God, though very dimly; and to the knowledge of moral good and evil:

and the darkness comprehended it not; or “perceived it not”; as the Syriac version renders it. By the light of nature, and the remains of it, men could not come to any clear and distinct knowledge of the above things; and much less to any knowledge of the true way of salvation: unless, rather by the light should be meant, the light of the Messiah, or of the Gospel shining in the figures, types, and shadows of the law, and in the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament: and yet, such was the darkness upon the minds of men, that they could not very distinctly apprehend it, and much less fully comprehend it, so that there was need of a fresh and fuller revelation; an account of which follows;

Ver. 6. *There was a man sent from God*, etc.] John the Baptist: he was not the Logos, or word; nor was he an angel, but a man; yet an extraordinary one, in his conception of a barren woman, and in being born when both parents were stricken in years; and whilst he was in the womb, he leaped for joy at the salutation of Mary; and as soon as born was filled with the Holy Ghost; and when he was grown up, and appeared in public, it was in an uncommon manner: his dress and his diet were both out of the common way; and his temper and spirit were that of Elias the prophet; and as for his work and office, it was very peculiar; he was the forerunner of Christ, and the first administrator of the new ordinance of baptism, and the greatest of all the prophets: this person had his mission from God, both to preach and baptize:

whose name was John; the name given him by the angel before his conception, and by his mother Elisabeth, after her neighbours and cousins had given him another; and which was confirmed by his father Zacharias, when deaf and dumb: it signifies grace, or gracious; and a gracious man he was; he was very acceptable to his parents; a man that had the grace of God in him, and great gifts of grace bestowed on him; he was a preacher of the doctrines of grace; and his ministry was very grateful to many.

Ver. 7. *The same came for a witness*, etc.] The end of his being sent, and the design of his coming were,

to bear witness of the light: by which is meant, not the light of nature, or reason; nor the light of the Gospel: but Christ himself, the author of light, natural, spiritual, and eternal. This was one of the names of the Messiah with the Jews; of whom they say ^{f20}, *wmç aryhn*, “light is his name”; as it is said in (²⁰²²Daniel 2:22) and the light dwelleth with him; on which they have ^{f21} elsewhere this gloss, this is the King Messiah; and so they interpret (⁹⁸⁸Psalm 43:3) of him ^{f22}. Philo the Jew often speaks of the Logos, or word, as light, and calls him the intelligible light; the universal light, the most perfect light; represents him as full of divine light; and says, he is called the sun ^{f23}. Now John came to bear a testimony to him, as he did; of which an account is given in this chapter, very largely, and elsewhere; as that he testified of his existence before his incarnation; of his being with the Father, and in his bosom: of his deity and divine sonship; of his being the Messiah; of the fulness of grace that was in him; of his incarnation and satisfaction; of his descent from heaven; and of his relation to his church, as in (⁴⁰¹⁵John 1:15,16,18,23,27,29,30,34,36 3:29,31) the end of which witness was,

that all men through him might believe; that is, that the Jews, to whom he preached, might, through his testimony, believe that Jesus was the light, and true Messiah; for these words are to be taken in a limited sense, and not to be extended, to every individual of mankind; since millions were dead before John began his testimony, and multitudes then in being, and since, whom it never reached: nor can it design more than the Jews, to whom alone he bore witness of Christ; and the faith which he taught, and required by his testimony, was an assent unto him as the Messiah; though the preaching of the Gospel is a means of true spiritual faith in Christ; and doubtless it was so to many, as preached by John: it points out the object of faith, and encourages souls to believe in Christ; and hence, Gospel ministers are instruments by whom others believe; and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and then is it, considerable end of the Gospel ministry answered.

Ver. 8. *He was not that light,* etc.] He was a light; he was the forerunner of the sun of righteousness, the “phosphorus” of the Gospel day; he had great light in him; he knew that the Messiah was ready to come, and declared it; and upon his baptism he knew him personally, and signified him to others: he had great light into the person and work of Christ; and into the way of salvation by him, and remission of sins through him; into the doctrines of faith in Christ, and of evangelical repentance towards God;

and into the abolition of the legal Mosaic and Jewish dispensation; and was an instrument of giving light to others; yea, he was a burning and shining light, in whose light the Jews rejoiced, at least for a season: but then he was not that light, the word and wisdom of God; that uncreated light that dwelt with him from all eternity; nor that which was the light of men, from the creation; nor that light, which was of old promised to the saints and patriarchs of the Old Testament, and shone in the ordinances and predictions of that state; nor that fountain and giver of light, of every sort, to men; not that light in which is no darkness, and always shines; not that true light, or sun of righteousness, the Messiah, or that lightens every man that comes into the world:

but was sent to bear witness of that light; which is repeated, to distinguish him from that light; to show what he was sent for, and that he acted according to his mission; and to express the honourableness to his work.

Ver. 9. *That was the true light*, etc.] Christ is that light, that famous and excellent light, the fountain of all light to all creatures; that gave light to the dark earth at first, and spoke light out of darkness; that light of all men in the earth, and of all the angels in heaven, and of all the saints below, and of all the glorified ones above: he is the true light, in distinction from typical lights; the “Urim” of the former dispensation; the candlestick, with the lamps of it; the pillar of fire which directed the Israelites by night in the wilderness; and from all the typical light there was in the institutions and sacrifices of the law; and in opposition to the law itself, which the Jews^{f24} magnify, and cry up as the light, saying, there is no light but the law; and in opposition to all false lights, as priests, diviners, and soothsayers among the Gentiles, Scribes, and Pharisees, and the learned Rabbins among the Jews, so much boasted of as the lights of the world; and to all false Christs and prophets that have risen, or shall rise, in the world.

Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world: the sense is, either that every man that is enlightened in a spiritual manner, is enlightened by him, which is true of Christ, as the Son of God, existing from the beginning; but not in the Socinian sense, as if they were enlightened by his human ministry and example; for the Old Testament saints were not enlightened by his preaching; and many were enlightened by the ministry of John the Baptist; and multitudes afterwards, through the ministry of the apostles; and very few, comparatively, were enlightened under the ministry of Christ; and none we read of, in this sense, enlightened by him, when, and

as soon as they came into, the world: or, the meaning is, that he is that light which lighteth all sorts of men; which is true in, a spiritual sense: some connect the phrase, “that cometh into the world”, not with “every man”, but with the “true light”; and the Arabic version so reads, and joins it to the following verse; but this reading is not so natural and the order of the words requires the common reading; nor is the difficulty removed hereby; for still it is every man that is enlightened: it is best therefore to understand these words of the light of nature, and reason, which Christ, as the word, and Creator and light of men, gives to every man that is born into the world; and which serves to detect the Quakers’ notion of the light within, which every man has, and is no other than the light of a natural conscience; and shows how much men, even natural men, are obliged to Christ, and how great a person he is, and how deserving of praise, honour, and glory. The phrase, “every man that cometh into the world”, is Jewish, and often to be met with in Rabbinical writings, and signifies all men that are born into the world; the instances are almost innumerable; take one or two: on those words in (~~ⲕⲉⲧⲃ~~ Job 25:3) on whom doth not his light arise? it is asked ^{f25}, who is he that cometh,

“ⲡⲓ ⲱⲓ yab I km, “of all that come into the world”; and says, the sun hath not lightened me by day, nor hath the moon lightened me by night! thou enlightenest those above, and those below, and “all that come into the world”.”

Again, God is introduced thus speaking ^{f26}:

“I am the God, ⲡⲓ ⲱⲓ yab I kl , “of all that come into the world”; and I have not united my name, but to the people of Israel.”

Once more ^{f27},

“Moses, our master, from the mouth of power, (i.e. God; (see ~~ⲕⲓⲙⲁ~~ Matthew 26:64.) commanded to oblige, ⲡⲓ ⲱⲓ h yab I k ta, “all that come into the world”, to receive the commandments which were commanded the sons of Noah.”

Ver. 10. *He was in the world*, etc.] This is to be understood, not of his incarnation; for the word was denotes past existence in the world, even all the time past from the creation of the world; and the world intends the world in general, as opposed to Judea, and the people of the Jews in the next verse; besides, the incarnation of the word is spoken of in (~~ⲕⲓⲙⲁ~~ John

1:14) as a new and distinct thing from this: but of his being in the world, when first made, and since, by his essence, by which he fills the whole world; and by his power, upholding and preserving it; and by his providence, ordering and managing all the affairs of it, and influencing and governing all things in it: he was in it as the light and life of it, giving natural life and light to creatures in it, and filling it, and them, with various blessings of goodness; and he was in the promise and type before, as well as after the Jews were distinguished from other nations, as his peculiar people; and he was frequently visible in the world, in an human form, before his incarnation, as in Eden's garden to our first parents, to Abraham, Jacob, Manoah, and his wife, and others.

And the world was made by him: so Philo the Jew often ascribes the making of the world to the Logos, or word, as before observed on (~~ROM~~ John 1:3) and this regards the whole universe, and all created beings in it, and therefore cannot design the new creation: besides, if all men in the world were anew created by Christ, they would know him; for a considerable branch of the new creation lies in knowledge; whereas, in the very next clause, it is asserted, that the world knew him not; and they would also love him, and obey him, which the generality of the world do not; they would appear to be in him, and so not be condemned by him, as multitudes will. To understand this of the old creation, best suits the context, and proves the deity of Christ, and his pre-existence, as the word, and Son of God, to his incarnation.

And the world knew him not; that is, the inhabitants of the world knew him not as their Creator: nor did they acknowledge the mercies they received from him; nor did they worship, serve, and obey him, or love and fear him; nor did they, the greater part of them, know him as the Messiah, Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer. There was, at first, a general knowledge of Christ throughout the world among all the sons of Adam, after the first promise of him, and which, for a while, continued; but this, in process of time, being neglected and slighted, it was forgot, and utterly lost, as to the greater part of mankind; for the Gentiles, for many hundreds of years, as they knew not the true God, so they were without Christ, without any notion of the Messiah; and this their ignorance, as it was first their sin, became their punishment.

