No. 69.

On "the unclean spirit" mentioned. Matt. xi. 15.
Matth. XII. 25, 24, 43. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out, and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

This passage, in order to be understood correctly, needs considerable explanation, as like many other passages, it is formed by the necessity of knowing & taking into the account the feelings, opinions, prejudices of the times, &c.
Sacrifice, appeared, y. When the books of the N.T. were written, it would be gain a clear idea of the sense of many parts of Scripture. This plan, that our Lord, in the course of His instructions, very often adapted His expressions to the mass of notions already existing in the minds of His hearers, what he might make His doctrine better understood. Indeed this accommodation to the situation of the mind of those, whom he taught, was in an exigent degree necessary; for if he had not used the current language of the times, the great mass of the people, at least, would not have understood him. If he had not attached to morals the same ideas employed them in the same sense that they did, they would have turned away from him, and had no regard to the admonitions of this heavenly teacher.

This habitual manner of our Saviour is exemplified in the text, the language of parables, to pedantry, to Jewish language, is adapted to those among whom it was used. It was an opinion universally prevalent among the Jews, that all extraordinary diseases, especially such as affected the mind, were produced by the agency of evil spirits. This opinion indeed was not peculiar to the Jews. They probably derived it from the heathen nations, who surrounded them, with whom at different times they had had intercourse. It is well known that the heathen nations, called bare their spirits to the rank of deities, & supposed them to exert a direct & immediate agency in the production of certain diseases; & they even attributed to them the power of entering the bodies of mankind, & causing poisoning or madness. This notion was doubtless the spring of ignorance & of imaginative. What men cannot account for, they naturally attribute to the invisible & mysterious agency; as in these times, they were unacquainted with the operation...
of natural causes, as have been gradually develop-
led by the discoveries of improvements of science,
they easily fell into the superstition of ascribing
any person's sickness or disorder to the action of
spirits and sorcerers. Thus their imagina-
tion had peopled the world above them. This
opinion was adopted by the doctrine of the real
possession of demons, as believed by the Jews,
and by many other sects in the history of
human society. This was a melancholy proof
of their perverseness to adopt the principles and
practices of their idolatries and superstitious neigh-
bours. At the time of our Saviour, the learning of
the Greeks was much studied and admired by
the Jews, and had infected all classes of
people. It is therefore natural to suppose that
like their neighbours, they believed in
real possessions, they would like them,
and that they did not differ in their doctrine to human spirits, since
after their decease they were supposed to
still have an influence over the living.

And that, as a fact, did so, we are taught
by the following testimony of history.

I have promised these observations in order to
explain the expressions and the manner of speaking
used in our text. "When," says our Saviour, "the unclean
spirit is gone out of a man, he, i.e., the spirit, walk-
through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none." It is plain, that by "the spirit going out
of a man" is meant the departure of the disorder
with the superstition of the times attributed to
the agency of an evil spirit, and to illustrate the
latter part of the verse, we should observe that
it was a common opinion of the Jews that these
geni or spirits were fond of wandering in debt-
less places, and were evil, restless, and uneasy. Our
Saviour proceeds in the next verse to represent the
unclean spirit as saying, "I will return into
my house, from whence I came out, and when he was to
findeth it empty, except it be cleansed, i.e., I will
return to the man whom I have left, and resume
my possession of him. The meaning of this song,
that the disorder returns upon him, as had been
just escaped from it. It is personified under the
name of the unclean spirit. & the spirit is represen-
ted metaphorically as returning to go & remain inside
the soul. But this, & takes with
him seven other spirits more wicked than him-
self. & they enter in & dwell there. & the last state
of that man is worse than the first." By the
spirit taking with him seven others more wicked
than himself, we are to understand merely,
that the disorder, when it comes upon the man,
the second time, comes with much greater vio-
ence. & the evil spirit strengthens his forces, & re-
turns with greater fury. In this figurative way
it was common with the Jews to represent this
thing. Thus "the last state of that man becom-
emos than the first" i.e. the disease returns upon
him with greater violence at last, than it did
before. If the language in the whole of this
passage were stripped of the highly figurative
language, in which it is clothed, by any of acceola-
tion to the prevailing opinions of the people to
which it was addressed, & if the reader, whose task
was intended to convey, were expressed in our own lan-
guage, & in modern times, we should say, "when
a disorder is expelled of the person cured, does
not exert especial care, the same disease returns,
& the relative is much more dangerous & difficult
to be remedied than the original disorder."

Such is the meaning of the passage considered by
itself, without any relation to the context. We
seek now to enquire into its application in the con-
text in which it stands. For what purpose did our
for introduce the comparison, nor have endeavor
to explain?

It is evident, that the allusion was intended for
the Jews of that time; for at the end of the whole
passage as we have read, it is added, "even so
shall it be also unto this wicked generation." It
may be considered as intended he art generally,
that as the disorder which left the demoniac re-
turns upon him with sevenfold violence,
so notwithstanding the Jews exhibited some appearance of repentance, reformation at the preaching of John the Baptist, 
and the ministry of Jesus; yet the tables would return upon them with double violence of bringing down upon them heavier judgments. But probably the application is more particular than this. If we look back to the preceding verses we find that the scribes and pharisees had demanded of a sign from heaven, as a proof of his divine mission. By this they did not intend to request one of those miracles, so common daily performing, but a brilliant display of power in the heavens, as like the thunderflash might humble the mind into belief of submission. It gives them no sign from heaven, but refers to the similarity in one respect between the life of the prophet Jonas and his own fate. He then intimate to them, that even if he should make this grand display of power, they desired a sign of a while, that spirit of unbelief, as like an evil demon possessed their hearts yet such was their perversity, that this spirit was
return with multiplied force, gain full possession of their hearts, 
and they would become more stubbornly sceptical, than they were before. Thus their last state would be worse than the first.

