

# The Transfiguration - Alfred Edersheim

## THE TRANSFIGURATION ALFRED EDERSHEIM

(St. Matt. 18:1-8; St. Mark 9:2-8; St. Luke 9:28-36.)

THE great confession of Peter, as the representative Apostle, had laid the foundations of the Church as such. In contradistinction to the varying opinions of even those best disposed towards Christ, it openly declared that Jesus was the Very Christ of God, the fulfilment of all Old Testament prophecy, the heir of Old Testament promise, the realisation of the Old Testament hope for Israel, and, in Israel, for all mankind. Without this confession, Christians might have been a Jewish sect, a religious party, or a school of thought, and Jesus a Teacher, Rabbi, Reformer, or Leader of men. But the confession which marked Jesus as the Christ, also constituted His followers the Church. It separated them, as it separated Him, from all around; it gathered them into one, even Christ; and it marked out the foundation on which the building made without hands was to rise. Never was illustrative answer so exact as this: 'On this Rock' - bold, outstanding, well-defined, immovable - 'will I build My Church.'

Without doubt this confession also marked the high-point of the Apostles' faith. Never afterwards, till His Resurrection, did it reach so high. Nay, what followed seems rather a retrogression from it: beginning with their unwillingness to receive the announcement of His decease, and ending with their unreadiness to share His sufferings or to believe in His Resurrection. And if we realise the circumstances, we shall understand at least, their initial difficulties. Their highest faith had been followed by the most crushing disappointment; the confession that He was the Christ, by the announcement of His approaching Sufferings and Death at Jerusalem. The proclamation that He was the Divine Messiah had not been met by promises of the near glory of the Messianic Kingdom, but by announcements of certain, public rejection and seeming terrible defeat. Such possibilities had never seriously entered into their thoughts of the Messiah; and the declaration of the very worst, and that in the near future, made at such a moment, must have been a staggering blow to all their hopes. It was as if they had reached the topmost height, only to be cast thence into the lowest depth.

On the other hand, it was necessary that at this stage in the History of the Christ, and immediately after His proclamation, the sufferings and the rejection of the Messiah should be prominently brought forward. It was needful for the Apostles, as the remonstrance of Peter showed; and, with reverence be it added, it was needful for the Lord Himself, as even His words to Peter seem to imply: 'Get thee behind Me; thou art a stumbling-block unto me.' For - as we have said - was not the remonstrance of the disciple in measure a re-enactment of the great initial Temptation by Satan after the forty days' fast in the wilderness? And, in view of all this, and of what immediately afterwards followed, we venture to say, it was fitting that an interval of 'six' days should intervene, or, as St. Luke puts it, including the day of Peter's confession and the night of Christ's Transfiguration, 'about eight days.' The Chronicle of these days is significantly left blank in the Gospels, but we cannot doubt, that it was filled up with thoughts and teaching concerning that Decease, leading up to the revelation on the Mount of Transfiguration.

There are other blanks in the narrative besides that just referred to. We shall try to fill them up, as best we can. Perhaps it was the Sabbath when Peter's great confession was made; and the 'six days' of St. Matthew and St. Mark become the 'about eight days' of St. Luke, when we reckon from that Sabbath to the close of another, and suppose that at even the Saviour ascended the Mount of Transfiguration with the three Apostles: Peter, James, and John. There can scarcely be a reasonable doubt that Christ and His disciples had not left the neighborhood of Cæsarea,<sup>[3680](#)</sup> and hence, that 'the mountain' must have been one of the slopes of gigantic, snowy Hermon. In that quiet semi-Gentile retreat of Cæsarea Philippi could He best teach them, and they best learn, without interruption or temptation from Pharisees and Scribes, that terrible mystery of His Suffering. And on that gigantic mountain barrier which divided Jewish and Gentile lands, and while surveying, as Moses of old, the land to be occupied in all its extent, amidst the solemn solitude and majestic grandeur of Hermon, did it seem most fitting that, both by anticipatory fact and declamatory word, the Divine attestation should be given to the proclamation that He was the Messiah, and to this also, that, in a world that is in the power of sin and Satan, God's Elect must suffer, in order that, by ransoming, He may conquer it to God. But what a background, here, for the Transfiguration; what surroundings for the Vision, what echoes for the Voice from heaven!

