

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 3

Ver. 1. *In those days came John the Baptist*, etc.] The Evangelist having given an account of the genealogy and birth of Christ; of the coming of the wise men from the east to him; of his preservation from Herod's bloody design against him, when all the infants at Bethlehem were slain; of the flight of Joseph with Mary and Jesus into Egypt, and of their return from thence, and settlement in Nazareth, where Christ continued till near the time of his baptism, and entrance on his public ministry; proceeds to give a brief relation of John, the harbinger and forerunner of Christ, and the administrator of baptism to him: and he describes him by his name John, in Hebrew $\hat{n}j wy$, "Jochanan", which signifies "gracious", or "the grace of the Lord", or "the Lord has given grace"; which agrees with him, both as a good man, on whom the Lord had bestowed much grace, and as a preacher, whose business it was to publish the grace of God in Christ, (~~¶166~~ Luke 16:16). This name was given him by an angel before his conception, and by his parents at his birth, contrary to the mind of their relations and neighbours, (~~¶113~~ Luke 1:13-60,63). He is called by some of the Jewish writers ^{f132}, John the "high priest"; his father Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abia, and he might succeed him therein, and be the head of that course, and for that reason be called a "high" or "chief priest"; as we find such were called, who were the principal among the priests, as were those who were chosen into the sanhedrim, or were the heads of these courses; and therefore we read of many chief priests, (~~¶104~~ Matthew 2:4). From his being the first administrator of the ordinance of baptism, he is called John the Baptist; and this was a well known title and character of him. Josephus ^{f133} calls him "John", who is surnamed $\omicron \beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \sigma \tau \eta \varsigma$, "the Baptist"; and Ben Gorion having spoken of him, says ^{f134}, this is that John who $hl ybj h\check{c}$ [, "made", instituted, or practised "baptism"; and which, by the way, shows that this was not in use among the Jews before, but that John was the first practiser this way. He is described by his work and office as a preacher, he "came" or "was preaching" the doctrines of repentance and baptism; he published and declared that the kingdom of the Messiah

was at hand, that he would quickly be revealed; and exhorted the people to believe on him, which should come after him. The place where he preached is mentioned,

in the wilderness of Judea; not that he preached to trees and to the wild beasts of the desert; for the wilderness of Judea was an habitable place, and had in it many cities, towns, and villages, in which we must suppose John came preaching, at least to persons which came out from thence. There were in Joshua's time six cities in this wilderness, namely Betharabah, Middin, and Secacah, and Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi, (~~Q156~~ Joshua 15:61,62). Mention is made in the Talmud ^{F135} of this wilderness of Judea, as distinct from the land of Israel, when the doctors say, that

“they do not bring up small cattle in the land of Israel, but they bring them up **hdwhybç rbdmb**, “in the wilderness which is in Judea”.”

The Jews have an observation ^{F136} of many things coming from the wilderness;

“the law, they say, came from the wilderness; the tabernacle from the wilderness; the sanhedrim from the wilderness; the priesthood from the wilderness; the office of the Levites from the wilderness; the kingdom from the wilderness; and all the good gifts which God gave to Israel were from the wilderness.”

So John came preaching here, and Christ was tempted here. The time of his appearance and preaching was in those days: not when Christ was newly born; or when the wise men paid their adoration to him; or when Herod slew the infants; or when he was just dead, and Archelaus reigned in his room; or when Christ first went to Nazareth; though it was whilst he dwelt there as a private person; but when John was about thirty years of age, and Christ was near unto it, (~~Q123~~ Luke 3:23) an age in which ecclesiastical persons entered into service, (~~Q143~~ Numbers 4:3). It was indeed, as Luke says, (~~Q121~~ Luke 3:1) in the “fifteenth” year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar; Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea; and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee; and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea; and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene; Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.

Ver. 2. *And saying, repent ye,* etc.] The doctrine which John preached was the doctrine of repentance; which may be understood either of amendment of life and manners; for the state of the Jews was then very corrupt, all sorts of men were grown very wicked; and though there was a generation among them, who were righteous in their own eyes, and needed no repentance; yet John calls upon them all, without any distinction, to repent; and hereby tacitly strikes at the doctrine of justification by works, which they had embraced, to which the doctrine of repentance is directly opposite: or rather, this is meant, as the word here used signifies, of a change of mind, and principles. The Jews had imbibed many bad notions. The Pharisees held the traditions of the elders, and the doctrine of justification by the works of the law; and the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead; and it was a prevailing opinion among them all, and seems to be what is particularly struck at by John, that the Messiah would be a temporal king, and set up an earthly kingdom in this world. Wherefore he exhorts them to change their minds, to relinquish this notion; assuring them, that though he would be a king, and would have a kingdom, which was near at hand, yet it would be a heavenly, and not an earthly one. Hence the manner in which John enforces his doctrine, or the reason and argument he uses to prevail upon them to regard it, is by saying,

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: by which is meant not the kingdom of glory to be expected in another world; or the kingdom of grace, that is internal grace, which only believers are partakers of in this; but the kingdom of the Messiah, which was “at hand”, just ready to appear, when he would be made manifest in Israel and enter upon his work and office: it is the Gospel dispensation which was about to take place, and is so called; because of the wise and orderly management of it under Christ, the king and head of his church by the ministration of the word, and administration of ordinances; whereby, as means, spiritual and internal grace would be communicated to many, in whose hearts it would reign and make them meet for the kingdom of glory; and because the whole economy of the Gospel, the doctrines and ordinances of it are from heaven. This phrase, “the kingdom of heaven” is often to be met with in Jewish writings; and sometimes it stands opposed to the “kingdom of the earth”^{F137}; by it is often meant the worship, service, fear, and love of God, and faith in him: thus in one of their books^{F138} having mentioned those words, “serve the Lord with fear”: it is asked, what means this phrase, “with fear?” It is answered, the same as it is written, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of

wisdom”; and this is $\mu\gamma\mu\zeta\ \tau\omega\kappa\lambda\ \mu$ “the kingdom of heaven”. And elsewhere they ^{F139} ask, “what is the kingdom of heaven?” To which is answered, “the Lord our God is one Lord”. Yea, the Lord God himself is so called ^{F140}, and sometimes the sanctuary; and sometimes they intend by it the times of the Messiah, as the Baptist here does; for so they paraphrase ^{F141} those words,

“the time of the singing of birds, or of pruning, is come; the time for Israel to be redeemed is come; the time for the uncircumcision to be cut off is come; the time that the kingdom of the Cuthites (Samaritans or Heathens) shall be consumed is come; and the time $h\lambda\ g\tau\zeta\ \mu\gamma\mu\zeta\ \tau\omega\kappa\lambda\ \mu\ \lambda\ \zeta$ that “the kingdom of heaven shall be revealed” is come, as it is written, “and the Lord shall be king over all, the earth.””