On the whole, another address is contained if we look back still further into the contents of the chapter, from which the text is taken. We find that she had excited his ire in casting out a demon, according to the explanation. I have given of this circumstance that he had healed some diseased, probably insane wretches, unable to deny the fact. That he had performed this miraculous cure, endeavored to destroy the impression of this wonderful act was un
allowed to have on the minds of the people, by attributing this power of working miracles, with prowess, to the Beelzebub, whom they supposed to be the prince of the demons. This gross calumny Jesus wipes, proves in their own principles that the accusation is wholly ridiculous and groundless. Yet this reduces them to silence, as he does not bring them to
connection. His conversation is interrupted by the
demanding of him a sign from heaven... we have already adverted... having replied to this demand, resumes his thoughts in particular, in... with the first charge, wh... he had just refuted... proceed to estimate that through Habai... the clamors of their unbelief, yet it... it would return upon them that... if their... increased by their disaffection... It is as if... had addressed them these... observe & estimate as... you are, although the striking character of some... cases; by the power of my words & deeds, may... while astonish you, disconcert your... if you apply you... the temporary belief that I am the Messiah, yet own your deep-rooted unbelief & your malice... pride will return; will daily increase, & leave you... in a worse state than you were in at first. Thus... you will resemble a man, whom you suppose to be possessed with an evil spirit, i.e. a man... mind of body, whose disorder, after having... is, after having... brought upon him with increases... & this condition becomes worse than ever..." In this way..."
We see therefore, that when it is said to have cast out devils, the meaning is not that the persons afflicted were really possessed with an evil spirit, but that he was troubled with a disorder, which was attributed to the agency of a demon. You may see in speaking to or of such a person, & the language in giving an account of the event, use the language whereby else in their time used. This was very natural & indeed almost necessary. But we are not to consider their use of this language as intended to counteract the demon not in some ages has been generally received, that God suffers evil spirits to enter into the bodies of mankind, & to harass, & torture them. Scripture gives no example to any such notions; & the language which has been supposed to favor them, is to be understood only as an accommodation to the mode of speaking in the subject which was then generally prevalent. God rules the universe both of mind & matter by the eternal laws of his government. He has constituted certain causes with their powers to produce certain effects. His omnipotent arm is stretched over the world, & under the shadow of his protection every being, from the ant that creeps on the dust to the angel that causes his head to ring t' the praises of his God in heaven, may find security & safety. Let us not suppose that God would give up his rational creatures to be the sport & sport of his irrational creatures. Let us look to & trust in him, as the great, infinite Spirit, that rules the universe.

From the passage, which we have considered, some important moral & religious instruction may be drawn. We are told that evil spirits, when they return, "take with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself," & they enter in & dwell there, in the last state of that man is worse than the first. This may be applied as a very powerful description of the condition of one, who has begun to break off every habit, & who has in some degree rescued himself from their dreadful dominion, but who after a time...
trust in weak & feeble condition: the smallest irregularities indulgence may introduce a relapse, after your strength has been already so much embarrassed by the attack. It becomes you to take much care of your health, to avoid the company of the places, where your habits have been indulged, lest they should bring to your remembrance your sinful pleasures, & revive the inclination to indulge in them. Prevent every temptation to return to your former course of life, though it be but for a moment. Remember, you have but just escaped from a fire, & do not then go back & plunge headlong into it.

Again, we may learn from the text, the danger of suffering our minds to remain idle. We are told that when the unclean spirits returned, they found the house "empty, ready for their reception; there were no inhabitants there to oppose them, if they entered in." Such is our state. If our hearts are empty, unoccupied with any good purposes & good thoughts, they will become a fit residence for the evil spirits. Sooner or later, they will be open to the reception of these devilish passions, & corrupt desires, & have ever threatening & seeking to obtain admission. The more honest & holy the man is, the more the most liable to be the prey of every sort of vice; he is in a state of mind helpless, in the face of dangerous temptations & corrupt desires, & if he be not prepared to resist the snare of the seductions of earthly pleasure, he keeps open minds & affections constantly exposed to insidiously employed evils & pleasures. Hence, every avenue to temptation & sin must shut up every avenue to temptation, & thus like some great Master in all the works of Him who sent us into the world while it is day, knowing that the night cometh, when no man can work." July, 1820.
Dear Father, wilt thou give us a heart to search, and understanding to perceive the truths of thy Holy Word, enable us to study & to comprehend the sense of the sacred volume, & to derive such instruction from all the good lessons which it teaches. O may we grapple with earnestness against the danger of bad habits, & when we have once escaped from those powers, may we besaved from turning to them again. Preserve us from idleness, from the waste of time, & from the abuse of our privileges. Assist us in the future course of our lives, that we may ever walk in the path of duty, advance with fidelity to thy service, & strive in all things to be the true disciples of our ascended Lord, who, when on earth went about doing good. Give us grace to consecrate our lives to thee in all the ways of well doing, & may we
At home July 30th, 1820. afternoon.

so pass through the discipline of this life, as finally to inherit the blessing of a better an endless life. through J. E. P.