

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN 9

Ver. 1. *And as [Jesus] passed by*, etc.] The word “Jesus” is not in the Greek text, but is rightly supplied by us, as it is in the Vulgate Latin, and as the word “Christ” is in the Persic version; for of his passing from the temple, and by the multitude that were there, and on his way to the place he designed to make to, is this said, as appears from the close of the preceding chapter; though some think this is to be understood of his passing by at another time and place, since the preceding fact of the woman’s being taken in adultery, and the discourse of our Lord with the Jews, were quickly after the feast of tabernacles; whereas the following ones, both in this, and the next chapter, seem to be at the feast of dedication, (^{<BIB2>}John 10:22), which was some months after: but it may be, that the parable of the sheep, though it runs in connection with what is said in this chapter, might be delivered then; or what follows, (^{<BIB2>}John 10:22), might be said at the feast of dedication, when the parable, and what is related here, might be delivered before, seeing there is so very strict a connection between this, and the preceding chapter; and the Ethiopic version is very express, rendering it, “and departing from thence”; that is, from the temple, at that time when the Jews took up stones to stone him:

he saw a man which was blind from his birth; which man was an emblem of God’s elect in a state of nature, who being conceived in sin, are transgressors from the womb, and so are alienated from the life of God through their ignorance and blindness: they are blind as to any true and spiritual knowledge of God in Christ; as to any true sight of sin, or sense of their own estate and condition; and with respect to Christ, and the way of peace, righteousness, and salvation by him; and as to the Spirit, and the operations of his grace, and with regard to the Scriptures, and the doctrines of the Gospel: and as Christ saw this man first, and not the man him, for he was blind, so Christ first looks upon his chosen ones with an eye of love and mercy, as he passes by them, and both enlightens and quickens them, (^{<BIB6>}Ezekiel 16:6,8). He saw Matthew the publican first, as

he passed along, and called him from the receipt of custom to be a follower of him, (⁴¹⁰Matthew 9:10).

Ver. 2. *And his disciples asked him*, etc.] It may be that some of the twelve apostles, or others of his disciples, might put the following question to him on sight of this blind man, who by some means or another knew was born blind:

saying, master, who did man, or his parents, that he was born blind? the first of these questions, whether the man himself had sinned before he was born, which might be the occasion of his blindness, proceeds not upon the doctrine of original sin, though the Jews then believed that; (see Gill on “⁴¹²Romans 5:12”); since that was common to all men, and therefore could not admit of such a question; but either upon the notion of transmigration of souls into other bodies; and so the disciples might ask whether this man had sinned in a pre-existent state when in another body, which was the reason of this blindness, or of his being put into a blind body. This notion, Josephus says ⁴¹¹, was embraced by the Pharisees; though, according to him, it seems, that they only understood it of the souls of good men; and if so, this could lay no foundation for such a question, unless these disciples had given into the Pythagorean notion of a transmigration of all souls, which was to be known by defects, as blindness, etc. ⁴¹²; or else this question proceeded upon a principle received by the Jews, that an infant might do that which was faulty and criminal, and actually sin in the womb; of which Dr. Lightfoot has given instances: the second question proceeds upon the methods which sometimes God has taken with men, by visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; or, as the above learned writer observes, upon a notion the Jews had, that a child might suffer for what the mother did whilst it was in the womb; or on another, which prevailed among them, that there should be neither merit nor demerit in the days of the Messiah; that is, that neither the good deeds, nor bad deeds of their parents, should be imputed to their children, neither the one to their advantage, nor the other to their disadvantage: and therefore since he the Messiah was come, they ask, how this blindness should come to pass? what should be the reason of it?

Ver. 3. *Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents*, etc.] Not but that both were guilty of original sin, and had committed actual transgressions; but Christ’s answer is to be considered agreeable to the design of the question; and the sense is, that it was not any sin that

either of them had committed, whilst he was in the womb, or previous to his birth, that was the cause of this blindness; otherwise, all such irregularities and afflictions arise from sin, and the fall of man, as does that spiritual blindness with which all mankind are attended:

but that the works of God should be manifest in him; that is, that Christ might have an opportunity of working a miracle in the cure of him, whereby it might appear that he is truly and properly God, the Son of God, and the Messiah; and so spiritual blindness, which has followed the fall of man, takes place in the elect of God in common with others, that the power of divine grace might be displayed in bringing them out of darkness into marvellous light.

Ver. 4. *I must work the works of him that sent me,* etc.] This shows, that the works of God, that were to be manifest, were to be done by Christ: many were the works which the Father gave him to do, and which he undertook to perform; and therefore there was a necessity of doing them, as principally the work of redemption, by fulfilling the law, and satisfying justice: and besides this, there were the preaching of the Gospel, and doing of miracles, and among these was this of giving sight to the blind, (see ~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 35:5), both in a natural and spiritual sense: and with a view to this he speaks of the works he must do,

while it is day; while the day of life lasts, for in the grave there is no work nor device:

the night cometh when no man can work; meaning the night of death, and of the grave, and suggesting his own death hereby, that he had but a little time to be in this world, and therefore would make the best use of it, to do the will and work of his Father that sent him; and which should be a pattern to us. This life is but short, it is but as the length of a day; a great deal of business is to be done; and death is hastening on, which will put a period to all working.

Ver. 5. *As long as I am in the world,* etc.] Which had been now two or three and thirty years; but was not to be much longer.

I am the light of the world; (see Gill on “~~John~~ John 8:12”). Though doubtless he said this with some view to the cure he was about to perform, it being agreeable to his character and work, while he was in the world.

Ver. 6. *And when he had thus spoken*, etc.] In answer to the disciples' question, and declaring his own work and office in the world, and the necessity he was under of performing it:

he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle; the Misnic doctors speak ^{f413} of *qwrn j yj*, "clay that is spitted", or "spittle clay", which their commentators say ^{f414} was a weak, thin clay, like spittle or water; but this here was properly spittle clay, or clay made of spittle, for want of water; or it may be rather, through choice Christ spat upon the dust of the earth, and worked it together into a consistence, like clay:

and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay; however, spittle, especially fasting spittle, might be thought proper in some disorder of the eyes, to be used, as it was by the Jews; (see Gill on "~~4016~~ John 9:16"); yet clay was a most unlikely means of restoring sight to a man that was born blind, which might be thought rather a means of making a man blind that could see. This may be an emblem of the word of God, the eye salve of the Gospel; which is a very unlikely means in the opinion of a natural man, who counts it foolishness, of enlightening and saving sinners; and yet by this foolishness of preaching God does save those that believe.