Ver. 11. *He came unto his own,* etc.] Not all the world, who are his own by right of creation; for these, his own, are opposed to the world, and

distinguished from them; and his coming to them designs some particular favour, which is not vouchsafed to all: nor yet are the elect of God intended; though they are Christ's own, in a very special sense; they are his by his own choice, by his Father's gift, by his own purchase, and through the conquest of his grace, and are the objects of his special love; and for their sake he came in the flesh, and to them he comes in a spiritual way, and to them will he appear a second time at the last day unto salvation: but they cannot be meant, because when he comes to them they receive him; whereas these did not, as the next clause affirms: but by his own are meant the whole body of the Jewish nation; so called, because they were chosen by the Lord above all people; had distinguishing favours bestowed upon them, as the adoption, the covenants, the promises, the giving of the law, and the service of God; and had the Shekinah, and the symbol of the divine presence in a remarkable manner among them; and the promise of the Messiah was in a particular manner made to them; and indeed, he was to be born of them, so that they were his kindred, his people, and his own nation: and this his coming to them is to be understood not of his incarnation; though when he came in the flesh, as he came of them, so he came to them, particularly being sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and was rejected by them as the Messiah; yet his incarnation is afterwards spoken of in (~~2014~~ John 1:14) as a new and distinct thing from this; and to understand it of some coming of his before his incarnation, best suits with the context, and the design of the evangelist. Now Christ, the word, came to the Jews before his incarnation, not only in types, personal and real, and in promises and prophecies, and in the word and ordinances, but in person; as to Moses in the bush, and gave orders to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt: he came and redeemed them himself with a mighty hand, and a outstretched arm; in his love and pity he led them through the Red Sea as on dry ground; and through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night; and he appeared to them at Mount Sinai, who gave unto them the lively oracles of God:

and his own received him not; they did not believe in him, nor obey his voice; they rebelled against him, and tempted him often, particularly at Massah and Meribah; they provoked him to anger, and vexed, and grieved his holy Spirit, as they afterwards slighted and despised his Gospel by the prophets. Of this nonreception of the word by the Jews, and their punishment for it, the Targumist on (~~2017~~ Hosea 9:17) thus speaks:

“my God will remove them far away, because, *hyrmyml wl ybq al*, “they receive not his word”; and they shall wander among the people.”

And so they treated this same “Logos”, or word of God, when he was made flesh, and dwelt among them. Somewhat remarkable is the following discourse of some Jews among themselves ^{f28}:

“when the word of God comes, who is his messenger, we shall honour him. Says R. Saul, did not the prophets come, and we slew them, and shed their blood? (compare this with ^{<4E33>}Matthew 23:30,31,37.) how therefore now, *wrbdm l bqñ*, “shall we receive his word?” or wherefore shall we believe? Says R. Samuel, the Levite, to him, because he will heal them, and deliver them from their destructions; and because of these signs we shall believe him, and honour him.”

But they did not.

Ver. 12. *But as many as received him*, etc.] This is explained, in the latter part of the text, by believing in his name; for faith is a receiving him as the word, and Son of God, as the Messiah, Saviour, and Redeemer; a receiving grace out of his fulness, and every blessing from him, as a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified; for though the generality rejected him, there were some few that received him:

to them gave he power to become the sons of God; as such were very early called, in distinction from the children of men, or of the world; (see ^{<101E>}Genesis 6:2,4). To be the sons of God is a very special favour, a great blessing, and high honour: saints indeed are not in so high a sense the sons of God as Christ is; nor in so low a sense as angels and men in common are; nor in such sense as civil magistrates; nor merely by profession of religion; much less by natural descent; but by adopting grace: and in this, Christ, the word, has a concern, as all the three divine persons have. The Father predestinated men to the adoption of children, secures this blessing for them in the covenant of his grace, and puts them among the children, and assigns them a goodly heritage: the Spirit, and who is therefore called the spirit of adoption, discovers and applies this blessing to them, and witnesses to their spirits that they are the children of God: and Christ, the word, or Son of God, not only espoused their persons, and in time

assumed their nature, and by the redemption of them opened a way for their reception of the adoption of children; but actually bestows upon them the “power”, as it is here called, of becoming the sons of God: by which is meant, not a power of free will to make themselves the sons of God, if they will make use of it; but it signifies the honour and dignity conferred on such persons: so Nonnus calls it, “the heavenly honour”; as indeed, what can be a greater? It is more honourable than to be a son or daughter of the greatest potentate on earth: and it is expressive of its being a privilege; for so it is an undeserved and distinguishing one, and is attended with many other privileges; for such are of God’s household and family, and are provided for by him; have liberty of access unto him; are Christ’s free men, and are heirs to an incorruptible inheritance. This is a privilege that excels all others, even justification and remission of sins; and is an everlasting one: and it also intends the open right which believers have unto this privilege, and their claim of it: hence it follows,

even to them that believe in his name; that is, in himself, in Christ, the word: the phrase is explanative of the former part of the verse, and is a descriptive and manifestative character of the sons of God; for though the elect of God, by virtue of electing grace, and the covenant of grace, are the children of God before faith; and were so considered in the gift of them to Christ, and when he came into the world to gather them together, and save them; and so, antecedent to the Spirit of God, being sent down into their hearts, to make this known to them; yet no man can know his adoption, nor enjoy the comfort of it, or claim his interest in it, until he believes.

Ver. 13. *Which were born not of blood*, etc.] Or bloods, in the plural number. The birth, here spoken of, is regeneration, expressed by a being born again, or from above; by a being quickened by the Spirit and grace of God; by Christ being formed in men; and by a partaking of the divine nature; and by being made new creatures, as all that believe in the name of Christ are; and which is the evidence of their being the sons of God: and now this is owing not to blood, or bloods; not to the blood of circumcision; or of the passover, which the Jews had an high opinion of, and ascribe life and salvation to, and to which notion this may be opposed: so their commentators^{f29} on (עֲשֵׂה) Ezekiel 16:6) where the word “live” is twice used, observe on the first “live”, by the blood of the passover, on the second “live”, by the blood of circumcision; but, alas! these contribute nothing to the life of the new creature: nor is regeneration owing to the blood of ancestors, to natural descent, as from Abraham, which the Jews valued

themselves upon; for sin, and not grace, is conveyed by natural generation: all men are of one blood, and that is tainted with sin, and therefore can never have any influence on regeneration; no blood is to be valued, or any one upon it, but the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin.

Nor of the will of the flesh; man's free will, which is carnal and corrupt, is enmity to God, and impotent to every thing that is spiritually good: regeneration is ascribed to another will and power, even to the will and power of God, and denied of this:

nor of the will of man: of the best of men, as Abraham, David, and others; who, though ever so willing and desirous, that their children, relations, friends, and servants, should be born again, be partakers of the grace of God, and live in his sight, yet cannot effect any thing of this kind: all that they can do is to pray for them, give advice, and bring them under the means of grace; but all is ineffectual without a divine energy. So with the Jews, *צַיָּא*, "a man", signifies a great man, in opposition to "Adam", or "Enosh", which signify a mean, weak, frail man; and our translators have observed this distinction, in (^{צַיָּא}Isaiah 2:9) and the mean man (Adam) boweth down, and the great man (Ish) "humbleth himself": on which Jarchi has this note, "Adam boweth down", i.e. little men; "and a man humbleth himself", i.e. princes, and mighty men, men of power: and so Kimchi on (^{צַיָּא}Psalms 4:2). "O ye sons of men", observes, that the Psalmist calls them the sons of men, with respect to the great men of Israel; for there were with Absalom the sons of great men. Though sometimes the Jews say ^{f30}, Adam is greater than any of the names of men, as Geber, Enosh, Ish. But now our evangelist observes, let a man be ever so great, or good, or eminent, for gifts and grace, he cannot communicate grace to another, or to whom he will; none are born again of any such will:

but of God; of God, the Father of Christ, who begets to a lively hope; and of the Son, who quickens whom he will; and of the grace of the Spirit, to whom regeneration is generally ascribed.

Ver. 14. *And the word was made flesh*, etc.] The same word, of whom so many things are said in the preceding verses; and is no other than the Son of God, or second person in the Trinity; for neither the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, were made flesh, as is here said of the word, but the Son only: and "flesh" here signifies, not a part of the body, nor the whole body only, but the whole human nature, consisting of a true body, and a reasonable

soul; and is so called, to denote the frailty of it, being encompassed with infirmities, though not sinful; and to show, that it was a real human nature, and not a phantom, or appearance, that he assumed: and when he is said to be “made” flesh, this was not done by the change of one nature into another, the divine into the human, or the word into a man; but by the assumption of the human nature, the word, taking it into personal union with himself; whereby the natures are not altered; Christ remained what he was, and became what he was not; nor are they confounded, and blended together, and so make a third nature; nor are they separated, and divided, so as to constitute two persons, a divine person, and an human person; but are so united as to be but one person; and this is such an union, as can never be dissolved, and is the foundation of the virtue and efficacy of all Christ’s works and actions, as Mediator:

and dwelt among us; or “tabernacled among us”; in allusion to the tabernacle, which was a type of Christ’s human nature: the model of the tabernacle was of God, and not of man; it was coarse without, but full of holy things within; here God dwelt, granted his presence, and his glory was seen; here the sacrifices were brought, offered, and accepted. So the human nature of Christ was of God’s pitching, and not man’s; and though it looked mean without, the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in it, as well as a fulness of grace and truth; in the face of Christ the glory of God is seen, and through him, even the vail of his flesh, saints have access unto him, and enjoy his presence; and by him their spiritual sacrifices become acceptable to God: or this is observed, in allusion to the feast of tabernacles, when the Jews dwelt in booths, in remembrance of their manner of living in the wilderness: the feast of tabernacles was typical of Christ, and of his tabernacling in our nature. Solomon’s temple, which was also a type of Christ, was dedicated at the time of that feast; and it seems probable, that our Lord was born at that time; for as he suffered at the time of the passover, which had respect unto him, and the pouring forth of the Spirit was on the very day of Pentecost, which that prefigured; so it is highly probable, that Christ was born at the time of the feast of tabernacles, which pointed out his dwelling among us; and is therefore very pertinently hinted at, when mention is here made of his incarnation. However, reference is manifestly had to the Shekinah, and the glory of it, in the tabernacle and temple; and almost the very word is here used. The Targumists sometimes speak of the Shekinah of the word dwelling among the Israelites: so

Onkelos in (^{401D}Numbers 11:20) where the Israelites are threatened with flesh, until they loath it; because, says the paraphrast,

“ye have loathed “the word of the Lord”, whose Shekinah dwelleth among you.”

Jonathan ben Uzziel, on the same place, expresses it thus;

“because ye have loathed the word of the Lord, the glory of whose Shekinah dwelleth among you.”