It was evening,<sup>[3681](#)</sup> and, as we have suggested, the evening after the Sabbath, when the Master and those three of His disciples, who were most closely linked to Him in heart and thought, climbed the path that led up to one of the heights of Hermon. In all the most solemn transactions of earth's history, there has been this selection and separation of the few to witness God's great doings. Alone with his son, as the destined sacrifice, did Abraham climb Moriah; alone did Moses behold, amid the awful loneliness of the wilderness, the burning bush, and alone on Sinai's height did he commune with God; alone was Elijah at Horeb, and with no other companion to view it than Elisha did he ascend into heaven. But Jesus, the Saviour of His people, could not be quite alone, save in those innermost transactions of His soul: in the great contest of His first Temptation, and in the solitary communings of His heart with

God. These are mysteries which the outspread wings of Angels, as reverently they hide their faces, conceal from earth's, and even heaven's vision. But otherwise, in the most solemn turning-points of this history, Jesus could not be alone, and yet was alone with those three chosen ones, most receptive of Him, and most representative of the Church. It was so in the house of Jairus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

As St. Luke alone informs us, it was 'to pray' that Jesus took them apart up into that mountain. 'To pray,' no doubt in connection with 'those sayings;' since their reception required quite as much the direct teaching of the Heavenly Father, as had the previous confession of Peter, of which it was, indeed, the complement, the other aspect, the twin height. And the Transfiguration, with its attendant glorified Ministry and Voice from heaven, was God's answer to that prayer.

What has already been stated, has convinced us that it could not have been to one of the highest peaks of Hermon, as most modern writers suppose, that Jesus led His companions. There are three such peaks: those north and south, of about equal height (9,400 feet above the sea, and nearly 11,000 above the Jordan valley), are only 500 paces distant from each other, while the third, to the west (about 100 feet lower), is separated from the others by a narrow valley. Now, to climb the top of Hermon is, even from the nearest point, an Alpine ascent, trying and fatiguing, which would occupy a whole day (six hours in the ascent and four in the descent), and require provisions of food and water; while, from the keenness of the air, it would be impossible to spend the night on the top.<sup>3682</sup> To all this there is no allusion in the text, nor slightest hint of either difficulties or preparations, such as otherwise would have been required. Indeed, a contrary impression is left on the mind.

'Up into an high mountain apart,' 'to pray.' The Sabbath-sun had set, and a delicious cool hung in the summer air, as Jesus and the three commenced their ascent. From all parts of the land, far as Jerusalem or Tyre, the one great object in view must always have been snow-clad Hermon. And now it stood out before them - as, to the memory of the traveller in the West, Monte Rosa or Mont Blanc<sup>3683</sup> - in all the wondrous glory of a sunset: first rose-colored, then deepening red, next 'the death-like pallor, and the darkness relieved by the snow, in quick succession.'<sup>3684</sup> From high up there, as one describes it,<sup>3685</sup> 'a deep ruby flush came over all the scene, and warm purple shadows crept slowly on. The sea of Galilee was lit up with a delicate greenish-yellow hue, between its dim walls of hill. The flush died out in a few minutes, and a pale, steel-coloured shade succeeded. . . . A long pyramidal shadow slid down to the eastern foot of Hermon, and crept across the great plain; Damascus was swallowed up by it; and finally the pointed end of the shadow stood out distinctly against the sky - a dusky cone of dull colour against the flush of the afterglow. It was the shadow of the mountain itself, stretching away for seventy miles across the plain - the most marvellous shadow perhaps to be seen anywhere. The sun underwent strange changes of shape in the thick vapours - now almost square, now like a domed Temple - until at length it slid into the sea, and went out like a blue spark.' And overhead shone out in the blue summer-sky, one by one, the stars in Eastern brilliancy. We know not the exact direction which the climbers took, nor how far their journey went. But there is only one road that leads from Cæsarea Philippi to Hermon, and we cannot be mistaken in following it. First, among vine-clad hills stocked with mulberry, apricot and fig-trees; then, through corn-fields where the pear tree supplants the fig; next, through oak coppice, and up rocky ravines to where the soil is dotted with dwarf shrubs. And if we pursue the ascent, it still becomes steeper, till the first ridge of snow is crossed, after which turfy banks, gravelly slopes, and broad snow-patches alternate. The top of Hermon in summer - and it can only be ascended in summer or autumn - is free from snow, but broad patches run down the sides expanding as they descend. To the very summit it is well earthed; to 500 feet below it, studded with countless plants, higher up with dwarf clumps.<sup>3686</sup>