Ver. 7. *And said unto him, go wash in the Pool of Siloam*, etc.] A fountain of this name is called Siloah, (~~2006~~ Isaiah 8:6), and according to the Jewish writers, sometimes Gihon ^{f415}; and this, they say ^{f416}, was without Jerusalem, though near unto it: hither the Jews went at the feast of tabernacles ^{f417}, and drew water with great rejoicing, and brought it, and poured it on the altar; the waters thereof also the priests drank for digestion, when they had eaten too much flesh ^{f418}; and this was likewise made use of to wash in, in case of uncleanness. It is said ^{f419} of Benaiah, one of David's worthies, that

“one day he set his foot upon a dead toad, and he went down to Siloah, and broke the pieces of hail, (or ice congealed together,) and dipped himself.”

This fountain was to the south west of Jerusalem; and was, as Josephus says, sweet and large ^{f420}; and from it were two watercourses, upper and lower, (~~4020~~ 2 Chronicles 32:30), which ran into two pools; the one was called the Pool of Siloam, which may be the same that Josephus ^{f421} calls the Pool of Solomon, and is here meant, and which was situated on the south of the wall of Sion, towards the east; and the other was called the Pool of Shelah, and which, in (~~4025~~ Nehemiah 3:15), is called in our

translation, and in some others, the Pool of Siloah. Now both the fountain, and the pool, were without the city; and yet we read of a Siloah in the midst of the city^{f422}. This blind man was sent, not to wash himself all over, but only his face or eyes; and so the Arabic and Persic versions read, “wash thy face”; the clay from it: this may be emblematical of the grace of the Spirit, sometimes signified by water and washing, which accompanying the word, makes it effectual to the salvation of souls:

which is by interpretation sent. This interpretation of the word Siloam does not determine which of the pools is meant, the upper or lower, “Siloah” or “Shelah”, since they both come from the word **ج | ح**, which signifies to “send”; but by the flexion of the word, the upper pool “Siloah” seems plainly intended, which was not so forenamed, as Nonus suggests, from the sending this man thither, but rather from the sending forth its waters, which flowed softly and gently for the supply of the city of Jerusalem, Some think Christ gave this interpretation of it with a view to himself, as the sent of God, the true Messiah: but the words seem not to be the words of Christ, but of the evangelist, who interprets this word; wherefore they are left out in the Syriac and Persic versions, where such an interpretation was needless.

He went his way therefore and washed, and came seeing: he did as he was commanded; he was obedient to the directions and orders of Christ, though they seemed so unlikely to answer the end; and yet that was brought about through the divine power of Christ, which appeared the more in making use of such unlikely means.

Ver. 8. *The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him,* etc.] For it seems the blind man was not a stranger, one that came out of the country to the city to beg; but a native of Jerusalem, that had long lived in a certain neighbourhood in it, and was well known to be what he was;

that he was blind; the Alexandrian copy, and one of Beza’s exemplars, and the Vulgate Latin version read, “that he was a beggar”; to which agree the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions: wherefore they

said, is this not he that sat and begged? they particularly remark his begging posture; he was not laid all along, as the lame man in (~~4AB~~ Acts 3:2); nor did he go from door to door, as others were used to do, but he sat in some certain place, as blind men generally did; (see ~~4AB~~ Matthew 20:30).

Ver. 9. *Some said, this is he*, etc.] It is the same man that was blind, and begged:

others [said]; in one of Beza's copies it is added "no", and so read the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions; though they owned and said,

he is like him. This discourse of the neighbours concerning the blind man restored to sight, resembles the talk that generally is among relations, acquaintance, and neighbours, when anyone belonging to them is called by grace, and converted, saying, what is come to such an one? is he mad or melancholy? he is not the man he was: he is scarcely the same; is it he, or another? what is the matter with him?

[but] he said, I am [he]; and so put an end to the dispute between them, by his frank acknowledgment that he was the blind man, and the beggar they before knew as such: so persons enlightened by the Spirit of God, and effectually called by his grace, are very free and ready to acknowledge what they were before conversion, what poor, blind, and miserable, and contemptible creatures they were: Matthew owns himself to have been a publican; and Paul confesses he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person, and the chief of sinners.

Ver. 10. *Therefore said they unto him*, etc.] When the case was clear, and it was out of question that he was the man:

how were thine eyes opened? or made to see: they might well ask this question, since such a thing was never known before, that one born blind received his sight; and as great a miracle it is in grace, and as great a mystery to a natural man, how one should be born again, or be spiritually enlightened.

Ver. 11. *He answered and said, a man that is called Jesus*, etc.] Whom he had as yet little knowledge of, only by some means or another he had learned his name;

made clay and anointed mine eyes, etc. (see Gill on "~~406~~John 9:6"), (see Gill on "~~407~~John 9:7").

Ver. 12. *Then they said unto him, where is he?* etc.] For Christ had withdrawn himself and was gone; whether on account of the Jews, who he knew would be irritated by this miracle, or whether to avoid all popular applause and glory, which he sought not, is not certain; it may be on both

accounts: this question, however, was put, not out of good will to Christ, but that they might apprehend him, and bring him before the sanhedrim, for doing work on the sabbath day; and such enmity there is in carnal men, at the conversion of sinners, their acquaintance, instead of rejoicing at it:

he said I know not; for when he returned from the pool, Jesus was gone: and so it sometimes is, that when Christ has wrought a good work of grace upon the heart, he withdraws himself for a while, and the converted sinner knows not where he is.

Ver. 13. *They brought to the Pharisees*, etc.] That is, to the sanhedrim, which chiefly consisted of Pharisees; and so Nonnus calls them the priests and chief priests:

him that was aforetime blind; to be examined by them. And something like this is the method used by carnal relations and friends, who when they have any belonging to them under a work of grace, have them to their learned doctors of a different religion, to talk to them, and dissuade them from the ways of truth and godliness.

