

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

VAIN REPETITIONS.

MATTHEW VI. 7.—“But when ye pray, use no vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

“Next morning we started again at an early hour as soon as the reisser had got through their prayers. With one of them this was a very long and a very serious concern. He spent an hour in this exercise every morning, and as much in the evening, besides being very punctual in the performance of this duty at the intervening periods of stated prayer. Certainly he did not pray in secret, communing with his heart, but vociferated with all his might, and repeated the words as fast as his tongue could give them utterance. The form and words of his prayer were the same with those of the others, but this good man had made a vow to repeat certain words of the prayer a given number of times both night and morning. The word *Rabboni* for example, answering to our word *Lord*, he would bind himself to repeat a hundred or two hundred times, twice a day: and accordingly went on, in the hearing of all the party, and on his knees, sometimes with his face directed steadily towards heaven, at other times bowing down to the ground and calling out *Rabboni, Rabboni, Rabboni, &c.* as fast as he could articulate the words, like a school-boy going through his task, not like a man who, praying with the heart and the understanding also, continues longer on his knees in the rapture of devotion; and who, like Jacob pleading with the Lord, will not let him go unless he bless him.

Having settled his account with the word *Rabboni*, which the telling of his beads enabled him to know when he had done, he proceeded to dispose of his other vows in a similar manner. *Allah houakbar*, ‘God most great,’ perhaps came next, and this he would go on with as with the other, repeating the words as fast as he could frame his organs to pronounce them,—and so on with respect to others. The usual number for repeating certain words is thirty-three times each: and the Mussulman’s beads are strung accordingly, three times thirty-three, with a large dividing bead between each division.

“To hear this man repeat his prayers, his variety of unconnected tones running through all the notes of the gamut, produced quite a ludicrous effect; you would say this man was caricaturing or making a farce of devotion but to look at him while engaged in the performance, nothing could be more serious or devout, or more abstracted from the world than his appearance. All his countrymen thought well of his devotions, and never manifested the slightest disposition to smile at him for his oddities; on the contrary, they said that he was a rich man, and would be a great sheikh. So great is their respect for prayer, that raillery on that topic would not be tolerated among Mussulmans.”—*Richardson’s Travels.*

FOOD AND DRESS OF THE BAPTIST.

MATT. III. 4.—“And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”

The ambassador and his suite lay encamped at Bushire for some days: during which they experienced much inconvenience from the hot currents of air, which blew from the south-east with such violence, as to level three of their tents with the ground.

The effect of this wind in parching and withering vegetables of every kind, is supposed by Mr Morier, and with great probability, to be pointed at in the image of “*corn blasted before it be grown up*” (2 Kings xix. 26,) and in that passage of the Psalms, (ciii. 15, 16,)—“*The wind passeth over it (the grass) and it is gone.*”

“This south-east wind,” Mr. Morier proceeds to remark, constantly brought with it innumerable flights of locusts: but the e which feel on this occasion, we were informed, were not of the predatory sort. They were three inches long, from the head to the extremity of the wing, and their body and head of a bright yellow. The locust which destroys vegetation is of a larger kind, and of a deep red. As soon as the wind had subsided, the plain of Bushire was covered by a great number of its poorer inhabitants, men, women and children, who came out to gather the locusts, which they eat. They also dry and salt them, and afterwards sell them in the bazaars as the food of the lowest peasantry. When boiled, the yellow ones turn red, and eat like stale or decayed shrimps. The locusts and wild honey which Saint John ate in the wilderness are perhaps particularly mentioned to shew that he fared as the poorest of men, and not as a wild man, as some interpret. Indeed the general appearance of St. John, clothed with camel’s hair, (rather skin) with a leathern girdle around his loins, and living a life of the greatest self-denial, was that of the older Jewish prophets, (Zech. xiii. 4,) and such was the dress of Elijah, the hairy man, with a girdle about his loins, described in 2 Kings i. 8. At the present moment, however, we see some resemblance of it in the dervishes who are so frequently met with in Persia: a set of men who hold forth their doctrine in open places, sometimes almost naked, with their hair and beard floating wildly about their head, and a piece of camel or deer-skin thrown over their shoulders.”—*Morier.*

THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION CONSIDERED,

*With reference to the Authority of the Clergy of the Church of England.**

By Bishop Wilson of Calcutta.

9. That our own Church, thus founded on the apostolical model, has all the requisites to a pure Church of Christ I will not stop to argue.