And it follows here,

and we beheld his glory; the glory of his divine nature, which is essential to him, and underived, is equal to the Father’s glory, is transcendent to all creatures, and is ineffable, and incomprehensible; some breakings forth of which there were in his incarnate state, and which were observed by the evangelist, and his companions; who, in various instances, saw plainly, that Christ was possessed of divine perfections, such as omniscience, and omnipotence; since he knew the thoughts of the heart, and could do the things he did: his Father declared him to be his beloved Son; and the miracles he wrought, and the doctrines he taught, manifested forth his glory; and not only there were some beams of his glory at his transfiguration, which were seen by the apostles, among which the Evangelist John was one, and to which he may have here a particular reference; but even at his apprehension, and death, and especially at his resurrection from the dead. The Jews speak of the glory of the Messiah to be seen in the world to come. They say^{f31},

“If a man is worthy of the world to come, (i.e. the times of the Messiah,) he shall “see the glory” of the King Messiah.”

And of Moses, they say^{f32},

“there was (or will be) no generation like that in which he lived, until the generation in which the King Messiah comes, which shall “behold the glory” of the holy, blessed God, as he.”

This our evangelist, and the other disciples of Christ have seen:

the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father; a glory becoming him, suitable to him as such; the very real glory of the Son of God; for the “as”, here, is not a note of similitude, but of certainty, as in (^{404B}Matthew 14:5,

^{<90B>}Psalm 2:8) and the word is here called, “the only begotten of the Father”; which cannot be said of Christ, as man; for as such, he was not “begotten” at all: nor on the account of his resurrection from the dead; for so he could not be called the “only begotten”, since there are others that have been, and millions that will be raised from the dead, besides him: nor by reason of adoption; for if adopted, then not begotten; these two are inconsistent; besides, he could not be called the only begotten, in this sense, because there are many adopted sons, even all the elect of God: nor by virtue of his office, as magistrates are called the sons of God; for then he would be so only in a figurative and metaphorical sense, and not properly; whereas he is called God’s own Son, the Son of the same nature with him; and, as here, the only begotten of the Father, begotten by him in the same nature, in a way inconceivable and inexpressible by us:

full of grace and truth; that is, he dwelt among men, and appeared to have a fulness of each of these: for this clause is not to be joined with the glory of the only begotten, as if this was a branch of that; but regards him as incarnate, and in his office, as Mediator; who, as such, was full of “grace”; the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit; of all the blessings of grace, of justifying, pardoning, adopting, sanctifying, and persevering grace; of all the promises of grace; of all light, life, strength, comfort, peace, and joy: and also of truth, of all Gospel truths; and as he had the truth, the sum, and substance of all the types and prophecies concerning him in him; and as he fulfilled all his own engagements, and his Father’s promises; and as possessed of sincerity towards men, and faithfulness and integrity to God.

Ver. 15. *John bare witness of him*, etc.] Which was his office and business, for which purpose he was sent, (^{<90C>}John 1:6-8)

and cried; this agrees with his work and office, according to the prophecy of him in (^{<230B>}Isaiah 40:3) and with the time of his ministry, the year of jubilee; and with the nature of his ministry, which was clear, open, and public; and performed with vigour, and in a powerful manner, with much assurance and certainty, with boldness and intrepidity, and with great zeal and fervency, and in an evangelical way; for it was such a cry as debased the creature, and exalted Christ:

this was he, of whom I spake; when he first entered upon his ministry and baptism, before he saw Christ, or baptized him; (see ^{<40B1B>}Matthew 3:11).

he that cometh after me; for Christ came into the world after John; he was born six months after him; he came after him to be baptized by him, and attended on his ministry; and came later into the public ministry than he did;

is preferred before me; by God, the Father, in setting him up as Mediator; constituting him the head of the church; causing a fulness of grace to dwell in him; appointing him the Saviour of his people; and ordaining him judge of quick and dead. And by the prophets, who spake much of him, and sparingly of John; and of him as the Messiah and Saviour, and of John only as his harbinger: and by John himself, who represents him as coming from above, and as above all; and himself as of the earth, earthly: and by all Gospel ministers, and every true believer; and good reason there is for it:

for he was before me; which cannot be meant of honour and dignity; for this is expressed before; and it would be proving one thing by the same: nor of his birth, as man; for John in that sense was before him, being born before him; besides, being born before another, is no proof of superior worth; others were born before John, whom he yet excelled: but of his eternal existence, as the word, and Son of God, who was before John, or any of the prophets; before Abraham, and Noah, and Adam, or any creature whatever: the Arabic and Persic versions read, “for he was more ancient than me”; being from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

Ver. 16. *And of his fulness have all we received*, etc.] These are the words not of John the Baptist; but of the evangelist carrying on his account of Christ, after he had inserted the testimony of the Baptist, in connection with (~~John~~ John 1:14) where he is said to be full of grace and truth; and which fulness is here intended; for the fulness of the Godhead in trim is incommunicable; and the fulness of his fitness, and ability for his office, as Mediator, was for himself; but his fulness of grace and truth is dispensatory, and is in him, on purpose to be communicated unto others: and “of it”, the evangelist says, “have all we received”; not all mankind, though they all receive natural light and life from trim; nor merely all the prophets of the Old Testament, though they had their gifts and grace from him, who then was, as now, the head of the church; nor only all the apostles of Christ, though these may be principally intended; but all believers, who, though they have not all the same measure of grace, nor the same gifts, yet all have received something: nor is there any reason for

discouragement, envy, or reproach. Faith is the hand which receives Christ, and grace from him; and the act of receiving, being expressed in the past tense, seems to regard first conversion, when faith is first wrought, and along with it abundance of grace is received; for a believer has nothing but what is given him, and what he has, is in a way of receiving; so that there is no room for boasting, but great reason for thankfulness, and much encouragement to apply to Christ for more grace, which is the thing received, as follows:

and grace for grace: according to the different senses of the preposition $\alpha\upsilon\tau\iota$, different interpretations are given of this passage; as that signifies a substitution of a person, or thing, in the room of another, the sense is thought to be, the Gospel, instead of the law; or the grace of the present dispensation, instead of the grace of the former dispensation; grace, different from the former grace, as Nonnus expresses it. If it designs the original, and moving cause, the meaning is, grace is for the sake of grace; for there is no other cause of electing, justifying, pardoning, adopting, and regenerating grace, and even eternal life, but the grace, or free favour of God; and the one is the reason why the other is received: if it signifies the end, or final cause, then it is explained in this way; the disciples received the grace of apostleship, or gift, of grace, in order to preach the Gospel of the grace of God, and for the implanting and increasing grace in men; and grace also, in this life, is received, in order to the perfection of grace, or glory, in the other: if it denotes the measure and proportion of a thing, as one thing is answerable to another, then it may be interpreted after this manner; the saints receive grace from the fulness of Christ, according, or answerable to the grace that is in him; or according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and in proportion to the place, station, and office they bear in the church. Some think the phrase only designs the freeness of grace, and the free and liberal manner in which it is distributed, and received; along with which, I also think, the abundance of it, at first conversion, with all after supplies, is intended; and that grace for grace, is the same with grace upon grace, heaps of grace; and that the phraseology is the same with this Jewish one ^{f33}, $wbyj\ awhh\ | \ [\ wbyj$, “goodness upon that goodness”, an additional goodness; so here, grace upon grace, an abundance of it, an addition to it, and an increase of it: so $wdj\ | \ [\ wdj$ ^{f34}, joy upon joy, is an abundance of joy, a large measure of it; and “holiness upon holiness” ^{f35}, abundance of it.

Ver. 17. *For the law was given by Moses,* etc.] Both moral and ceremonial. The moral law was given to Adam, in innocence, which having been broken, and almost lost out of the minds, and memories of men, was given by Moses, in a new edition of it in writing; and points out what is man's duty both to God and men; discovers sin, accuses of it, convicts of it, and condemns for it; nor could it give strength to perform its demands; nor does it give the least hint of forgiveness; nor will it admit of repentance: and hence is opposed to grace; though it was a benefit to men, being in its own nature good and useful in its effects. The ceremonial law pointed out the pollution of human nature, the guilt and punishment of sin; was a type and shadow of deliverance by Christ, but could not give the grace it shadowed, and therefore is opposed both to grace and truth. Now both these were given by Moses to the people of the Jews, not as the maker, but the minister of them: it was God who appointed each of these laws, and ordained them in the hand of the mediator Moses, who received them from him, by the disposition of angels, and delivered them to the people of Israel; and a very high office this was he was put into, and a very great honour was conferred upon him; but Jesus Christ is a far greater person, and in an higher office:

but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ: by grace and truth, is meant the Gospel, in opposition to the law; which is called grace, because it is a declaration of the love, and grace, of God to men; it ascribes salvation, in all the parts of it, to the free grace and favour of God; and is the means of implanting and increasing grace in the hearts of men. And "truth", not only because it contains truth, and nothing but truth, it coming from the God of truth; and the substance of it being Christ, who is the truth; and being revealed, applied, and led into by the Spirit of truth; but because it is the truth of the types, and the substance of the shadows of the law: or these two may mean distinct things; grace may design all the blessings of grace which are in Christ, and come by him; and truth, the promises, and the fulfilment of them, which are all yea, and amen, in Christ: and when these are said to be by him, the meaning is, not that they are by him, as an instrument, but as the author of them; for Christ is the author of the Gospel, and the fulfiller of the promises, and the giver of all grace; which shows the superior excellency of Christ to Moses, and to all men, and even to angels also.

Ver. 18. *No man hath seen God at any time,* etc.] That is, God the Father, whose voice was never heard, nor his shape seen by angels or men; for

though Jacob, Moses, the elders of Israel, Manoah, and his wife, are said to see God, and Job expected to see him with his bodily eyes, and the saints will see him as he is, in which will lie their great happiness; yet all seems to be understood of the second person, who frequently appeared to the Old Testament saints, in an human form, and will be seen by the saints in heaven, in his real human nature; or of God in and by him: for the essence of God is invisible, and not to be seen with the eyes of the body; nor indeed with the eyes of the understanding, so as to comprehend it; nor immediately, but through, and by certain means: God is seen in the works of creation and providence, in the promises, and in his ordinances; but above all, in Christ the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person: this may chiefly intend here, man's not knowing any thing of God in a spiritual and saving way, but in and by Christ; since it follows,

the only begotten Son; the word that was with God in the beginning. The Jerusalem Targum on (^{<OR2>}Genesis 3:22) says almost the same of the word of the Lord, as here, where it introduces him saying,

“the word of the Lord God said, lo, the man whom I created, the only one in my world, even as I am, *ydyj y*, “the only one”, (or, as the word is sometimes rendered, “the only begotten”,) in the highest heavens.”