As they ascend in the cool of that Sabbath evening, the keen mountain air must have breathed strength into the climbers, and the scent of snow - for which the parched tongue would long in summer's heat<sup>3687</sup> - have refreshed them. We know not what part may have been open to them of the glorious panorama from Hermon embracing as it does a great part of Syria from the sea to Damascus, from the Lebanon and the gorge of the Litany to the mountains of Moab; or down the Jordan valley to the Dead Sea; or over Galilee, Samaria, and on to Jerusalem and beyond it. But such darkness as that of a summer's night would creep on. And now the moon shone out in dazzling splendour, cast long shadows over the mountain, and lit up the broad patches of snow, reflecting their brilliancy on the objects around.

On that mountain-top 'He prayed.' Although the text does not expressly state it, we can scarcely doubt, that He prayed with them, and still less, that He prayed for them, as did the Prophet for his servant, when the city was surrounded by Syrian horsemen: that his eyes might be opened to behold heaven's host - the far 'more that are with us than they that are with them.'<sup>3688</sup> And, with deep reverence be it said, for Himself also did Jesus pray. For, as the pale moonlight shone on the fields of snow in the deep passes of Hermon, so did the light of the coming night shine on the cold glitter of Death in the near future. He needed prayer, that in it His Soul might lie calm and still - perfect, in the unruffled quiet of His Self-surrender, the absolute rest of His Faith, and the victory of His Sacrificial Obedience. And He needed prayer also, as the introduction to, and preparation for, His Transfiguration. Truly, He stood on Hermon. It was the highest ascent, the widest prospect into the past, present, and future, in His Earthly Life. Yet was it but Hermon at night. And this is the human, or rather the Theanthropic view of this prayer, and of its consequence.

As we understand it, the prayer with them had ceased, or it had merged into silent prayer of each, or Jesus now prayed alone and

apart, when what gives this scene such a truly human and truthful aspect ensued. It was but natural for these men of simple habits, at night, and after the long ascent, and in the strong mountain-air, to be heavy with sleep. And we also know it as a psychological fact, that, in quick reaction after the overpowering influence of the strongest emotions, drowsiness would creep over their limbs and senses. 'They were heavy - weighted - with sleep,' as afterwards at Gethsemane their eyes were weighted.<sup>36893690</sup> Yet they struggled with it, and it is quite consistent with experience, that they should continue in that state of semi-stupor, during what passed between Moses and Elijah and Christ, and also be 'fully awake,'<sup>3691</sup> 'to see His Glory, and the two men who stood with Him.' In any case this descriptive trait, so far from being (as negative critics would have it), a 'later embellishment,' could only have formed part of a primitive account, since it is impossible to conceive any rational motive for its later addition.<sup>3692</sup>

