

one in the spirit and power of Elias.—I do not say that it was the first coming of Jesus, that was specially intended by Malachi, in the passage alluded to. He had no doubt the second coming more especially in view; but that the circumstance of the Baptist's appearing in the spirit and power of Elijah, as the precursor of Jesus, was typical of the coming of Elijah, before the second advent of the Lord, is evident from our Saviour's words in Matt. xvii. 11-12, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto ye, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him, whatsoever they listed." The angel's words, with regard to John's going before Christ, in the spirit and power of Elias, just mean, that John would act with the intrepidity, zeal and holiness of Elijah, and that his labors would be crowned with similar success.

This passage is an exposition, rather than an exact quotation of the words of Malachi. John was to turn the hearts of the fathers of the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. This may mean that the hearts of Abraham, and the other patriarchs, had been alienated from their descendants, in consequence of their sins; but that, in consequence of the reformation which would be effected by John, they would be reconciled to them again. Scott interprets it, that he would turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, or persons of every age and situation in society, to lay aside their party disputes, or domestic contests, and to unite in repenting of sin, and attending on the great duties of true religion." But, whatever may be the exact verbal meaning of the passage, there can be no doubt that it is meant to point out the extent and thoroughness of the reformation which John would be the means of effecting.

In the eighteenth verse, we find Zacharias manifesting a want of confidence in the

promise of the angel, and asking some sign for the confirmation of his faith. He alleged that he was an old man, and his wife well stricken in years. His age, however, could not have exceeded fifty; for at that period of life, the priests ceased to minister at the altar. But as the Jews married at a very early age, he and his wife had probably long ceased to expect or even to pray for children. Still he ought to have placed confidence in the statement of a messenger of God, delivered in his own house, without questioning God's ability to fulfil the promise. The angel told him that he was Gabriel, the same who had appeared unto Daniel, and whose name indicates that he was one of the most exalted of created beings, who stood in the presence of God, and who had been sent to speak unto him, and to show him these glad tidings. He granted him indeed a sign as he wished, but such an one as served at the same time, as a punishment for his unbelief. He punished him in the very member which had been the instrument of his sin, and inflicted a dumbness upon him, which was to continue till these things were performed.

The people who were waiting in the court of the temple, were astonished at Zacharias' long continuance in the sanctuary; and upon his coming out, and being unable to speak, they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned to them, and remained speechless.

Zacharias, though unable to speak, was not incapacitated for the honorable office of burning incense in the temple; and so he remained till the days of his ministration were accomplished, and then departed to his own house.

Doubtless, Zacharias communicated to his wife by writing, an account of the vision which he had seen, and the promises which had been made to him, regarding the character and glorious destiny of the