Ver. 14. *And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay*, etc.]

Which was reckoned a violation of the sabbath, (⁴⁰¹⁶John 9:16), and was one reason why they had the man to the Pharisees to be examined, and why they were desirous of knowing where Jesus was:

and opened his eyes; by putting on the clay, and sending him to wash in the Pool of Siloam: nor did the miracle, nor the good done to the man, excuse with them, what they thought a breach of the sabbath.

Ver. 15. *Then again the Pharisees asked him*, etc.] Not that they had put any question of this kind to him before; but they also, as well as the neighbours, inquired of him,

how he had received his sight; from whom, and by what means:

he said unto them, he put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and do see. This account agrees with the matter of fact, and with that he gave to his neighbours: he did not vary as to the truth of the relation, but this is somewhat more concise and short; and it is reasonable to suppose, that the Pharisees had talked much with him before, which made it less necessary to be more particular; for he makes no mention of the name of Jesus, nor of his making the clay, and the manner of it, nor of the Pool of Siloam, or his

orders to go there and wash; (see Gill on “~~John 9:6~~”), (see Gill on “~~John 9:7~~”).

Ver. 16. *Wherefore said some of the Pharisees*, etc.] Or sanhedrim, for they were not all of one mind, as appears by what follows:

this man is not of God; meaning not the blind man, but Jesus; and their sense is, he is not sent of God, he does not come from him to do his will and work, nor does he seek his glory, nor is he on his side, or for his interest;

because he keepeth not the sabbath day: this they concluded from his making clay of spittle, and spreading it on the blind man’s eyes, which was contrary to the traditions of their elders: one of whose rules and canons is ^{f423}, that

“it is forbidden to put fasting spittle even on the eyelid on a sabbath day.”

An eye salve, or a plaster for the eye, if it was put on for pleasure, was lawful, but not for healing ^{f424}: but if it was put on, on the evening of the sabbath, it might continue on the sabbath day ^{f425}.

Others said, how can a man that is a sinner, or a sabbath breaker,

do such miracles? as curing a man born blind, the like of which was never heard: those that reasoned after this manner may be supposed to be Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

And there was a division among them; even in the sanhedrim, they could not agree about the character of the person that had done this miracle.

Ver. 17. *They say unto the blind man again*, etc.] After they had discoursed among themselves, and could not agree about the author of the miracle, they turn to him that had been blind, who is called the blind man, because he had been so, and ask him his sentiments of him:

what sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? the question seems, at first sight, as if it was, whether Jesus had opened his eyes or not; but by the answer it appears, that it required his thoughts of him, “who hath opened thine eyes”, as the Vulgate Latin and Persic versions read; or “seeing”, or “because he hath opened thine eyes”, as the Arabic and Ethiopic versions:

he said, he is a prophet; the Syriac and Persic versions read, “I say he is a prophet”; or, “he is certainly a prophet”, as the Arabic version. The Jews were wont to conclude a man’s being a prophet from miracles wrought by him; (see ~~4064~~ John 6:14 7:31); though it does not appear that he believed him, as yet, to be that prophet, or the Messiah, that was to come; (see ~~4065~~ John 9:36).

Ver. 18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him*, etc.] Not Jesus, but the blind man;

that he had been blind, and received his sight; they imagine there was a fraud in the case, that it was collusion between Jesus and this man; that he was a man who had never been blind, but only had given out that he was, and pretended he had now received his sight from Jesus, on purpose to spread his fame, and induce people to believe he was the Messiah; and in this imagination they endeavoured to strengthen themselves and others:

until they called the parents of him that had received his sight; they sent messengers to them, and summoned them before them, that they might examine them about this matter, hoping, they might get something out of them, which might detect the supposed fraud, and bring Jesus under disgrace.

Ver. 19. *And they asked them, saying, is this your son*, etc.] The first question they put was, whether the man that stood before them, pointing to him, was their son or not; whether they knew him by any marks to be their son, and would own him as such: had they answered to this in the negative, they would have got an advantage against him, and would have convicted him of a lie, since he had given out that he was the son of such parents; and proving such a lie upon him, would at once have brought the whole affair into suspicion at least: they add,

who ye say was born blind; this contains a second question, whether, if this was their son, he was born blind or not; and if he was not born blind, though he had been blind, it would have greatly lessened the miracle: and besides, they would have put other questions upon this, whether his blindness was real, and by what means it came. Next follows a third question,

how then doth he now see? By what means has he received his sight? They might hope, that if he was their son, and was really born blind, that he had his sight some other way than by Jesus; or they might object this to his

being born, blind, as being a thing impossible, or at least not credible that he should ever see, was that the case.

Ver. 20. *His parents answered them, and said,* etc.] What follows, which contains distinct answers to the several questions: and to the first they reply very freely, and with great confidence,

we know that this is our son; for though his receiving his sight made a considerable alteration in him, yet his features were the same; and there might be some marks in his body, which they were acquainted with, by which they knew assuredly he was their son: and if even the neighbours, though they disagreed about him, yet some of them knew him to be the same person that had been blind and begged, then much more his parents; and even those who said it was not he, yet they owned he was like him: and with respect to the second question they answer,

and that he was born blind: this they were ready to attest, and did attest.

Ver. 21. *But by what means he now seeth we know not,* etc.] As to the third question they could say nothing to it, they were not present when the cure was wrought, and knew nothing of the matter, but what they had heard from their son, or from others, or both:

or who hath opened his eyes we know not; they had heard it was Jesus, and their son had doubtless told them it was he; but since they could say nothing of their own personal knowledge, they choose not to say anything of him:

he is of age; at man's estate, as, with the Jews, one was, who was at the age of thirteen years, if he could produce the signs of puberty: and such an one was allowed a witness in any case, but not under this age; nor if he was arrived to it, if the above signs could not be produced^{f426}. This man very likely was much older, as may be thought from the whole of his conduct, his pertinent answers, and just reasoning: wherefore his parents direct the sanhedrim to him for an answer to their third question,

ask him, he shall speak for himself; or "of himself", as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions render it: their sense is, he is capable of giving an account of himself in this matter, and he will do it, and let him do it; put the question to him, and a proper answer will be returned; and so they left the affair to be issued in this way.