What they saw was their Master, while praying, 'transformed.'<sup>3693</sup> The 'form of God' shone through the 'form of a servant;' 'the appearance of His Face became other,'<sup>36943695</sup> it 'did shine as the sun.'<sup>36963697</sup> Nay, the whole Figure seemed bathed in light, the very garments whiter far than the snow on which the moon shone<sup>3698</sup> - 'so as no fuller on earth can white them,'<sup>3699</sup> 'glittering,'<sup>3700</sup> 'white as the light.' And more than this they saw and heard. They saw 'with Him two men,'<sup>3701</sup> whom, in their heightened sensitiveness to spiritual phenomena, they could have no difficulty in recognising, by such of their conversation as they heard, as Moses and Elijah.<sup>3702</sup> The column was now complete: the base in the Law; the shaft in that Prophetism of which Elijah was the great Representative - in his first Mission, as fulfilling the primary object of the Prophets: to call Israel back to God; and, in his second Mission, this other aspect of the Prophets' work, to prepare the way for the Kingdom of God; and the apex in Christ Himself - a unity completely fitting together in all its parts. And they heard also, that they spake of 'His Exodus - outgoing - which He was about to fulfil at Jerusalem.'<sup>3703</sup> Although the term 'Exodus,' 'outgoing,' occurs otherwise for 'death,'<sup>3704</sup> we must bear in mind its meaning as contrasted with that in which the same Evangelic writer designates the Birth of Christ, as His 'incoming.'<sup>3705</sup> In truth, it implies not only His Decease, but its manner, and even His Resurrection and Ascension. In that sense we can understand the better, as on the lips of Moses and Elijah, this about His *fulfilling* that Exodus: accomplishing it in all its fulness, and so completing Law and Prophecy, type and prediction.

And still that night of glory had not ended. A strange peculiarity has been noticed about Hermon in 'the extreme rapidity of the formation of cloud on the summit. In a few minutes a thick cap forms over the top of the mountain, and as quickly disperses and entirely disappears.'<sup>3706</sup> It almost seems as if this, like the natural position of Hermon itself, was, if not to be connected with, yet, so to speak, to form the background to what was to be enacted. Suddenly a cloud passed over the clear brow of the mountain - not an ordinary, but 'a luminous cloud,' a cloud uplit, filled with light. As it laid itself between Jesus and the two Old Testament Representatives, it parted, and presently enwrapped them. Most significant is it, suggestive of the Presence of God, revealing, yet concealing - a cloud, yet luminous. And this cloud overshadowed the disciples: the shadow of its light fell upon them. A nameless terror seized them. Fain would they have held what seemed for ever to escape their grasp. Such vision had never before been vouchsafed to mortal man as had fallen on their sight; they had already heard Heaven's converse; they had tasted Angels' Food, the Bread of His Presence. Could the vision not be perpetuated - at least prolonged? In the confusion of their terror they knew not how otherwise to word it, than by an expression of ecstatic longing for the continuance of what they had, of their earnest readiness to do their little best, if they could but secure it - make booths for the heavenly Visitants<sup>3707</sup> - and themselves wait in humble service and reverent attention on what their dull heaviness had prevented their enjoying and profiting by, to the full. They knew and felt it: 'Lord' - 'Rabbi' - 'Master' - 'it is good for us to be here' - and they longed to have it; yet how to secure it, their terror could not suggest, save in the language of ignorance and semi-conscious confusion. 'They wist not what they said.' In presence of the luminous cloud that enwrapt those glorified Saints, they spake from out that darkness which compassed them about.

And now the light-cloud was spreading; presently its fringe fell upon them.<sup>3708</sup> Heaven's awe was upon them: for the touch of the heavenly strains, almost to breaking, the bond betwixt body and soul. 'And a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My Beloved'<sup>3709</sup> Son: hear Him.' It had needed only One other Testimony to seal it all; One other Voice, to give both meaning and music to what had been the subject of Moses' and Elijah's speaking. That Voice had now come - not in testimony to any fact, but to a Person - that of Jesus as His 'Beloved Son,'<sup>3710</sup> and in gracious direction to them. They heard it, falling on their faces in awestruck worship.

How long the silence had lasted, and the last rays of the cloud had passed, we know not. Presently, it was a gentle touch that roused them. It was the Hand of Jesus, as with words of comfort He reassured them: 'Arise, and be not afraid.' And as, startled,<sup>3711</sup> they looked round about them, they saw no man save Jesus only. The Heavenly Visitants had gone, the last glow of the light-cloud had faded away, the echoes of Heaven's Voice had died out. It was night, and they were on the Mount with Jesus, and with Jesus only.

