

shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." (Math. xviii. v. 18.) And when the minds and hearts of the apostles were in some measure prepared for the reception of this stupendous power, for the establishment of this wondrous institution of God's infinite pity and mercy for sinful man, He then instituted the sacrament when He said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." (John xx-23). The words used by our Saviour in the institution of this sacrament are worthy of our deepest attention, for they seem to have been specially employed to show the awfulness of the institution, to show that it was indeed a new creation on the earth, and the work in a special manner of divine omnipotence and infinite mercy. He began by assuring the apostles that He constituted them His vicars and representatives, and that He there and then conferred on them the same authority to teach and the same power to forgive sins with which He himself as man had been clothed by the Eternal Father: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." As if He would say, I as man hold from God the power to forgive sins, and that I have this power I have already proved by a miracle (Math. iv. c.) and I hereby delegate that power to you forever—to the Church, and

to its ministers for all times, do I give this divine prerogative, this God-power for the destroying of the reign of sin in human hearts and souls, and for the salvation of all penitent sinners.

"He then breathed upon them." When God made man, "He breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2 c. 9 v.) "He inspired into him the soul that worketh, and he breathed into him a living spirit." (Wisdom xv-11)—that is, the breath of God breathed into inanimate matter, created man, and made him a living rational person—gave him the soul that worketh, and the living quickening spirit—made man the master work of His creation, made him a little less than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. This is the first instance of which we are told in Scripture that God *breathed* upon man, and the result was the existence of rational man, made in the