Ver. 22. *These words spake his parents*, etc.] these were the answers they returned to the three questions put to them: and the reason why they answered in the manner they did to the third, was,

because they feared the Jews; the Jewish sanhedrim, otherwise they were Jews themselves:

for the Jews had agreed already; the sanhedrim had made a decree, either at this time, upon this account, or some time before,

that if any man did confess that he was Christ; that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah,

he should be put out of the synagogue; which was not that sort of excommunication which they called **ywcn**, “Niddui”, a separation from civil society for the space of four cubits, and which held but thirty days, if the person repented; if he did not, it was continued to sixty days; and after that, in case of non-repentance, to ninety days; and if no amendment, then they proceeded to another excommunication called **µrj**, “Cherem”, or **atmç**, “Shammatha”, whereby such were anathematized, and cut off from the whole body of the Jewish church and people, called sometimes the synagogue and congregation of Israel^{f427}; and this struck great terror in the minds of the people; and this was what intimidated the parents of the blind man, being what is intended here. Though these are sometimes put one for another, and signify the same thing; and he that was under the former of those censures, is said to be **rwbyx ^m l dbwm**, “separated from the congregation”^{f428}, a phrase by which the word here used may be very well rendered: but in some things there was a difference between them; the one was without cursing, the other with; he that was under “Niddui”, might teach others the traditions, and they might teach him; he might hire workmen, and be hired himself: but he that was under “Cherem” might neither teach others, nor they teach him; but he might teach himself, that he might not forget his learning; and he might neither hire, nor be hired; and they did not trade with him, nor did they employ him in any business, unless in very little, just to keep him alive^{f429}; yea, the goods which he was possessed of, were confiscated, and which they conclude should be done from^{f430} (^{<15008>}Ezra 10:8), which may be compared with this passage; so that this greatly and chiefly affected them in the affairs of civil life, and which made it so terrible: for I do not find that they were obliged to abstain from the temple, or temple worship, or from the synagogue, and the worship of

it, and which is the mistake of some learned men: it is certain, they might go into places of worship, though with some difference from others; for it is said ^{f431}, that

“all that go into the temple, go in, in the right hand way, and go round, and come out in the left, except such an one to whom anything has befallen him, and he goes about to the left; (and when asked) why dost thou go to the left? (he answers) because I am a mourner; (to whom it is replied) he that dwells in this house comfort thee: (or) **hdwnm ynaç**, “because I am excommunicated”; (to whom they say) he that dwells in this house put it into thy heart (that thou mayest hearken to the words of thy friends, as it is afterwards explained) and they may receive thee.”

And it is elsewhere said ^{f432}, that

“Solomon, when he built the temple, made two gates, the one for bridegrooms, and the other for mourners and excommunicated persons; and the Israelites, when they went in on sabbath days, or feast days, sat between these two gates; and when anyone came in by the gate of the bridegrooms, they knew he was a bridegroom, and said unto him, he that dwells in this house make thee cheerful with sons and daughters: and when anyone came in at the gate of mourners, and his upper lip covered, they knew that he was a mourner, and said unto him, he that dwells in this house comfort thee: and when anyone came in at the gate of mourners, and his upper lip was not covered, they knew **hdwnm hyhç**, “that he was excommunicated”; and said unto him, he that dwells in this house comfort thee, and put it into thy heart to hearken to thy friends.”

And it is afterwards also said in the same place, that when the temple was destroyed, it was decreed that such persons should come into synagogues and schools; but then they were not reckoned as members of the Jewish church, but as persons cut off from the people of Israel, and scarce allowed to be of their commonwealth. And it may be further observed, that excommunication with the Jews was not only on religious accounts, but on civil accounts; on account of money, or when a man would not pay his debts, according to the decree of the sanhedrim ^{f433}. The twenty four reasons of excommunication, given by Maimonides ^{f434}, chiefly respect contempt of the sanhedrim, and of the wise men, and breach of the

traditions of the elders; sometimes they excommunicated for immorality, particularly the Essenes, as Josephus relates, who says ^{f435}, that such who are taken in grievous sins, they cast them out of their order; and he that is so dealt with commonly dies a miserable death; for being bound by oaths and customs, he cannot eat the food of others, and so starves. The same is reported ^{f436} by R. Abraham Zachuth: and sometimes excommunication was for Epicurism, or heresy, and such they reckoned the belief of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah, on account of which this decree was made, and which continued with them; for not only this blind man was cast out of the synagogue by virtue of it, but our Lord tells his disciples, that they should be so treated by the Jews after his death; and we find it remained in force and practice many hundreds of years afterwards. Athanasius ^{f437} relates of a Jew, that lived in Berytus, a city in Syria, between Tyre and Sidon, that an image of Christ being found in his house by another Jew, though unknown to him; and this being discovered to the chief priests and elders of the Jews, they cast him out of the synagogue. Sometimes this sentence was pronounced by word of mouth, and sometimes it was delivered in writing: the form of one is given us by Buxtorf ^{f438}, out of an ancient Hebrew manuscript; and a dreadful shocking one it is; and is as follows:

“according to the mind of the Lord of lords, let such an one, the son of such an one, be in “Cherem”, or anathematized, in both houses of judgment, of those above, and those below; and with the anathema of the saints on high, with the anathema of the “Seraphim” and “Ophanim”, and with the anathema of the whole congregation, great and small; let great and real stripes be upon him, and many and violent diseases; and let his house be an habitation of dragons; and let his star be dark in the clouds; and let him be for indignation, wrath, and anger; and let his carcass be for beasts and serpents; and let those that rise up against him, and his enemies, rejoice over him; and let his silver and his gold be given to others; and let all his children be exposed at the gate of his enemies, and at his day may others be amazed; and let him be cursed from the mouth of Addiriron and Actariel, (names of angels, as are those that follow,) and from the mouth of Sandalphon and Hadraniel, and from the mouth of Ansisiel and Pathchiel, and from the mouth of Seraphiel and Zaganzael, and from the mouth of Michael and Gabriel, and from the mouth of Raphael and Meshartiel; and let him be anathematized from the mouth of Tzabtzabib, and from tile

mouth of Habhabib, he is Jehovah the Great, and from the mouth of the seventy names of the great king, and from the side of Tzortak the great chancellor; and let him be swallowed up as Korah and his company, with terror, and with trembling; let his soul go out; let the reproof of the Lord kill him; and let him be strangled as Ahithophel in his counsel; and let his leprosy be as the leprosy of Gehazi; and let there be no raising him up from his fall; and in the sepulchres of Israel let not his grave be; and let his wife be given to another; and let others bow upon her at his death: in this anathema, let such an one, the son of such an one be, and let this be his inheritance; but upon me, and upon all Israel, may God extend his peace and his blessing. Amen.”

And if he would, he might add these verses in (^{f439}Deuteronomy 29:19-21): “and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate, him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according, to all the curses of the covenant, that are written in this book of the law”. There were many rites and ceremonies, which in process of time were used, when such a sentence was pronounced, as blowing of horns and trumpets, and lighting of candles, and putting them out: hence, trumpets are reckoned ^{f439} a among the instruments of judges. It is said ^{f440} of R. Judah, that being affronted by a certain person, he resented the injury, and brought out the trumpets and excommunicated him: and they tell us ^{f441}, that Barak anathematized Meroz, whom they take to be some great person, with four hundred trumpets: and they also say ^{f442}, that four hundred trumpets were brought out, and they excommunicated Jesus of Nazareth; though these words are left out in some editions of the Talmud. Now this was done in order to inject terror both into those that were guilty, and also into the whole congregation of the people, that they might hear and fear; for the “Cherem”, or that sort of excommunication which goes by that name, was done publicly before the whole synagogue, all the heads and elders of the church being gathered together; and then candles were lighted, and as soon as the form of the curse was finished, they were put out, as a sign that the excommunicated person was unworthy of the

heavenly light ^{f443}. Very likely the Papists took their horrible custom from hence of cursing with bell, book, and candle.

Ver. 23. *Therefore said his parents, he is of age*, etc.] (See Gill on “<R02>John 9:21”).

Ver. 24. *Then again called they the man that was blind*, etc.] That had been blind. After they had examined his parents, and could get nothing from them for their purpose, they try a second time what they could do with the son:

and said unto him, give God the praise; a phrase used when confession of sin was required; (see <R07>Joshua 7:19); and this may be the meaning of it here; confess this fraud and imposture before the omniscient God, the searcher of hearts, and in so doing glorify that perfection of his. One and the same word, **hdy**, signifies both to confess the truth of anything, as a sinful action, (<R03>Proverbs 28:13), and to give thanks and praise to God for any mercy and blessing, (<R57>Psalm 45:17 <R02>Daniel 2:23). Some take this to be the form of an oath, and that the Pharisees adjured the than by the living God, that he would tell the truth, and discover the cheat and collusion used in this affair of receiving his sight; and thought hereby to have deterred him from speaking of this benefit he had received from Christ, especially in such a manner as to reflect any honour upon the author of it. Or the sense may be, if this really is matter of fact, that thou wast born blind, and hast received thy sight by the means of this man, give all the glory of it to God, to whom alone it is due, and not to him. God sometimes works by wicked instruments, when the glory of what is done ought not to be ascribed to them, but to him.

We know that this man is a sinner; this they concluded from his breaking the sabbath, as they supposed; though they also aspersed his character, and accused him of other things, yet falsely; (see <R11>Matthew 11:19 <R21>Luke 23:2); nor could they prove one single instance of sin in him, though they express themselves here with so much assurance.

Ver. 25. *He answered and said*, etc.] That is, the man who had been blind, who takes no notice of the confession they pressed him to, which is what he could not do; there being no collusion in this case, he only replies to the reproachful character they had given of his benefactor.

Whether he be a sinner or not, I know not: or “if he is a sinner I know not”, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it, suggesting that he did not know he was a sinner; he could not charge him with being one; nor could he join with them in saying he was a sinner; nor did he think and believe he was: however, he was sure he had done a good thing to him, and in that he was no sinner; and what proof they had of his being one he could not tell: and be that as it will, adds he,

one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see; as if he should say, whatever charges you bring against the person that has done me this favour, which I am not able to answer to, you cannot reason me out of this; this I am sure of, that once I had no eyes to see with, and now I have, and that by the means of this man you reproach. And so it is with persons enlightened in a spiritual sense, whatever things they may be ignorant of, though they may not know the exact time of their conversion, nor have so much Gospel light and knowledge as others, or be so capable of expressing themselves, or giving such a distinct and orderly account of the work of God upon them as some can, nor dispute with an adversary for the truths of the Gospel, or have that faith of assurance, and discoveries of God’s love, and the application of such great and precious promises as others have; yet this they know, that they were once blind, as to the knowledge of spiritual things, as to a saving knowledge of God in Christ, as to a true sight and sense of themselves, their sins and lost estate, as to the way of righteousness and salvation by Christ, or the work of the Spirit of God upon their souls, or as to any true and spiritual discerning of the Scriptures, and the doctrines of grace in them: but now they are comfortably assured, they see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the plague of their own hearts, the insufficiency of their righteousness to justify them before God, and the beauty, fulness, suitableness, and ability of Christ as a Saviour; and that their salvation is, and must be of free grace; and that they see the truths of the Gospel in another light than they did before, and have some glimpse of eternal glory and happiness, in the hope of which they rejoice.

Ver. 26. *Then said they to him again*, etc.] Finding they could not bring him to deny the fact, or cause him to entertain an ill opinion of him that did it, they examine him again about the manner of it:

what did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? These questions they had put before, (^{<RB>}John 9:15), and propose them again, in hope he would vary in the account, which they would not fail of improving against him; or that

it would appear that he had not been really blind, at least from his birth; or that Christ made use of some unlawful means, as magic art, which they were always ready to charge him with, and to impute his miracles to a diabolical familiarity and influence; and they would have been glad to have had something to support such a calumny.