Is it truth or falsehood; was it reality or vision, or part of both, this Transfiguration-scene on Hermon? One thing, at least, must be evident: if it be a true narrative, it cannot possibly describe a merely subjective vision without objective reality. But, in that case, it would be not only difficult, but impossible, to separate one part of the narrative - the appearance of Moses and Elijah - from the

other, the Transfiguration of the Lord, and to assign to the latter objective reality,<sup>3712</sup> while regarding the former as merely a vision. But is the account true? It certainly represents primitive tradition, since it is not only told by all the three Evangelists, but referred to in 2 Peter 1:16-18,<sup>3713</sup> and evidently implied in the words of St. John, both in his Gospel,<sup>3714</sup> and in the opening of his First Epistle. Few, if any would be so bold as to assert that the whole of this history had been invented by the three Apostles, who professed to have been its witnesses. Nor can any adequate motive be imagined for its invention. It could not have been intended to prepare the Jews for the Crucifixion of the Messiah, since it was to be kept a secret till after His Resurrection; and, after the event, it could not have been necessary for the assurance of those who believed in the Resurrection, while to others it would carry no weight. Again, the special traits of this history are inconsistent with the theory of its invention. In a legend, the witnesses of such an event would not have been represented as scarcely awake, and not knowing what they said. Manifestly, the object would have been to convey the opposite impression. Lastly, it cannot be too often repeated, that, in view of the manifold witness of the Evangelists, amply confirmed in all essentials by the Epistles - preached, lived, and bloodsealed by the primitive Church, and handed down as primitive tradition - the most untenable theory seems that which imputes intentional fraud to their narratives, or, to put it otherwise, non-belief on the part of the narrators of what they related.

But can we suppose, if not fraud, yet mistake on the part of these witnesses, so that an event, otherwise naturally explicable, may, through their ignorance or imaginativeness, have assumed the proportions of this narrative? The investigation will be the more easy, that, as regards all the main features of the narrative, the three Evangelists are entirely agreed. Instead of examining in detail the various rationalistic attempts made to explain this history on natural grounds, it seems sufficient for refutation to ask the intelligent reader to attempt imagining any natural event, which by any possibility could have been mistaken for what the eyewitnesses related, and the Evangelists recorded.

There still remains the mythical theory of explanation, which, if it could be supported, would be the most attractive among those of a negative character. But we cannot imagine a legend without some historical motive or basis for its origination. The legend must be in character - that is, congruous to the ideas and expectancies entertained. Such a history as that of the Transfiguration could not have been a pure invention; but if such or similar expectancies had existed about the Messiah, then such a legend might, without intentional fraud, have, by gradual accretion, gathered around the Person of Him Who was regarded as the Christ. And this is the *rationale* of the so-called *mythical theory*. But all such ideas vanish at the touch of history. There was absolutely no Jewish expectancy that could have bodied itself forth in a narrative like that of the Transfiguration. To begin with the accessories, the idea, that the coming of Moses was to be connected with that of the Messiah, rests not only on an exaggeration, but on a dubious and difficult passage in the Jerusalem Targum.<sup>37153716</sup> It is quite true, that the face of Moses shone when he came down from the Mount; but, if this is to be regarded as the basis of the Transfiguration of Jesus, the presence of Elijah would not be in point. On the other hand - to pass over other inconsistencies - anything more un-Jewish could scarcely be imagined than a Messiah crucified, or that Moses and Elijah should appear to converse with Him on such a Death! If it be suggested, that the purpose was to represent the Law and the Prophets as bearing testimony to the Dying of the Messiah, we fully admit it. Certainly, this is the New Testament and the true idea concerning the Christ; but equally certainly, it was not and is not, that of the Jews concerning the Messiah.<sup>3717</sup>

If it is impossible to regard this narrative as a fraud; hopeless, to attempt explaining it as a natural event; and utterly unaccountable, when viewed in connection with contemporary thought or expectancy - in short, if all negative theories fail, let us see whether, and how on the supposition of its reality, it will fit into the general narrative. To begin with: if our previous investigations have rightly led us up to this result, that Jesus was the Very Christ of God, then this event can scarcely be described as miraculous - at least in such a history. If we would not expect it, it is certainly that which might have been expected. For, first, it was (and at that particular period) a necessary stage in the Lord's History, viewed in the light in which the Gospels present Him. Secondly, it was needful for His own strengthening, even as the Ministry of the Angels after the Temptation. Thirdly, it was 'good' for these three disciples to be there: not only for future witness, but for present help, and also with special reference to Peter's remonstrance against Christ's death-message. Lastly, the Voice from heaven, in hearing of His disciples, was of the deepest importance. Coming after the announcement of His Death and Passion, it sealed that testimony, and, in view of it, proclaimed Him as the Prophet to Whom Moses had bidden Israel hearken,<sup>3718</sup> while it repeated the heavenly utterance concerning Him made at His Baptism.<sup>3719</sup>

But, for us all, the interest of this history lies not only in the past; it is in the present also, and in the future. To all ages it is like the vision of the bush burning, in which was the Presence of God. And it points us forward to that transformation, of which that of Christ was the pledge, when 'this corruptible shall put on incorruption.' As of old the beacon-fires, lighted from hill to hill, announced to them far away from Jerusalem the advent of solemn feast, so does the glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shine through the darkness of the world, and tell of the Resurrection-Day.

On Hermon the Lord and His disciples had reached the highest point in this history. Henceforth it is a descent into the Valley of Humiliation and Death!

- [3680](#) According to an old tradition, Christ had left Cæsarea Philippi, and the scene of the Transfiguration was Mount Tabor. But (1) there is no notice of His departure, such as in generally made by St. Mark; (2) on the contrary, it is mentioned by St. Mark as after the Transfiguration (ix. 30); (3) Mount Tabor was at that time crowned by a fortified city, which would render it unsuitable for the scene of the Transfiguration.
- [3681](#) This is implied not only in the disciples being heavy with sleep, but in the morning scene (St. Luke 9:37) which followed.
- [3682](#) Canon *Tristram* writes: 'We were before long painfully affected by the rarity of the atmosphere.' In general, our description is derived from Canon *Tristram* ('Land of Israel'), Captain *Conder* ('Tent-Work in Palestine'), and *Bädeker-Socin's* Palästina, p. 354.
- [3683](#) One of its names, *Shenir* (Deut. 3:9; Song 4:8; Ezek. 17:5) means Mont Blanc. In Rabbinic writings it is designated as the 'snow-mountain.'
- [3684](#) *Tristram*, u.s., p. 607.
- [3685](#) *Conder*, u.s., vol. i. p. 264.
- [3686](#) Our description is based on the graphic account of the ascent by Canon *Tristram* (u.s. pp. 609-613).
- [3687](#) Prov. 25:13.
- [3688](#) 2 Kings 6:16, 17.
- [3689](#) St. Matt. 26:43; St. Mark 14:40.
- [3690](#) The word is the same. It also occurs in a figurative sense in 2 Cor. 1:8; 5:4; 1 Tim. 5:16.
- [3691](#) *Meyer* strongly advocates the rendering: 'but having kept awake.' See, however, *Godet's* remarks ad loc.
- [3692](#) *Meyer* is in error in supposing that the tradition, on which St. Luke's account is founded, amplifies the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark. With Canon *Cook* I incline to the view of *Resch*, that, judging from the style, &c., St. Luke derived this notice from the same source as the materials for the large portion from Lk 9:51 to Lk 18:17.
- [3693](#) On the peculiar meaning of the word  $\mu\omicron\pi\phi$  comp. Bishop *Lightfoot* on Philip. pp. 127-133.
- [3694](#) St. Luke.
- [3695](#) This expression of St. Luke, so far from indicating embellishment of the other accounts, marks, if anything, rather retrogression.
- [3696](#) St. Matthew.
- [3697](#) It is scarcely a Rabbinic parallel - hardly an illustration - that in Rabbinic writings also Moses' face before his death is said to have shone as the sun, for the comparison is a Biblical one. Such language would, of course, be familiar to St. Matthew.
- [3698](#) The words 'as snow,' in St. Mark 9:3, are, however, spurious - an early gloss.
- [3699](#) St. Mark.
- [3700](#) St. Luke.
- [3701](#) St. Luke.
- [3702](#) *Godet* points out the emphatic meaning of  $\omicron\ \tau\iota\ \nu\epsilon\varsigma$  in St. Luke ix. 30=*quippe qui*: they were none other than.
- [3703](#) St. Luke.
- [3704](#) In some of the Apocrypha and *Josephus*, as well as in 2 Pet. 1:15.
- [3705](#)  $\epsilon\ \sigma\omicron\delta\omicron\varsigma$ , Acts 8:24.