She has been acknowledged by the best judges to be the purest of all the Protestant communities; as her Liturgy, her offices, her Articles, and her Homilies were drawn up with the greatest deliberation and at a time when the Reformation had for nearly half a century been casting light upon every question of doctrine and discipline. They are admitted to be most scriptural. Her moderation also on all doubtful points, the decency and simplicity of her worship, the large portions of the holy Scriptures which are read in her services, her primitive administration of the sacraments, her edifying series of fasts and festivals have long formed a subject of admiration to discordant parties, as tending to protect religion at once from the inroads of heresy, superstition, and enthusiasm. Especially is her confession of faith, expanded as it is in her Homilies, a model of evangelical doctrine. She has accordingly stood forth for three centuries the bulwark of Christianity in the greatest of the Protestant nations.

10. With regard to the objections to which the aspect of the times at home may again have given a temporary importance, as they have been repeatedly answered, I will be almost wholly silent. I will only observe, that those who withdraw from a national church, because of the necessarily general language of her offices—or because of the accidental change by the

*Concluded from our last number.

lapse of time and the current of modern theological language, in the signification of a single term, regeneration—or because of decay at times in that which platform of discipline can ensure, the personal piety of her ministers—or because of supposed defects in the mode of her connection (so salutary in itself, though not essential to her as a Church) with the state which protects it—or because of the greater or less extent of dioceses, or the mode of apportioning support to Clergy—or on account of indiscreet and exaggerated and really false admissions of individual writers authorized by their superiors, appear to me not understand the grounds of communion with a visible Church of Christ; which, whilst her doctrines and confessions remain untouched, her primitive ecclesiastical polity, her scriptural Articles, her devotional and sublime Liturgy—in a word, all that constitute a pure visible Church of Christ, can never be safely altered for such defects as spring from the corruption of man, and the infirmities and imperfections of all ages, and which no changes of merely ecclesiastical polity could remove. To advance such objections merely to say that our Church is not a perfect one. Before the members of it can consistently withdraw from its communion, and by withdrawing aid, however unintentionally, to overthrow it, a case must be made out something resembling that of our reformers when they came out from the Church of Rome—That her doctrines, once simple and scriptural, have been changed by public authoritative acts and documents that she has introduced, as articles of belief, tenets and usages which partake of the nature of idolatry—that she has undermined the foundation of faith by setting up the authority of tradition as co-ordinate with that of holy Scripture—that she has virtually introduced other mediators besides the only Mediator and saviour Jesus Christ—that she has set up a claim of fallibility and exclusive salvation—that she has indignantly spurned at all attempts, however discreet, to restore her to her original principles and confessions—that she persecutes and silences all who differ from her—and that instead of retracting, she has only confirmed and made her own the accumulated errors of ages.

Here is a case clear, strong, palpable. But individual Christians to begin by speculating abstractedly on their natural rights, to magnify errors, inconveniences and abuses incident to all schemes of Church polity, to draw up theories of possible improvements, and to launch forth on a voyage of discovery, as it were, after forms of ecclesiastical discipline; as if nothing had been settled by the experience of eighteen centuries, and nothing was due to the testimony of antiquity as to matters of fact—is surely to bring on interminable confusion. A man might almost as well pretend to act thus as to his subject to civil authority. All society civil or religious, implies a partial sacrifice of our natural liberty for common benefit. And no individual should disturb the peace of Christ’s flock till he is prepared to refer these two questions: Is he ready to subvert altogether the existing order of Church government? Is he sure that he has a fair probability of substituting another decisively better? Till he can answer these fearful questions in the affirmative, the far more course is to give himself to prayer for that grace Almighty God which alone can set right the disorder whether of nations or individuals—and to seek to remedy, in the unity of the Church, particular evils they are discovered.

Let it ever be remembered that no Church effect the highest ends of its institution, except by a clergy who minister at its altar, walk worthy of their profession, as well as preach her scriptural doctrine and administer her sacramental rites. Even the Jewish Church, divinely appointed in all its parts, its general spirituality and efficiency by the deity in its pastors. The seven Asiatic Churches whose praise is in the Apocalypse, once stars in the Son of man’s right hand, are extinct from the same cause. No creeds, no articles, no ecclesiastical forms can be a substitute for a holy, diligent, and consistent clergy. In fact, the mass of mankind is always judged of a Church by the doctrine and life of its actual ministers, more than by its antiquity or formularies. And undoubtedly it is upon this conversion, edification, and salvation of each generation almost entirely depend.