And to the same purpose the Targum of Jonathan, and also Jarchi, on the same place. The Syriac version here renders it, “the only begotten, God which is in the bosom of the Father”; clearly showing, that he is the only begotten, as he is God: the phrase,

which is in the bosom of the Father, denotes unity of nature, and essence, in the Father and Son; their distinct personality; strong love, and affection between them; the Son's acquaintance with his Father's secrets; his being at that time, as the Son of God, in the bosom of his Father, when here on earth, as the son of man; and which qualified him to make the declaration of him:

he hath declared him. The Persic and Ethiopic versions further add, “to us”; he has clearly and fully declared his nature, perfections, purposes, promises, counsels, covenant, word, and works; his thoughts and schemes of grace; his love and favour to the sons of men; his mind and will concerning the salvation of his people: he has made, and delivered a fuller revelation of these things, than ever was yet; and to which no other

revelation in the present state of things will be added. Somewhat like this the Jews ^{f36} say of the Messiah;

“there is none that can declare the name of his Father, and that knows him; but this is hid from the eyes of the multitude, until he comes, *whdgyw*, “and he shall declare him”.”

He is come, and has declared him: so Philo speaks of the “Logos”, or word, as the interpreter of the mind of God, and a teacher of men ^{f37}.

Ver. 19. *And this is the record of John*, etc.] The evangelist proceeds to give a large, and full account of the testimony John the Baptist bore to Christ, which he had hinted at before, and had signified was his work, and office, and the end of his being sent.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, who art thou? The Jews that sent were the great sanhedrim that sat at Jerusalem, whose business it was to inquire into, examine, and try prophets, whether true or false ^{f38}; and John appearing as a prophet, and being so esteemed by the people, they deputed messengers to him to interrogate him, and know who he was. The persons sent were very likely of their own body, since priests and Levites were in that council. For it is said ^{f39},

“they do not constitute, or appoint in the sanhedrim but priests, Levites, and Israelites, who have their genealogies — and it is commanded, that there should be in the great sanhedrim priests and Levites, as it is said, (⁻⁶¹⁷⁹Deuteronomy 17:9) “and thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites”, etc. and if they are not to be found, though they are all Israelites, (not of the tribe of Levi,) it is right.”

Such a sanhedrim is a lawful one; but priests and Levites, if such could be found, that had proper qualifications, were to be admitted in the first place. A message from so august an assembly, at so great a distance, (for Jordan was a day’s journey distant from Jerusalem ^{f40}; according to Josephus ^{f41}, it was 210 furlongs, or 26 miles and a quarter,) and by the hands of persons of such character and figure, was doing John a great deal of honour, and serves to make his testimony of Christ the more public and remarkable; and it also shows what a noise John’s ministry and baptism made among the Jews, that it even reached Jerusalem, and the great council of the nation; and likewise the question put to him, which by John’s answer seems to

intimate as if it was thought he was the Messiah, shows the opinion that was entertained of him, and even the sanhedrim might not be without thoughts this way: and the question they put by their messengers might not be, as some have thought, to ensnare John, nor out of disrespect to Jesus, who, as yet, was not made manifest; but might be in good earnest, having, from many circumstances, reason to think there might be something in the people's opinion of him; since, though the government was not wholly departed from Judah, yet they could not but observe it was going away apace, an Idumean having been upon the throne for some years, placed there by the Roman senate; and now the government was divided among his sons by the same order; Daniel's weeks they could not but see were just accomplishing; and besides, from the uncommon appearance John made, the austerity of his life; the doctrine of remission of sins he preached, and the new ordinance of baptism he administered, they might be ready to conclude he was the person.

Ver. 20. *And he confessed, and denied not*, etc.] He freely, and without any reserve, declared, and in the plainest and strongest terms professed to the messengers before all the people, that he was not the Messiah; nor did he retract his confession, or draw in his words again, or drop any thing that looked doubtful or suspicious;

but confessed, I am not the Christ: he stood to it, and insisted on it, that he was not that illustrious person; nor had they any reason to entertain such an opinion of him; nor would he have them do so; they might assure themselves he was not Christ.

Ver. 21. *And they asked him, what then? art thou Elias?* etc.] Elijah, the prophet; the Tishbite, as Nonnus in his paraphrase expresses it; who was translated, soul and body, to heaven: the Jews had a notion that that prophet would come in person a little before the coming of the Messiah; (see Gill on "^{407D}Matthew 17:10") wherefore these messengers inquire, that since he had so fully satisfied them that he was not the Messiah, that he would as ingenuously answer to this question, if he was Elias, or not:

and he saith, I am not; that is, he was not Elijah the prophet that lived in Ahab's time, and was called the Tishbite; for John's answer is to the intention of their question, and their own meaning in it, and is no contradiction to what Christ says of him, (^{401H}Matthew 11:14) that he was the Elias that was to come; for he was the person meant by him in (^{30E}Malachi 4:5) though not in the sense the Jews understood it; nor is it

any contradiction to what the angel said to Zacharias, (^{<4017>}Luke 1:17) for he does not say that John should come in the body, but in the power and spirit of Elias; (see Gill on “^{<4014>}Matthew 11:14”).

Art thou that prophet? Jeremiah, whom some of the Jews ^{f42} have thought to be the prophet Moses spoke of, in (^{<5815>}Deuteronomy 18:15) and expected that he would appear about the times of the Messiah; (see ^{<0164>}Matthew 16:14) or any one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead, which they also had a notion of, (^{<4018>}Luke 9:8,19) or, as it may be rendered, “art thou a prophet?” for prophecy had long ceased with them:

and he answered, no; he was not Jeremiah, nor any one of the old prophets risen from the dead, nor a prophet in the sense they meant: he was not like one of the prophets of the Old Testament; he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, as Christ says, (^{<0109>}Matthew 11:9) yet not such a prophet as they were; his prophesying lay not so much in predicting future events, as in pointing out Christ, and preaching the doctrine of the remission of sins by him.

Ver. 22. *Then said they unto him, who art thou?* etc.] Since, as yet, he had only answered in negatives, who he was not, that he was not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet; they desire he would give them a positive account who he was:

that we may give answer to them that sent us; that their labour might not be in vain; that they might not come so far for nothing, without knowing who he was; and that they might be capable of giving an account of him to the sanhedrim:

what sayest thou of thyself? they insisted on it, that he would openly, and honestly declare who he was, and what was his office and business; that from his own mouth, and not from the opinion and conjectures of others, they might represent him in a true light to those who had deputed them on this errand.

Ver. 23. *And he said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness,* etc.] These words are cited by the other evangelists, and applied to John the Baptist; but then they are only to be considered as their citation, and as an application of them to him by them: but here they are used by John himself, who both expresses them, and interprets them of himself; and in which he was undoubtedly under the infallible direction of the blessed Spirit; and which confirms the sense of the evangelists, who apply the words to him.

The Jews give a different interpretation of the words; though one of their celebrated commentators ^{f43} owns, that the comforts spoken of in the preceding verses are what will be in the days of the King Messiah: one of them ^{f44} interprets, “the voice”, of the Holy Ghost; and so far it may be true, as John was filled with the Holy Ghost, and he spake by him in his ministry: and another ^{f45}, of the resurrection of the dead, or the voice that will be heard then, which will be the voice of the archangel: though another of ^{f46} them better explains it by, $\mu\gamma\rho\zeta\beta\mu\eta\ \mu\eta$, “they are they that bring glad tidings”, or good news; such are Gospel preachers; only it should have been in the singular number: for the text speaks but of one voice; of one person crying; and of John the Baptist, who brought the good news, and glad tidings, that the Messiah was coming, yea, that he was already come, and that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The Hebrew writers generally understand the passage, of the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and of removing all obstructions in their way to Jerusalem; to which sense the Targum on the place inclines, which paraphrases it thus;

“the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare the way before the people of the Lord, make in the plain, paths before the congregation of our God:”

but not the people of the Lord, but the Lord himself, and not the congregation of God, but God himself is intended; whose ways were to be prepared, and made plain, even the King Messiah; which was to be done, and was done by his forerunner John the Baptist, who, with great modesty, expresses himself in the language of this Scripture, as being a prophecy of him: he was a “voice”, but not a mere voice; nor was his ministry a mere voice of words, as the law was, but it was the sweet voice of the Gospel, proclaiming the coming of the Messiah; encouraging men to believe in him; calling them to evangelical repentance, and publishing remission of sins in the name of Christ, and pointing him out as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world: this voice was “crying”; it was not a still small voice, it was a very loud one; John lifted up his voice like a trumpet; he delivered himself with great zeal and fervency; and it was “in the wilderness” where this voice was heard, in the wilderness of Judea, as in (⁴⁰⁸ Matthew 3:1) where Jesus came preaching; the Ethiopic version renders the words, “I am the voice of one that goes about in the wilderness”; that is, in the several towns and villages which were in the wilderness, to whom John went and preached the Gospel: the Persic version reads, “I am the voice and cry which cometh out of the

wilderness”; referring to the place where he was before he entered on his public ministry, and from whence he came; for he was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel, (^{<40B>}Luke 1:80). The words this voice cried were,

make straight the way of the Lord; he called upon persons to reform their ways, and walk in the way of the Lord, to repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and submit to the ordinance of baptism: the Ethiopic version reads, “the way of God”; and such was the person he came to prepare the way for, even the Son of God, and who is truly and properly God,

as said the prophet Esaias, in (^{<24B>}Isaiah 40:3 (See Gill on “^{<40B>}Matthew 3:3”)).

Ver. 24. *And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.*] Who were the strictest sect of religion among the Jews; were very zealous of the traditions of the elders, and professed an expectation of the Messiah; and were famous in the nation for their knowledge and learning, as well as for their devotion and sanctity: and many of them were in the sanhedrim, as appears from (^{<40B>}John 3:1, ^{<42B>}Acts 23:6), (See Gill on “^{<40B>}Matthew 3:7”).