Ver. 27. *He answered them, I have told you already*, etc.]. As he had, (~~John~~ John 9:15),

and ye did not hear; the Vulgate Latin version reads, and ye have heard; and so some copies of Stephens's; that is, an account had been given of the manner how his eyes were opened, and they had heard the account with their bodily ears, though not with the ears of their minds; and therefore, according to most copies and versions, it is read, "ye did not hear"; did not regard it, or give credit to it; and so the Persic version renders it, "and ye have not believed"; they would not believe the man had been blind, until they sent for his parents; much less would they believe the account of his cure:

wherefore would ye hear it again? once is sufficient, especially since the former account has been disregarded and discredited: their view could not be their own information but to baffle and confound the man, if they could. The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions leave out the word "again", and only read, "wherefore would ye hear?" what end can you have in it? of what avail would it be? or what purpose can be answered by it?

will ye also be his disciples? as many whom you call ignorant and accursed people are, and as I myself desire to be. This he might say either in an ironical and sarcastic way; or else seriously, suggesting, that if they were willing to examine into this fact, with upright views and sincere intentions, that should it appear to be a true miracle, they would become the disciples and followers of Jesus, then he would, with all his heart, relate the account to them over and over again, or as often as they pleased.

Ver. 28. *Then they reviled him*, etc.] Called him an impertinent, saucy, impudent fellow, for talking in this pert manner to them, the great sanhedrim of the nation; or, as the Vulgate Latin version reads, they cursed him; they thundered out their anathemas against him, and pronounced him an execrable and an accursed fellow:

and said, thou art his disciple; for they looked upon it a reproach and scandal to be called a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth; though there is nothing

more honourable than to be a follower of him the Lamb whithersoever he goes: wherefore these Jews threw off what they thought a term of reproach from themselves to the blind man; and perhaps they might say this to ensnare him, hoping that he would own himself to be a disciple of Jesus, and profess him to be the Christ, that they might, according to their own act, excommunicate him. The Vulgate Latin, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “be thou his disciple”; if thou wilt, we despise the character; far be it from us that we should be followers of him:

but we are Moses’s disciples. Thus they preferred Moses to Christ, and chose to be the disciples of Moses the servant, rather than of Christ the Son; though indeed they were not the genuine disciples of Moses; for if they had, they would have been the disciples of Christ, and believers in him, since Moses wrote and testified of him: they might indeed be so far the disciples of Moses, or of his law, since they sought for righteousness and justification by obedience to his law. This was a phrase in use among the Jews: so the Targumist ^{f444} on (~~ORDE~~ Numbers 3:2) says,

“these are the names of they sons of Aaron the priests, **hçmd aydym l t**, “the disciples of Moses”, the master of the Israelites;”

particularly the Pharisees, as here, claimed this title to themselves: for it is said ^{f445},

“all the seven days (before the day of atonement) they delivered to him (the high priest) two of the disciples of the wise men, to instruct him in the service (of that day), who were, **hçm l ç wydym l tm**, “of the disciples of Moses”, in opposition to the Sadducees:”

from whence it appears, that these disciples of Moses were of the sect of the Pharisees, who assumed this character as peculiar to themselves; sometimes they call themselves the disciples of Abraham, though the description they give of such, by no means belongs to them; (see Gill on ~~AKB~~ John 8:39”). They say ^{f446},

“whoever has three things in him, is **phrba l ç wydym l tm**, “of the disciples of Abraham” our father, and who has three other things is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked: he that has a good eye, (beneficence, or temperance, or contentment,) a lowly spirit, and an humble soul, he is of “the disciples of Abraham” our father;

but he that has evil eye, and a proud spirit, and a large soul (lustful or covetous), is of the disciples of Balaam.”

This last character best agrees with those very persons, who would be thought to be the disciples of Abraham and of Moses.

Ver. 29. *We know that God spoke to Moses*, etc.] Out of the bush, and told him who he was, and sent him to deliver the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and spoke the ten words, or law unto him, and by him delivered them to the children of Israel, and to whom he spake face to face, as a man does to his friend, and mouth to mouth, and not in dark sayings; they mean, they knew that Moses had his mission, commission, and credentials from God:

but as for this fellow; so they contemptuously called the Lord Jesus Christ, *we know not from whence he is*; contradicting what others of them had said, (⁴³⁷²John 7:27). They imagined they knew the country from whence he came, which they supposed to be Galilee, and the place where he was born, which they concluded was Nazareth; though in both they were in the wrong; and they knew his parents, Joseph and Mary, and his brethren and sisters; but as to his divine filiation, they knew nothing of it; nor would they own his mission, commission, and credentials to be from heaven; and pretended they had no reason to conclude they were.

Ver. 30. *The man answered and said unto them*, etc.] Very appropriately and pertinently,

why herein is a marvellous thing; strange and unaccountable,

that ye know not from whence he is; that you learned doctors, men of sagacity and penetration, should not be able to discern that this man is of God, is a prophet sent by him, and that there should be any doubt from whence he comes, or from whom he has his commission:

and [yet] he hath opened mine eyes; which was so clearly and plainly the work of the Messiah, and to be done by him when he came, (²³⁰⁴Isaiah 35:4,5 42:7).

Ver. 31. *Now we know that God heareth not sinners*, etc.] All mankind are sinners, even God’s elect; yea, such who are truly gracious and righteous persons; for there is no man without sin; and God hears such who cry unto him day and night; such Christ came to save; for such he died; and these he

calls to repentance; and every penitent sinner God hears: but by “sinners” are meant notorious sinners, such in whom sin reigns, who live in sin, and particularly impostors. The man takes up the word the Jews had made use of, and applied to Christ, (~~402~~ John 9:24), and suggests, that had Jesus been a sinner, that is, an impostor, God would not have heard him, or have assisted him in doing a miracle, to support an imposture, or cover and encourage a fraud; but that he was heard and assisted, was a plain case: whereas not only they, the learned doctors of the nation, but such an illiterate man as himself knew, that notoriously wicked men, cheats, and deceivers, were not heard of God; and this was known from the Scripture, and all experience; (see ~~468~~ Psalm 66:18 ~~2015~~ Isaiah 1:15). The Persic and Ethiopic versions read, “I know, that God”, etc.

but if any man be a worshipper of God; fears the Lord, and worships him in spirit and in truth, both with internal and external worship:

and doth his will; for it is not everyone that Lord, or draws nigh to God with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, that is a true and sincere worshipper of him; but he that does his will in faith, from a principle of love, and with a view to his glory: and

him he heareth; for he is nigh to all that call upon him in truth; and such an one the man intimates Jesus must be, since it was out of all dispute that God had heard him, and had bore a testimony to him.