Very pertinently does John make use of this argument to engage to repentance; since there cannot be a greater motive to it, whether it regard sorrow for sin, and confession of it, or a change of principles and practice, than the grace of God through Christ, which is exhibited in the Gospel dispensation: and very appropriately does he urge repentance previous to the kingdom of heaven; because without that there can be no true and cordial embracing or entering into the Gospel dispensation, or kingdom of heaven; that is, no real and hearty receiving the doctrines, and submitting to the ordinances of it. Nor ought the Jews above all people to object to John’s method of preaching; since they make repentance absolutely necessary to the revelation of the Messiah and his kingdom, and redemption by him; for they say ^{F142} in so many words, that

“if Israel do not repent, they will never be redeemed; but as soon as they repent, they will be redeemed; yea, if they repent but one day, immediately the son of David will come.”

Ver. 3. *For this is he that was spoken of*, etc.] These are not the words of the Baptist himself, as in (⁴⁰²³John 1:23) but of the Evangelist, who cites and applies to John a passage in the Prophet Isaiah, (^{230B}Isaiah 40:3) and that very pertinently, since that “chapter” is a prophecy of the Messiah. The consolations spoken of in (^{230B}Isaiah 40:3), were to be in the days of the king Messiah, as a writer of note ^{F143} among the Jews observes. The Messiah is more expressly prophesied of in (^{230B}Isaiah 40:9-11) as one that should appear to the joy of his people, and “come with a strong hand”,

vigorously prosecute his designs, faithfully perform his work, and then receive his reward; he is spoken of under the “character” of a “shepherd”, who would tenderly discharge the several parts of his office as such, which character is frequently given to the Messiah in the Old Testament: now the person spoken of in (^{231B}Isaiah 40:3) was to be his harbinger to go before him, proclaim and make ready for his coming; and what is said of him agrees entirely with John the Baptist, as the character given of him,

the voice of one crying, Βοωντος, lowing like an ox; which expresses the austerity of the man, the roughness of his voice, the severity of his language; that he called aloud and spoke out, openly, publicly, and freely; and that he delivered himself in preaching with a great deal of zeal and fervency. The place where he preached was “in the wilderness”, that is, of Judea, where he is said before, in (^{40B}Matthew 3:1) to come preaching. The doctrine he preached was,

prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, which is best explained by what is said before, in (^{40B}Matthew 3:2)

repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Lord whom ye have sought, the Messiah whom you have expected, is just coming, he will quickly appear; prepare to meet him by repentance, and receive him by faith, relinquish your former notions and principles, correct your errors, and amend your lives, remove all out of the way which may be offensive to him. The allusion is to a great personage being about to make his public appearance or entrance; when a harbinger goes before him, orders the way to be cleared, all impediments to be removed, and everything got ready for the reception of him.

Ver. 4. *The same John had his raiment*, etc.] The Evangelist goes on to describe this excellent person, the forerunner of our Lord, by his raiment;

the same John of whom Isaiah prophesied, and who came preaching the doctrine in the place and manner before expressed,

had his raiment of camel's hair; not of camel's hair softened and dressed, which the Talmudists ^{F144} call $\mu\lambda\ \text{mg}\ \text{rmx}$ “camel's wool”; of which wool of camels and of hares, the Jews say ^{F145} the coats were made, with which God clothed Adam and Eve; and which being spun to a thread, and wove, and made a garment of, they call ^{F146} $\text{hl}\ \text{ymj}$, and we “camlet”; for this would have been too fine and soft for John to wear, which is denied of him,

(^{<0118>}Matthew 11:8) but either of a camel's skin with the hair on it, such was the "rough garment", or "garment of hair", the prophets used to wear, (^{<0118>}Zechariah 13:4) or of camels hair not softened but undressed; and so was very coarse and rough, and which was suitable to the austerity of his life, and the roughness of his ministry. And it is to be observed he appeared in the same dress as Elijah or Elias did, (^{<0118>}2 Kings 1:8) in whose spirit and power he came, and whose name he bore, (^{<0117>}Luke 1:17 ^{<0114>}Matthew 11:14).

And a leathern girdle about his loins; and such an one also Elijah was girt with, (^{<0118>}2 Kings 1:8) and which added to the roughness of his garment, though it shows he was prepared and in a readiness to do the work he was sent about.

And his meat was locusts and wild honey; by the "locusts" some have thought are meant a sort of fish called "crabs", which John found upon the banks of Jordan, and lived upon; others, that a sort of wild fruit, or the tops of trees and plants he found in the wilderness and fed on, are designed; but the truth is, these were a sort of creatures "called locusts", and which by the ceremonial law were lawful to be eaten, (see ^{<0112>}Leviticus 11:22). The Misnic doctors ^{F147} describe such as are fit to be eaten after this manner;

"all that have four feet and four wings, and whose thighs and wings cover the greatest part of their body, and whose name is **bgj** "a locust.""

For it seems they must not only have these marks and signs, but must be so called, or by a word in any other language which answers to it, as the commentators ^{f148} on this passage observe; and very frequently do these writers speak ^{f149} of locusts that are clean, and may be eaten. Maimonides ^{f150} reckons up "eight" sorts of them, which might be eaten according to the law. Besides, these were eaten by people of other nations, particularly the Ethiopians ^{f151}, Parthians ^{f152}, and Lybians ^{f153}.

And wild honey: this was honey of bees, which were not kept at home, but such as were in the woods and fields; of this sort was that which Jonathan found, and eat of, (^{<0125>}1 Samuel 14:25,26,27) now the honey of bees might be eaten, according to the Jewish laws ^{f154}, though bees themselves might not.

Ver. 5. *Then went out to him Jerusalem*, etc.] The uncommon appearance of this person, the oddness of his dress, the austerity of his life, together with the awfulness and importance of his doctrine, and the novelty of the ordinance of baptism he administered, and the Jews having had no prophet for some hundreds of years, and imagining he might be the Messiah, quickly drew large numbers of people to him. Some copies read “all Jerusalem”: that is, the inhabitants of that city, a very large number of them; and “all Judea”, a great number of people from all parts of that country. “All” is here put for “many”. And

all the region round about Jordan; multitudes from thence, which seems to be the same country with that which is called “beyond Jordan”, (^{<4025>}Matthew 4:25) and is distinguished from Judea as here. The Septuagint in (^{<4447>}2 Chronicles 4:17) use the same phrase the Evangelist does here, and likewise in (^{<0130>}Genesis 13:10,11).

Ver. 6. *And were baptized of him*, etc.] The place where they were baptized of him was, “in Jordan”; some copies read, “in the river Jordan”, as in (^{<4005>}Mark 1:5). As to the name of this river, and the etymology of it, the Jews say ^{f155} it was so called, *dm drwyç* “because it descended” from Dan, i.e. Leshem Dan, or Pamiyas, which they say is a cave at the head of it. It was in John’s time and long after a considerable river, a river to swim in; we ^{f156} read that “Resh Lakish *andryb yj s hwh* was swimming in Jordan.” And elsewhere ^{f157}, that one day “R. Jochanan was swimming in Jordan.” Also it was a river for boats and ships to pass in, so that it was a navigable river; hence we read ^{f158} of *dryh tbyr* [“the boat of Jordan”, and of ships in it, and of such and such things being forbidden to be carried over Jordan in a ship ^{f159}; particularly,

“a man might not take the water of the sin offering, and the ashes of the sin offering, and carry them over Jordan in a ship.”

Pliny ^{f160}, Pausanias ^{f161}, Solinus ^{f162}, and others, speak of it as a very considerable and delightful river; (see ^{<0685>}Joshua 3:15,16,17). The Christians of Christ’s time are called by the Jews, in a way of contempt, apostates, that received the doctrine of baptism, and were *dryb μyl wbj* “dipped in Jordan” ^{f163}. The manner in which they were baptized by him was by immersion or plunging them in the water: this may be concluded from the signification of the word βαπτίζω where used, which in the primary sense of it signifies to dip or plunge; from the place in which they

were baptized, “the river Jordan”; and from John’s constant manner of baptizing elsewhere, who chose places for this purpose, where and because there was there much water; (see ^{<4012>}John 1:28 ^{<4023>}John 3:23). The character of the persons baptized by him is this, they were such as were

confessing their sins. They were called to repentance by John’s ministry, and had the grace of it bestowed upon them; being thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly sorry for it, they were ready to acknowledge and confess it to God and men; and such an abiding sense they had of it upon their minds, that they continued doing it: they were not only confessing their sins before baptism, which engaged John to administer it to them; since we find afterwards he refused to admit others, because of their want of repentance and fruits meet for it; but also whilst they were going into the water, and when they came up out of it, so full were they of a sense of sin, and so ready to own it. Even in baptism itself there is a tacit confession and acknowledgment of sin, for it represents the sufferings and death of Christ which were for sin, into which persons are baptized, and profess to be dead to sin thereby; and also the resurrection of Christ for justification from sin, which obliges the baptized person to walk in newness of life, (see ^{<4010>}Romans 6:3,4,5) besides, in this ordinance believers are led to the blood of Christ, both for the cleansing and remission of their sins, which suppose filth and guilt, (^{<4026>}Acts 22:16) and (^{<4028>}Acts 2:38). Now this is the character given of the very first persons that were baptized by John, and ought surely to be attended to, by us; and as much care as possible should be taken, that none but such as have a true sense of sin, and are brought to an humble and hearty acknowledgment of it, be admitted to this ordinance.

Ver. 7. *But when he saw many of the Pharisees,* etc.] This being the first place in which mention is made of the Pharisees and Sadducees, it may not be amiss to give some account of them once for all, and to begin with the Pharisees, and first with their name. Some derive this word from **φρ** pharatz to “divide”, to “make a breach”, from whence Phares had his name (^{<0329>}Genesis 38:29) so Jerom ^{f164}, who observes, that

“the Pharisees, who separated themselves from the people as righteous persons, were called “divisi, the divided.””

And in ^{f165} another place,

“because the Pharisees were “divided” from the Jews on account of some superfluous observations, they also took their name from their disagreement.”

Origen^{f166} seems to refer to this etymology of the word, when he says,

“the Pharisees, according to their name, were **διηρημενοι τινες και στασιωδεις**, certain divided and seditious persons.”

And true it is, that this sect often meddled with the affairs of the government, and were very ambitious of being concerned therein. Josephus^{f167} observes of queen Alexandra, that she governed others, and the Pharisees governed her; hence, though they were in great esteem with the people, they were rather dreaded than loved by the government. Others derive this name from **φρp** “Pharas” to “expand”, or “stretch out”; either because they made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments; or because they exposed themselves to public notice, did all they could to be seen of men, prayed in the corners of the streets, had a trumpet blown before them when they gave alms, chose the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, greetings in the markets, and to be called of men “Rabbi”: all which to be sure are their just characters. Others derive it from the same word, as signifying to “explain” or “expound”; because it was one part of their work, and in which they excelled, to expound the law; but this cannot be the reason of their general name, because there were women Pharisees as well as men, who cannot be thought to be employed in that work. The more generally received opinion is, that this name is taken from the above word, as signifying to “separate”; because they separated themselves from the men and manners of the world, to the study of the law, and to a greater degree of holiness, at least in pretence, than other persons. They were strict observers of the traditions of the elders; are said, to hold both fate and free will; they owned the resurrection of the dead, and that there were angels and spirits, in which they differed from the Sadducees. Or rather they have their name from **srp**, which signifies “a reward”; they being stiff defenders of the doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, which the Sadducees denied. The Talmudic writers^{f168} say, there were “seven” sorts of them, and if it would not be too tedious to the reader, I would give the names of them; and the rather, because some of them seem to tally with the complexion and conduct of the Pharisees mentioned in the scriptures. There were then,

1. **yṃkyç çwrp** the “Shechemite Pharisee”, who does as Shechem did; is circumcised, not on God’s account, or for his glory, or because circumcision is a command of his, but for his own profit and advantage, and that he may get honour from men.
2. **ypqyn çwrp** “the dashing Pharisee”; who walks gently, the heel of one foot touching the great toe of the other; and scarce lifts up his feet from the earth, so that he dashes them against the stones, and would be thought hereby to be in deep meditation.
3. **yazyq çwrp** the “Pharisee letting blood”; who makes as if he shut his eyes, that he may not look upon women, and so runs and dashes his head against the wall, till the blood gushes out, as though a vein was opened.
4. **aykwdm çwrp** the “depressed Pharisee”; who went double, or bowed down, or as others render the phrase, “the mortar Pharisee”; either because he wore a garment like a mortar, with the mouth turned downwards; or a hat resembling such a vessel; so that he could not look upward, nor on either side, only downward, or right forward.
5. **hnç[aw ytbwj hm çwrp** the Pharisee, that said, what is my duty and I will do it? the gloss upon it is, teach me what is my duty, and I will do it: Lo! this is his excellency, if he is not expert in the prohibitions and niceties of the commands, and comes to learn; or thus, what is more to be done and I have not done it? so that he shows himself, or would appear as if he had performed all.
6. **hary çwrp** “the Pharisee of fear”; who does what he does from fear of punishment.
7. **hbha çwrp** “the Pharisee of love”; who does what he does from love; which the gloss explains thus: for the love of the reward of the commandment, and not for the love of the commandment of his Creator; though they say of all these there is none to be beloved, but the Pharisee of love.

When this sect first began, and who was the first author of it, is not easy to say; it is certain there were great numbers of them in the times of John the Baptist, and of Christ, and for some time after. The Jews say^{f169}, that when the temple was destroyed the second time, the Pharisees increased in Israel.

Next let us consider the Sadducees, who they were, and from whence they sprung. These have their name not from **qydx** “Saddik righteous”^{f170}, or **qdx** “Sedek righteousness”, being self justitaries; for though they were, yet this would not have distinguished them from the Pharisees, who were likewise such; but from **qwdx** Sadok or Saduk, a disciple of Antigonus, a man of Socho^{f171}. The occasion of this new sect was this; Antigonus, among the instructions he gave to his scholars, had this saying;

“be not as servants who serve their master for the sake of reward; but be ye as servants that serve their master not for the sake of reward, and let the fear of God be upon you.”

Which, when Sadok and a fellow scholar, whose name was Baithos, or Baithus, heard, not rightly understanding him, concluded that there was no future state of rewards and punishments; which notion they broached and had their followers, who from the one were called Sadducees, and sometimes from the other Baithuseans: these men held the Scriptures only, rejecting the traditions of the elders; they denied fate, and ascribed all to free will; they affirmed that there is no resurrection of the dead; that the soul dies with the body; that there is no future state after this life, and that there are neither angels nor spirits. Now when “John saw” or observed “many” of both these sects “come to his baptism”; not merely to see it administered, led thither by the novelty of the thing; but to submit to it, to which they might be induced by that very great character of a very holy good man, which John had got among the people; and they were desirous of being thought so too, and therefore desired to be baptized by him; but he knowing the men and their manners,

said unto them; addressed them in a very severe style, quite contrary to their expectation, and the opinion the people had of them,

O generation of vipers! It seems their parents before them were vipers, and they their offspring were like them, in hypocrisy and malice. The viper appears very beautiful outwardly, but is full of poison; it looks harmless and innocent, as if it neither could nor would do any hurt, its teeth being hid, but is a most deadly and hurtful creature: so these men, though they made specious pretences to religion and holiness, yet were full of the deadly poison of hypocrisy, malice, and error. A very disagreeable salutation this must be to men, who were desirous of being reckoned very religious, and who boasted of, and trusted in, their being the seed of

Abraham; when they were the children of the devil, the seed of the old serpent, and the offspring of the worst of men, and in whom was verified the proverb, like father like son. John proceeds and asks, saying, “who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” who has suggested this to you? from whom have ye received this hint? who has pointed out the way to you to escape divine vengeance, or the ruin which will quickly come upon you? for by

wrath to come is not meant hell fire, everlasting destruction, from which baptism could not save them; but temporal calamity and destruction, the wrath which in a little time came upon that nation to the uttermost, for rejecting the Messiah, and the Gospel dispensation; from which they might have been saved, had they given credit to Jesus as the Messiah, though only with a bare assent; and had they entered into the kingdom of heaven, or Messiah, the Gospel dispensation, by receiving its doctrines, and submitting to its ordinances, though only externally.

Ver. 8. *Bring forth therefore fruits*, etc.] That is, if you are truly penitent, if you have a proper sense of sin, and true repentance for it, do such works as are suitable to it, and will show the genuineness of it; for

fruits meet for repentance are the same as “works meet for repentance”, (^{<403>}Acts 26:20) and as a tree is known by its fruit, so repentance is known by good works; these are the fruits and effects of repentance, and which are proofs with men of the sincerity of it. Those which follow upon evangelical repentance are such as are mentioned in (^{<401>}2 Corinthians 7:11). Now let it be observed, that John insisted upon repentance, and a good conversation, attesting the truth of it as necessary prerequisites to the ordinance of baptism; and so Peter first urged repentance; and then proposed baptism, (^{<413>}Acts 2:38) from whence one should think it may be rationally and strongly concluded, that none but truly repenting sinners, and such who have given proofs that they are so, are to be admitted to this ordinance.

Ver. 9. *And think not to say within yourselves*, etc.] John knew the sentiments of their minds, and the prevailing opinion they had given into, against which he cautions them; as, that because they were Abraham’s seed, they were in a state of salvation, in the favour of God, and had a right to all privileges and ordinances: this they trusted in, and boasted of, and would often think of it within themselves, pleasing themselves with the thoughts of it, and speak of it to others;

we have Abraham for our father. The Baptist was aware how ready they would be to object this to him; and therefore prevents their plea from hence in favour of their admission to baptism, by assuring them, that this would have no weight with him, nor give them any right to the ordinance he administered: hence it appears that it is not a person's being born of believing parents that can entitle him to water baptism; or be a reason why it ought to be administered to him: if nothing more than this can be said in his favour, it is a plain case from hence, he ought to be debarred from it. The reason John gives why such a plea as this would be insufficient is,

for I say unto you; I assure you of it; you may depend on it as a certain truth,

that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. To “raise up children” is an Hebrew way of speaking, and the same with $\mu\zeta$ or $[rz \mu y q h i]$ to “raise up seed”, or a “name” to another, (^{<0808>}Genesis 38:8 ^{<0527>}Deuteronomy 25:7 ^{<0810>}Ruth 4:10) and signifies to beget children for another, who are to be called by his name. Some by “the stones” understand the Gentiles, comparable to stones, both for the hardness of their hearts, and their idolatry in worshipping stocks and stones; of and among whom God was able to raise, and has raised up, a spiritual seed to Abraham; who are of the same faith with him, who walk in his steps, and whose father he is: but then it must be supposed, according to this sense, that there were some Gentiles present, since John calls them “these” stones, pointing to some persons or things, that were before him; wherefore I rather think that this phrase is to be taken literally, and that John pointed to some certain stones that were near him, within sight, and which lay upon the banks of Jordan, where he was baptizing; for what is it that the omnipotent God cannot do? He could as easily of stones make men, as make Adam out of the dust of the earth, and then make these men, in a spiritual sense, children of Abraham; that is, believers in Christ, and partakers of his “grace; for if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”, (^{<0829>}Galatians 3:29). So that God stood in no need of these persons, nor had they any reason to boast of their natural descent from Abraham; since this in spiritual matters, and in things relating to the Gospel dispensation, would stand them in no stead, or be of any advantage to them.

Ver. 10. *And now also the axe is laid,* etc.] These words may be rendered, “for now also”, and contain in them a reason why they might expect future

wrath; why they should bring forth good fruit; and why they should not trust to nor plead their descent from Abraham, because “the axe is now laid”: by which is meant, not the Gospel which now began to be preached by John; though this was like an axe laid to the root of, and which cut down, their pride and vanity, their self-confidence and glorying in their righteousness, holiness, carnal wisdom, and fleshly privileges: but rather; the axe of God’s judgment and vengeance is here designed, which, because of the certainty and near approach of it, is said to be “now laid”; and that not to some of the branches only, to lop them off, to take away from the Jews some particular privileges, but “to the root” of all their privileges, civil and ecclesiastical; even the covenant which God had made with that people as a nation, who was now about to write “Lo Ammi” upon them; so that henceforward they would have nothing to expect from their being the seed of Abraham, Israelites, or circumcised persons. The time was just at hand, when the Lord would take his “staff Beauty and cut it asunder, that he might break the covenant he had made with all the people”, (³¹¹⁰Zechariah 11:10) in a short time their civil polity and church state would be both at an end. The Romans, who were already among them and over them, would very quickly come upon them, and cut them off root and branch; and utterly destroy their temple, city, and nation: and this ruin and destruction was levelled not at a single tree, a single person, or family only, as Jesse’s, or any others, but at the root

of the trees: of all the trees of the whole body of the people; for the covenant which was made with them all being broke, and which was their hedge and fence, they were all exposed to the wild boar of the forest.

Therefore every tree, every individual person, though one of Abraham’s children, and made never such a fair show in the

flesh, which bringeth not forth good fruit; does not perform good works from a right principle, to a right end, such as are meet for repentance; particularly, does not believe in the Messiah now ready to be revealed, which is the main and principal work; and does not continue so doing, and thus believing,

is hewn down and cast into the fire. Temporal ruin and destruction shall come upon him; he shall not escape divine vengeance here, and shall be cast into everlasting burnings hereafter; which is quite contrary to a notion of theirs, that **pħrbad ytwkzb** “by the merits of Abraham”, the Israelites shall be delivered from the fire of hell^{f172}.

Ver. 11. *I indeed baptize you with water*, etc.] These words, at first view, look as if they were a continuation of John's discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and as though he had baptized them; whereas by comparing them with what the other Evangelists relate, (see ^{<1005}Mark 1:5,8 ^{<110}Luke 3:10,15,16) they are spoken to the people, who, confessing their sins, had been baptized by him; to whom he gives an account of the ordinance of water baptism, of which he was the administrator, in what manner, and on what account he performed it:

I indeed baptize you; or, as Mark says, "I have baptized you"; I have authority from God so to do; my commission reaches thus far, and no farther; I can administer, and have administered the outward ordinance to you; but the inward grace and increase of it, together with the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, I cannot confer. I can, and do baptize, upon a profession of repentance, and I can threaten impenitent sinners with divine vengeance; but I cannot bestow the grace of repentance on any, nor punish for impenitence, either here or hereafter; these things are out of my power, and belong to another person hereafter named: all that I do, and pretend to do, is to baptize

with water, or rather in water, as *εν υδατι* should be rendered. Our version seems to be calculated in favour of pouring, or sprinkling water upon, or application of it to the person baptized, in opposition to immersion in it; whereas the "preposition" is not instrumental, but local, and denotes the place, the river Jordan, and the element of water there, in which John was baptizing: and this he did

unto repentance, or "at", or upon "repentance": for so *εις* may be rendered, as it is in (^{<1124}Matthew 12:41) for the meaning is not that John baptized them, in order to bring them to repentance; since he required repentance and fruits meet for it, previous to baptism; but that he had baptized them upon the foot of their repentance; and so the learned Grotius observes, that the phrase may be very aptly explained thus: "I baptize you upon the `profession' of repentance which ye make." John gives a hint of the person whose forerunner he was, and of his superior excellency to him: he indeed first speaks of him as one behind him, not in nature or dignity, but in order of time as man;

but he that comes after me. John was born before Jesus, and began his ministry before he did; he was his harbinger; Jesus was now coming after him to Jordan from Galilee, to be baptized by him, and then enter on his

public ministry: but though he came after him in this sense, he was not beneath, but above him in character; which he freely declares, saying,

is mightier than I; not only as he is the mighty God, and so infinitely mightier than he; but in his office and ministry, which was exercised with greater power and authority, and attended with mighty works and miracles, and was followed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. Not to mention the mighty work of redemption performed by him; the resurrection of his own body from the dead; and his exaltation in human nature, above all power, might, and dominion. The Baptist was so sensible of the inequality between them, and of his unworthiness to be mentioned with him, that he seems at a loss almost to express his distance from him; and therefore signifies it by his being unfit to perform one of the most servile offices to him,

whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; or as the other Evangelists relate it, “whose shoelatchet I am not worthy to unloose”; which amounts to the same sense, since shoes are unloosed in order to be taken from, or carried before, or after a person; which to do was the work of servants among the Jews. In the Talmud^{f173} it is asked,

“What is the manner of possessing of servants? or what is their service? He buckles his (master’s) shoes; he “unlooses his shoes”, and “carries them before him to the bath.””

Or, as is elsewhere^{f174} said,

“he unlooses his shoes, or carries after him his vessels (whatever he wants) to the bath; he unclothes him, he washes him, he anoints him, he rubs him, he clothes him, he buckles his shoes, and lifts him up.”

This was such a servile work, that it was thought too mean for a scholar or a disciple to do; for it is^{f175} said,

“all services which a servant does for his master, a disciple does for his master, l [nm wl trthm w], “except unloosing his shoes”.”

The gloss on it says, “he that sees it, will say, he is a “Canaanitish servant”.”

for only a Canaanitish, not an Hebrew servant^{f176}, might be employed in, or obliged to such work; for it was reckoned not only, mean and servile, but even base and reproachful. It is one of their^{f177} canons;

“if thy brother is become poor, and is sold unto thee, thou shalt not make him do the work of a servant; that is, *yagn l ç trwb* [, any reproachful work; such as to buckle his shoes, or unloose them, or carry his instruments (or necessaries) after him to the bath.”

Now John thought himself unworthy; it was too great an honour for him to do that for Christ, which was thought too mean for a disciple to do for a wise man, and too scandalous for an Hebrew servant to do for his master, to whom he was sold; which shows the great humility of John, and the high opinion he had of Christ. It has been controverted whether Christ wore shoes or not; Jerom affirmed that he did not: but it seems from hence that he did; nor were the Jews used to walk barefoot, but on certain occasions. The Baptist points at the peculiar work of this great person, in which he greatly exceeds anything done by him;

he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; referring, either to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, to be bestowed on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, of which the cloven tongues, like as of fire, which appeared unto them, and sat upon them, were the symbols; which was an instance of the great power and grace of Christ, and of his exaltation at the Father's right hand. Or rather, this phrase is expressive of the awful judgments which should be inflicted by him on the Jewish nation; when he by his Spirit should “reprove” them for the sin of rejecting him; and when he should appear as a “refiner's fire”, and as “fuller's soap”; when “the day of the Lord” should “burn as an oven”; when he should “purge the blood of Jerusalem”, his own blood, and the blood of the Apostles and Prophets shed in it, “from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning”; the same with “the Holy Ghost and fire” here, or the fire of the Holy Ghost, or the holy Spirit of fire; and is the same with “the wrath to come”, and with what is threatened in the context: the unfruitful trees shall be cut down, and cast into the fire”, and the “chaff” shall be burnt with unquenchable fire”. And as this sense best agrees with the context, it may the rather be thought to be genuine; since John is speaking not to the disciples of Christ, who were not yet called, and who only on the day of Pentecost were baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, in the other sense of this phrase; but to the people of the Jews, some of whom had been

baptized by him; and others were asking him questions, others gazing upon him, and wondering what manner of person he was; and multitudes of them continued obdurate and impenitent under his ministry, whom he threatens severely in the context. Add to all this, that the phrase of dipping or baptizing in fire seems to be used in this sense by the Jewish writers. In the Talmud ^{f178} one puts the question, In what does he (God,) dip? You will say in water, as it is written, “who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?” Another replies, **lybj arwnb**, “he dips in fire”; as it is written, “for behold the Lord will come with fire”. What is the meaning of **arwnb atwl ybj**, “baptism in fire?” He answers, according to the mind of Rabbah, the root of “dipping in the fire”, is what is written; “all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go” through the water. Dipping in the fire of the law, is a phrase used by the Jews ^{f179}. The phrases of “dipping, and washing in fire”, are also used by Greek ^{f180} authors.

Ver. 12. *Whose fan is in his hand*, etc.] The Jews had their hand fans, and which were like a man’s hand; their names were **bwgm hrwm rb[m**; which, as Maimonides says ^{f181}, were three sorts of instruments used in the floor, in form of a man’s hand; with which they cleansed the wheat and barley from the straw; and their names differ according to their form: some have many teeth, and with them they cleanse the wheat at the end of the work; and there are others that have few teeth, no more than three, and with these they purge the wheat at first, from the thick straw. By the “fan”, here is meant, either the Gospel which Christ was just ready to publish; by which he would effectually call his chosen people among the Jews, and so distinguish and separate them from others, as well as purify and cleanse them, or rather the awful judgment of God, which Christ was ready to execute, and in a short time would execute on the unbelieving and impenitent Jews: hence it is said to be “in his hand”; being put there by his Father, who “hath committed all judgment to the Son”. That this is the meaning of the “Baptist”, seems evident, since “fanning” is always, when figuratively taken, used for judgments, (^{<2416>}Isaiah 41:16 ^{<2457>}Jeremiah 15:7 ^{<2512>}Jeremiah 51:2). By “his floor”, is meant the land of Israel, where he was born, brought up, and lived; of which the Lord says, “O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!” (^{<2210>}Isaiah 21:10). This, he says, “he will thoroughly purge” of all his refuse and chaff, that is, by fanning: so fanning and cleansing, or purging, are joined together, (^{<2411>}Jeremiah 4:11) so **rrb** is used for purging by fanning, in the Misnic writings ^{f182}. By “his wheat”, are meant his elect among the Jews, the chosen of God and precious; so called

because of their excellency, purity, usefulness, solidity, and constancy: these he “will gather into his garner”; meaning either some place of protection, where he would direct his people to for safety from that wrath, ruin, and destruction; which should fall upon the Jewish nation; or else the kingdom of heaven, into which he would bring them, by taking them out of the world from the evil to come. By “the chaff”, are meant wicked and ungodly persons, such as are destitute of the grace of God, whether professors, or profane; being empty, barren, and unfruitful; and so good for nothing but the fire, which therefore “he will burn with unquenchable fire”, of divine wrath and vengeance: an allusion to a custom among the Jews, who, when they purified the increase of their unclean fields, gathered it together in an “area” or floor, in the midst of them, and then sifted it with sieves; one sort with two sieves, another with three, that they might thoroughly purge it, and burnt the chaff and stalks ^{f183}; (see ~~2364~~ Isaiah 5:24).

Ver. 13. *Then cometh Jesus*, etc.] That is, when John had been some time preaching the doctrine of repentance, and administering the ordinance of baptism; for which, time must be allowed, since he went into all the country about Jordan, and preached unto them, and baptized such large numbers: very probably it might be six months from his first entrance on his ministry; since there was this difference in their age, and so might be in their baptism and preaching. Now when John had given notice of the Messiah’s coming, and so had prepared his way; had declared the excellency of his person, the nature of his work, and office, and had raised in the people an expectation of him,

then cometh Jesus from Galilee; from Nazareth of Galilee, (~~4009~~ Mark 1:9) where he had lived for many years, as the Jews ^{f184} themselves own; in great obscurity, in all obedience to God, in subjection to his parents, exercising a conscience void of offence towards God and man, and employing his time in devotion and business: from hence he came to Jordan to John, who was baptizing there; which shows the great humility of Christ, who comes to John, and does not send for him, though John was his servant, and he was his Lord and Master; and also his cheerful and voluntary subjection to the ordinance of baptism, since of himself, of his own accord, he took this long and fatiguing journey; for Nazareth, according to David de Pomis ^{f185}, was three days journey from Jerusalem, though somewhat nearer Jordan; the end and design of his coming was

to be baptized of him. It may reasonably be inquired what should be Christ's view in desiring to be baptized; it could not be to take away original or actual sin, since he had neither; nor has baptism any such efficacy to do this, in those who have either or both: but, it was to show his approbation of John's baptism, and to bear a testimony of it, that it was from heaven; and also that he himself might receive a testimony both from heaven, and from John, that he was the Son of God and true Messiah, before he entered upon his public ministry, into which he was in some measure initiated and installed hereby; and moreover, to set an example to his followers, and thereby engage their attention and subjection to this ordinance; and, in a word, as he himself says, to fulfill all righteousness.

Ver. 14. *But John forbad him, saying,* etc.] It appears from hence, that John knew Christ before he baptized him, and before he saw the Spirit descending and abiding on him, (~~John~~ John 1:33) wherefore that was not a signal, whereby he should first know him but whereby his knowledge of him should be confirmed; which knowledge of him he had, not through his kindred to him, or by any conversation he had with him before, but by immediate, divine revelation: upon which account he "forbad him"; refused to administer the ordinance to him; earnestly entreated that he would not insist upon it; desired to be excused being concerned herein: and this he did, partly lest the people should think Christ was not so great a person as he had represented him to be; yea, that he was one of the penitent sinners John had admitted to his baptism; and chiefly because of the majesty and dignity of Christ's person, who he knew stood in no need of such an outward ordinance; and because of his own unworthiness to administer it to him, as is evident from what follows,

I have need to be baptized of thee; not with water baptism, which Christ never administered, but with the baptism of the Spirit, which was his peculiar office. Hence we learn, that though John was so holy a man, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, had such large measures of grace, and lived such an exemplary life and conversation; yet was far from thinking, that he was perfect and righteous in himself, but stood in need of Christ, and of more grace from him. He seems surprised that Christ should come to him, and make such a motion to him; when it was his duty and privilege to come to him daily for fresh supplies of grace, and always to trust in him for life and salvation;

and comest thou to me? who am of the earth, earthly, when thou art the Lord from heaven; “to me”, a poor sinful creature, when thou art the Holy One of God; “to me”, who am thy servant, when thou art Lord of all; “to me”, who always stand in need of thy grace, when thou art God all sufficient.

Ver. 15. *And Jesus answering, said unto him,* etc.] This is an Hebrew way of speaking, often used in the Old Testament, and answers to $r\text{mayw}^{\wedge}[y$; (see ^{<K&K>}Job 3:1). He replied to John, who had made use of very forbidding words, after this manner,

suffer it to be so now; let me have my request; do not go on to object, but comply with my desire; let it be done now, immediately, directly, at this present time; do not put me off with any excuse; it is a proper season for it, even “now”, since the time is not yet come that I am to baptize with the Holy Ghost; and besides, thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. It became John to administer the ordinance of baptism to Christ, as he was his forerunner, and the only administrator of it, and that he might fulfill the ministry which he had received; and as it became Christ to fulfill all righteousness, moral and ceremonial, and baptism being a part of his Father’s will, which he came to do, it became him to fulfill this also. And since it became Christ, it cannot be unbecoming us to submit to this ordinance; and since he looked upon it as a part of righteousness to be fulfilled by him, it ought to be attended to by all those who would be accounted followers of him. Christ having strongly urged the conveniency and equity of the administration of baptism to him, which showed his eager desire after it, and the lowliness of his mind; and John being convinced, and overcome by the force of his reasoning, agrees to his baptism;

then he suffered him, i.e. to be baptized in water by him, as he had requested, and accordingly did administer it to him.

Ver. 16. *And Jesus, when he was baptized,* etc.] Christ, when he was baptized by John in the river Jordan, the place where he was baptizing,

went up straightway out of the water. One would be at a loss at first sight for a reason why the Evangelist should relate this circumstance; for after the ordinance was administered, why should he stay in the water? what should he do there? Everyone would naturally and reasonably conclude, without the mention of such a circumstance, that as soon as his baptism was over, he would immediately come up out of the water. However, we

learn this from it, that since it is said, that he came up out of the water, he must first have gone down into it; must have been in it, and was baptized in it; a circumstance strongly in favour of baptism by immersion: for that Christ should go down into the river, more or less deep, to the ankles, or up to the knees, in order that John should sprinkle water on his face, or pour it on his head, as is ridiculously represented in the prints, can hardly obtain any credit with persons of thought and sense. But the chief view of the Evangelist in relating this circumstance, is with respect to what follows; and to show, that as soon as Christ was baptized, and before he had well got out of the water,

lo the heavens were opened: and some indeed read the word “straightway”, in connection with this phrase, and not with the words “went up”: but there is no need of supposing such a trajection, for the whole may be rendered thus;

and Jesus, when he was baptized, was scarcely come up out of the water, but lo, immediately, directly, as soon as he was out, or rather before,

the heavens were opened to him; the airy heaven was materially and really opened, parted, rent, or cloven asunder, as in (<4010>Mark 1:10) which made way for the visible descent of the Holy Ghost in a bodily shape. A difficulty arises here, whether the words, “to him”, are to be referred to Christ, or to John; no doubt but the opening of the heavens was seen by them both: but to me it seems that John is particularly designed, since this vision was upon his account, and for his sake, and to him the following words belong; “and he”, that is,

John, saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: for this is what was promised to John, as a sign, which should confirm his faith in Jesus, as the true Messiah, and which he himself says he saw, and upon which he based the record and testimony he bore to Christ, as the Son of God; (see <4012>John 1:32,33,34) not but that the descent of the Holy Ghost in this manner might be seen by Christ, as well as John, according to (<4010>Mark 1:10). The Spirit of God, here said to descend and light on Christ, is the same, which in the first creation moved upon the face of the waters; and now comes down on Christ, just as he was coming up out of the waters of Jordan, where he had been baptized; and which the Jews ^{f186} so often call *j wr j yçmh dl m l ç*, “the Spirit of the king Messiah, and the spirit of the Messiah”. The descent of him was in a “bodily shape”, as Luke says in (<4012>Luke 3:22) either in the shape of a dove, which is a very

fit emblem of the Spirit of God who descended, and the fruits thereof, such as simplicity, meekness, love, etc. and also of the dove-like innocence, humility, and affection of Christ, on whom he lighted; or it was in some other visible form, not expressed, which pretty much resembled the hovering and lighting of a dove upon anything: for it does not necessarily follow from any of the accounts the Evangelists give of this matter, that the holy Spirit assumed, or appeared in, the form of a dove; only that his visible descent and lighting on Christ was **ωσει περιστερα**, as a dove descends, hovers and lights; which does not necessarily design the form of the creature, but the manner of its motion. However, who can read this account without thinking of Noah's dove, which brought in its mouth the olive leaf, a token of peace and reconciliation, when the waters were abated from off the earth? Give me leave to transcribe a passage I have met with in the book of Zohar^{f187};

“a door shall be opened, and out of it shall come forth the dove which Noah sent out in the days of the flood, as it is written, “and he sent forth the dove”, that famous dove; but the ancients speak not of it, for they knew not what it was, only from whence it came, and did its message; as it is written, “it returned not again unto him any more”: no man knows whither it went, but it returned to its place, and was hid within this door; and it shall take a crown in its mouth, and put it upon the head of the king Messiah.”

And a little after, the dove is said to abide upon his head, and he to receive glory from it. Whether this is the remains of some ancient tradition, these men studiously conceal, concerning the opening of the heavens, and the descent of the Spirit of God, as a dove, upon the Messiah; or whether it is hammered out of the evangelic history, let the reader judge.

Ver. 17. *And lo, a voice from heaven, saying*, etc.] At the same time the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended as a dove, and lighted on Christ, and whilst it abode upon him, an extraordinary voice was heard; hence the note of attention and admiration, “lo”, is prefixed unto it, as before, to the opening of the heavens; being what was unusual and surprising; and as denoting something to be expressed of great moment and importance. The Jews, in order to render this circumstance less considerable, and to have it believed, that these voices from heaven heard in the time of Jesus, and in relation to him were common things, have invented a great many stories concerning **μυμζμ l wq tb**, “the voice”, or

“the daughter of the voice from heaven”; which they pretend came in the room of prophecy: their ^{f188} words are,

“after the death of the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the holy Spirit departed from Israel, and thenceforwards they used “Bath Kol”, the “voice”. One time they were sitting in the chamber of the house of Guria in Jericho, and there came to them מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם לֵיָּד טַב, “the voice from heaven”, (saying;) there is one here, who is fit to have the Shekinah (or divine majesty) abide on him, as Moses our master; but because his generation was not worthy, therefore the wise men set their eyes on Hillell, the elder; and when he died, they said concerning him, this was a holy man, a meek man, a disciple of Ezra. Again, another time they were sitting in a chamber in Jabneh, and there came to them “the voice from heaven”, (saying;) there is one here, who is fit to have the Shekinah dwell on him; but because his generation was not worthy, therefore the wise men set their eyes on Samuel the little.”

I have cited this passage at large, partly because, according to them, it fixes the date and use of “the voice”; and partly, because it affords instances of it, wherefore more need not be mentioned; for, it would be endless to repeat the several things spoken by it; such as encouraging Herod to rebel, and seize his master’s kingdom ^{f189}; forbidding Ben Uzziel to go on with his paraphrase on the Hagiographa, or holy books, when he had finished his Targum on the prophets ^{f190}; declaring the words of Hillell and Shammai to be the words of the living God ^{f191}; signifying the conception, birth, and death of ^{f192} persons, and the like; all which seem to be mere fiction and imagination, diabolical delusions, or satanical imitations of this voice, that was now heard, in order to lessen the credit of it. But, to proceed; this extraordinary voice from heaven, which was formed in articulate sounds for the sake of John; and, according to the other Evangelists, was directed to Christ, (~~ⲁⲓⲓⲓ~~ Mark 1:11 ~~ⲁⲓⲓⲓ~~ Luke 3:22) expressed the following words, “this is my beloved Son”. “This” person, who had been baptized in water, on whom the holy Spirit now rested, is no other than the Son of God in human nature; which he assumed, in order to be obedient to this, and the whole of his Father’s will: he is his own proper “son”, not by creation, as angels, and men; nor by adoption, as saints; nor by office, as magistrates; but in such a way of filiation as no other is: he is the natural, essential, and only begotten Son of God; his beloved Son, whom the Father loved from everlasting, as his own Son; the image of himself, of the same nature with

him, and possessed of the same perfections; whom he loved, and continued to love in time, though clothed with human nature, and the infirmities of it; appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh; being in his state of humiliation, he loved him through it, and all sorrows and sufferings that attended it. Christ always was, and ever will be considered, both in his person as the Son of God, and in his office as mediator, the object of his love and delight; wherefore he adds,

in whom I am well pleased. Jehovah the Father took infinite delight and pleasure in him as his own Son, who lay in his bosom before all worlds; and was well pleased with him in his office relation, and capacity: he was both well pleased in him as his Son, and delighted in him as his servant, (~~2300~~ Isaiah 42:1) he was pleased with his assumption of human nature; with his whole obedience to the law; and with his bearing the penalty and curse of it, in the room and stead of his people: he was well pleased with and for his righteousness, sacrifice and atonement; whereby his law was fulfilled, and his justice satisfied. God is not only well pleased in, and with his Son, but with all his people, as considered in him; in him he loves them, takes delight in them, is pacified towards them, and graciously accepts of them. It would be almost unpardonable, not to take notice of the testimony here given to the doctrine of the Trinity; since a voice was heard from the “father” in heaven, bearing witness to “the Son” in human nature on earth, on whom “the Spirit” had descended and now abode. The ancients looked upon this as so clear and full a proof of this truth, that they were wont to say; Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity. Add to all this, that since this declaration was immediately upon the baptism of Christ, it shows that his Father highly approved of, and was well pleased with his submission to that ordinance; and which should be an encouraging motive to all believers to follow him in it.