Ver. 25. *And they asked him, and said unto him*, etc.] They put a question, by saying to him,

why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? since he denied that he was the Messiah, or Elias that was to come before the Messiah, according to the expectation of the Jews, or that prophet, or a prophet, they demand by what authority he introduced a new rite and ordinance among them, which they had never been used to; for though there were divers washings or baptisms among them, enjoined by the law of Moses in certain cases, and others which obtained by tradition, as the immersion of themselves after they had been at market, and of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables, yet nothing of this kind that John administered: and as for the baptism of proselytes, it seems to be of a later date than this, and had no manner of likeness to it. The ordinance John administered was such, as they apprehended that no one ought to practise, unless he was the Messiah, or his forerunner, or some eminent prophet; they insist upon it therefore, that since he denied he was either of these, that he would show his credentials, and what commission he had from God to baptize; or they suggest he was liable to be called to an account by their

sanhedrim, and be condemned as a false prophet, or an innovator in religious affairs. From hence it appears, that the Jews expected that baptism would be administered in the times of the Messiah, and his forerunner; but from whence they had this notion, it is not easy to say, whether from (~~380B~~ Zechariah 13:1) as Grotius, or from (~~385~~ Ezekiel 36:25) as Lightfoot; nor do they speak contemptibly of it, but rather consider it as a very solemn affair, to be performed only by great personages: and this may teach modern ones to think and speak more respectfully of this ordinance than they do, who have given themselves great liberties, and have treated it with much contempt and virulence; calling it by the names of uncleanness, abomination, filthy water, and a devoting of persons to Satan^{f47}: likewise, it is clear from hence, that they expected that this ordinance would be first administered by some person of very great note, either some very famous prophet, as Elias, whom they looked for before the coming of the Messiah, or else the Messiah himself, and not by a common teacher, or any ordinary person; wherefore this rite, as performed by John, could have no likeness with any thing that was in common use among them: besides, it was expressly done in the name of the Messiah, (~~409B~~ Acts 19:5) therefore they conclude he, or his forerunner, must be come; and that John must be one, or other of them, otherwise, why did he administer it? and it is also evident from hence, that no such practice had obtained before among them, or they would not have been alarmed at it, as they were; nor would they have troubled themselves to have sent after John, and inquire of him who he was, that should practise in this manner.

Ver. 26. *John answered them, saying, I baptize with water,* etc.] Or in water, so the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions render it. The sense of the answer is, that he indeed baptized persons in water, which was all that he could do, or pretended to do; and he owned, that this was a new rite, and that he was the administrator of a new ordinance; but he suggests, as may be supplied from (~~401B~~ Matthew 3:11) that there was one at hand, and even now among them, that should baptize, and so it is read in one of Stephens's copies here, in the Holy Ghost, and in fire; and it was by his authority, by a commission he had received from him, that he baptized in water; and that his speedy manifestation and appearance as the Messiah, which would be confirmed by his power of baptizing in the Holy Ghost, and by his ministry and miracles, would be a sufficient vindication of his conduct, and support him in his administration of water baptism:

but there standeth one among you; or “hath stood”, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it; referring, not to his being among them at twelve years of age, but a few days ago when he came to John to be baptized, and was baptized by him; for from (^{<RB12>}John 1:29) it is plain he was not now, or “today”, as Nounus expresses it, standing in the midst of them. The Ethiopic version renders it, there is one about to stand among you, as he did the next day: though the meaning of the phrase may only be, that he was then in being, and dwelt somewhere among them, and not that he was personally present at that time:

whom ye know not; neither from whence he is, nor who he is, or what is his work and office; neither the dignity of his person, nor the end of his coming into the world, nor the nature of his business in it.

Ver. 27. *He it is who coming after me*, etc.] Both into the world, and into the ministry of the word; for John was before Christ, in both these respects, though greatly behind him in others, and therefore he adds,

is preferred before me: being not only of a more excellent nature, the Son of God, and of an higher extract, the Lord from heaven; but in an higher office, and having greater gifts, and the Spirit of God without measure on him; and also being more followed by the people; for John decreased, but he increased: or rather the words may be rendered, who was before me; being the eternal Son of God, whose goings forth were of old, from everlasting; who was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; the firstborn, or first bringer forth of every creature; and therefore must be before all things, which are created by him; (See Gill on ^{<RB15>}John 1:15”).

Whose shoes latchet I am not worthy to unloose; which was one of the meanest services done by a servant to his master; (See Gill on ^{<RB11>}Matthew 3:11”).

Ver. 28. *These things were done in Bethabara*, etc.] That is, this testimony was bore by John; and this discourse passed between him and the Pharisees, at the place here mentioned; which was a passage over Jordan, where much people walked to go on the other side,

beyond Jordan; and *where also John was baptizing*; which brought a great concourse of people together: so that this witness was bore in a very public manner, and before a large number; and it is to this that Christ refers, in (^{<RB3>}John 1:33) for this was so well known, that there was no hiding or

denying it: the place where this conversation passed, is in the Vulgate Latin, and all the eastern versions; and in the Alexandrian copy, and many other copies, and so in Nonnus, called Bethany; but as Deuteronomy Dieu observes, Bethany was not beyond Jordan, nor in the wilderness of Judea, but near to Jerusalem, about two miles distant from it; nor was it situated by waters convenient for baptizing, unless they went to the brook Kidron, which indeed was not far from it; but it is clear from the history, that John was not so near Jerusalem; nor did that brook which might be forded over, continues the same learned author, seem fit and proper enough, “mergendis baptizandorum corporibus”, for plunging the bodies of those that were to be baptized; wherefore he rightly concludes, that either this reading is an error, or there was another Bethany near Jordan: Bethabara signifies “the house of passage”, and is thought to be the place where the Israelites passed over Jordan, to go into the land of Canaan, (^{<01816>}Joshua 3:16,17). And which, as it must be a very convenient place for the administration of baptism by immersion, used by John, so it was very significant of the use of this ordinance; which is, as it were, the passage, or entrance, into the Gospel church state; for persons ought first to be baptized, and then be admitted into a Gospel church, according to the example of the primitive Christians, (^{<01814>}Acts 2:41) but whether there was a place of this name, where the Israelites went over Jordan, is not certain; and if there was, it does not seem so likely to be the place here designed, since that was right over against Jericho; whereas this seems to be rather further off, and over against Galilee: there were several passages of Jordan, (^{<01815>}Judges 12:5,6). There was a bridge over it, between the lake of Samochon and Gennesaret, now called Jacob’s bridge, where Jacob is supposed to have wrestled with the angel, and to have met with his brother Esau; and there was another over it at Chainmath, near Tiberias, and in other places: and it might be at one of these passages, by which they went over into Galilee, that John pitched upon to continue preaching and baptizing at; partly because of the number of people that went over, to whom he had the opportunity of preaching; and partly, for the sake of baptizing those who became proper subjects of that ordinance through his ministry. Some have thought, that this place is the same with Bethbarah, in (^{<01824>}Judges 7:24), which was either in the tribe of Ephraim or of Manasseh, and not far from the parts where this place must be, but was on this side Jordan; and so Beza says the words should be rendered; and those who came to John at Jordan, are not said to pass over that river: others are of opinion, that Bethabara is the same with Betharabah, (^{<01816>}Joshua 15:6,61),

since this is called Bethabara by the Septuagint, in (~~1682~~ Joshua 18:22). However, be it what place soever, and wheresoever, it was no doubt very proper for John's purpose; and therefore he chose it, and for a while continued at it: and here, says Jerom^{f48}

“to this day many of the brethren, that is, of the number of believers, desiring there to be born again, are baptized in the vital stream;”

such veneration had they for the place where John first baptized: Origen says^{f49}, that in his time it was said, that Bethabara was showed by the banks of Jordan, where they report John baptized.

Ver. 29. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him*, etc.] Not to be baptized, for he had been baptized before by him. This seems to have been after Christ had been forty days in the wilderness, from whence he now returned, and came to attend on John's ministry; both to do honour to him, and that he might be made manifest by him; and this was the day after John had bore such a testimony concerning him, to the priests and Levites; and which Christ the omniscient God, knew full well, and therefore came at this season, when the minds of the people were prepared by John's testimony, to expect and receive him: one part of the work of Elias, which the Jews assign unto him, and the precise time of his doing it, exactly agree with this account of John the Baptist; they say^{f50}, that his work is

“to bring to them (the Israelites) the good news of the coming of the Redeemer; and this shall be, *dj a μwy*, “one day”, before the coming of the, Messiah; and this is that which is written, “behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord”. (~~3005~~ Malachi 4:5).”

For John, the day before Christ Lord, came to him, had signified to the priests and Levites, that the Messiah was already come; and now on the day following, seeing him, pointed as with his finger to him,

and saith, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world: he calls him a “lamb”, either with respect to any lamb in common, for his harmlessness and innocence; for his meekness and humility; for his patience; and for his usefulness, both for food and clothing, in a spiritual sense; as well as for his being to be a sacrifice for the sins of his people: or else with respect to the lambs that were offered in sacrifice, under the legal

dispensation; and that either to the passover lamb, or rather to the lambs of the daily sacrifice, that were offered morning and evening; since the account of them best agrees with what is said of this Lamb of God, who was slain in type, in the morning of the world, or from the foundation of the world; and actually in the evening of the world, or in the end of it; and who has a continued virtue to take away the sins of his people, from the beginning, to the end of the world; and their sins, both of the day and night, or which are committed every day: for as they are daily committed, there is need of the daily application of the blood and sacrifice of Christ, to remove them; or of continual looking unto him by faith, whose blood has a continual virtue, to cleanse from all sin: the Jewish doctors say ^{f51}, that