Ver. 32. *Since the world began*, etc.] $\epsilon\kappa\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \alpha\iota\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma$, “from eternity”, or never: the phrase answers to $\mu\iota\ \omega\lbrack m$, frequently used by the Jews ^{f447}, for never; and so the Arabic version renders it, “it was never heard”, etc. since time was:

was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind; as not any physician by any natural means, or art, so not any prophet in a miraculous way, no not Moses himself; among all the miracles he wrought, which the Jews say ^{f448} were seventy six, and which were two more than were wrought by all the prophets put together, this is not to be found in the list of them, nor in the catalogue of miracles done by others. Elisha indeed prayed to God to restore sight to an army smitten with blindness; but then they were persons who saw before, and were not blind from their birth. Wherefore it must follow, that Jesus, the author of this miracle, must be greater than any of the prophets, even than Moses himself, and has a greater confirmation of his mission from God, than either he or they had:

and as this was a miracle in nature, it is no less a miracle in grace, that one born in the blindness and darkness of sin, ignorance, and infidelity, should have the eyes of his understanding opened, to behold divine and spiritual things.

Ver. 33. *If this man were not of God*, etc.] If he had not his mission, commission, and credentials from God; if he had not been sent by him, and had not authority from him, and was not assisted by him, as man, or God was not with him,

he could do nothing; or “not do these things”, as the Syriac version reads; that is, such miraculous works; or, as the Persic version, “he could not do this miracle”: open the eyes of a man born blind. His doing this is a full proof that he is of God, and comes from him.

Ver. 34. *They answered and said unto him*, etc.] Being nettled, and stung at what he said, and not able to confute his reasoning; and it is amazing that a man that could never read the Scriptures, who had had no education, was not only blind, but a beggar from his youth, should be able to reason in so strong and nervous a manner, and should have that boldness and presence of mind, and freedom of speech before the whole sanhedrim. Certainly it was God that gave him a mouth and wisdom which these learned doctors could not resist, and therefore they reply in the following manner,

thou wast altogether born in sins; meaning not in original sin, as all mankind are, for this might have been retorted on themselves; but having imbibed the Pythagorean notion of a transmigration of souls into other bodies, and of sinning in a pre-existent state, or a notion of infants sinning actually in the womb, and so punished with blindness, lameness, or some deformity or another for it, they reproach this man, calling him vile miscreant, saying, thou vile, sinful creature, who came into the world covered with sin, with the visible marks of having sinned, either in another body, or in the womb before birth, and therefore wast born blind:

and dost thou teach us, holy, wise, and learned men! which breathes out the true pharisaical spirit they were possessed of, and which appeared in their ancestors before them; (see צריב Isaiah 65:5 צריב Luke 18:9).

And they cast him out; not merely out of the place where the sanhedrim sat, or out of the temple; this would have been no great matter, nor have made any great noise in the city, or have been taken notice of by Christ, or

moved his compassion towards him; nor merely out of any particular synagogue, or was the excommunication called “Niddui”, which was a separation for thirty days, and for the space of four cubits only; but was what they call “Cherem”, which was a cutting him off from the whole congregation of Israel; (see Gill on “~~402~~John 9:22”); an anathematizing him, and a devoting him to ruin and destruction: and now in part was fulfilled, (~~206~~Isaiah 66:5), for this was done in pretence of zeal, for the honour and glory of God; and Christ appeared to the joy and comfort of this man, and to the shame and confusion of those that cast him out, as the following verses show.

Ver. 35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out*, etc.] this being perhaps the first instance, of putting in execution the act they had made, (~~402~~John 9:22), and was a stretching of that act; which only threatened with an ejection, in case any should confess Jesus to be the Messiah; which this man had not done as yet, only had said he was a prophet, and that he was of God; it made a very great noise in the city, and the report of it was soon spread over it; and it became the talk of everyone, and so Jesus, as man, came to hear of it; though he, as God, knew it the very instant it was done, and needed not any to make report of it to him:

and when he had found him: not by chance, meeting him at an unawares, but seeking him; and knowing where he was, went to the very place, and found him in this piteous condition, abandoned by all mankind: this is an emblem of Christ’s seeking after his chosen ones, both in redemption, and in the effectual calling, who are like sheep going astray, and never come to, and lay hold on Christ, till he comes first, seeks after, and apprehends them: he sends his ministers and his Gospel after them, where they are, and his Spirit into their hearts; yea, he comes himself, and enters there, and dwells in them by faith: he knows where they are, as he did Matthew the publican, Zacchaeus, and the woman of Samaria; and even though they are at the ends of the earth; and he goes and looks them up, and finds them; and he finds them in a deplorable condition, in a desert, in a waste howling wilderness, hopeless and helpless, poor and miserable, and blind and naked; in a pit wherein is no water; in the mire and clay of sin; in the paw of Satan, and under the power of darkness.