[3706](#) Conder, u.s. vol. i. p 265.

[3707](#) *Wünsche* (ad loc.) quotes as it seems to me, very inaptly, the Rabbinic realistic idea of the fulfilment of Isa. 4:5, 6, that God would make for each of the righteous seven booths, varying according to their merits (Baba B. 75 a) or else one booth for each (Bemid. R. 21, ed. Warsh. p. 85 a). Surely, there can be no similarity between this and the words of Peter.

[3708](#) A comparison of the narratives leaves on us the impression that the disciples also were touched by the cloud. I cannot agree with *Godet*, that the question depends on whether we adopt in St. Luke 9:34 the reading of the T.R. κε vous, or that of the Alex. α το ς.

[3709](#) The more correct reading in St. Luke seems to be 'Elect Son.'

[3710](#) St. Matthew adds, 'in Whom I am well pleased.' The reason of this fuller account is not difficult to understand.

[3711](#) St. Mark indicates this by the words: 'And suddenly, when they looked round about.'

[3712](#) This part of the argument is well worked out by *Meyer*, but his arguments for regarding the appearance of Moses and Elijah as merely a vision, because the former at least had no resurrection-body, are very weak. Are we sure, that disembodied spirits have no kind of corporeity, or that they *cannot* assume a visible appearance?

[3713](#) Even if that Epistle were not St. Peter's, it would still represent the most ancient tradition.

[3714](#) St. John 1:P14.

[3715](#) On Ex. 7:1-25

[3716](#) Moses and the Messiah are placed side by side, the one as coming from the desert, the other from Rome. 'This one shall lead at the head of a cloud, and that one shall lead at the head of a cloud, the Memra of Jehovah leading between them twain, and they going' - as I would render it - 'as one' (*Ve-innun mehalkhin kachada*), or, as some render it, 'they shall walk together.' The question here arises, whether this is to be understood as merely figurative language, or to be taken literally. If literally, does the Targum refer to a kind of heavenly vision, or to something that was actually to take place, a kind of realism of what Philo had anticipated (see vol. i. p. 82)? It may have been in this sense that Fr. Tayler renders the words by '*in culmine nubis equitabit*.' But on careful consideration the many and obvious incongruities involved in it seem to render a literal interpretation well nigh impossible. But all seems not only plain but accordant with other Rabbinic teaching (see vol. i. p. 176), if we regard the passage as only indicating a parallelism between the first and the second Deliverer and the deliverances wrought by them. Again, although the parallel is often drawn in Rabbinic writings between Moses and Elijah, I know only one passage, and that a dubious one, in which they are conjoined in the days of the Messiah. It occurs in Deb. R. 3 (seven lines before the close of it), and is to this effect, that, because Moses had in this world given his life for Israel, therefore in the aeon to come, when God would send Elijah the prophet, they two should come, *keachath*, either 'together' or 'as one,' the proof passage being Nah. i. 3, 'the whirlwind' there referring to Moses, and 'the storm' to Elijah. Surely, no one would found on such a basis a Jewish mythical origin of the Transfiguration.

[3717](#) *Godet* has also aptly pointed out, that the injunction of silence on the disciples as to this event is incompatible with the mythical theory. It could only point to a real event, not to a myth.

[3718](#) Deut. 18:15.

[3719](#) St. Matt. 3:17.