“the morning daily sacrifice made atonement for the iniquities done in the night; and the evening sacrifice made atonement for the iniquities that were by day:”

and in various things they were typical of Christ, as that they were lambs of the first year, which may denote the weakness of the human nature of Christ, which had all the sinless infirmities of it; they, were also without spot, signifying the purity of Christ’s human nature, who was holy and harmless, a lamb without spot and blemish; these were offered as a sacrifice, and for the children of Israel only, as Christ has given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, both in soul and body, for the sins of the mystical Israel of God, the Israel whom God has chosen for himself, whether Jews or Gentiles; for Christ is the propitiation for the sins of both: and these were offered daily, morning and evening; and though Christ was but once offered, otherwise he must have often suffered; yet as he has by one offering put away sin for ever, so there is a perpetual virtue in his sacrifice to take it away, and there is a constant application of it for that purpose; to which may be added, that these lambs were offered with fine flour, oil and wine, for a sweet savour to the Lord; denoting the acceptableness of the sacrifice of Christ to his Father, to whom it is for a sweet smelling savour, (~~HEB~~ Ephesians 5:2). And Christ is styled the Lamb “of God”, in allusion to the same, whom the Cabalistic Jews ^{f52} call the secret of the mystery, and **amj r yçbk**, “the Lambs of God”; because God has a special property in him; he is his own Son; and because he is of his providing and appointing, as a sacrifice for sin, and is acceptable to him as such; and to distinguish him from all other lambs; and to give him the preference, since he does that which they could not do, “taketh away the sin of the world”: by the “sin of the world”, is not meant the sin, or sins of

every individual person in the world; for some die in their sins, and their sins go before hand to judgment, and they go into everlasting punishment for them; which could not be, if Christ took them away: rather, the sin which is common to the whole world, namely: original sin; but then it must be observed, that this is not the only sin Christ takes away; for he also takes away actual sins; and the Arabic and Ethiopic versions read in the plural, “the sins of the world”; and also that this he takes away, only with respect the elect; wherefore they are the persons intended by the world, as in (~~4063~~ John 6:33,51), whose sin, or sins, Christ takes away: and a peculiar regard seems to be had to the elect among the Gentiles, who are called the world, in distinction from the Jews, as in (~~4016~~ John 3:16 ~~4011~~ 1 John 2:2), and the rather, since the lambs of the daily sacrifice, to which the allusion is, were only offered for the sins of the Jews: but John here signifies, that the Lamb of God he pointed at, and which was the antitype of these lambs, not only took away the sins of God’s people among the Jews, but the sins of such of them also as were among the Gentiles; and this seems to me to be the true sense of the passage. The phrase “taking away sin”, signifies a taking it up, as Christ did; he took it voluntarily upon himself, and became responsible to divine justice for it; and also a bearing and carrying it, for taking it upon himself, he bore it in his own body on the tree, and carried it away, as the scape goat did under the law; and so likewise a taking it quite away: Christ has removed it as far as the east is from the west, out of sight, so as never to be seen any more; he has destroyed, abolished, and made an utter end of it: and this is expressed in the present tense, “taketh away”: to denote the continued virtue of Christ’s sacrifice to take away sin, and the constant efficacy of his blood to cleanse from it, and the daily application of it to the consciences of his people; and which is owing to the dignity of his person, as the Son of God; and to his continual and powerful mediation and intercession: this must be a great relief to minds afflicted with the continual ebullitions of sin, which is taken away by the Lamb of God, as fast as it rises; and who, for that purpose, are called to “behold”, and wonder at, the love and grace of Christ, in taking up, bearing, and taking away sin; and to look to him by faith continually, for everlasting salvation; and love him, and give him the honour of it, and glorify him for it.

Ver. 30. *This is he, of whom it is said*, etc.] Either the day before, as in (~~4027~~ John 1:27), or some time before that, (~~4015~~ John 1:15), when he first began to baptize, even before Christ came to be baptized by him, and before he personally knew him; (see ~~4011~~ Matthew 3:11,13).

After me cometh a man; not a mere man, but the man God's fellow: and this is said, not because he was now a grown man, or to show the truth of his human nature; but seems to be a common Hebraism, and is all one as if it had been said, "after me cometh one", or a certain person: for the sense of this phrase, and what follows, *see Gill* "^{<4015>}*John 1:15*".

Ver. 31. *And I knew him not*, etc.] *ὄμμασιν*, "by sight", as Nonnus paraphrases it; personally he had never seen him, nor had had any conversation and familiarity with him; for though they were related to each other, yet lived at such a distance, as not to know one another, or have a correspondence with each other: John was in the deserts, until the day of his showing unto Israel; and Christ dwelt with his parents at Nazareth, in a very mean and obscure manner, till he came from thence to Jordan to John, to be baptized by him; and which was the first interview they had: and this was so ordered by providence, as also this is said by John, lest it should be thought, that the testimony he bore to Jesus, and the high commendation he gave of him, arose from the relation between them; or from a confederacy and compact they had entered into:

but that he should be made manifest to Israel; who had been for many years hid in Galilee, an obscure part of the world: and though he had been known to Joseph and Mary, and to Zacharias and Elisabeth, and to Simeon and Anna; yet he was not made manifest to the people of Israel in common; nor did they know that the Messiah was come: but that he might be known:

therefore am I come baptizing with water; or in water, as before: for by administering this new ordinance, the people were naturally put upon inquiry after the Messiah, whether come, and where he was, since such a new rite was introduced; and besides, John, when he baptized any, he exhorted them to believe on him, which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus; and moreover, by Christ's coming to his baptism, he came to have a personal knowledge of him himself, and so was capable of pointing him out, and making him manifest to others, as he did.

Ver. 32. *And John bare record*, etc.] The same day that he said the above things, and at the same time:

saying, I saw the Spirit; that is, of God, as is said in (^{<4016>}Matthew 3:16) and which Nonnus here expresses; and the Ethiopic version reads, "the Holy Ghost",

descending from heaven like a dove; at the time of his baptism; *see Gill* “^{<4016>}Matthew 3:16”.

And it abode upon him; for some time; so long as that John had a full sight of it, and so was capable of giving a perfect account of it, and bearing a certain and distinct testimony to it.

Ver. 33. *And I knew him not*, etc.] That is, before he came to be baptized by him; when it was secretly suggested to him who he was, and the following signal was given him, to confirm him in it:

but he that sent me to baptize with water; or “in water”; that is, God; for John’s mission was from God, as in (^{<4006>}John 1:6), and his baptism from heaven; he had a divine warrant and commission for what he did:

the same said unto me; either by an articulate voice, or by a divine impulse on his mind, or by the revelation of the Spirit:

upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost; that is, the Messiah; (see Gill on “^{<4011>}Matthew 3:11”), (see Gill on “^{<4016>}Matthew 3:16”).

Ver. 34. *And I saw*, etc.] The Spirit descending from heaven as a dove, and lighting upon Jesus, and remaining some time on him; this he saw with his bodily eyes:

and bore record; at the same time, before all the people that were with him, when he baptized Jesus:

that this is the Son of God; the natural, essential, and eternal Son of God; who being sent in the fulness of time, had assumed an human nature, in which he became subject to all ordinances, and had the Spirit without measure bestowed on him; and which was an evidence who he was, and of what he came about.

Ver. 35. *Again, the next day after*, etc.] The third day from the priests and Levites having been with John, to know who he was. The Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, leave out the word “again”:

John stood, and two of his disciples; one of these was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, as appears from (^{<4040>}John 1:40) and very likely the other was the Evangelist John, the writer of this Gospel, who always chooses to

conceal himself. John the Baptist stood, and these disciples by him, in some certain place near Jordan, where he was preaching and baptizing.

Ver. 36. *And looking upon Jesus as he walked*, etc.] Either by them; or as he was going from them to his lodgings; it being toward the close of the day, when John had finished his work for that day, and the people were departing home: John fixed his eyes intently on Christ, with great pleasure and delight, and pointing at him,

he saith, behold the Lamb of God; as in (~~4012~~ John 1:29), where it is added, “which taketh away the sin of the world”; and which the Ethiopic version subjoins here.

Ver. 37. *And the two disciples heard him speak*, etc.] The above words, and took notice of them; faith in Christ came by hearing them; they reached their hearts, and they found their affections, and the desires of their souls, to be after Christ:

and they followed Jesus; left their master, and went after him, in order to get some acquaintance with him, and receive some instructions from him.

Ver. 38. *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following*, etc.] That is, “him”, as the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions add: he saw by their walk, and by their countenances, that they were following him; and which he knew before he turned himself: he knew what John had said, and what an effect it had upon these disciples, and what was working in their hearts, and how desirous they were of coming up to him, and conversing with him; and therefore he turned himself, that they might have an opportunity of speaking to him; or rather, in order to speak to them first, as he did:

and saith unto them, what seek ye? This he said, not as ignorant of whom, and what they were seeking, and desirous; but to encourage them to speak to him, which, through fear and bashfulness, they might be backward to do; and therefore, he who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but cherishes and encourages the first motions of grace, begins first with them, and treats them in a free and familiar manner; thereby to animate and engage them to use freedom with him, and which end was answered:

they said unto him, Rabbi; a title which now began to be in much use with the Jews, and which they gave to their celebrated doctors; and these disciples of John, observing how magnificently their master spoke of Jesus,

in great reverence to him, addressed him under this character; (see Gill on “~~4217~~ Matthew 23:7”);

which is to say, being interpreted, master. These are the words of the evangelist, interpreting the word “Rabbi”, and not of the disciples, and are left out in the Syriac and Persic versions, who, for “Rabbi”, read “our master”, or our “Rabbi”; being said by both the disciples, or by one in the name of both, putting the following question:

where dwellest thou? signifying, that that was not a proper place, in the public way, to enter into a conversation with him, and acquaint him with what they were desirous of; but should be glad to know where he lodged, that they might wait upon him there, either then, or on the morrow, or at any convenient time.

Ver. 39. *He saith unto them, come and see,* etc.] He gave them an invitation, to go along with him directly, and see with their own eyes, where he dwelt, and there and then converse with him, and at any other time; to which they had a hearty welcome:

they came and saw where he dwelt; they accepted of the invitation, and went along with him immediately, and saw, and took notice of the place where he had lodgings, that they might know it, and find it another time; which Dr. Lightfoot conjectures was at Capernaum, which is very probable; since that was his own city, where he paid tribute, where he frequently resorted, and was on the banks of Jordan, near the lake of Gennesaret; and these disciples were Galilaeans:

and abode with him that day; the remaining part of the day, which they spent in delightful conversation with him; by which they knew that he was the Messiah; at least they were better instructed in this matter, and more confirmed in it. The Arabic version renders it, “they remained with him that his own day”; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks the next day is meant, and that it was the sabbath day, which they kept with him in private devotion and conference:

for it was about the tenth hour; which, according to the Roman way of reckoning, must be ten o’clock in the morning; so that there was a considerable part of the day before them; but according to the Jewish way of reckoning, who reckon twelve hours to a day, it must be four o’clock in the afternoon, when there were but two hours to night: and this being; about the time when the lamb of the daily sacrifice of the evening was

offered up, very seasonably did John point unto them, at this time, Christ the Lamb of God, the antitype of that sacrifice; for the daily evening sacrifice was slain at eight and a half, and was offered at nine and a half^{f53}, or between the ninth and tenth hours of the day. The Ethiopic version renders it, “they remained with him that day unto the tenth hour”.

Ver. 40. *One of the two which heard John [speak]*, etc.] The above things, concerning Jesus being the Lamb of God:

and followed him; that is, Jesus, as the Syriac and Arabic versions read; and the Persic version, Christ: and the Ethiopic version, “the Lord Jesus”; for not John, but Jesus they followed:

was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother: (see ^{<40B>}Matthew 4:18) the other, as before observed, might be the writer of this Gospel.

