

original apostles, "ye are witnesses of these things." When the apostle Peter presented to the assembled disciples, the necessity of one being ordained in room of Judas, this was kept in view, that it should be one who had associated with the followers of Christ throughout his ministry, and who could give testimony to the fact of his resurrection. Paul recognizes this qualification as essential for when his apostleship is in question, he demands, "Have not I seen Jesus Christ the Lord?" The Lord himself assigned this as the express reason of his appearance to Paul on the way to Damascus, when he said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; but arise: stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee."

3. *A knowledge of Divine truth by original and direct revelation of Jesus Christ.* This was the peculiar advantage of the twelve, who enjoyed the personal instructions of the Lord on earth. It was kept in view in the ordination of Matthias. And Paul asserts this in terms which intimate that if he failed to establish this point, he could have no claim to be regarded as an apostle. "But I certify you, brethren," he says to the Galatians, "that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." And he goes on to shew by the facts of his history, that he could not have acquired it through ordinary channels of instruction. In addition to this original and independent instruction, they spoke by special guidance and inspiration of the promised Spirit.

4. *The attestation of their mission and authority by supernatural gifts.*—If they claimed to be ambassadors of heaven, they must be able to shew their credentials, and no ordinary gifts could prove so extraordinary a commission. Our Lord himself acknowledges the correctness of the expectation, that a man sent of God should be able to point to the works done, as evidence of it. He not only promised such gifts to the eleven, and bore them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will; but again in the case of Paul, we have such supernatural attestation spoken of as essential to the office: "Truly," says he to the Corinthians, when defending his own claims, "the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty deeds."

Without enlarging, it will be perceived that the apostleship was altogether extraordinary and supernatural; and, from the nature of the case, necessarily temporary. They have and can have no successors; and to expect that they should, would be

to question the sufficiency of the record which God has given us concerning his Son. When we say that the Apostleship was necessarily a temporary office, we would be understood as meaning that when those who had personally seen the Lord after his resurrection, were all dead there was no person on earth qualified to fill it. But so far as we are concerned the testimony of these original witnesses is ours, as much as it belonged to the primitive churches. They exercised that office for all times; and the Lord is with them now, and will be to the end of the world. We are, or ought to be built upon this foundation. To speak of successors to them, is to suppose that their testimony and teaching is set aside.

We urge these considerations at present, not so much with a view to expose the arrogant and impious claims of a proud prelacy, but to caution those who through inconsideration, rather than presumption, speak of themselves as ambassadors of Christ; and to prepare the way for an intelligent enquiry into the nature and functions of the eldership, by excluding from the enquiring, all texts which apply to this very distinct and altogether extraordinary office.

Though it cannot be necessary to sustain these views by the names of commentators or expositors, we quote for its distinctness, a paragraph from Dr. Davidson's Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament:—

"The apostles were those who had seen Christ; and could, therefore, be witnesses of his resurrection. They were called immediately by himself. Their commission was universal, authorising them to preach the gospel and organise churches throughout the world; and they were peculiarly fitted for their work by an inspiration which rendered them infallible in expounding the will of God, and by the power of working miracles in attestation of their divine mission, as well as of conferring miraculous gifts on others. It is sufficiently obvious from these qualifications that the apostolic office was not intended to be perpetuated. Vacancies were not filled up as they occurred."

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

#### ON THE MODE OF INTERPRETING UNFULFILLED PROPHECY.

Concluded.

We have another instance of the same kind relating to the man of sin, 2 Thess. ii, 1-12, Who shall sit in the temple of God, exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit," or breath, "of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." The usual gloss upon this prophecy is, that "the man of sin" is the head of the papal

church, the pope, who sits in the church of Rome, and exercises lordship over the adherents of that church; but whose influence shall be destroyed "by the lustre with which Christ will cause the true doctrine of the Gospel to shine." Very plausible arguments have been urged in support of this mode of interpretation; and among Protestant Churches it is generally adopted. Notwithstanding these things, however, it is felt to be an impossibility to reconcile the interpretation with the letter of the text, or with that of the parallel passages.

*First.*—The term "man of sin" properly denotes an individual, and not a long succession of individuals, which it must be understood to do, if applied to the papacy. Nor can it denote the office of the individuals, abstractedly from the persons filling it, for this is merely an idea in the mind, a practical nonentity: therefore, either some individual pope must be meant, or all the individuals who have held that office. The former supposition is not maintained; the latter is an impossibility; for a succession of *dying* men to exalt themselves above all that is called God, the self-existent, eternal Being, is a self-evident absurdity. And loose interpretations of the Holy Scriptures which involve absurdity, will be avoided by all who seek the truth.

*Second.*—The place where he sits, is a further proof that the pope of Rome is not the party here signified. "*Sitteth in the temple of God.*" In Scripture the temple of God, signifies the temple at Jerusalem, 1 Sam. iii, 3; the human body of Christ which was raised from the dead, John ii, 21; and the person of believers in whom the Spirit dwells, 1 Cor. vii, 19, whence also the aggregate of believers is said to be "built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." These are all the significations which the word has in Scripture, excepting the heavenly state mentioned Rev. vii, 15. The heavenly state, the person of believers, and the body of Jesus Christ, must be excluded, as also the aggregate of believers with whom, and in whom, God dwells by, his Holy Spirit. The temple at Jerusalem, then, is the only place left, in which the "man of sin," can sit. And if we turn to Isaiah xiv, we read of a king of Babylon, who comes to his end at the time, when Israel is finally restored, of whom it is said, "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." It will not, it is presumed, be said, that such a king of Babylon has existed yet. If we now pass on to Dan. ix, 26, 27, we read of the death of Messiah; and *after* this, of the coming of the people of the prince to destroy the