

LUKE

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF LUKE

The writer of this Gospel, Luke, has been, by some, thought, as Origen^{f1} relates, to be the same with Lucius, mentioned in (<5162>Romans 16:21), but he seems rather to be, and without doubt is, Luke the beloved physician, who was a companion of the Apostle Paul in great part of his travels in the Gentile world: he came with him to Jerusalem, and from thence accompanied him to Rome, and continued with him when in prison, and was with him to the last; (see <41610>Acts 16:10,11), etc. (<51014>Colossians 4:14 <5111>2 Timothy 4:11 <51024>Philemon 1:24). Jerom^{f2}, and others, say, he was a physician of Antioch in Syria; where it may be the Apostle Paul met with him, and might be the happy instrument of his conversion; so that he seems to be, by nation, a Syrian, as Jerom^{f3} calls him. Grotius thinks his name is Roman, and that it is the contraction of Lucilius. It is not an Hebrew name, but might be in common use in Syria; for though the Jews reckon SWQWL , “Lukus”, among foreign names, yet say^{f4} a it was a very illustrious one, and well known to them, as it may well be thought to be if Syriac, the language being spoke by them: and many Jews lived in Syria, and particularly in Antioch. Some say that this Gospel was written by the advice, and assistance, and under the direction of the Apostle Paul, as the Gospel according to Mark was by that of Peter; though the following preface does not seem so well to accord with this. Eusebius says^{f5} that it was the sense of the ancients, that whenever the Apostle Paul makes mention of his Gospel, he intends this according to Luke. The time of the writing of it is not certain; some say it was written in the fifteenth year after the ascension of our Lord; others in the twenty second; and others in the twenty seventh. It is commonly thought to have been written after the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, according to the order in which it stands; but this is rejected by some learned men, who rather think that Luke wrote first of all: and indeed, there are some things in his preface which look as if there had not, as yet, been any authentic account published, at least which was come to the knowledge of this evangelist. The place where he wrote it

is also uncertain. Jerom says ^{f6}, he wrote it in the parts of Achaia, perhaps at Corinth: according to the titles prefixed to the Syriac and Persic versions, he wrote it in Alexandria: the former of these runs thus;

“the Gospel of Luke, the Evangelist, which he spake and published in Greek in Alexandria the great.”

And the latter thus;

“the Gospel of Luke, which he wrote in the Greek tongue in Alexandria of Egypt.”

However, it is agreed on all hands, that it is genuine, and of divine inspiration. Eusebius ^{f7} relates, that it was affirmed by some, that this Gospel, together with those of Matthew and Mark, were brought to the Apostle John, who approved of them, and bore witness to the truth in them.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 1

Ver. 1. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand*, etc.] From hence, to the end of (~~☞~~ Luke 1:4) is a preface of the evangelist to his Gospel, setting forth the reasons of his writing it; and which he wrote and sent to the excellent Theophilus, for the further confirmation of him in the faith of Christ. It seems that many had took in hand, or attempted

to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us; that is, they undertook to write and publish a very particular and exact narrative of the birth, life, actions, doctrines, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ; things which Luke, and other Christians, had the fullest and strongest evidence, and were confidently assured of, and most firmly believed, even with a full assurance of faith. By these many, he cannot mean the authentic historians of evangelical facts, as Matthew and Mark; for they two cannot, with any propriety, be called many; and besides, it is not so very clear and certain a point, that they had, as yet, wrote their Gospels; nor would this evangelist suggest any deficiency, weakness, and inaccuracy in them, as he seems to do: nor does he intend such spurious writers as the authors of the Gospels according to the Nazarenes, Hebrews, and Egyptians; of Nicodemus, Thomas, Matthias, and of the twelve apostles; and still less, the Gospels of Cerinthus, Basilides, and other heretics; since these would not have passed without a censure from him, for the falsehood, fabulous, and trifling stuff in them, as well as for the wicked and heretical opinions propagated by them; and besides, these pieces were not extant when this Gospel was written: but he seems to design some honest and well meaning Christians, who undertook to write, and did write an account of the above things, which were firmly believed by all; and which they took from the apostles, and first ministers of the Gospel, from their sermons and discourses, and from conversation with them; and which they committed to writing, partly to help their own memories, and partly for the benefit of others; in which, no doubt, they acted an upright part, though attended with weakness: wherefore, the evangelist does not censure them as false, wicked, and

heretical, nor approve of them as divine and perfect for though they honestly meant, and designed well, yet there might be many things collected by them, which were impertinent, and not proper to be transmitted to posterity; and what might be wrote with great inaccuracy and deficiency, and in a style the Holy Ghost thought improper things of this kind should be delivered in: and therefore the evangelist, moved and inspired by the Spirit of God, set about the following work, and under the same influence completed it. The phrase, *αναταξασθαι διηγησιν*, “to set forth in order a declaration”, is as Dr. Lightfoot observes, out of the Talmud^{f8}, agreeably to the Jewish way of speaking.

“R. Chasdai said to one of the Rabbins, who was *atdga rds*m, “setting in order a declaration” before him. etc. or relating in order a story before him.”

Ver. 2. *Even as they delivered them unto us*, etc.] By whom the evangelist means, as appears from the after description of them, the twelve apostles, and seventy disciples; who handed down to others the accounts of the birth, life, and death of Christ; and according to which the above Christians proposed to write:

which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; either of the Gospel, or rather of Christ himself, the eternal Word of God; for from the beginning of Christ's preaching the Gospel, or as soon as he entered upon his public ministry, he called his apostles, as Simon, Andrew, James, John, etc. and afterwards seventy disciples; who were eyewitnesses of him, of the truth of his incarnation, and of his ministry and miracles; saw, and conversed with him after his resurrection from the dead and beheld his ascension to heaven; and were ministers that were called, qualified, and sent out by him and waited on him, and served him. This shows, as is by some rightly observed, that Luke was not one of the seventy disciples, as some^{f9} have thought, and as the title of this Gospel, to the Arabic version of it, expresses; for then he would have been an eyewitness himself: nor did he take his account from the Apostle Paul; for he was not a minister of the word from the beginning, but was as one born out of due time.

Ver. 3. *It seemed good to me also*, etc.] Being moved to it by the Holy Ghost; for he did not undertake this work of himself, merely by the motion

of his own will, but was influenced, and directed to it by the Spirit of God, as well as by him assisted in it:

having had perfect understanding of all things; relating to the subject of this Gospel, concerning the conception, birth, ministry, baptism, and death of John the Baptist; concerning the conception, birth, private and public life of Christ, together with his sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Syriac and Persic versions refer the word “all” to persons, to the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; rendering the clause thus, “who have been studiously near to them all”: and both senses may be taken in, and the meaning be, that Luke had diligently sought after, and had attained unto a perfect knowledge of all the affairs of Christ; having studiously got into the company of, and intimately conversed with all, or as many as he could, who had seen Christ in the flesh; and were, from the very first of his ministry, attendants on him, that he might have the most certain and exquisite account of things, that could be come at:

from the very first; and to the last; from the conception of John, the forerunner of the Messiah, which is higher than any other evangelist goes, to the ascension of Christ; though some choose to render the word here used, “from above”, as it may be, and sometimes is; and may signify, that the evangelist had his perfect knowledge of things by a revelation from above, by divine inspiration; and this moved him to write, and which he mentions, that Theophilus, to whom he writes, and every other reader, may depend, with certainty, on what is said in it. This clause is omitted in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, but is in all copies, and by all means to be retained: this being the case, these reasons prevailed upon him, as he says,

to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus; which regards not so much the order of time, which he does not always strictly observe, as the particulars of things, related in order, and with great exactness: who this Theophilus was, to whom he writes his Gospel, cannot be said; by his title, which is such as was given to governors of provinces, as to Felix and Festus, (~~4236~~ Acts 23:26 26:25), he seems to be, or to have been, a civil magistrate in some high office; for though not many rich, and mighty, yet some have been, and are, called by grace. Theophylact^{f10} says, he was of the order of the senators, and perhaps a nobleman, or prince: however, this name was not a general name, for every “lover of God”, as the word signifies, as Salvian^{f11} thought; but the name of a particular man, who

believed in Christ, and was an acquaintance of Luke's; though Epiphanius^{f12} makes a doubt of it which it should be.

Ver. 4. *That thou mightest know the certainty*, etc.] The end the evangelist had in writing this Gospel, and sending it to Theophilus, was, that he might be more strongly assured of and more firmly established in the truths of the Gospel. The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it, “that thou mightest know the truth”; that is, the certain truth of things: the truth he did in some measure know before, but Luke's view was, that he might have a more certain knowledge of it; both truth, and the certainty of it may be intended: so the Hebrew word, *hnwma*, signifies both truth and firmness; and the word here used signifies such a certain evidence of things, as may be safely depended on; even

of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed; or catechised, signifying, that he had been hitherto taught, as a catechumen, the rudiments, and first principles of the Christian religion, by word of mouth; and he had taken them in upon the evidence they came with, and the authority of those that instructed him in them; and now he sent him in writing this account, to increase his knowledge, strengthen his faith, and to give him such a sure proof of things, as might preserve him safe in the belief of them, from all doubting and defection. Having finished his preface, he proceeds to the narrative itself, which begins as follows.

Ver. 5. *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea*, etc.] This was Herod, the son of Antipater, sometimes called Herod the Great, and is rightly here said to be the king of Judea; for, by deputation from the Roman emperor, he had the government of all Judea, which upon his death was divided among his sons. The phrase, “in the days of”, is an eastern way, of speaking; (see ^{<1140>}Genesis 14:1 ^{<8000>}Ruth 1:1 ^{<0972>}1 Samuel 17:12); and intends the time of his reign; in which there was

a certain priest named Zacharias: a name famous among the Jews, for an high priest, who was slain by them the court of the temple, (^{<1420>}2 Chronicles 24:20,21), and for one of the later prophets, (^{<3000>}Zechariah 1:1), who were of this name. This man, the father of John the Baptist, was not an high priest, as this character of him, and the work afterwards ascribed to him, show; though he has been thought to be so by some; and John himself is so called by the Jews^{f13}: he was

of the course of Abia. The Ethiopic version reads, “in the days of Abia”: and it has been the opinion of some, that Zacharias and Abia were two priests, who performed their ministry in succession, one after another; one ministered one time, and another at another time; but such betray their ignorance both of Scripture, and of Jewish affairs. In David's time, there was a division of the sons of Aaron into “twenty four” orders, or courses; and this of Abia was one, and the “eighth” of them; (see ^{<1304>}1 Chronicles 24:1,4,10). The account the Jews ^{f14} give of this matter, and in which they are not agreed, is this;

“says Rab Chama bar Guria, says Rab, Moses ordered for the Israelites eight courses, four from Eleazar, and four from Ithamar; Samuel came and made them “sixteen”; David came and made them twenty four. — It is a tradition, that Moses ordered for the Israelites sixteen courses, eight from Eleazar, and eight from Ithamar; and when the children of Eleazar increased above the children of Ithamar, they divided them, and appointed them twenty four.”

The account, as given by Maimonides ^{f15}, is as follows:

“Moses, our master, divided the priests into eight courses, four from Eleazar, and four from Ithamar, and so they were until Samuel the prophet; and in the days of Samuel, he and David, the king, divided them into twenty four courses; and over every course one head was appointed, and they went up to Jerusalem to the service of the course every week; and from sabbath to sabbath they changed; one course went out, and another came in, till they finished, and returned again.”

Now of these there were but four courses returned from the Babylonish captivity, as appears from (^{<1523>}Ezra 2:36-39) and with this the Jewish accounts agree ^{f16}.

“The Rabbins teach, that four courses came up from the captivity, Jedaiah, Harim, Pashur, and Immer; the prophets that were among them stood up, and divided them, and appointed four and twenty lots, and put them into a box: Jedaiah came and took his lot, and the lot of his companions, six; Harim came and took his lot, and the lot of his companions, six; and so Pashur and Immer: and so the prophets that were among them taught, that if Jehoiarib, the first

course, came up from captivity, he should not drive away Jedaiah out of his place; but Jedaiah should be the principal, and Jehoiarib an appendix to him.”

Now, though the course of Abia did not return from captivity, yet its order and name were retained as the rest of the courses, being divided between these four by whom they were supplied; and therefore Zacharias is not said to be of the posterity of Abia, but of his course. To these courses there were added as many stations; and what they were, and their use, may be learnt from what follows ^{f17}.

“The former prophets offered four and twenty courses; and to every course there was a station at Jerusalem; consisting of priests, Levites, and Israelites: and when the time came for the course to go up, the priests and Levites went up to Jerusalem, but the Israelites, which were in that course, gathered themselves to their cities, and read in the history of the creation; and the men of the station fasted four days in the week, from the second day, to the fifth.”

The sense of which, according to their commentators ^{f18}, is, that these stations were substituted in the room of, and represented all Israel; and their business was to give themselves up to divine worship, prayer, and sacrifices; and such of them as were near Jerusalem, when the time of their course came, assisted at the sacrifices; and such as were afar off, betook themselves to the synagogues in their cities, and there fasted, prayed, and read. And so another of their authors ^{f19} says,

“there were twenty and four courses of the priests, and so twenty and four courses of the Levites; and every week the course of the priests and Levites goes to Jerusalem; and the twenty and four stationary men, half of them go thither, and half are left in their houses, and pray over the offerings:”

for they had their stationary cities, where these men dwelt ^{f20}. Jericho was one: they say ^{f21},

“Jericho was able to produce a complete station itself; but because of dividing the glory to Jerusalem, it furnished out but half an one:”

hence you need not wonder to hear of a priest and Levite on the road to Jericho from Jerusalem, as in (~~2181~~ Luke 10:31,32) for they say, in the same place, that twenty four thousand, a station consisted of at Jerusalem, and

there was half a station at Jericho: as for the heads of the courses of the houses of their fathers,

“there were in a course five, six, seven, eight, nine of them; a course which had five (heads) in it, three offered three days, and two offered four days; a course in which were six, five offered five days, and one offered two days: a course in which were seven, every one offered on his day; a course in which were eight, six offered six days, and two offered one day; a course in which were nine, five offered five days, and four offered two days: and there were some that fixed themselves for ever; and a course that was (or began) on a sabbath day, was always on a sabbath; and that which was at the going out of the sabbath, was always at the going out of the sabbath: and there were some of them that offered at every course: and there were some that cast lots at every course^{f22}.”

But to say no more of these courses and stations, I conclude with what Maimonides^{f23} says of them:

“it is not possible, that a man's offering should be offered up, and he not stand by it; but the offerings of the congregation are the offerings of all Israel; and it is not possible that all Israel should stand, in the court at the time of sacrifice: wherefore the former prophets ordered, that they should chose out of Israel men that were fit, and feared to sin, that they may be the messengers of all Israel to stand by the offerings, and these are called the men of the station; and they divided them into twenty and four stations, according to the number of the courses of the priests and Levites; and at every station one of them was appointed over them all, and he called the head of the station; and every week the men of the station of that week gather together; and such of them as are in Jerusalem, or near to it, go into the temple, with the course of the priests and Levites of that week; and they who are in that station, that are at a distance, when their station comes, they gather together to the synagogue, which is in their place.”

Then he goes on to give an account, as before, how often they fast in that week, how many prayers they say, and what they read.

And his wife was of the daughters of Aaron. It is a saying of R. Jochanan^{f24},

“he that would be rich, let him join himself to the seed of Aaron; so it is, that the law and the priesthood make rich. — R. Idi bar Abin married a priestess, and from him proceeded that were made doctors, R. Shesheth, the son of R. Idi, and R. Joshua, the son of R. Idi.”

This is not so much said in commendation of Zacharias, that he took a wife of the same tribe, and of the priestly line: for it was lawful for the tribe of Levi to take a wife of any other, because it did not make any alteration in the inheritances of tribes; and it a rule with the Jews ^{f25}, that priests, Levites, and Israelites, might marry with one another; as Mary, who was of the tribe of Judah, was akin to Elizabeth: but to point the original of John, and show of what extraction he was, his father and mother being both of the family of Aaron.

And her name was Elizabeth; the same name with [bçyl a. “Elisheba”, the wife of Aaron, (^{<0623>}Exodus 6:23), and whom the Septuagint interpreters there call, as here, Elisabeth: and this being the name of Aaron's wife, it is very probable it might be a common name among the daughters of Aaron, in succeeding generations.

Ver. 6. *And they were both righteous before God*, etc.] Not as the Pharisees, only righteous before men, but in the sight of God, who sees the heart, and whose judgment is according to truth; and therefore were not justified by the deeds of the law; for by them no man can be justified in the sight of God; but were made righteous through the righteousness of Christ, by which the saints were made righteous before the coming of Christ, as those after it: see (^{<4151>}Acts 15:11, ^{<6138>}Revelation 13:8). God beheld them in his Son, as clothed with that righteousness he engaged to bring in, and as cleansed from all sin in that blood of his which was to be shed: and they appeared to him, and in the eye of his justice, and according to his law, righteous persons: though this character may also regard the internal holiness of their hearts, and the truth and sincerity of grace in them: which God, who trieth the hearts and reins of the children of men, knew, took notice of, and bore testimony to: as likewise their holy, upright walk and conversation before men, and which was observed by God, and acceptable to him, though imperfect, as arising from a principle of grace, being performed in the faith and fear of him, and with a view to his glory, and for the sake, and through the righteousness of his Son.

Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord: this was not the matter of their righteousness before God, but the evidence of it before men: “by the commandments” are meant, all those that are of a moral nature, which regarded their duty to God and man, and which are comprehended in love to both; and by “the ordinances of the Lord”, are intended the injunctions and institutions of the ceremonial law, which is called the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, which, though now abolished, were then in force: and it was right and commendable in them to observe them, who, by their “walking” in them, showed they loved them, both one and the other; esteemed them, concerning all things to be right; and had respect to them all, and observed them, and took pleasure in walking in them, which, by the grace of God, they continued to do; for walking not only shows that these commands and ordinances were a way marked out for them, but in which they took pleasure, and made progress: and were

blameless; not that they were without sin, as none are; and it appears from this chapter that Zacharias was not, (see [☞ Luke 1:20](#)) but they were so in the sight of God; as they were justified by the righteousness of Christ, so they were without fault before the throne, and unreprieveable before God; and as to their moral and religious character and conduct before men, they did not indulge themselves in any known sin, but lived in all good conscience among men: nor were they remiss and negligent in the discharge of duty: they were not guilty of any notorious breach of the law of God, or of any remarkable negligence in the business of religious observances: and though they might observe enough in them to charge themselves with, and to humble themselves before God and men; yet so strict were they, in their lives and conversations, that those who were the most intimately acquainted with them, had nothing very material to blame them for.

Ver. 7. *And they had no child,* etc.] Son or daughter: and which was accounted a great infelicity: but this was not owing to the judgment of God upon them for any sins they had been guilty of, as the above character of them shows: and it had been the case of some righteous pairs before them for a great while, as Abraham and Sarah, Manoah, and his wife, Elkanah and Hannah:

because that Elizabeth was barren; so that it was peculiarly her case, and not Zacharias's: and though God had promised the people of Israel that

there should be no male nor female barren among them, (^{<0714>}Deuteronomy 7:14) yet there were instances and exceptions to this general rule, as before mentioned, when it was the pleasure of God to make himself known, and magnify his power in the extraordinary conception and birth of any person; and therefore, though barrenness was reckoned a reproach to a person, there was, in this case, a particular hand of God, to answer a special purpose: the signs of sterility are, according to the Jews ^{f26}, when a woman had not breasts as other women have, her voice gross, so that it could not be discerned, whether it was a man's or a woman's, etc.

and they both were now well stricken in years; which made the conception and birth of John the more extraordinary, and even miraculous, and so the belief of it the more difficult; (see ^{<0177>}Genesis 17:17) It may be literally rendered, “they had proceeded”, or had far advanced “in their days”: it is an “Hebraism”, and answers to, **μυμυβ μυαβ** in (^{<0181>}Genesis 18:11 ^{<0630>}Joshua 13:1 23:1,2 ^{<1000>}1 Kings 1:1) where the Septuagint render it by the same phrase as here. The Mahometan writers Beidavi and Jallallo'din say ^{f27} that Zacharias was “ninety nine” years of age, and his wife “eighty nine”.

Ver. 8. *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office*, etc.] To which he was called and ordained, even to offer gifts and sacrifices for men; whilst he was in the way of his duty, when oftentimes God appears to, and in favour of his people; whilst he was performing it,

before God; in the temple, where was the symbol of the divine presence, before the altar of the Lord; and as having the fear of God before his eyes; considering himself as in the sight of God, and doing his work faithfully and sincerely:

in the order of his course; taking his turn in the order of the course of Abia, to which he belonged; (See Gill on “^{<0005>}Luke 1:5”).

Ver. 9. *According to the custom of the priest's office*, etc.] In which, every man took his part in the execution of it by lot; and which was not an original settled law of God; but a custom, which, in process of time, through the number of the priests, took place, and prevailed: the occasion of it was this;

“at first, whoever would, might sweep the altar, or cleanse it — — it happened that two alike ran, and came up to the ascent of the

altar, and one thrust down the other, and he fell, and his leg was broke; and when the sanhedrim saw that they came into danger, they ordered that they should not cleanse the altar, but by lot ^{f28}.”

And so likewise all other sorts of service were settled by lot:

his lot was to burn incense, when he went into the temple of the Lord; where was the altar of incense, and which was burnt upon it morning and evening; (see ^{f29}Exodus 30:1,7,8), and was typical of the continual intercession of Jesus Christ; and this part of service was assigned him by lot. The priests used to cast lots, what part they should take in the service of the temple, in the order of the course, to which they belonged ^{f29} .

“There were four lots there, and this was the first lot (i.e. to cleanse the altar); the second lot was, who should slay (the sacrifice,) who should sprinkle (the blood), who should remove the ashes from the innermost altar, who should cleanse the candlestick, who should bring the members (or parts of the sacrifice) to the ascent of the altar — — the third lot was, ye new ones, to the incense come, **wsyphw**, and “cast lots”; and the fourth, ye new ones, with the old ones, who shall bring up the parts from the ascent of the altar to the altar.”

And this was not only the case on the day of atonement, to which these rules belong; but every day in the daily service and sacrifice, when the same rules were observed, as appears from the rubric of the daily sacrifice: ^{f30}

“the president said unto them (the priests), come and cast lots who shall slay, who shall sprinkle, who shall remove the ashes from the innermost altar, who shall remove the ashes from the candlestick, who shall bring up the parts to the ascent of the altar, etc.”

Again, ^{f31} ,

“he says to them, O ye new ones, to the incense come, and cast lots; and they cast lots, and he is worthy, whom he accounts worthy — and he that is accounted worthy of the incense, takes a vessel, and the vessel is like to a large golden bushel, that holds three kabs, and a bowl in the middle of it, full and heaped up with incense, with a cover, and a sort of a linen cloth put over it.”

And it is afterwards said ^{f32} ,

“he that is worthy of the incense, takes the bowl out of the vessel, and gives it to his friend, or he that is near to him; and if it is scattered from it, in the midst of it, he puts it into his fist; and they teach him, “saying”, take care that thou dost not begin before thy face, that thou art not burnt: when he begins, he spreads it and goes out; and he that burns incense, may not do it, until the president says, burn incense.”

The account Maimonides gives ^{f33} of this matter, is as follows;

“all the services that they do every day, they do, **syypb**, by lot; and how do they do it? All the priests of the houses of the fathers, of the day, go into the paved chamber, after the pillar of the morning has ascended, and clothe themselves with the priestly garments; and the president who is over the lots is with them, and they stand in a circle; and the president takes a mitre from off the head of one of them, and goes round with it, and the man from whom he begins to number, and they cast lots, as has been explained — — how do they cast lots? they stand in a circle, and agree upon a number, eighty, a hundred, or a thousand, or whatsoever number they may agree upon; and the president says to them, put out your fingers, and they put out their fingers, one, or two; and if one puts out three, they number him three; and they do not put out the thumb in the sanctuary, because of deceivers; for the thumb is short, and easy to be put out, and to bend; and he that puts out the thumb, they do not number for him: and the president begins to number from the man that is known, whose mitre he took off first, and he numbers by their fingers, and returns in the round, until he has perfected the number they agreed upon; and the man that completes the number with his finger, he is he that goes out by the first lot to service: and why does he number the number they agree upon, by their fingers that they put out, and does not number them by the men themselves? Because it is forbidden to number Israel, but by means of another thing; as it is said, (~~1~~1 Samuel 15:4) “And numbered them in Telaim”. There were four lots they cast every day in the morning; the first lot; was, who should cleanse the altar: they cast lots, and he was worthy that was accounted worthy to cleanse it; and he sets the row in order, and brings up the two pieces of wood to the altar, and he brings in the censer full of fire, from the outer altar, to the golden altar, to burn incense upon it: and the second

lot, thirteen were worthy of it, according to the order of their standing; how? the president says to them, put out your fingers, and he numbers in the way that has been explained; and he that goes out by the first lot, is he that slays the daily sacrifice of the morning; and the second that stands by his side, is he that receives the blood of the daily sacrifice, and sprinkles it; and the third that is next to the second, receives the ashes from the innermost altar, which is the altar of incense; and the fourth, that is by his side, cleanses the candlestick, and trims the lamps; and the fifth brings up the head of the daily sacrifice, and its leg to the ascent of the altar: and the sixth brings up the two shoulders; and the seventh brings up the extreme part of the backbone, and the other leg; and the eighth brings up the breast and the gullet; and the ninth brings up the two sides; and the tenth brings up the inwards; and the eleventh brings up the fine flour, and the drink offerings; and the twelfth brings up the things that were fried; and the thirteenth brings up the wine of the drink offerings: the third lot, the president says to them, “even” to all the men of the house of the father of that day, whoever has never burnt incense, let him come and “cast lots”; and they gather together to the president, and cast lots; and he that goes out by the lot first, he is he that is worthy to burn incense; the fourth lot, they all gather together, and cast lots to know who shall bring up the parts from the ascent of the altar, to the altar; they cast lots, and he is worthy who is accounted worthy: the daily evening sacrifice, they do not cast another lot for it; but every priest that is worthy of any service of the services of the morning, is worthy of the evening, except that of the incense; for they cast another lot for that in the evening; and every one may come, who has never burnt incense of the men of that house of the fathers, and cast lots for it; but if they have all of them burnt incense already, they all of them cast lots, in the morning, at the third lot; and he that is worthy of it in the morning, burns incense in the evening.”

Hence it appears, that the burning of incense, as other parts of the priest's service, was by lot; and that they were new priests, or such who had never burnt incense, that cast lots for it: for it is a tradition^{f34}, that no man ever burnt incense twice; the reason assigned for it is, because it makes a man rich; and therefore that every one might partake of the blessing in their turns, new ones were called unto it: whether Zacharias had ever burnt

incense before, and whether he now did it in the morning or evening, is not certain.

Ver. 10. *And the whole multitude of the people were praying without*, etc.] In the court of the Israelites, whilst Zacharias was in the holy place; though not in the holy of holies, where only the high priest entered: it looks, as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, as if this was on a sabbath day, since there was such a multitude of people together; for on the weekday, there were only the priests and Levites of the course, and the stationary men, which represented the Israelites, and some of the more devout sort of the people; but here was the whole multitude of the people; or as the Ethiopic version renders it, “all the people were in a full congregation praying”: prayer, was wont to be made at the time of incense; hence it is compared to it, (^{491B}Psalm 141:2). And hence it is, that Christ is said to offer up the prayers of all saints, with his much incense, (^{418B}Revelation 8:3,4)

in the time of incense: whether it was morning or evening, the people were obliged to be at a distance, whilst that was burning; the Jewish canons confirm this ^{f35}:

“in the time they burn the incense in the temple every day, $\mu[h\ i\ k\ \acute{y}c\ r\ w\ p$, “they separate all the people”, from the temple, and from between the porch and the altar; there is not a man there, till he comes out that burns the incense.”

Ver. 11. *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord*, etc.] Gabriel, as seem's manifest from (^{411B}Luke 1:19,26,36) the same angel that had appeared to Daniel, about the time of the evening oblation, near five hundred years before, and gave him an account of the time of the Messiah's coming, (^{270B}Daniel 9:21). The Jews sometimes speak of divine and wonderful appearances to their priests, at such times, and in such places:

“it is a tradition that R. Ishmael ben Elishah should say, one time I went in, $trj\ q\ ryj\ qhl$, “to burn incense”: and I saw Actariel (one of the names of God with them) the Lord, the Lord of hosts, who was sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. ^{f36}”

And so they say of Simeon the just, that there was always an appearance when he went into the holy of holies; it is related thus ^{f37}:

“Simeon the just, ministered unto Israel in the high priesthood, forty years; and in the last year, he said to them, I shall die this year: they said to him, from whence dost thou know it? He replied to them, every year that I have entered into the holy of holies, there was, *dj a ^qz*, “one old man” clothed in white, and veiled in white, that went in with me, and came out with me; and this year he went in with me, but did not come out with me.”

And according to Josephus^{f38}, the high priest Hyrcanus received an oracle, or answer from God, as he was offering incense; so that the Jews ought not to discredit such an appearance to Zacharias:

standing on the right side of the altar of incense; of which, (see ^{<2310>}Exodus 30:1-10, 35:25-28) the situation of it, according to the Jews, was this^{f39}:

“the table (of showbread) was in the north, two cubits and a half distant from the wall; and the candlestick was in the south, two cubits and a half distant from the wall; and the altar (of incense) was in the middle, and stood between them.”

And to

“this agrees the account of Maimonides^{f40}, who says, the candlestick was on the south, on the left hand, as you go in; and the table of shewbread on the right hand, and both of them on the side of the holy of holies without; and the altar of incense was between them both without.”

So that it was on the north side that the angel stood.

Ver. 12. *And when Zacharias saw him*, etc.] The angel; he was troubled, and fear fell upon him; for such appearances of angels were not now so common as formerly: and when they were more usual, generally had such effects on the minds, even of good men; (see ^{<1062>}Judges 6:22, ^{<2187>}Daniel 8:17).

Ver. 13. *But the angel said unto him, fear not, Zacharias*, etc.] He calls him by his name; for holy men are known to angels in person, and by name; to whom they are ministering spirits, and for whose good they are concerned; and bid him not be afraid, as the angel also said to the women at Christ's sepulchre, (^{<4185>}Matthew 28:5) for he saw by his countenance and gestures, that he was greatly surprised and terrified at the sight of him:

for thy prayer is heard; which he had many years ago put up for a son; for it cannot be thought that he had been now praying for one, being in such an advanced age, and having for years past given up all hopes of one, and was even unbelieving, when he was told by the angel he should have one: prayer is sometimes immediately heard, and answered; and sometimes an answer is deferred a long time, to try the faith and patience of the saints, and to discover the more the wisdom, power, and goodness of God: or this may have regard to his present prayer, one branch of which might concern the coming of the Messiah, which was now expecting, and therefore is told, that his prayer was heard; since the angel that appeared to him, brought him the news of the conception and birth of his forerunner:

and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son; who had been always barren, and was called so, (^{<4007>}Luke 1:7,36)

And thou shalt call his name John; in Hebrew, “Jochanan”, and signifies “gracious”: a fit name for one that was filled with the gifts and graces of the Spirit; and was the harbinger of the Messiah, who is full of grace and truth; and the ushered in the Messiah's kingdom, which is a dispensation of grace.

Ver. 14. *And thou shalt have joy and gladness*, etc.] Not only because of his having a son; but because this his son would be the prophet of the Highest; would go before the Lord, and prepare his ways; give knowledge of salvation to many, and light to them that were in darkness, and guide their feet in the way of peace: all which, and more, he afterwards expresses in his song, whereby this part of the angel's prediction had its accomplishment:

and many shall rejoice at his birth; as the neighbours and cousins of his parents did; (see ^{<4058>}Luke 1:58) and not only they, but all others, who, afterwards had knowledge of him as prophet, and as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Ver. 15. *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord*, etc.] Of Jehovah, the Father; with whom, what is highly esteemed among men, is oftentimes an abomination; and of the Lord Jesus Christ, before whom he was to go, and who pronounced him a prophet, and more than a prophet, and even greater than any born of women, (^{<4019>}Matthew 11:9,11) and of the Lord, the Spirit, with whom he was filled from his mother's womb: he was great, not in birth and blood, in worldly riches and grandeur, but in gifts and

grace, in his work, office, and usefulness, and in the esteem of God, and even of men too:

and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; which were forbidden the Nazarites, (^{<04B>}Numbers 6:3) where the Jews, by “wine”, understand “new wine”; and by “strong drink”, old wine: so all the “three Targums”, of Onkelos, Jonathan ben Uzziel, and the Jerusalem, paraphrase the words there, “from wine new and old, he shall separate himself”; and they allow strong drink to a Nazarite, that has no wine in it: their canon ^{f41} runs thus,

“three things are forbidden a Nazarite, defilement, and shaving, and whatever proceeds from the vine, whether fruit, or the refuse of fruit; but strong drink made of dates, or dried figs, and such like, is free for a Nazarite; and the strong drink which is forbidden him in the law, is strong drink made of mixture of wine.”

But the Hebrew word, רִקְוֹ, and which is here retained by the evangelist, signifies ^{f42} any sort of liquor, which is inebriating, whether it is made of fruits, or honey, or what not. The Jews had no such strong drink as ours, which we call beer or ale; but they speak of the strong drink of the Medes, which they say was an inebriating liquor, made of barley ^{f43}:

and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb; or “whilst in his mother's womb”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions render it: like Jeremiah, he was sanctified, set apart, and ordained to be the prophet of the Highest, before he came out of his mother's womb; and was then under such an influence of the Spirit of God, as to leap in it for joy, at the salutation of the mother of Christ to his, (^{<04B>}Luke 1:41,44) and very early appeared to have the extraordinary gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, qualifying him for his work.

Ver. 16. *And many of the children of Israel*, etc.] To whom only, or at least chiefly, he was sent, and came preaching, and administering the ordinance of baptism; and great multitudes of them flocked unto him, attended on his ministry, believed in his doctrine, and submitted to his baptism, but not all; for some slighted his preaching, and rejected his baptism: however, some there were, and many too, that were converted under his ministry, confessed their sins, and were baptized by him; which verified this prediction:

shall he turn to the Lord their God; not Jehovah, the Father; for though he was the Lord God of the Jews in general, and of those that were turned by John's ministry in a special manner; yet John cannot be said "to go before him", as he is in the next verse; but the Messiah is here meant, who is the Lord Jehovah, and is often so called in the Old Testament; particularly in a prophecy afterwards respected, (^{230B}Isaiah 40:3) a name peculiar to God alone: and who also is called God, as he is frequently with additional epithets; as the mighty God, God over all, the great God, the true God, and eternal life; and our, your, and their God, the God of his covenant people, whether Jews or Gentiles; (see ^{225B}Isaiah 25:9 35:4). Conversion, which is meant by turning to God, is not man's work, but God's; and is effected by his mighty power, which is only equal to it; but John was to be, and was, an instrument of the conversion of many among the Jews, by preaching the doctrine of repentance towards God, and faith in the Messiah, that was just ready to come: he was the means in the hand of God, of turning many from sin, of bringing them to a true sense of it, and to an hearty and ingenuous confession and acknowledgment of it; and from trusting to, and depending upon, their birth privileges, legal duties, and self-righteousness; and from their gross notions of a temporal Messiah; and of leading them to believe in Christ as a spiritual Saviour, as the Lamb of God, that should take away the sin of the world.

Ver. 17. *And he shall go before him*, etc.] The Lord his God, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose forerunner he was; the messenger of him, that according to the prophecies in (^{230B}Isaiah 40:3, ^{300B}Malachi 3:1) was to go before him, and prepare his ways; as he did by his wonderful conception and birth, which made way for the more easy belief of the conception and birth of the Messiah, by a virgin; and by his preaching the doctrine of repentance, and administering the ordinance of baptism; which, were done to awaken the people's expectation of the Messiah, and that he might be made manifest in Israel, and by pointing him out to them in his preaching:

in the spirit and power of Elias: or Elijah, the Syriac and Persic versions add, "the prophet"; John the Baptist, and Elijah, were men much of the same spirit and disposition, and of like power, life, and zeal in religion; and therefore the one goes by the name of the other: they both much conversed in the wilderness; agreed in the austerity of their lives; their habit and dress were much alike; they were both restorers of religion, when very low, and much decayed; were famous for their faithfulness in reproofing the vices of

kings, and for their warm zeal for true religion, and for the persecution they endured for the sake of it:

to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children in (³⁰⁰⁶Malachi 4:6) which is the prophecy referred to, it is added,

and the heart of the children to their fathers; which some understand, of his turning the degenerate offspring of the Jews, to the sentiments of their forefathers, and causing them to agree with them in their notions of the Messiah: others, of the turning of the Jews to Christ, and his apostles; and others, of his being a means, through his ministry and baptism, of reconciling Jews and Gentiles together, which is the great business of the Gospel dispensation, ushered in by John; and who preached that all men should believe in Christ, and baptized publicans and Roman soldiers, as well as Jews; and which sense pretty much agrees with the interpretation the Jews put upon the prophecy, as referring to Elijah the Tishbite, whom they expect in person, before the coming of the Messiah: say ^{f44} they,

“Elijah comes to defile and to cleanse (i.e. to pronounce what things are clean or unclean), and to remove afar off, and to bring near (i.e. to determine what families are legitimate or illegitimate).

R. Simeon says, “to compose differences”; and the wise men say, neither to remove, nor to bring near, but $\mu\omega\iota \zeta \tau\omega\zeta[\iota]$, “to make peace” in the world; as it is said, “behold, I send unto you Elijah the prophet”, etc. “and he shall turn the heart of the fathers”, etc.”

But the true meaning is, that John the Baptist, who is meant by Elias, should be an instrument of turning fathers with their children, and children with their fathers, to the Lord; that he should be a means of converting both fathers and children, one as well as another; and to gather persons of every age and station; for the particle ι [] which we render “to”, is the same as μ [], “with”, as Kimchi on the text observes: “and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just”. By the “disobedient” are meant, either Jews or Gentiles; some understand it of the Gentiles, who were children of disobedience, before the light of the Gospel came among them: but rather the former are meant, who were a disobedient, rebellious, and gainsaying people; who were gone off from the wisdom, knowledge, and religion, of the just, or righteous ones, their forefathers; who prophesied of Christ, rejoiced to see his day, longed for him, and believed in him: now John was to be an instrument of turning some of the unbelieving Jews, to the true

knowledge of salvation by Christ; which their righteous progenitors waited for, had a right knowledge of, and an interest in: and of leading them either into the Gospel of Christ, that wisdom of God is a mystery; the manifold wisdom of God, in which he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence: and which the righteous men among the Jews, searched diligently into, attained some knowledge of, and which even the holy angels desire to look into; so the patriarchs were called just, or righteous; as righteous Abel, just Noah, etc. and so the Jewish fathers: hence in the Targum on (^{241B}Jeremiah 12:5,6 31:16,21) mention is made of thy fathers, **ayqydx** “the just”, who were of old: or to Christ himself, who is the wisdom of God, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, to know him, and believe in him; who in the same Targum on (^{242B}Jeremiah 23:5) is called **ayqydx d j yçm**, “the Messiah of the just”.

To make ready a people prepared for the Lord. The Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions read, “a perfect people”; and the Persic version, “all the people”: not all the people of the Jews, but God's elect among them who from all eternity were “prepared”, as a people in a covenant relation, as the portion of Christ, and as his spouse and bride, and as such, given to him; they were in electing grace, vessels of mercy, afore prepared for glory; and heaven, as a kingdom, was prepared for them from the foundation of the world: they were provided with all spiritual blessings, which were prepared for them, and bestowed on them in heavenly places, in Christ, before the foundation of the world; even all their grace, and all their glory; yea, even their good works are such, which God has foreordained, or foreprepared that they should walk in. Now, the work of John the Baptist, was “to make ready” this people, by pointing out to them, in a ministerial way, wherein their readiness lay, to meet the Lord, and be for ever with him in heaven; not in a civil, moral, or legal righteousness; or in outward humiliation for, and abstinence from sin; nor in a submission to Gospel ordinances, and in a mere profession of religion, and in an observance of a round of duties; but in justification by the righteousness of Christ, and in regeneration and sanctification, by his Spirit and grace; the one giving a right to, the other a meetness for the heavenly inheritance: and John; and so any other Gospel minister, may be said to make ready a people, in this sense; when they are the instruments of the regeneration and conversion of sinners, and of leading them to the righteousness of Christ, for their justification before God, and acceptance with him.

Ver. 18. *And Zacharias said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this?* etc.] Notwithstanding such an appearance of an angel to him, which in those times was not so usual, and this in the holy place; and the things themselves which were told him, and these as the return of prayer; yet he distrusted, and wanted a sign, whereby he might know the truth of them, as the Jews were generally desirous of, and as the father of them was; who expressed himself in much such language, on a certain occasion, as this his son did; (see ^{<0158>}Genesis 15:8).

For I am an old man; at least sixty years of age; for with the Jews, sixty years were reckoned, **hnqzl**, “for old age”^{f45}; and a man of these years, was accounted an old man: and the Jewish Rabbins observe^{f46}, that the word for old age in (^{<0302>}Job 30:2) is by “gematry, sixty”; that is, the letters of the word, numerically make so much. The Mahometan writers, as before observed on (^{<0107>}Luke 1:7) make him to be ninety nine years of age: he was not discharged from service; the Levites were at fifty, but not the priests; blemishes, as the Jewish writers say^{f47}, made them unfit for service, but years did not: and even the law concerning the Levites, they say^{f48}, only respected the time they carried the sanctuary from place to place, and not future generations; and that they are disqualified neither by blemishes, nor by years, only by voice, for singing of the song; but then they might be among the porters; so that they were not on that account laid aside from all service:

and my wife well stricken in years. The Mahometan writers, as before, say, she was “eighty nine”; a like objection Abraham made, though he afterwards got over it, and was strong in faith, giving glory to God, believing in his power and faithfulness; (see ^{<0177>}Genesis 17:17).

Ver. 19. *And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel*, etc.] The name of an angel well known to Zacharias from Daniel's prophecies, (^{<0386>}Daniel 8:16; 9:21) and is the first time we read of the name of an angel: the Jews say^{f49}, the names of angels came out of Babylon, by the means of the Israelites; and it was there that Daniel became acquainted with this name of Gabriel, and also of Michael. Frequent mention is made of Gabriel in the Jewish writings^{f50}: were there a particular angel appointed over conception, as the Jews say^{f51} there is, one would be ready to think it should be Gabriel, since he was sent to declare the conception and birth both of John the Baptist, and of our Lord Jesus Christ: the name of that angel the Jews indeed say^{f52} is Lilah; but yet the Cabalistic doctors^{f53}

affirm, that that angel is under Gabriel. In what language this angel spoke to Zacharias, and afterwards to Mary, may be a needless inquiry; but since the Syriac language was generally spoken, and understood by the Jews at this time, it is highly reasonable that he spoke to them in that. The Jews have a notion, that none of the ministering angels understand the Syriac language, excepting Gabriel; and he, they say, understood seventy languages^{f54}. Now the angel, by making mention of his name, puts Zacharias in mind of the prophecy of Daniel concerning the coming of the Messiah, which he had from him; and whereas his name signified, “a man of God”, or “the power”, or “strength of God”, or “God is my strength”, he suggests unto him, that he ought not to have distrusted his Words, since with God all things are possible: he adds,

that stand in the presence of God; beholding his face, hearkening to his voice, and ministering to him, and so had this affair immediately from him: and therefore he had no reason to doubt of the accomplishment of it. Gabriel, according to the Jews, is one of the four angels that surround the throne of God: their names are Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel^{f55}.

“Michael they place at his right hand, and Uriel at his left hand, and Gabriel, **wynpl m**, before him, (in his presence, as he here says of himself,) over against the kingdom of Judah, and Moses and Aaron, who were in the east (of the camp of Israel); and why is his name called Gabriel? of Judah it is written, (~~33RD~~1 Chronicles 5:2) “for Judah”, **rbg**, “prevailed above his brethren”; and of Moses it is written, (~~4000E~~Leviticus 1:1) “and God called unto Moses”; and it is written, (~~2390E~~Isaiah 9:6) “and shall call his name Wonderful, Counselor, **rwbg l a** the mighty God, lo! Gabriel”.”

And am sent to speak unto thee, and to show unto thee these glad tidings: wherefore, on account of his name, his office, and his mission, especially the subject of it being welcome news, good tidings, what he said ought to have obtained credit with him. Gabriel was one of the ministering spirits sent to minister to them that were heirs of salvation; his messages were messages of mercy, grace and love; he was not a minister of the wrath and vengeance of God, but of his favour. Agreeably to this the Jews say of him, that his name Gabriel is, by “gematry”, or numerically, the same with **μ j r** “merciful”^{f56}: he is called, in the Talmud^{f57}, **tynwqsp j wr** “the decisive spirit”, and is said to have three names, Piskon, Itmon, and Sigron. He is

called Piskon, because he decides, or determines judgment against them that are above; and Itmon, because he stops up the sins of the Israelites; and Sigron, because when he shuts (the gates of judgment) there is none can open again. Hence also they say, that he is the angel that is appointed over water which quenches fire. The Targumist on (~~Job~~ Job 25:2) paraphrases the words thus:

“Michael on the right hand, who is over fire; and Gabriel on the left hand, who is over water; and the holy creatures mingle fire and water, and by his dominion and fear, make peace in his heaven of heavens.”

Ver. 20. *And behold, thou shalt be dumb*, etc.] Or “silent; and not able to speak”, if he would. Silence is sometimes voluntary; but this was what he could not help;

until the day that these thing shall be performed; which he had said concerning the conception and birth of a son, and the imposition of a name on him; for this dumbness remained upon Zachariah, not only until his wife had conceived, and the child was born, but until the eighth day after, when he was circumcised, and his name was given him the angel directed to: “because thou believest not my words”: he was struck both deaf and dumb, as appears from his friends making signs to him, (~~Luke~~ Luke 1:62) which they had no need to have done, could he have heard: he was struck with deafness, because he hearkened not to the angel's words; and with dumbness, because from the unbelief of his heart he objected to them. We learn from hence, what an evil unbelief is, and how much resented by God, and how much it becomes us to take heed, that it prevails not in us: and especially since it easily besets us: “which shall be fulfilled in their season”; first the conception, then the birth; after that the calling him by his name, and in process of time, the doing of his work and office; so that the unbelief Zacharias did not make the faith of God of none effect; for though sometimes the people of God are very unbelieving, yet he abides faithful to his word and promises. Mahomet, in his Alkoran ^{f58}, very wrongly makes the angel to say these words to Zacharias;

“thy sign shall be, that thou shalt speak unto no man for three days, otherwise than by gesture.”

And elsewhere ^{f59} it is said three nights.

Ver. 21. *And the people waited for Zacharias*, etc.] That were without, in the court of the Israelites, praying there, while he was offering incense: these were waiting for his coming out, in order to be blessed by him, according to (^{f60}Numbers 6:23-26) and be dismissed: and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple; beyond the usual time of burning incense; which might be occasioned either by a longer discourse of the angel with him than what is here related; or being struck with amazement at the sight and hearing of the angel, he might continue long musing on this unexpected appearance and relation; or he might spend some time not only in meditation upon it, but in mental prayer, confession, and thanksgiving. The high priest, when he went in to burn incense on the day of atonement,

“made a short prayer in the outward house, (in the temple,) and he did not continue long in his prayer, **ty[bhl al ʕ**, “that he might not affright” the Israelites”^{f60},

thinking that he was dead; for many high priests that were unfit for, or made alteration in the service, died in the holy of holies^{f61}.

“It is reported^{f62} of one high priest, that he continued long in his prayer, and his brethren, the priests, thought to have gone in after him; and they began to go in, and he came out; they say unto him, why didst thou continue long in thy prayer? he replied to them, is it hard in your eyes that I should pray for you, and for the house of the sanctuary, that it might not be destroyed? they answered him, be not used to do so; for we have learned, that a man should not continue long in prayer, that he may not affright Israel.”

This high priest, they elsewhere say^{f63}, was Simeon the just.

Ver. 22. *And when he came out, he could not speak unto them*, etc.] Or deliver the benediction they were waiting for:

and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: which he made them to understand, by the gestures he used: for he beckoned unto them; nodding his head, or by some motions of his hands the Ethiopic version adds, “with his hand”: or of his lips; for the signs of a dumb man are distinguished into **hzymr**, and **hxypq**^{f64}; the one is a sign which is expressed by the head and hands; and the other is a sign expressed by the lips: hence that rule,^{f65}

“a dumb man beckons, and is beckoned to; and Ben Bethira says, he moves his lips, and lips are moved to him:”

and remained speechless; to the time the angel fixed.

Ver. 23. *And it came to pass, that as soon as the days of his ministration,* etc.] In the order of the course, which might be three, four, five, or six days, according to the number of the heads of the house of their fathers in the course; (See Gill on “~~<4015>~~Luke 1:5”)

were accomplished: for though he was deaf and dumb, he was not hereby disqualified for service. Deafness and dumbness excused persons from various duties ^{f66} but did not disqualify priests: a Levite, if he had lost his voice, was disqualified, but not a priest; ^{f67} the reason was this, because it was one part of the work of the Levites to sing, and therefore could not perform it without a voice; but such was the work of the priests, that though deaf and dumb, they could discharge it; as cleansing the altar, trimming the lamps, carrying the parts to the altar, laying them upon it, and burning them, or offering any sacrifice, burning incense, etc. which was the business of Zacharias; which when he had fulfilled, he departed to his own house; which was not at Jerusalem, but in the hill country, in a city of Judah there; (see ~~<4013>~~Luke 1:39,40).

Ver. 24. *And after those days,* etc.] The days of his ministration in the temple, quickly after his return home; the Ethiopic version reads, “after two days”:

his wife Elisabeth conceived; according to the angels prediction, and notwithstanding her barrenness, and the unbelief of her husband;

and hid herself five months. The Arabic and Persic versions render it, “hid her size”; but there could be no occasion to take any methods to hide this, since, if she said nothing of it herself, and there could be no suspicion of it in one of her years, it could not be much discerned in her by such a time; but she hid herself, or lived retired, that she might be fully satisfied that she was with child, before she said any thing about it; and that she might not discover any pride or vanity on account of it; and to avoid all discourse with others about it, which might be rumoured abroad; and chiefly to shun all ceremonial uncleanness, which one, that bred a Nazarite, was obliged to; (see ~~<40134>~~Judges 13:14) and most of all, that she might be retired, and spend her time in meditation upon the goodness of God, and in returning

thanks to him for the favour she had received; saying; as in the following verse.

Ver. 25. *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me*, etc.] In a very gracious and bountiful manner; in giving her strength to conceive a son in her old age, and such an one that was to be great, and so useful in his day; of which her husband had doubtless informed her by writing, though he could not speak:

in the days wherein he looked on me; with a favourable eye, with a look of love and mercy:

he took away my reproach from among men; as barrenness was accounted, especially among the Israelites, the seed of Abraham; to whom was promised a numerous issue, as the stars in the sky, and as the sand on the sea shore, and particularly the Messiah; (see ^{<B123>}Genesis 30:23, ^{<B01>}Isaiah 4:1).

Ver. 26. *And in the sixth month*, etc.] After Elisabeth's conception; for so long was John the Baptist conceived before Christ, and so long he was born before him; and it seems as if there was the same distance between the public ministry of the one, and the other: John was before Christ, as man, being his forerunner; but Christ was preferred unto him as mediator, and existed before him, as the eternal Son of God:

the angel Gabriel was sent from God; the same angel, that near five hundred years before gave Daniel an exact account of the time of the Messiah's coming, and six months ago acquainted Zacharias with the conception, birth, character, and office of his forerunner:

unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth; the whole country of Galilee was mean and contemptible with the Jews: they observe, though through mistake, that no prophet arose out of it, (^{<B072>}John 7:52) and Nazareth particularly was exceeding despicable in their eye: hence those words of Nathanael, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (^{<B046>}John 1:46) and yet hither an angel was sent by God; and here dwelt the mother of our Lord. (See Gill on "^{<B123>}Matthew 1:23")

Ver. 27. *To a virgin*, etc.] A pure virgin, that never knew man; (See Gill on "^{<B134>}Luke 1:34") and yet

espoused to a man whose name was Joseph; but they were not come together, nor had he taken her for his wife, and home to his house, nor had they cohabited:

of the house of David; which, according to the grammatical construction of the words, may be connected either with the virgin, or with Joseph, to whom she was espoused; and is true of both; for they both were of the house and lineage of David: and this shows what a low condition David's family was in, that the persons that were the nearest allied to it were a carpenter, and a poor virgin; and both residing in so despicable a place as Nazareth in Galilee:

and the virgin's name was Mary; a name frequent among the Jews, and the same with Miriam; of which name was the sister of Moses and Aaron.

Ver. 28. *And the angel came in unto her*, etc.] Into her house, and into the room where she was:

and said, hail; all health, happiness, and prosperity attend thee; (^{<A839>}Matthew 28:9)

thou art highly favoured; or graciously accepted, or hast obtained grace; not referring to electing, redeeming; justifying, pardoning, adopting, and sanctifying grace, which she had in common with other saints; but to that special and particular favour, in being chosen and singled out from all other women, to be the mother of the Messiah:

the Lord is with thee; so the angel to Gideon, (^{<A762>}Judges 6:12) or “be with thee”, an usual form of salutation among the Jews; (^{<A804>}Ruth 2:4)

thou art blessed among women; and will be pronounced so by other women, as she was by Elisabeth, (^{<A142>}Luke 1:42) and by another woman, (^{<A117>}Luke 11:27).

Ver. 29. *And when she saw him*, etc.] The Persic version renders it, “when Mary saw the angel”; which expresses the true sense of the words, The Vulgate Latin reads, “when she heard”; i.e. the salutation:

she was troubled at his saying; at his speaking to her; she was surprised at the sight of him, and more at what he said to her;

and cast in her mind, or thought and reasoned within herself,

what manner of salutation this should be; for it was not usual with the Jews for a man to use any salutation to a woman; with them it was not lawful to be done in any shape or form; not by a messenger, nor even by her own husband ^{f68}; so that Mary might well be thrown into a concern what should be the meaning of this; and especially, that she should be addressed in such language, and saluted as a peculiar favourite of God, and blessed among women.

Ver. 30. *And the angel said unto her*, etc.] Observing the consternation and confusion she was in;

fear not, Mary; he calls her by her name, signifying that she was well known to him, as the saints are to the ministering angels, who are often sent unto them, encamp about them, and do them many good offices; and bids her not be afraid, he had no ill design upon her, nor brought any ill news to her:

for thou has found favour, or “found grace with God”; and what that particular grace and favour was, is expressed in the following verses.

Ver. 31. *And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb*, etc.] Though a pure virgin, which never knew a man; and therefore, “a behold”, is prefixed to it, as being what was extraordinary and wonderful; as it is also, in the prophesy of it, in (²³⁷⁴Isaiah 7:14) to which the angel manifestly refers, and is, by Matthew cited, as accomplished hereby; (See Gill on “⁴⁰²²Matthew 1:22-23”)

and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus; which signifies a “Saviour”; and a Saviour Christ is of God's appointing, providing and sending; and a very suitable one, being a spiritual Saviour, and a complete one, both able and willing to save to the uttermost all that believe in him; nor is there any other, nor salvation in any other: he is the Saviour of his people, whom the Father has given him, even of all the elect, whether of Jews or Gentiles; and of them from all their sins, and from all their enemies; and whom he saves with a spiritual and eternal salvation.

Ver. 32. *He shall be great*, etc.] In his person, as God-man; this child born, and Son given, being the angel of the great counsel, the mighty God, and everlasting Father; (²³⁹⁶Isaiah 9:6) which is here referred to; and in his offices, in his prophetic office, being that great and famous prophet Moses spoke of, mighty in word and deed, in his doctrine and miracles; in his priestly office, being a great high priest, both in the oblation of himself, and

in his prevalent intercession; and in his kingly office, being the King of kings, and Lord of Lords; and in the whole of his office, as Mediator, being a great Saviour, the author of a great salvation for great sinners; in which is greatly displayed the glory of all the divine perfections: great also in his works, the miracles that he wrought, as proofs of his Deity and Messiahship, the work of redemption, the resurrection of himself from the dead, and of all men at the last day; and in the glory he is now possessed of in human nature, at the Father's right hand, where he is highly exalted above all principality and power:

and shall be called the Son of the Highest; that is, of God, of whose names is $\hat{w}yl$ [, “the Most High”; (see ^{<0148>}Genesis 14:18-20) not by creation, as angels and men, nor by adoption, as saints, nor by office, as magistrates, are called “the children of the Most High”, (^{<1806>}Psalm 82:6) but by nature, being the eternal Son of God; of the same nature with him, and equal to him: for he was not now to begin to be the Son of God, he was so before, even from all eternity; but the sense is, that he should now be known, owned, and acknowledged to be the Son of God, being as such manifested in human nature, and should be proved to be so by the works he wrought, and declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead:

and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. Christ, as God, is the Son of God, as man, the son of David; a name often given to the Messiah, and by which he was well known among the Jews; and as Christ descended from him as man, in a literal sense, he had a right to the throne of his father David; and the Jews themselves say, that he was $twkl ml bwrq$, “nearly allied to the kingdom” ^{f69}: but here it intends not his throne, in a literal, but in a figurative sense; for as David was a type of the Messiah in his kingly office, hence the Messiah is called “David their king”, (^{<3805>}Hosea 3:5) so his throne was typical of the Messiah's throne and kingdom; which is not of this world, but is in his church, and is set up in the hearts of his people, where he reigns by his Spirit and grace; and this is a throne and kingdom “given” by the Lord God. The kingdom of nature and providence he has by right of nature, as the Son of the Highest; the kingdom of grace, or the mediatorial kingdom, the kingdom of priests, or royal priesthood, is a delegated one; his Father has set him as king over his holy hill of Zion; and he is accountable for his government to him, and will one day deliver it up complete and perfect.

Ver. 33. *And he shall reign over the house of Jacob*, etc.] Not over the Jews, the posterity of Jacob, in a literal sense; but over the whole Israel of God, consisting of Jews and Gentiles. For as his father David reigned over the Idumeans, Syrians, and others, as well as over the house of Judah and Israel, so this his son shall reign over both Jews and Gentiles: his kingdom shall be from one end of the earth to the other, even over all the elect of God; who in successive generations call themselves by the name of Jacob, and surname themselves by the name of Israel, of whatsoever nation they be; and this reign of his shall be “for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end”; referring to (^{<2307>}Isaiah 9:7) see also (^{<2704>}Daniel 2:44) (^{<2714>}Daniel 7:14) he shall reign in the hearts of his people here unto the end of the world; and with his saints a thousand years in the new heavens and new earth; and with them to all eternity, in the ultimate glory.

Ver. 34. *Then said Mary to the angel, how shall this be*, etc.] This she said not as doubting the truth of what was said; for she required no sign, as Zacharias did; nor is she charged with, and blamed for unbelief, as he was; yea, it is expressly said, (^{<0145>}Luke 1:45) that she believed: nor was this a curious question, as whether she should have this son by a man in a married state, or in her present virgin state; for she clearly understood the angel to mean the latter; and therefore her words express her admiration at it, and also her desire to be informed of the manner how it should be: as to the matter of fact, she did not dispute it, but wanted to be resolved by what means it would be brought about: she knew, by prophecy, that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, and she perceived, by the angel's declaration, that she was that virgin, but could not imagine in what way this amazing thing should be effected; and therefore proposes this question for the following reason,

seeing I know not a man? “A husband”, as the Arabic version renders it; not Joseph, nor any other man; for though she was espoused to Joseph, yet he had not taken her to wife; nor were they, as yet; come together; and before they did, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost, (^{<0118>}Matthew 1:18) she was a pure virgin, untouched by man. The words are an “euphemism”, or a modest way of expressing carnal copulation; (see ^{<0101>}Genesis 4:1).

Ver. 35. *And the angel answered and said unto her*, etc.] The angel gave her an account of the manner in which what he had said should be effected, as well as observed some things for the strengthening of her faith.

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. The words, “upon thee”, are left out in the Syriac and Persic versions; but are retained in others, and in all copies: the formation of Christ's human nature, though common to all the three persons, yet is particularly, and most properly ascribed to the Spirit; not to the first person, the Father, lest it should be thought that he is only the Father of him, as man; nor to the second person, the Son, since it is to him that the human nature is personally united; but to the third person, the Spirit, who is the sanctifier; and who separated, and sanctified it, the first moment of its conception, and preserved it from the taint of original sin. His coming upon the virgin must be understood in consistence with his omnipresence, and immensity; and cannot design any local motion, but an effectual operation in forming the human nature of her flesh and substance; and not in the ordinary manner in which he is concerned in the formation of all men, (^{<RB330E>}Job 33:4) but in an extraordinary way, not to be conceived of, and explained. The phrase most plainly answers to **I [ab**, in frequent use with the Jews^{f70}, as expressive of coition.

And the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. By “the power of the Highest” is not meant the Lord Jesus Christ, who is sometimes called the power of God; but rather the Holy Ghost, as before, who is styled the finger of God, and power from on high, (^{<Q123>}Luke 11:20, 24:49) unless it should be thought that the perfection of divine power common to all the three persons is intended: and so points out the means by which the wondrous thing should be performed, even by the power of God; and which should not only be employed in forming the human nature of Christ, but in protecting the virgin from any suspicion and charge of sin, and defending her innocence and virtue, by moving upon Joseph to take her to wife. In the word, “overshadow”, some think there is an allusion to the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters, in (^{<OK02>}Genesis 1:2) when, **tpj rm**, he brooded upon them, as the word may be rendered; and which is the sense of it, according to the Jewish writers^{f71} as a hen, or any other bird broods on its eggs to exclude its young: and others have thought the allusion may be to **μynty tpwh**,^{f72} “the nuptial covering”: which was a veil, or canopy, like a tent, supported on four staves, under which the bridegroom and bride were betrothed; or, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, it is a modest phrase alluding to the conjugal embraces, signified by a man's spreading the skirt of his garment over the woman, which Ruth desired of Boaz, (^{<RB9>}Ruth 3:9) though the Jewish writers say^{f73}, that phrase is **ˆyawcyn ˆwçl** expressive of the act of marriage, or taking to wife. The

phrase of being *hawbn j wrb ʿyl l j m* “overshadowed”, or “covered with the spirit of prophecy”, as the virgin also was, is used by the Targumist, on (~~105~~ 1 Chronicles 2:55)

therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. The human nature of Christ is here called a “thing”; for it was not a person; it never subsisted of itself, but was taken at once into union with the person of the Son of God, otherwise there would be two persons in Christ, whereas he is God, and man, in one person; and it is said to be “holy”, being free from that original pollution and sin, in which all that descend from Adam, by ordinary generation, are conceived, and brought forth; and is, moreover, said to be born of a virgin, “of thee”, or “out of thee”. Christ's flesh was formed out of the Virgin's; he took flesh of her; his body did not descend from heaven, or pass through her, as water through a pipe, as some heretics of old said: nor did his human nature, either as to soul or body, pre-exist his incarnation; but in the fulness of time he was made of a woman, and took a true body of her, and a reasonable soul, into union with his divine person; and “therefore should be called the Son of God”: not that he was now to become the “the Son of God”; he was so before his incarnation, and even from all eternity; but he was now to be manifested as such in human nature: nor does the angel predict, that he should, for this reason, be called the Son of God; for he never was, on this account, so called, either by himself, or others: nor is the particle, “therefore”, causal, but consequential: the angel is not giving a reason why Christ should be the Son of God, but why he should be owned, and acknowledged, as such by his people: who would infer, and conclude from his wonderful conception and birth, that he is the “Emmanuel”, God with us, the child that was to be born, and the Son given, whose name should be Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, etc. (~~2374~~ Isaiah 7:14, 9:6). Moreover, the word, “also”, is not to be overlooked; and the sense is, that seeing that human nature, which should be born of the virgin, would be united to the Son of God, it likewise should bear the same name, being in personal union with him, who was so from all eternity.

Ver. 36. *And behold thy cousin Elisabeth*, etc.] For though Elisabeth was of the daughters of Aaron, or of the tribe of Levi by her father's side, yet might be of the tribe of Judah by her mother's side, and so akin to Mary. The Persic version calls her “aunt by the mother's side”: intermarriages between the two tribes of Levi and Judah were frequent; nor were they at all contrary to the intention of that law, that forbid the tribes to intermarry,

which was to preserve the inheritance in each tribe, since the tribe of Levi had none at all. Though she might be called her cousin in a more general sense; it being usual with the Jews to call all of their own nation their kinsmen and kinswomen, according to the flesh: but the former sense seems more agreeable; and so Mary is directed to her own family, and to her own relations, and known friends, for a sign, by which her faith might be confirmed, in what the angel had said unto her; for if she found the one to be true, she might conclude the other was also; which is as follows:

she hath also conceived a son in her old age: though Mary asked no sign, yet one is given her, whereby she might know the truth of what was spoken: for if it should appear that Elisabeth had received strength to conceive, as was declared by the angel; and that a son, too, which he could not have known without a divine revelation; and that in her old age, which, was extraordinary and supernatural, she might assure herself, that the message brought to her was from God; and that she likewise, though a virgin, might conceive, and bear a son: the angel adds, as a further testimony of the truth of things;

and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. Elisabeth, was generally known to be barren, and was, by way of reproach, usually called so, but was now six months gone with child; so that it was a plain case, and out of question; the signs of her pregnancy were very apparent.

Ver. 37. *For with God nothing shall be impossible.*] That is consistent with his nature and perfections, with his counsels, purposes, and promises: every thing that he has said, purposed, or promised, he is able to do, and will; every word that he has spoken, every thing predicted by his prophets, or declared by his angels, and particularly this of a virgin's conceiving and bearing a Son: so that the angel not only answers her question, how this should be, but confirms her faith in it; partly by the instance of her cousin Elisabeth, and partly by observing the infinite omnipotence of God.

Ver. 38. *And Mary said, behold the handmaid of the Lord,* etc.] In which words she expresses her obedience of faith; she owns herself to be the handmaid of the Lord, and desires to obey him, and be submissive to him as such; and tacitly acknowledges her meanness, and great unworthiness:

be it unto me according to thy word; she assented to what the angel said should be unto her; she earnestly desired it might be, and firmly believed it would be; she set her "Amen" to the angel's message:

and the angel departed from her; to the heavenly regions from whence he came; to his great Lord and master, that sent him; having dispatched the business he came about, and which he was accountable to him for.

Ver. 39. *And Mary arose in those days*, etc.] The Ethiopic version renders it, “in that day”; directly, immediately, as soon as the angel was gone from her; partly to know the truth of things, and to make use of the sign which had been given her, for the further confirmation of her faith, which was very right and proper for her to do; and partly to converse with Elisabeth about the great things which God had done for each of them, and to praise his name together: “and went into the hill country with haste”; the same which is called the country of the hills, and the hills, and the mountains, in (~~6100~~Joshua 10:40 11:2,16 16:1 18:13 ~~4030~~2 Chronicles 26:10) where the Septuagint use the same word as here: the land of Judea was divided into three parts, **rh**, “the mountain”, or hill country, the champaign country, and the valley ^{f74}: from Betboron to Emmaus is **rh**, “the hill country”; from Emmaus to Lud, or Lydda, is the champaign country; and from Lydda to the sea, the valley ^{f75}. This place is frequently called, in the Jewish writings ^{f76}, the king's mountain, or the royal mountain, and is said to be very full of cities: ten thousand cities, they say ^{f77}, were in the king's mountain, and a thousand of them belonged to R. Eleazer ben Harsum: yea, they say ^{f78}, that king Jannai had sixty myriads of cities in the mountain of the king. The Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions render it, “went to the mountain”, to this mountain, and which is called the mountain, or, as we read it, the hill country of Judah, (~~6211~~Joshua 21:11) on which Hebron was situated; and seems to be the city next mentioned: into a city of Judah; for that was given to the children of Aaron and so may reasonably be thought to be the city where Zacharias dwelt, and not Jerusalem, which was in the tribe of Benjamin. Hebron was a city peculiar to the priests; whereas Jerusalem was not; and it was in the hill country of Judea; it was remarkable for the goodness of its stones. It is said ^{f79}

“you have no stones in all the land of Israel harder than at Hebron; hence they buried the dead there.”

Ver. 40. *And entered into the house of Zacharias*, etc.] Which was in the above city, and might be well known to her: and saluted Elisabeth; not Zacharias; either because he was not at home; or because he was deaf and dumb, and could neither hear her salutation, nor return it; or because it was not usual for women to salute men, nor men to salute women; (see Gill on

“^{<Q129>}Luke 1:29”), yet one woman might salute another; and especially Mary saluted Elisabeth, because she came to pay the visit to her, and it was with her she was principally concerned.

Ver. 41. *And it came to pass that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary*, etc.] Which might be before she saw her, and at some little distance from her:

the babe leaped in her womb: which motion was not natural, but supernatural; being made at hearing the voice of Mary, who had now conceived the Messiah, whose forerunner this babe, John the Baptist, was to be; and who, by this motion, gave the first notice of his conception, which his mother Elisabeth took from hence; as he afterwards pointed him out by his finger, and by his baptism made him manifest to Israel:

and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost not with the ordinary graces of the Spirit, for these she had been filled with before, but with extraordinary gifts, with a spirit of prophecy; by which she knew that the Messiah was conceived, and that Mary was the mother of her Lord; that many things had been told her; that she had believed them; and there would be a performance of them; and perhaps it was at this time that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost also; see (^{<Q115>}Luke 1:15).

Ver. 42. *And she spake out with a loud voice*, etc.] So as that all in the house might hear; she spake with great vehemency of soul, and strength of affection, being under a very powerful impression of the Spirit of God: and said,

blessed art thou among women; the same words that the angel had said to her before, (^{<Q128>}Luke 1:28)

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb: this is a reason why she is called blessed, because her child was blessed; being in union with a divine person, who is God over all, blessed for ever; and who has all spiritual blessings in him, and is that seed, in which all nations of the earth were to be blessed; and so is both blessed in himself, and the source of all blessedness to others. The Jews say ^{f80}, that the six measures of barley, Boaz gave to Ruth, (^{<Q115>}Ruth 3:15) signified, that six righteous men should spring from her, and among, them the Messiah; who should be blessed with six blessings, and they are these; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; (see ^{<Q110>}Isaiah 11:2).

Ver. 43. *And whence is this to me*, etc.]. How comes it to pass, that such notice is taken of me, such an honour is done me; that besides being favoured with a child, who shall be great,

that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Elisabeth was far from envying the superior honour conferred on her kinswoman, who was both meaner and younger than she; that she esteems it a wonderful favour, that she should be indulged with a visit from her, who had already conceived the Messiah: and in due time would be the mother of him, as man; who, in his divine nature, is Lord of all angels, and men, and every creature; and in an especial manner was her Lord, and the Lord of all the saints; by his Father's gift from eternity, by his own purchase in time, and by the power of his grace on each of their souls. Thus the virgin is said to be the mother of our Lord, and so may be called the mother of God; because she was parent of that child, which was in union with him, who is truly Lord and God: Just in such sense as the Lord of life and glory is said to be crucified, and God is said to purchase the church with his own blood, (~~40B~~1 Corinthians 2:8, ~~40B~~Acts 20:28)

Ver. 44. *For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears*, etc.] This she mentions, as the signal by which she knew that she was the mother of her Lord; namely, from that unusual and extraordinary motion of the child, she felt within her:

the babe leaped in my womb for joy; that the mother of her Lord, and his, was come thither: the Jews ought not to object to this, who affirm, that the embryos, or infants in their mother's womb, sung the song at the Red Sea, and praised God. ^{f81}

Ver. 45. *And blessed is she that believed*. etc.] Meaning Mary, a woman, a very young woman, and who had had things very incredible to nature and reason told her; and yet she believed, without objecting thereto, or requiring a sign; tacitly referring to the unbelief of Zacharias, who was a man, a man in years, a priest by office; and yet had been very incredulous, in a thing that was much more possible; because there had been instances of it before, in Sarah, Hannah, and Manoah's wife; than what was related to the virgin, of which there had been none; and which to reason, and with men, was impossible: and happy indeed is every one, that has true faith in any degree; for faith is the faith of God's elect, and is both a fruit and evidence of electing grace, which is the source of all blessings; it is the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit, and can never be lost: many are the

blessings such as believe are in the possession of, and openly entitled to; as the justification of their persons, the remission of their sins, their adoption into the household of God, liberty at the throne of grace, and a right to the eternal inheritance; they enjoy much solid peace, joy, and comfort in their own souls; bring much glory to God, and shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation:

for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord: these words may be considered, either as the subject matter of her faith, and be rendered in connection with the former, thus, “blessed is she that believed, that there shall be a performance, etc.”, being fully persuaded, that what the angel had told her, concerning the conception and birth of a son, concerning his name, and the greatness of his person, and the nature, extent, and duration of his kingdom, should be certainly and punctually fulfilled; or as a reason of her happiness, because there should be a sure accomplishment of them. Whatever God has spoken to any of his people, whether it be with respect to things temporal, spiritual, or eternal, shall be performed; as may be strongly concluded from the veracity of God, who cannot lie; and from his power, who is able to do all things; and from his faithfulness, which he will never suffer to fail; and from instances, and matters of fact; from the experience of the saints in all ages, who know, and are conscious to themselves, that not one of the good things the Lord God has spoken to them, has ever failed, but that all have come to pass; (see ¹⁶²³⁴Joshua 23:14).

Ver. 46. *And Mary said, my soul doth magnify the Lord.*] Either Jehovah, the Father, or the Son; who, as he was David's Lord, according to his divine nature, though his son after the flesh, was, in the same sense, Mary's Lord, as well as her son: and by “magnifying” him is meant, not making him great, for he cannot be made greater than he is; but ascribing greatness to him, even all the perfections of the Deity, and praising him on account of them; and also declaring and speaking well of his many and mighty works of power, goodness, grace, and mercy, and giving him the glory of them: this Mary did, not in lip and word only, but with her whole heart and, soul, and with all the powers and faculties of it; being filled with the Holy Ghost, and under a more than ordinary influence of his, as her cousin Elisabeth was: and it is to be observed, that she all along speaks in the prophetic style, of things, as if they were done, which were doing, or would shortly be done.

Ver. 47. *And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*] Which also, may be understood, either of God the Father, who was her Saviour, both as the God of nature and providence; so the Persic version renders it, “in God that gives me life”; and who had supported, maintained, and preserved her life; and as the God of grace, who has contrived the scheme of salvation, fixed upon, and appointed Christ to be the Saviour; and who saves by him, and therefore is sometimes said to be our Saviour. (~~Scor~~ Titus 3:4,6) or of Christ, the Son of God, who being truly and properly God, was fit to be a Saviour; and is a very suitable, able, and willing one; and which is the great encouragement to sensible sinners, to look up to him, and be saved; and lays a solid foundation for rejoicing in him, since what he did as man, had hereby an infinite virtue and efficacy put into it, as was put into his blood, sacrifice, and righteousness; whereby the purposes designed were answered by them; and since he must be able to keep their immortal souls, which they commit unto him, and must have an interest with his Father, as their advocate, and a fulness, to supply all their wants: the consideration of Christ, by Mary, as God her Saviour, as having an interest in him, as a Saviour, and this her Saviour, God, gave her greater joy, than being the mother of him as man; and this her joy was not carnal, nor merely external, but inward and spiritual: it was a joy in her own spirit, and was excited there by the holy Spirit of God.

Ver. 48. *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden,* etc.] Meaning, either her outward temporal estate, which was very low and mean: David's family was now very much reduced, it had its seat not at Jerusalem, but at Nazareth, in Galilee: Mary, of that house, was a poor virgin, and Joseph, of the same, to whom she was betrothed, was a poor carpenter; and yet God passed by the rich and noble families of Jewish people, and pitched upon this poor virgin to be the mother of the Messiah: or her estate, in a spiritual sense, which, as that of every son and daughter of Adam, was very low by the fall; for sin has run all mankind into debt, and they have nothing to pay: it has stripped them of original righteousness, and clothed them with rags; it has filled them with diseases, from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet; it has exposed them to a prison, into which being cast, they must lie, till they have paid the uttermost farthing; and has left them hopeless and helpless, poor and miserable, and blind and naked: but God has remembered his elect, in this their low estate, and has provided a Saviour for them, and sent him to

deliver them out of it; because his mercy endures forever; and this Mary was sensible, and there rejoiced in God her Saviour:

for behold, from henceforth all generations; not Jews only, but Gentiles also,

shall call me blessed; both on account of her son she had now conceived, and was bearing; because she was the mother of our Lord, who had reason so to conclude, from the nature of the thing, and from the words of the angel, and of Elisabeth, (~~Q123~~ Luke 1:28,42) and much more than Leah had, who said something like this, at the birth of her second son, (~~Q123~~ Genesis 30:13) and also on account of her interest in Christ, as God her Saviour: in whom she was blessed, with all spiritual blessings; so that she was truly blessed, and might well be called so.

Ver. 49. *For he that is mighty hath done to me great things,* etc.] With respect to the incarnation of Christ, a new, a great, and unheard of thing; in causing her, though a virgin, to conceive; and also to bear such a Son, who should be called Jesus, a Saviour, Immanuel, God with us; and who was no other than the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace: wherefore she describes God the author of it, by a proper periphrasis of him, “he that is mighty”; since this was a work of almighty power, and very justly adds,

and holy is his name: seeing this was brought about without any impurity, through the overshadowing influence of the Holy Ghost; whereby the human nature was preserved from the infection of sin, was sanctified, and fit to be united to the Son of God, and to be a sacrifice for the sins of his people. This may also have regard to the great things God had done for her in a spiritual sense; in the choice of her to eternal life, in the redemption of her by the Messiah, and in her regeneration and sanctification; wherein God had displayed his sovereign grace and goodness, and his almighty power, in a way consistent with his justice and holiness.

Ver. 50. *And his mercy is on them that fear him,* etc.] Not with slavish fear of hell and damnation, but with reverence and godly fear; with a filial fear, with a reverential love of God, and affection for him; with that fear which springs from the goodness of God, which has that for its object, and is encouraged by it: and though this fear is not the cause and reason of the mercy of God, yet is descriptive of the persons towards whom it is exercised in various ways, and to whom it is openly shown; they hereby

appearing to be the vessels of mercy, afore prepared to glory; and in whose redemption, mercy and truth have met together, and who, according to the abundant mercy of God the Father, have been begotten again; whose unrighteousnesses he has been merciful to, and whose sins he will remember no more: and it may have a particular regard to the incarnation of Christ, which in this chapter is said to be in remembrance of mercy; to be the mercy promised, and to come through the tender mercy of our God, (⁴⁰⁵⁴Luke 1:54,72,78). And which was a mercy Mary considered, not as peculiar to herself, but as extended to all that fear the Lord; not in that age only, but from

generation to generation; to the end of the world, to God's elect in all times and places, who should all be partakers of it, and sharers in it.

Ver. 51. *He hath showed strength with his arm*, etc.] Of almighty power, in the business of the incarnation, and in working out salvation for his people; which is done by his own arm, he being mighty to save, and travelling in the greatness of his strength; (see ²³¹¹Isaiah 63:1,5).

He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; whom he always resists, and both in providence and grace, takes such methods, as tend to humble and confound them: here particularly, it may regard the proud and haughty Jews; who imagined nothing less, than that the Messiah would be born of one of the rich and noble families in Judea; that he would appear as a temporal prince, and set up a temporal kingdom in great state and splendour, and make them a free and flourishing people: when instead of this, he was to be born of a poor virgin, of whom they disdainfully say, is not his mother called Mary? who was of Nazareth in Galilee, of which it is said, shall Christ come out of Galilee? or any good thing out of Nazareth? A virgin betrothed to a carpenter, and her son of that business also, with which both were flouted; and because of this meanness, the Messiah was rejected by them; and thus were they scattered and confounded in their imaginations.

Ver. 52. *He hath put down the mighty from their seats*, etc.] As mighty kings and emperors from their thrones, as he often does, in the course of his providence; setting up one, and putting down another: or the mighty angels, from their seats of bliss and happiness in heaven; who rebelling against God, opposing the incarnation of Christ, taking it ill, that the human nature should be advanced above theirs, were cast down to hell; and are reserved in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day: or this

may have respect to the putting down the monarchies and kingdoms of this world, by the kingdom of the Messiah to be set up; which, though at first was mean and despicable, like a stone cut out of a mountain, will increase, spread, and break in pieces, and destroy all other kingdoms:

and exalted them of low degree; as David to the throne of Israel, from the sheepfold, and following the ewes great with young; and now his house and family, which were sunk very low, by raising of his seed, of a poor virgin in his family, unto Israel, a Saviour Jesus; in whose days the poor had the Gospel preached, and received it: these were chosen and called: the great things of the Gospel were revealed to babes, and hid from the wise and prudent; and beggars were raised from the dunghill, to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory: a method, which God in his infinite wisdom and grace has been pleased to take, more or less, in all ages of time; for not many mighty and noble are called by grace; but usually the foolish, the weak, and the base things of the world.

Ver. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things*, etc.] Such as earnestly desired and longed after the coming of the Messiah, as good old Simeon, and Anna the prophetess; and those that looked for redemption in Israel, to whom she spake: and all such persons as heartily desire salvation by Christ, and breathe after the forgiveness of their sins through his blood, and thirst after his righteousness, and long for communion with him, and a greater knowledge of him, and more conformity to him, and pant after his word and ordinances; these are filled, sooner or later, with a sense of their interest in Christ, and his salvation; with a view of the full and free forgiveness of their sins, and with his righteousness they hunger after; and with every good thing they stand in need of, with joy and peace, with food and gladness, even to satisfaction; so that they can say with Jacob, they have enough, yea, all things; seeing Christ is theirs, and all things with him:

and the rich he hath sent empty away: not the rich in this world's goods, though such who trust in their wealth, and boast of their riches, or do not make a proper use of them, God, in his providence, sometimes strips them of all, and turns them into the world naked and empty; much less the rich in grace, who are often the poor of the world; and who, though they seem to have nothing, yet possess all things, and are full: but such who are rich in their opinion, and in their own works; and trust in their righteousness, and despise others; these, as they come full of themselves to the throne of grace, as the Pharisee, are sent empty away; without any token of the love

and favour of God, or any blessing from him: and as they come to ordinances in their own strength, and trust in the performance of them, they go away empty, as they came; these are dry breasts unto them, whilst they are full breasts of consolation to the poor in spirit, and to all meek and humble souls: and what is still worst of all, notwithstanding all their good works they boast of, and trust in, they will be sent away at the last judgment from the presence of Christ, as not known by him, and as workers of iniquity.

Ver. 54. *He hath holpen his servant Israel*, etc.] Meaning, not the natural posterity of Jacob, or Israel in general, but the elect of God among them; for all were not Israel, who were of Israel; and not them only, but also the chosen ones among the Gentiles; who, with the former, make up the whole Israel of God, in a spiritual and mystical sense: these are the Israel, God has chosen, redeemed, and calls by his grace, and are here styled his “servant”, as Israel is frequently called, (²⁴⁰⁸Isaiah 41:8, 44:21). The word signifies a “child”, as well as a “servant”: and may design, either the weak and helpless condition God’s elect are in by nature, which calls for, and requires divine help and assistance; or the relation they stand in to him, being his adopted children, and which is the reason of his helping them: and which signifies to take them by the hand, and lift them up, and support and uphold them; and supposes them to have been fallen down, and unable to raise themselves up; but God having laid help for them on one that is mighty, sent him to take upon him their nature; and by obeying, suffering, and dying for them, to help them out of their state of sin and misery; and to uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness, and bring them safe to glory; and all this,

in remembrance of his mercy; which he had in his heart towards them, and had promised in his covenant to them: the mercy of God, is the spring and source of redemption; mercy provided a Redeemer, and a ransom; and it is owing to it, that the Redeemer came; and he, in his love and pity, performed the work: and therefore salvation is to be ascribed, not to works of righteousness done by men, but to the abundant mercy of God our Saviour.

Ver. 55. *As he spake to our fathers*, etc.] To David, of whose family Mary was; and to Jacob, or Israel, of whose stock she was; and to Isaac, in whom the seed was to be, called; and particularly,

to Abraham and to his seed for ever: not his natural, but his spiritual seed; both among Jews and Gentiles, to the end of the world; to these God promised this mercy of a Saviour and Redeemer, and to these he performs it, and will to all generations.

Ver. 56. *And Mary abode with her about three months*, etc.] That is, she continued with Elisabeth, as the Syriac and Persic versions express, about the space of three months; in which time, she had full satisfaction of the truth of the sign the angel had given her; namely, of Elisabeth's conception and pregnancy, for by this time she was ready to give birth; and she must now be fully assured, that she was with child herself: this space of three months is a term of time fixed by the Jewish doctors, to know whether a woman is with child or not, as in case of divorce or death: the rule runs thus ^{f82};

“every woman that is divorced, or becomes a widow, lo! she may not marry, nor be betrothed, until she waits, מַנְיָ מַנְיָ [צַט, ninety days (i.e. three months), exclusive of the day in which she is divorced, or her husband dies, and of the day in which she is betrothed; that so it may be known whether she is with child or not, in order to distinguish between the seed of the former, and the seed of the second husband.”

And so in the case of marrying the wife of a brother, that died without issue ^{f83}, and of newly married couples mistaking their spouses ^{f84}:

and returned to her own house; at Nazareth, in Galilee; and now it was, that Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, perceived she was with child; and suspecting evil, had a mind to put her away privately; but was informed by an angel of God, in a dream, of the whole matter; and was advised and encouraged to take her to wife, which he accordingly did; (see ~~4018~~ Matthew 1:18-20).

Ver. 57. *Now Elisabeth's full time came*, etc.] The nine months, which is the full time of a woman's going with child, were now complete; for in the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy, or when she had been gone six months with child, the angel acquainted Mary with it, and she had stayed about three months with her; but now had left her, to shun the company which would be at the delivery of her; though some think, she stayed till that time was over, which is not so probable; and so her reckoning being out, and the time come,

that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son, according to the angel's prediction both to Zacharias and Mary, (^{<0113>}Luke 1:13,36).

Ver. 58. *And her neighbours, and her cousins*, etc.] That lived in Hebron, and the parts adjacent, whether of the house of Aaron, or of the tribe of Judah; to both which she was related, and who dwelt near her, the priests in the city of Hebron, and the children of Judah in the places about it:

heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; or “had magnified his mercy with her”; (see ^{<0199>}Genesis 19:19) in removing her barrenness, and so taking away her reproach from among men; in giving her strength to conceive, and bring forth a son, that was to be so great, as the prophet of the Highest; and more than a prophet, and greater than any born of women:

and they rejoiced with her: as the angel had foretold they should, (^{<0114>}Luke 1:14) The Persic version reads, “with him, Zacharias”; having rendered the other clause thus, though wrongly, “hearing that God had poured out his mercy on the house of Zacharias”; (see ^{<5125>}Romans 12:15).

Ver. 59. *And it came to pass that on the eighth day*, etc.] The precise time fixed in the normal restitution of the ordinance of circumcision, (^{<0172>}Genesis 17:12) though this was not always attended to, but circumcision was sometimes deferred to another time; yet keeping the exact time was judged most commendable and praiseworthy; (See Gill on ^{<5085>}Philippians 3:5”)

they came to circumcise the child; that is, the neighbours and cousins of Elisabeth, who were at the time of her delivery; eight days after they came again to be at the circumcision of the child: who was the operator is not known; nor was there any particular person appointed for this service; but any one might do it, whether ecclesiastic or laic, men or women, father or mother, or any other friend; for the rule is ^{f85},

“all are fit to circumcise; even an uncircumcised person, and a woman, and a minor, may circumcise in a place where there is no man; but a Gentile may not circumcise at all.”

The circumcision of John seems to be performed in Zacharias's house, and by one of those that came; for Zacharias, being dumb, could not say the blessing which the circumciser was obliged to say: nor indeed could he say

that, which, as the father of the child, belonged to him; concerning which, take the following account ^{f86}:

“the circumciser blesses before he circumcises, “saying”, blessed is he that hath sanctified us by his precepts, and hath commanded us concerning circumcision: if he circumcises the son of his friend, or if he circumcises his own son, he blesses him with “this blessing”; and hath commanded us to circumcise a son: and the father of the son blesses with another blessing; blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hath sanctified us by his precepts, and hath commanded us to enter him into the covenant of Abraham our father. — — If his father is not there, they do not say this other blessing. — — And if there are any standing there, they say, as he hath brought him into the covenant, so bring him to the law, and to matrimony, and to good works; and after that the father of the child, or the circumciser, or one of those that stand by, bless, “saying”, blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who sanctified the beloved (Isaac) from the womb, etc.”

How many of Elisabeth's neighbours and relations were present at this ceremony, is not related; but the Jews require ten persons as witnesses of it; for they say ^{f87}, that

“testimonies worthy of belief, in Israel, are ten, the witnesses of the covenant of circumcision are ten, the witnesses of a dead person ten, etc.”

and at this time also it was usual to give the child a name, which was not by divine appointment, but was a custom that prevailed among them; which took its rise from Abraham, having his name changed at the time when circumcision was enjoined him, (^{<0170>}Genesis 17:5,10) and from the naming and circumcision of Isaac, mentioned together, (^{<0203>}Genesis 21:3,4)

and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father: as the neighbours of Naomi gave a name to the son of Boaz and Ruth, calling him Obed, (^{<0807>}Ruth 4:17). This they took upon them to do, because that Zacharias was deaf and dumb; but why they should call him by his name, cannot well be accounted for, it not being usual to call the father, and the son, by the same name; unless they were desirous of continuing the same name in the family, which had been famous in Israel for a prophet, and a

priest: to call children by Gentile names was not lawful. In the Targum on (~~<30B>~~ Amos 6:1) it is said,

“woe to them that name their children after the names of the Gentiles.”

Ver. 60. *And his mother answered and said*, etc.] That is, Elisabeth:

not so, but he shall be called John; knowing that this was the name wherewith the angel said he should be called; either by divine revelation, she being filled with the Holy Ghost, (~~<40H>~~ Luke 1:41) or by information of her husband, who, doubtless, in writing, gave her an account of all that the angel had said unto him.

Ver. 61. *And they said unto her*, etc.] Her neighbours and relations, there is none of thy kindred that is called by this name; from whence it appears, that it was usual to give names to children after their ancestors, relations, and friends. The Persic version renders it, “in thine Israel there is not any one of this name”: but this could not be true; for the name of Jochanan, or John, was a name very common among the Israelites, though not in Elisabeth's family, or her husband's.

Ver. 62. *And they made signs to his father*, etc.] Who was deaf, as well as dumb; otherwise there would have been no occasion to have signs made to him: and so the word used, in (~~<40K>~~ Luke 1:20) signifies both deaf and dumb. These signs were made by hands or head; for such used to be made to a dumb man. According to the canon ^{f88}, a dumb man nods, and זמגןnw “and is nodded”, or “beckoned to”: and which beckoning one of the commentators ^{f89} says, is a sign which is expressed either by the hands or head. Such a method as these took with Zacharias, about the name of his son, is directed to in case of a father's deafness, in relation to knowing who is his firstborn; ^{f90}

“father that is dumb, they search or examine him in the way they search for divorces; if he makes signs, or writes, that this is his firstborn, lo! this takes the double portion.”

How he would have him called; by what name, Zacharias or John; and they were right in applying to him, to whom it most properly belonged, to give a name to his child.

Ver. 63. *And he asked for a writing table*, etc.] That is, he made signs for one, for as yet he could not speak. The Persic version renders it “ink”, and the Ethiopic, a book, and the Vulgate Latin, a notebook. The word signifies “a little table”, such as they used to write not only “upon”, but “in”; and was sometimes of brass^{f91}, sometimes of wood, and sometimes of wax^{f92}, on which they wrote with a style or pen;

and wrote, saying, his name is John: not that he must be, or shall be, so called; but this is his name, and no other; being what the angel had given him before his conception, and Zacharias now confirms:

and they marvelled all; they were astonished, not so much at the new name brought into the family, as at the agreement between Elisabeth and Zacharias in this point, when the latter was both deaf and dumb; they knowing nothing, as yet, of the angel's message to him.

Ver. 64. *And his mouth was opened immediately*, etc.] As soon as ever the child was named, and so all things accomplished which the angel had foretold;

and his tongue loosed; the impediments of speech were removed, and the use of his tongue and lips was restored unto him:

and he spake and praised God; for the safe delivery of his wife; for the birth of his son, the forerunner of Christ; for the conception of the Messiah; for God's gracious regards to his church and people, in these instances; and for the restoration of speech and hearing to himself, of which he had been some time deprived for his unbelief.

Ver. 65. *And fear came on all that dwelt round about them*, etc.] That is, the fear of God, an awful reverence of the divine majesty; they perceived the hand of God was in these things, and that these were effects of divine power; and which made very serious impressions upon their minds, and they thought, and spoke of them with great solemnity; (see ~~4HB~~ Acts 2:43 5:11).

and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea: the several things relating to the appearance of the angel to Zacharias in the temple; his message to him; the striking him deaf and dumb; the conception of Elisabeth, who had been barren; the birth of her son; the unusual name given him; and the more unusual manner in which it was given; and the opening of Zacharias's mouth, and the loosening of his

tongue upon this, were reported, and commonly talked of by all people to that part of Judea, where the parents of John dwelt.

Ver. 66. *And all they that heard them*, etc.] The above things, laid them up in their hearts; treasured them up in their memories, and often thought of them in their minds, what should be the meaning, and what would be the issue of them:

saying, what manner of child shall this be? what will he be, or come to? and what is it that he shall do? surely he must be designed in providence to be put into some high station, and some eminent work and service; since so many, and such great things, have gone before, and attended his birth:

and the hand of the Lord was with him; which may intend the special care, and peculiar providence of God in preserving his life, giving him health, causing him to grow strong and robust, and in stature of body, and in endowments of mind; and also the communications of grace unto him, and the gracious presence of God with him, so soon as he was capable of enjoying them; as likewise a spirit of prophecy, which is sometimes signified by the hand of the Lord; and the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which, in process of time, appeared in him, qualifying him for his high office and work: the hand of the Lord, with the Jews, is the Holy Ghost: thus they interpret (^{<1338>}1 Chronicles 28:19) “all in writing”, this is the “Masora”; “from the hand of the Lord”, *çdwqh j wr wz*, “this is the Holy Ghost”.^{f93}

Ver. 67. *And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost*, etc.] With a spirit of prophecy, as his wife Elisabeth had been before, (^{<1141>}Luke 1:41)

and prophesied saying; the following things, relating to the Messiah, his incarnation and redemption by him; to the accomplishing of the covenant, oath, promise and mercy of God to his people; and to his son, the forerunner of Christ; and to his work and office, in the various parts and branches of it, which he should perform. Whence it appears, that the following song is of divine inspiration; and that Zacharias spake it as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, as the prophets of old did.

Ver. 68. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*, etc.] This was a form of blessing of long standing, (^{<197218>}Psalm 72:18) and very likely was in use, more or less, ever since Israel was distinguished from other nations,

became a body politic, and were settled in the land of Canaan, in the enjoyment of peculiar privileges, both civil and religious; see other forms before it in (~~000B~~Genesis 9:26 24:27 ~~010B~~Exodus 18:10) and now, this was very near being antiquated, and out of date; for upon the birth of Christ, the Son of God manifest in the flesh, the New Testament form of blessing runs, as in (~~000B~~2 Corinthians 1:3 Ep 1:3 ~~000B~~1 Peter 1:3) The reason of its being now made use of might be, because the Messiah, the principal subject of this song, was peculiarly promised unto Israel, was raised up for them, and sent unto them. To bless God, is not to invoke a blessing on him; for there is none greater than he to ask one of; nor does he stand in need of any, being the Creator, who is blessed for ever in himself, and is the fountain of blessedness to his creatures: and therefore, also, cannot signify to confer a blessing on him, but to praise and glorify him, on account of the perfections of his nature, and the works of his hands; and to give thanks unto him for all mercies, spiritual and temporal; and especially for Jesus Christ, his mission, incarnation, and salvation by him, which are the things the God of Israel is blessed for in this song:

for he hath visited, and redeemed his people; as he did Israel of old, (~~000B~~Exodus 3:16,17) when the Lord looked upon them, and delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt, and which was a type and resemblance of redemption by Christ; and to which reference here seems to be had. The “people” here said to be visited, and redeemed, design all the elect of God, not only among the Jews, but Gentiles also; all those whom God has chosen to be his people, and has in his covenant taken and declared to be such; whom he has given to Christ, as his people and portion; for whose sins he was stricken, and made reconciliation, and whom he saves from their sins. The act of “visiting” them, as previous to redemption, may include God's look of love upon them from everlasting; his choice of them in Christ unto salvation; the appointment and provision of a Saviour for them; the covenant of grace made with them in Christ, the foundation and security of their salvation; and particularly the mission of Christ in human nature, in consequence of the council, covenant, and promise of God: or it designs his incarnation, for he was now actually conceived in the womb of the virgin: so that God had visited, and looked upon his people, and remembered his love and mercy, his covenant and promise to them: and the “redemption” of them, which was now said to be made, or done, because Christ was now sent to do it, and because it was as sure, as if it was done, intends the spiritual and eternal redemption of them by the price of his

blood, from the slavery of sin, the bondage of the law, and curse of it, and the captivity of Satan, and a deliverance out of the hands of every enemy; a redemption which reaches both to soul and body, and secures from all condemnation and wrath to come; and includes every blessing in it, as justification, forgiveness of sins, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life; and is a plenteous, full, complete, and everlasting one.

Ver. 69. *And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us*, etc.] Meaning the Messiah, whom God had now raised up:

in the house of his servant David; in David's family, he being now conceived by a virgin of his house; and who, in a little time, would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. He is called “an horn of salvation”, because he is a powerful Saviour. “Horn” denotes power; it being that to a beast, as the arm is to a man, by which it defends itself, and pushes down its enemies; and “salvation” is the work Christ came to effect, and for which he was raised up, and sent: and a Saviour he is, and a mighty one, as appears from his doing and suffering what he has; as bearing all the sins of his people, and making reconciliation for them; obeying all the precepts of the law, and undergoing the penalty of it; being made a curse, and becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross: as also, from his delivering them from sin, Satan, and the law, which no other could have done; and from his grappling with, conquering, spoiling, and destroying all his, and our enemies. Moreover, the word “horn” signifies regal power, honour, and dignity; (see ^{<2024>}Daniel 7:24) and so may not only denote the work of Christ as a Saviour, but his office also as a King, who in the discharge of that is likewise a Saviour; for he not only rules, and governs, but protects, defends, and preserves his, people, by his power; (see ^{<0120>}1 Samuel 2:10 ^{<1927>}Psalms 132:17).

Ver. 70. *As he spake, by the mouth of his holy prophets*, etc.] Which shows not only the veracity and faithfulness of God in his promises, but the early intimations that were given by him concerning the Messiah: for it follows,

which have been since world began; or from the beginning of the world; ever since the first hint of the Messiah, as the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head, was given, he was more or less spoken of. Adam, the first prophet, seems to have respect to him, when he calls his wife Eve, which signifies life; and because she should be the mother of all living. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of him, of his second

coming, which supposes his first; and Lamech may be thought to have some regard to him, when he named his son Noah, and said what he did concerning him: Christ was spoken of to Abraham, as his seed, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed; and God spake of him by the patriarch Jacob, under the name of Shiloh, as who should spring from the tribe of Judah, before the sceptre and lawgiver were departed from it. Moses foretold that there should arise a prophet from the midst of his brethren like unto him, to whom the Israelites were to hearken. David, the prophet, often speaks of him, particularly of his death, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, and session at God's right hand; and the evangelical prophet Isaiah predicts his birth of a virgin, and testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Micah points out the very place of his birth; and Zechariah describes the manner of his entrance into Jerusalem, as riding on an ass: to say nothing of what Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others, have prophesied of him, It is a common saying of the Jews^{f94}, that

“all the prophets, all of them prophesied not, *j yçmh twmyl al a*
“but of the days of the Messiah.””

The men, by whom God spoke of the Messiah, of the mission of him, and of raising up this horn of salvation, for his people, were “prophets”; men endued with a spirit of prophecy; “holy”, men, who were sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and spake, as they were moved by him; and these all spake as if it were with one “mouth”; they all agree in their accounts concerning Christ, though they lived in different periods of time, from the beginning of the world.

Ver. 71. *That we should be saved from our enemies*, etc.] This, and the two following verses, either contain and express the sum and substance of what God spake by the prophets; or point out the end or ends of his raising up an horn of salvation, or a Saviour for his people; namely, that they should be saved by him from their enemies: from sin, which wars against the soul, and threatens the destruction of it; from Satan, the avowed and implacable adversary of mankind; from the world, the seed of the serpent, which has always bore an enmity to the seed of the woman; from the law, the killing letter; and from death, the last enemy that is to be destroyed;

and from the hand of all that hate us: which is only an illustration of the former sentence, or a repetition of it in other words; and designs the same as before.

Ver. 72. *To perform the mercy promised to our fathers,* etc.] By “mercy” is meant salvation by Christ, which springs from the mercy of God; the promise of which was an instance of mercy to the Jewish fathers under the Old Testament, and also the performance of it; for they were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus, even as we: his blood was shed for the remission of sins that were past, and for the redemption of transgressions under the first Testament:

and to remember his holy covenant; which was made between him, and his Son from all eternity; and was, at various times, dispensed and manifested to the patriarchs, and eminent saints, as Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. This is called an “holy” one; not only because it was made by, and between holy persons, and provided for the holiness of the people of God, both here, and hereafter; but because in the article of redemption and salvation by Christ, which is here more particularly regarded, care was taken to secure the glory of God's holiness and justice, as well as to display his grace and mercy. Now raising up, and sending Jesus a Saviour, showed, that God was mindful of this covenant, and therefore sent redemption to his people.

Ver. 73. *The oath which he swore to our father Abraham.*] When he swore by himself, because he could swear by no greater, that in blessing he would bless him; that his seed should possess the gates of his enemies, and in it all the nations of the earth should be blessed: all which have been fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah; (see ^{<0226>}Genesis 22:16-18, ^{<0163>}Hebrews 6:13,14).

Ver. 74. *That he would grant unto us,* etc.] What is said in this and the following verse, is the substance of the promised mercy, covenant, and oath:

that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, as before, in (^{<0171>}Luke 1:71)

might serve him without fear. One principal end of deliverance from spiritual enemies by Christ, is the service of God; and nothing lays a greater obligation on men to serve the Lord, and glorify him, than redemption by Christ; nor is there any thing that makes men more zealous of good works: spiritual and evangelical service, in distinction from the legal service, and worship of God, is here meant; since it is said to be “without fear”, which

the threatenings and curses of the law filled men with; but being delivered from it, they become free from that spirit of bondage unto fear, it genders to; as being delivered also from sin and Satan, they are without fear of hell and damnation; and from the world, they are without fear of men; and from death, they are without fear of that, through which many under the legal dispensation, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. It is a saying of the Jews^{f95}, that:

“greater is he that serves from love, than he that serves from fear.”

But such sort of service is not of a man's self, or performed by his own power and strength, but is a “grant” from God, and owing to the influence of his Spirit and grace.

Ver. 75. *In holiness and righteousness*, etc.], Not in mere outward rites and legal ceremonies but as the saints serve, from principles of righteousness and true holiness; in which the new man is created, and of which the kingdom of God, or spiritual and internal religion consists; so in acts of piety and devotion towards God, and justice among men, which is the substance of the perfect and acceptable will of God:

before him; it is one thing to serve the Lord with an outward appearance of holiness and righteousness before men, and another thing to be righteous before God, and to walk in all his commandments and ordinances, as in his sight: all the days of our life; which denotes the constancy and continuance of this service; it is not for a day or two, or only on festivals and sabbath days, such as were under the Jewish dispensation, but every day we live. In the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and in two copies of Beza's, and two of Stephens's, and in the Alexandrian copy, it is only read, “all our days”; but the Arabic version reads, as the generality of copies, and as we render it.

Ver. 76. *And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest*, etc.] Here Zacharias turns himself to his son John, though an infant, and incapable of knowing what was said to him; and for the sake of those that were present, describes his office and work; and says, that he should be “called”, that is, that he should “be”, and be accounted a “prophet”: for he was not only a preacher of Christ and his Gospel, but he also foretold the coming of the Messiah; and the vengeance that should fall on the Jewish nation, for their unfruitfulness, impenitence, and unbelief: and the Prophet “of the Highest”; that is, of God; as the Persic version renders it, of the

most high God; and by whom is meant, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose prophet, harbinger, and forerunner John was; and so is a proof of Christ being the supreme, or most high God:

for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; as the angel had suggested in (~~GRK~~ Luke 1:17) and as was prophesied of him in (~~GRK~~ Isaiah 11:3, ~~GRK~~ Malachi 3:1). (See Gill on "~~GRK~~ Matthew 3:3").

Ver. 77. *To give knowledge of salvation*, etc.] This is still said of John, and belongs to his work and office; though the Syriac and Arabic versions read, "that he may give"; as if it was spoken of the Lord, before whose face John was to go, and whose ways he was to prepare: by "salvation" is meant, not a temporal salvation, or a deliverance from the Roman yoke, the Jews were expecting, for John gave no intimation of any such salvation; but of a spiritual and eternal salvation, and of Christ himself, the author of it; who is often called Salvation, because he was appointed to this business, was fitted for it, and has effected it; and there is salvation in him, and in no other, the "knowledge" of this is not merely, notional and speculative, but experimental, approbative, fiducial, appropriating, sure, and certain; and is more excellent, than any other kind of knowledge whatever: and this is a "gift"; it is not what is attained unto, and acquired by application, diligence, and industry, as other sort of knowledge; but is a gift of God, though in the use of means, and through the ministry of the word: and so John is said to give it ministerially, he being an instrument in the hand of God, whereby souls came to the knowledge of salvation by Christ, and believed in him: it was communicated by God through his ministry,

unto his people: meaning not the people of John the Baptist, the Jews, though it was true of God's elect among them; but the people of Christ, and that not all mankind, who are his by creation; but a special people, whom the Father has given him, and he has purchased by his blood; whom he conquers by his grace, and makes a willing people, in the day of his power: to these, and only these, is the knowledge of salvation by Christ given; for none else are appointed to it, and for no other is it wrought out. It follows,

by the remission of their sins; the sense of which is, either that salvation is by the forgiveness of sin, and lies in it, that being a principal part of it; (see ~~GRK~~ Ephesians 1:7). Sins are debts; forgiving them is a remitting these debts, a loosing them, or the obligation to payment, which is done freely and fully, for Christ's sake, and through his blood; and herein lies the

blessedness and salvation of men; see (^{<6006>}Romans 4:6,7). Or else that the knowledge of salvation was conveyed through the ministry of John, not by preaching the works of the law, but the doctrine of remission of sins, by Christ; (^{<4004>}Mark 1:4, ^{<6029>}John 1:29) and which is the sum and substance of the Gospel, as it was ordered to be preached by Christ, and was preached by his apostles. The Alexandrian copy reads, “our sins”.

Ver. 78. *Through the tender mercy of our God*, etc.] or “bowels of mercy”, to which the forgiveness of sin is owing; the source and spring of pardon, is the free grace and abundant mercy of God; it takes its rise from thence, though it is channelled in the blood and sacrifice of Christ; and which no way derogates from, but rather heightens the riches of God's grace and mercy: for it was mercy that moved God to enter into a covenant with his Son, in which forgiveness of sin is promised; and it was mercy to set forth his Son, in his eternal purposes and decrees; and to send him forth in the fulness of time, to shed his blood for the remission of sins; it was the mercy of God to us, that provided a lamb for a burnt offering, and then accepted of the sacrifice and satisfaction of his Son, in our room and stead, and forgave all our sins, for his sake; and whatever the pardon of our sins cost God and Christ, it is all free grace and mercy to us: it is owing not to the absolute mercy of God, or to the mercy of God as an absolute God, but to the mercy of “our” God; our God in Christ, our covenant God and Father, whose bowels yearned towards us, and whose pity is that of a tender parent: whereby

the day spring from on high hath visited us: the word *ανατολη*, here used, and is translated “the day spring”, is the same which the Septuagint use, in (^{<235>}Jeremiah 23:5, ^{<388>}Zechariah 3:8, 6:12) where the Messiah is spoken of, under the name of the “branch”: and undoubtedly the Messiah Jesus, is intended here, who is the man, that branch, that has grown up out of his place; not from below, but from above; and who is the phosphorus, or bringer of light, that bright and morning star, that sun of righteousness, who has light in himself, and communicates light to others; even light natural, spiritual, and eternal; and with his rays and beams of light, life, and love, refreshes, exhilarates, and warms, the hearts of his people: and by the “visit” he has made in our “horizon”, is meant his assumption of human nature; which, like a friendly visit, proceeded from pure love to the children of God; and was a drawing near unto them, for it was a taking on him their nature, in which he represented their persons; and was done through much difficulty and great condescension, since he was in the form of God, and

thought it no robbery to be equal with him; and his stay on earth in this nature, was but for a little while; so that on all accounts, it may be truly called a “visit”: and which, as the remission of sin is wholly owing to the tender mercy of our God, who put him upon it, called him to it, sent him forth made of a woman, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, to obtain eternal redemption, in which mercy and truth met together: the end and design of this visit, are signified in the next verse; for the following words belong to the day spring from on high, and not to John the Prophet of the Highest.

Ver. 79. *To give light to them that sit in darkness*, etc.] God's elect among the Jews, who were not only in a state of unregeneracy, which is a state of darkness, ignorance, and unbelief; but in the darkness of the legal dispensation, and at this time under more than ordinary darkness and ignorance; having lost the knowledge of the righteousness of God, and of the spirituality of his law, the true sense of the Scriptures, and right notions of the Messiah; being led by blind guides, the Scribes and Pharisees;

and, were as it were also,

in the shadow of death; in a state seemingly irrecoverable, when Christ, the great light arose, and shone upon them; and communicated spiritual light, life, and heat unto them; (see ^{<2312>}Isaiah 9:2) compared with (^{<4043>}Matthew 4:13-16) though Christ is also a light, to lighten his chosen ones among the Gentiles, (^{<4072>}Luke 2:32) but the Jews seem chiefly to be intended here:

to guide our feet into the way of peace; which we knew not: not that he came to teach us how to make our peace with God, but to make peace for us, by the blood of his cross; and so by his Spirit and word, lead us into the true way of enjoying spiritual peace here, and eternal peace hereafter.

Ver. 80. *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit*, etc.] That is, John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, grew in stature of body, and increased in wisdom and knowledge, and fortitude in his soul:

and was in the deserts; or “desert”, as the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read; not in the wilderness of Judea, where he came preaching, but either of Ziph or Maon, which were near to Hebron; (see ^{<4034>}1 Samuel 23:14,24,25, ^{<4154>}Joshua 15:54,55) he was not brought up in the schools of the prophets, nor in the academies of the Jews, or at the feet of any of their Rabbins and doctors; that it might appear he was not taught and sent of men, but of God: nor did he dwell in any of the cities, or larger towns, but in deserts; partly that he might be fitted for that gravity and austerity of life,

he was to appear in; and that it might be clear he had no knowledge of, nor correspondence with Jesus, whose forerunner he was, and of whom he was to bear testimony, till such time he did it; and in this solitude he remained,

till the day of his showing unto Israel; either till the time came that he was to appear before, and be examined by the sanhedrim, that judged of persons fitness and qualifications for the priesthood, in order to be admitted to it; which should have been when he was thirty years of age, but that he was designed for other service; or rather therefore till he appeared in his prophetic office, and showed himself to the people of Israel; to whom he came preaching the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, administering the ordinance of baptism, giving notice of the near approach of the Messiah, and pointing him out unto the people.