Ver. 41. *He first findeth his own brother Simon*, etc.] Either before the other disciple, or before he found any other person: after he and the other disciple departed from Christ, being affected with the grace bestowed upon him, and his heart warm with the conversation he had had with him, and transported with joy at finding the Messiah, goes in all haste in search of his relations, friends, and acquaintance, to communicate what he had seen and heard, in order to bring them to the knowledge of the same; for such is the nature of grace, it is very communicative, and those that have it, are very desirous that all others should be partakers of it: and the first person he lighted on was Simon, who was afterwards called Peter, who was his own brother; not a brother-in-law, but his own brother, by father and mother’s side, and so dear unto him by the ties of nature and blood:

and saith unto him; with all eagerness imaginable, and in a rapture of joy:

we have found the Messiah; I, and a fellow disciple have had the Messiah, so often foretold by the prophets, and so long expected by our fathers, pointed out to us; and we have followed him, and have had conversation with him, and are well assured he is that illustrious person:

which is, being interpreted, the Christ; which, as in (^{<40B>}John 1:38), are the words of the evangelist, and not Andrew, and are therefore left out in the Syriac version; the word Messiah needing no interpretation in that language, and which was the language in which Andrew spoke. This name, Messiah, was well known among the Jews, for that who was promised, and they expected as a Saviour and Redeemer; though it is not very often

mentioned in the books of the Old Testament, chiefly in the following places, (^{<101P>}Psalm 2:2 18:50 89:39,51 ^{<2025>}Daniel 9:25,26); but is very much used in the Chaldee paraphrases: Elias Levita ^{f54} says, he found it in more than fifty verses; and Buxtorf ^{f55} has added others to them, and the word appears in “seventy one” places, which he takes notice of, and are worthy of regard; for they show the sense of the ancient synagogue, concerning the passages of the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah: this Hebrew word is interpreted by the Greek word, “Christ”; and both signify “anointed”, and well agree with the person to whom they belong, to which there is an allusion in (^{<200B>}Song of Solomon 1:3), “thy name is as ointment poured forth”: he is so called, because he was anointed from everlasting, to be prophet, priest, and king; (see ^{<101P>}Psalm 2:6 89:20) (^{<2012>}Proverbs 8:22,23), and he was anointed as man, with the oil of gladness, with the graces of the Spirit, without measure, (^{<101P>}Psalm 45:7) (^{<400B>}Acts 10:38). And it is from him the saints receive the anointing, or grace in measure; and are from him called Christians, and are really anointed ones; (see ^{<10127>}1 John 2:27 ^{<40124>}Acts 11:24 ^{<10121>}2 Corinthians 1:21), hence it is a name precious to the saints, and savoury to them. These words were delivered by Andrew, in a very exulting strain, expressing great joy; as indeed what can be greater joy to a sensible soul, than to find Christ? which in a spiritual sense, is to have a clear sight of him by faith, to go unto him, and lay hold on him, as the only Saviour and Redeemer: who is to be found in the Scriptures of truth, which testify of him; in the promises of grace, which are full of him and in the Gospel, of which he is the sum and substance; and in the ordinances of it, where he shows himself; for he is not to be found by the light of nature, or by carnal reason, nor by the law of Moses, but by means of the Gospel, and the Spirit of God attending that, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: and happy are those souls that find Christ under his direction; for they find life, spiritual and eternal, in him; a justifying righteousness; free and full pardon of their sins; spiritual food for their souls; and peace, comfort, joy, and rest, and eternal glory: wherefore this must needs be matter of joy unto them, since such a finding is a rich one, a pearl of great price, riches durable and unsearchable; and which a man that has found, would not part with for all the world; but parts with all he has for it; and is what can never be lost again; and, particularly to two sorts of persons, finding Christ must give a peculiar pleasure, and an inexpressible joy; to such as are under a sense of sin and damnation, and to such who have been under desertion. The phrase of

“finding” a person, twice used in this text, and hereafter in some following verses, is frequent in Talmudic and Rabbinic writings; as

“he went, *brl hyj kça*, “and found him with Rab”^{f56}.”

Ver. 42. *And he brought him to Jesus*, etc.] That is, Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus; he persuaded him to go along with him, and showed him where he was; which discovered great zeal for Christ, being desirous of, gaining souls unto him; and great affection to his brother, being heartily concerned that he might know Christ, as well as he; nor did he choose that he should take up with the bare account that he gave of him, but would have him go to him himself, that he might be personally acquainted with him, and instructed by him: and this also shows the readiness and willingness of Simon, to see and hear Christ himself, and not sit down contented with the bare relation his brother gave: no doubt he found his heart stirred up within him, and the desires of his soul going after Christ; and therefore he at once rose up and went with Andrew to him; and thus one person may be the means of bringing another to Christ: and it may be observed, that Peter was not the first of the apostles that was called by Christ, or first knew him; Andrew was before him, and the means of bringing him into an acquaintance with him; had it been the reverse, the Papists would have improved it in favour of Peter, as the prince of the apostles: this clause is omitted in the Persic version.

And when Jesus beheld him; as he was coming, or come to him: he had beheld him before in the glass of his Father’s purposes and decrees; he had viewed him in his blood, and said unto him, live; and he now looked upon him with a look of love, of complacency, and delight:

he said, thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thy name is Simon, and thy father’s name is Jona: he knew both their names, though he might have never seen their faces, nor heard of them: this he said to give Simon a testimony of his omniscience; and which, no doubt, must strike him at once. Simon, or Simeon, was a common name among the Jews, being the name of one of the twelve patriarchs; (see Gill on “~~4002~~ Matthew 10:2”); and so likewise was Jona, being the name of a prophet of theirs; (see Gill on “~~4067~~ Matthew 16:17”); and inasmuch as the prophet Jonah was of Gathhepher in Zebulun, which was in Galilee; (see Gill on “~~4072~~ John 7:52”); this might be a common name among the Galilaeans; so that there seems no reason why it should be thought to be the same with John, as the

Ethiopic version reads it, and by way of interrogation, “art thou not Simon the son of John?”

Thou shall be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone; or Peter as it should rather be rendered; and as it is in the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions; and as “Cepha”, or “Cephas”, in the Syriac and Chaldee languages signifies a stone, or rock ^{f57}, so does “Peter” in Greek: hence, the Syriac version here gives no interpretation of the word. Christ not only calls Simon by his present name, at first sight of him, but tells him what his future name should be; and which imports, not only that he should be a lively stone in the spiritual building, the church, but should have a considerable hand in that work, and abide firm and steadfast to Christ, and his interest, notwithstanding his fall; and continue constant and immoveable until death, as he did. The Jews also, in their writings, call him Simeon Kepha ^{f58}.

Ver. 43. *The day following*, etc.] Not the day after John had pointed out Christ, as the Lamb of God, to two of his disciples; but the day after Simon had been with him, being brought by Andrew:

Jesus would go forth into Galilee; from whence he came to Jordan, to John, to be baptized by him; and which being done, and his temptations in the wilderness over, it was his will, resolution, and determination, to return to Galilee, the place of his education and conversation, till this time; and therefore chose to begin his ministry, and miracles, there, both to give honour to it, and to fulfil a prophecy in (^{<2300>}Isaiah 9:1,2); and besides this, he had doubtless another end in going thither: which was to call some other disciples that dwelt there:

and findeth Philip; as he was going to Galilee, or rather when in it; not by hap or chance; but knowing where he was, as the shepherd and bishop of souls, looked him up and found him out, and called him by his grace, and to be a disciple of his; (see Gill on ^{<4000>}Matthew 10:3”);

and saith unto him, follow me; leave thy friends, thy calling, and business, and become a disciple of mine: and such power went along with these words, that he at once left all, and followed Christ; as the other disciples, Peter, and Andrew, James, and John, and Matthew did, as is recorded of them, though not of this; but the following history makes it appear he did.

Ver. 44. *Now Philip was of Bethsaida*, etc.] A town on the lake of Gennesaret, afterwards made a city by Philip the tetrarch, and called Julias,

after the name of Caesar's daughter^{f59}: it was a fishing town, and had its name from thence; and the disciples that were of it, were of this business:

the city of Andrew and Peter; or "Simon", as read the Syriac and Persic versions: three apostles were called out of this place, as mean, and wicked, as it was; (see ^{<4012>}Matthew 11:21); which was no small honour to it: it is a saying of the Jews^{f60}, that

"a man's place (his native place) does not honour him, but a man honours his place."

This was the case here.

Ver. 45. *Philip findeth Nathanael*, etc.] Who was of Cana of Galilee, (^{<4012>}John 21:2) and where, it is very likely, Philip found him; since we quickly read of Jesus, and his disciples being there. This man is thought, by some, to be the same with Bartholomew; and so he is called Bartholomew, in a Syriac dictionary^{f61}; and the rather, since he and Philip are always mentioned together in the account of the apostles, (^{<4003>}Matthew 10:3 ^{<4008>}Mark 3:18 ^{<4064>}Luke 6:14). And certain it is, from the above mentioned place, that Nathanael was among the apostles after our Lord's resurrection; and it is highly probable was one of them? his name might be Nathanael bar Tholmai, the son of Tholmai, Ptolomy, or Tholomew. It is the same name with Nethaneel, and which is read Nathanael, as here, in:

"And of the sons of Phaisur; Elionas, Massias Israel, and Nathanael, and Ocidelus and Talsas." (1 Esdras 9:22)

and by the Septuagint on (^{<1014>}1 Chronicles 2:14 15:24 24:6 26:4 ^{<4010>}2 Chronicles 35:9 ^{<5102>}Ezra 10:22) (^{<1626>}Nehemiah 12:36); and signifies one given of God; and is the same with Theodore in Greek, and Adeodatus in Latin; a doctor of this name, R. Nathaniel, is mentioned in the Jewish writings^{f62}:

and saith unto him, we have found him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets, did write. He does not say, that he, and Andrew, and Simon, had found the Messiah; though he designs him by this circumlocution; Nathanael being, as is generally thought, a person well versed in the law, and the prophets, and so would at once know who Philip meant: for Moses, in the law, or Pentateuch, in the five books written by him, frequently speaks of the Messiah as the seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head; as the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations

should be blessed; and as the Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people should be; and as the great prophet, like to himself, God would raise up among the children of Israel, to whom they were to hearken: and as for the prophets, they wrote of his birth of a virgin; of the place of his birth, Bethlehem; of his sufferings, and the glory, that should follow; of his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God; and of many things relating to his person, and office, and work. And Philip having given this general account of him, proceeds to name him particularly; and affirms him to be

Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph; that his name was Jesus, which signifies a saviour; and answers to the promises, and prophecies, and character of him in the Old Testament; that he was of Nazareth, a place not above three hours walk from Cana, as Adrichomius says, where Philip and Nathanael were: Nazareth was the place where Christ had lived almost all his days hitherto, and therefore is said to be of it; though Bethlehem was the place of his birth, which Philip might not as yet know; as Capernaum afterwards was his city, or the more usual place of his residence: and that he was the son of Joseph; this Philip says, according to the common opinion of people, for he was supposed to be the son of Joseph; he having married his mother Mary.