He said unto him, dost thou believe on the Son of God? the Persic version adds, “who hath healed thee”: this supposes that there was a Son of God, or a divine person known by the Jews under this character, and that the

expected Messiah would appear as such; and that, as such, he is the object of faith, and therefore, as such, must be God, since a creature, though ever so much dignified, or with whatsoever office invested, is not the object of faith, trust, and confidence, with respect to everlasting life and happiness: and it may be observed, that whenever Christ finds any of his people, he brings them to believe in him as the Son of God for righteousness and life: he himself is the author of faith in them, as well as the object of it; and no doubt power went along with these words, creating faith in this man: this was a most proper and pertinent question put to him in his present case, and suggests, that if he believed in the Son of God, it was no matter in what situation he was among men: since he would then appear to be a Son of God himself by adopting grace, and so an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ; would receive the remission of his sins, openly justified in the court of conscience, as well of God, and be everlastingly saved: and this question is put by Christ, not as though he was ignorant, whether he believed in him or not; for he knew from the beginning, who would, and who would not believe in him: he that knew whether Peter loved him or not, knew whether this man believed in him or not; but this he said to draw forth the principle of faith, which was wrought in him, into act and exercise, and to direct it to its proper object. And this effect it had, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 36. *He answered and said*, etc.] That is, “he that was healed”, as the Syriac version reads:

who is the Lord that I might believe in him? which shows, that though he knew there was a Messiah expected, and he believed in him as to come, yet he knew not that he was already come, nor the particular person in human nature, who was the Messiah, and the Son of God; even though he had been cured of his blindness by him, and had vindicated him, and pleaded for him before the sanhedrim, and had also suffered for him; which makes it appear, that Christ does many and great things for his people before they know him: nor does their interest in him, in his favour, and in the blessings of his grace, depend upon their knowledge of him, and faith in him; as likewise, that a man may plead for Christ, and suffer much for him, and yet be ignorant of him: however, there were in this man desires of knowing Christ; he was not like those in (^{<K214>}Job 21:14); and there was a readiness in him to believe on him, as soon as he was pointed out to him; not that there is any natural disposition in men to believe, or any readiness in themselves to it, or that it is of themselves; nothing of this nature was in

this man; but he having, by the power and grace of Christ, the principle of faith implanted in his heart, what he wanted was to be directed to the proper object of it, as he is in (^{<406>}John 9:37).

Ver. 37. *And Jesus said unto him,* etc.] Giving him the tokens by which he might know him: thou hast both seen him; not that he had seen him before now, with his bodily eyes; for he was blind when Christ anointed him, and sent him to Siloam to wash; nor when he came back, since Jesus was gone, and he knew not where he was; but he had seen him, that is, he had perceived and felt the power of him in restoring him to sight; and now he had seen him bodily, and did at this present time: but as this was not sufficient to distinguish him from other persons in company, he adds,

and it is he that talketh with thee; in like manner he made himself known to the woman of Samaria, (^{<406>}John 4:26).

Ver. 38. *And he said, Lord, I believe,* etc.] He immediately found faith in his soul, and that in exercise, moving towards, and acting upon Christ, as the Son of God, and true Messiah, for everlasting life and salvation; and as soon as he did perceive it, he made an open and hearty profession of it:

and he worshipped him: as God, with religious worship and adoration, not only trusting in him, but ascribing honour, glory, and blessing to him, which are due to God only, and not a creature.

Ver. 39. *And Jesus said, for judgment I am come into this world,* etc.] The Syriac version reads, “for the judgment of this world I am come”; and with which agrees the Ethiopic version, “for the judgment of the world I am come into the world”; and the Arabic and Persic versions still more expressly, “to judge this world”, or “the world, am I come”; which seems contrary to what Christ elsewhere says, (^{<406>}John 3:17 12:47). Nor is the sense of the words that Christ came by the judgment of God, or the order of divine providence, or to administer justice in the government of the world, in a providential way, or to distinguish his own people from others, though all these are true; but either to fulfil the purpose and decree of God in revealing truth to some, and hiding it from others; or in a way of judgment to inflict judicial blindness on some, whilst in a way of mercy he illuminated others. So Nonnus interprets it of *κριμα ψισσον*, a twofold “judgment”, which is different the one from the other.

That they which see not, might see; meaning, not so much corporeally as spiritually, since in the opposite clause corporeal blindness can have no

place; for though Christ restored bodily sight to many, he never took it away from any person. The sense is, that Christ came as a light into the world, that those who are in the darkness of sin, ignorance, and unbelief, and who are sensible of the same, and desire spiritual illuminations, as this man did, might see what they are by nature, what need they stand in of him, and what fulness of grace, life, righteousness, and salvation, there is in him for them.

And that they which see might be made blind; that such who are wise and knowing in their own conceit, who fancy themselves to have great light and knowledge, to have the key of knowledge, and to have the true understanding of divine things, and to be guides of the blind, such as the Scribes and Pharisees, might be given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart, so as to shut their eyes, and harden their hearts against the Gospel, and the truths of it, and which was in judgment to them: such different effects Christ and his Gospel have, as to illuminate and soften some, and blind and harden others; just as some creatures, as bats and owls, are blinded by the sun, whilst others see clearly by the light of it; and as that also has these different effects to soften the wax, and harden the clay; (see ²³⁸⁹Isaiah 6:9).

Ver. 40. *And some of the Pharisees which were with him*, etc.] Who had followed him, and were watching him, and observing what he said and did, in order to take all advantages, and every opportunity against him, they could,

heard these words, and said unto him, are we blind also? they perceived he pointed at them, and therefore with indignation ask this question, taking it as a great affront unto them, to put such wise, learned, and knowing men as they in company with the ignorant and unlearned common people; (see ²³⁹⁰Isaiah 42:19).

Ver. 41. *Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind*, etc.] And sensible of it, and knew yourselves to be blind, and were desirous of light and knowledge,

ye would have no sin: or your sin would not be so aggravated; it would not be imputed to you; it would be pardoned and taken away from you: for the sense cannot be, that their blindness would not have been criminal, or they should have no sin in them, or any done by them; only, that had this been barely their case, there would have been some hope of them, that their sin

might be forgiven, and put away, and be no more; (see ^{<5013>}1 Timothy 1:13);

but now ye say we see; they thought themselves to be wise and knowing, and stood in no need of any illumination from him, but were obstinate and hardened in their infidelity, and wilfully opposed and shut their eyes against all the light and evidence of truth:

therefore your sin remaineth; untaken away, yea, immoveable, or unpardonable; the guilt of it abode upon them; nor was there any hope of its being removed from them; owning that they saw, and yet believed not: sinning wilfully against light and knowledge in rejecting Jesus, as the Messiah, they sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is never forgiven. And so the Ethiopic version renders it, “your error shall not be forgiven you”; (see ^{<4122>}Matthew 12:32).