Ver. 46. *And Nathanael said unto him*, etc.] Taking notice of, and laying hold on what Philip said, that he was of Nazareth, which at once stumbled, and prejudiced him against Jesus being the Messiah; knowing very well that Bethlehem was to be the place of his birth:

can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? The whole country of Galilee was had in contempt with the Jews; but Nazareth was so mean a place, that it seems it was even despised by its neighbours, by the Galilaeans themselves; for Nathanael was a Galilean, that said these words. It was so miserable a place that he could hardly think that any sort of good thing, even any worldly good thing, could come from thence; and it was so wicked, as appears from their murderous designs upon our Lord, that he thought no good man could arise from hence; and still less, any prophet, any person of great note; and still least of all, that that good thing, or person, the Messiah, should spring from it: so that his objection, and prejudice, proceeded not only upon the oracle in (³¹⁸Micah 5:2), which points out Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah; but upon the wickedness, and meanness, and obscurity of Nazareth.

Philip saith unto him, come and see; who though he might not be master of this point, and knew not how to solve this difficulty, and remove this prejudice from Nathanael's mind, yet persuades him to go with him to Jesus; who, he doubted not, would give him full satisfaction in this, and all other points; and then it would most clearly appear to him, as it had done to him, that he was the true Messiah. The phrase, *yzj at*, "come, see", is often used in the book of Zohar^{f63}: so it is, and likewise, *harw ab*, "come and see", in the Talmudic writings^{f64}.

Ver. 47. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him*, etc.] For notwithstanding his prejudices, he was a man of so much uprightness and honesty, that he thought Philip's request was very reasonable; and that it was but right, and fair, that he should see, and hear, and judge, for himself, whether the person Philip spoke of was the Messiah, or not; and therefore he came along with him; and as he was coming, Jesus saw him, who knew all that had passed between him and Philip:

and saith of him; to those that were standing by him, and in the hearing of Nathanael,

behold an Israelite indeed! a son of Israel, as the Syriac and Persic versions read; a true son of Jacob's; an honest, plain hearted man, like him; one that was an Israelite at heart; inwardly so; not one after the flesh only, but after the Spirit; (see ~~4128~~Romans 2:28,29 ~~4108~~1 Corinthians 10:18); and which was a rare thing at that time; and therefore a note of admiration is prefixed to it; for all were not Israel, that were of Israel; and indeed but a very few then: and so, *larçy ^b*, "a son of Israel", and *rwmg larçy*, "a perfect Israelite", are^{f65} said of such who have regard to the articles of the Jewish faith, though not even of the seed of Israel: it is added,

in whom there is no guile; not that he was without sin; nor is this said of him; nor was he in such sense without guile, as Christ himself was; but guile was not a governing sin in him: the course of his life, and conversation, was with great integrity, and uprightness, and without any prevailing hypocrisy and deceit, either to God, or men. This Christ said to show how much such a character is approved by him; and that he knew the secrets of men's hearts, and the inward frames of their minds.

Ver. 48. *Nathanael saith unto him, whence knowest thou me?* etc.] This he said as one surprised, that he, who was a stranger to him, should hit upon his general character, and describe the internal state and frame of his soul:

this was more surprising to him, than if he had called him by his name Nathanael, as he did Simon; or had said what was the place, of his abode; Cana of Galilee; since this ordinarily was only to be observed, and learned, from a long and familiar acquaintance and conversation: by Nathanael's reply, it looks as if he had no doubt, or fears, about the character Christ gave him; but rather, that he believed it, as every good man must be conscious to himself of his own integrity; only it was amazing to him, how he should know it:

Jesus answered and said unto him; in order to satisfy him, how he could know this inward temper of his mind, and to give him some undeniable proofs of his omniscience, which he himself must acknowledge, being such as none but an all seeing eye could discover:

before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee; in which words Christ gives two instances of his omniscience; the one is, that he knew Philip had called him; he was privy to all that passed between them, though they were alone, and the conversation was had in the most private manner. Christ knew what an account Philip had given of him, and what objection Nathanael had made; and what an invitation Philip had given him to go along with him to Christ, and judge for himself; which is here meant by calling him, and with which he complied: and the other is, that he saw him under the fig tree before that: he was sitting under it, as men in those countries used to do; (see ³³⁰⁴Micah 4:4), where he might be reading the Scriptures, and meditating upon them; and if, as some observe, he was reading, and thinking upon Jacob's dream, concerning the ladder which reached from earth to heaven, and on which he saw the angels of God ascending and descending, the words of Christ in (⁶¹⁵John 1:51) must strike him with fresh surprise, and give him another convincing proof of his omniscience: or he might be praying here in secret, and so acted a different part from the generality, of religious men of that nation, who chose to pray in synagogues, and corners of the streets, that they might be seen; and likewise proved him to be what Christ had said of him, a true and rare Israelite, without guile and hypocrisy, which were so visible and prevailing among others. It was usual with the doctors to read, and study in the law, under fig trees, and sometimes, though rarely, to pray there. It is said ^{f66},

“R. Jacob, and his companions, were “sitting”, studying in the law, **hnyat adj twj t**, “under a certain fig tree”.”

And the rule they give about praying, on, or under one, is thus ^{f67}:

“he that prays on the top of an olive tree, or on the top of a “fig tree”, or on any other trees, must come down, and “pray below”.”

It is said of Nathanael, in the Syriac dictionary ^{f68}; that his mother laid him under a fig tree, when the infants were slain, i.e. at Bethlehem; which, if it could be depended upon, must be to Nathanael a surprising and undeniable proof of the deity of Christ, and of his being the true Messiah; since, at that time, he was an infant of days himself, and was the person Herod was seeking to destroy, as the Messiah, and king of the Jews.

Ver. 49. *Nathanael answered and saith unto him*, etc.] Being fully convinced of his omniscience by these instances:

Rabbi; that is, master, as it is interpreted in (~~40B~~ John 1:38), and is not here, because it is there:

thou art the Son of God; not by creation, for this would be to say no more of him, than may be said of every man; nor by adoption, for in that sense Nathanael himself was a Son of God, and many others; nor on account of his wonderful incarnation, which, it is very likely, at this time Nathanael knew nothing of; nor by reason of his resurrection from the dead, which, as yet, was not, and still less might be known by this person; nor because of his office, as Mediator, for this is expressed in the next clause; but by nature, as being of the same essence, and possessed of the same perfections God is; and of which he was convinced by the instances he gave of his omniscience; for it was from hence, and no other consideration, that he concludes him to be the Son of God: wherefore this phrase must be understood of him, not as Mediator, but as a divine person; as the natural, essential, and eternal Son of God; and who is truly and properly God: he adds,

thou art the King of Israel; having in view, no doubt, the passage in (~~41B~~ Psalm 2:6,7), where the characters of Son of God, and King of Zion, meet in the same person: not King of Israel, in a literal sense; though he was the son of David, and a descendant of his in a right line, and was of the royal line, and had a legal right to the throne of Israel; and Nathanael might have a view to this, being tinctured with the common national prejudice, that the Messiah would be a temporal prince: but his kingdom is not of this world; nor with observation; but is spiritual; and he is a King over Israel in a spiritual sense, even of saints, whether Jews or Gentiles: whom he

conquers by his power, and rules in their hearts by his Spirit, and grace; and protects, and defends them from all their enemies.

Ver. 50. *Jesus answered and said unto him*, etc.] Not as reproving him for his faith, as if he was too credulous, and too easily gave into the belief of Christ, as the Son of God, and true Messiah, upon these single expressions of his; but as approving of it, and surprised at it:

because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? some read the words, not by way of interrogation, but as an assertion; “thou believest”, or “hast believed”, as the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Persic versions:

thou shall see greater things than these; meaning that he should have larger discoveries of his person, nature, and perfections, and should see things done by him, much more surprising than any thing he had seen yet; referring to the miracles of raising the dead, casting out devils, and healing all manner of diseases.

Ver. 51. *And he saith unto him, verily, verily, I say unto you*, etc.] Not only to Nathanael, but to the rest of the disciples that were then with him; and to show himself to be the “Amen”, and faithful witness, as well as more strongly to asseverate what he was about to say, he doubles the expression:

hereafter you shall see heaven open; either in a literal sense, as it had been at his baptism; or, in a mystical sense, that there should be a clearer manifestation of heavenly truths made by his ministry; and that the way into the holiest of all should be made more manifest; and a more familiar intercourse he opened between God and his people; and also between angels and saints:

and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man; or to the son of man, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions render it; meaning himself in human nature; the second Adam, and seed of the woman; and is expressive both of the truth, and infirmity of that nature. Reference may here be had to the ladder Jacob dreamed of, in (^(Gen 28:12)Genesis 28:12), which was a representation of Christ, in his person, as God-man; who, as God, was in heaven, whilst he, as man, was on earth; and in his office, as Mediator between God and man, making peace between them both; and in the ministration of angels to him in person, and to his body the church. And it is observable, that some of the Jewish writers^{f69} understand

the ascent, and descent of the angels, in (^{<012812>}Genesis 28:12), to be, not upon the ladder, but upon Jacob; which makes the phrase there still more agreeable to this; and so they render **wyl** [, in (^{<012813>}Genesis 28:13), not “above it”, but “above him”. Or the sense is, that there would be immediately made such clearer discoveries of his person, and grace by his ministry, and such miracles would be wrought by him in confirmation of it, that it would look as if heaven was open, and the angels of God were continually going to and fro, and bringing fresh messages, and performing miraculous operations; as if the whole host of them were constantly employed in such services: and this the rather seems to be the sense, since the next account we have, is, of the beginning of Christ’s miracles to manifest forth his glory in Cana of Galilee, where Nathanael lived; and since the word, rendered “hereafter”, signifies, “from henceforward”; or, as the Persic version renders it, “from this hour”; though the word is left out in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions.