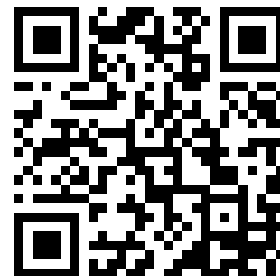


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*DR. COKE'S*  
COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.  
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**The REV. THOMAS COKE L.L.D.**  
*of the University of Oxford.*

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COMMENTARY  
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ON THE

# NEW TESTAMENT,

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By THOMAS COKE, LL.D.  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

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THE  
GENERAL PREFACE.

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THE first of all truths, and the foundation of all religion, is, That there is a God. This truth is manifest to us at all times and in all places, and seems to spring from the bottom of our hearts. It is almost as natural for us to believe that there is a God, as it is for us to be men; and there never has existed a nation (as was remarked by a celebrated heathen) but has acknowledged and worshipped a Divinity; inasmuch that it appears as if the Gentiles had inclined to admit of several gods through the fear of not having any. Man, indeed, the slave of his own corruption, has been too often willing to shrink from the knowledge of a truth that thwarted him in his pursuits, and kept his mind in awe; but the impression is too strong and too deep ever to be entirely effaced. If, therefore, sometimes the tongue dares to utter that there is no God, it either absolutely contradicts the thoughts of the heart, or is led away by the irregular motions of the soul, exhibiting rather its desire, or its wish, than what it really feels.

Can we indeed avoid feeling and acknowledging, that a world so beautiful and so perfect as that which we behold, and of which ourselves make so considerable a part, must be the work of a Supreme Intelligence? Again, can we at the same time observe in it so many imperfections, without being convinced that it subsists not of itself, either collectively, or in its parts? For, to exist of itself, and independent of a first principle, a primary cause, is to have *within* itself the chief of all perfections, in which all the rest are included: now, can the matter of which the universe consists have in itself this perfection, this excellence,—that matter which is as it were the centre of all imperfection?

It is evident, therefore, that there is a primary Being, existing of himself, existing before the world, and by whom the world was produced. Now this Being is neither body nor matter at all; since matter cannot exist of itself, having neither knowledge, wisdom, nor power; all which must necessarily have been united, and have acted in concert, for the production of an universe which manifests in all its parts such wonderful design. Neither is this first Being a limited or finite spirit; for, to produce any thing where nothing existed before,

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before, and to form without materials an entire world, cannot be the work of a finite being. This first Being must therefore be an infinite Spirit, who, with an existence from everlasting, possesses all imaginable perfections without any mixture of imperfection. 1. He possesses *Unity*; for he must be an imperfect being if not superior to all others. 2. *Power*, to do whatsoever he will. 3. *Wisdom*, to will nothing, and to do nothing, unworthy of infinite intelligence. 4. *Goodness*, to reveal himself to his creatures; and so of the rest. Now this infinitely perfect Being is GOD.

This first truth naturally leads us to a second; *viz.* That, “since there is a God, there ought to be a religion.” The idea of a primary Being and a first Principle throws all others into a state of dependence, and absorbs all the ideas which a creature can have of his own existence, and of his own perfections, to such a degree, that when from the contemplation of God we descend to ourselves, we hardly perceive our own existence, and are compelled to acknowledge that we are nothing. The brightness of the divine perfections, collectively considered, raises us to admiration, and exhausts all our ideas. Each perfection in particular should incite a sentiment of religion in the soul: his power impresses respect, obedience, submission; his goodness excites our love; his justice leads us to observe his law, through fear of its threats; his mercy fills us with peace and joy; his truth engages us to be faithful to him; and, finding in him all the good of which we can form an idea, all our desires centre in him; and the possessing of him becomes our only happiness. This is the character of every regenerate soul, but of no other. For, although the nature of God and of his divine perfections should thus lead us to religion; and though we have various intellectual faculties, and a heart which, narrow and limited as it is, cannot be satisfied and filled without the possession of infinite and eternal good; yet our understanding is still so imperfect, our heart by nature so completely and constantly inclined to error in all spiritual matters, that we cannot of ourselves form the plan of a religion, a worship proper to be offered to God, which would not rather be an insult to his majesty than an acceptable service. Being born with vicious inclinations, accustomed to behold terrestrial objects alone, and by nature spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, we confound the divine perfections with the gross ideas which occupy our own darkened understandings\*.

It is therefore evident, that man is not capable of forming a religion for himself: his views are too limited to reach so high; and he looks too much to himself in all his actions, to arrange a plan of worship, faith, and duty, which points him to God alone, and in the study and exercise of which he incessantly beholds himself with humility and self-abasement. Now, since God alone can perfectly know himself, and be acquainted with the extent of our ignorance and corruption, so he alone is capable of giving us the form of a religion worthy of his majesty, and suitable to our real interests; and the more so, as it is one of the

\* See this subject fully treated in the Introduction.

most essential parts of religion, to make man forego his natural inclinations, to be willing to renounce his own sentiments and thoughts, and submit them entirely to God, and to make God's will the only rule of his own. The very heathen, vain as they were of their own knowledge, yet sometimes expressed a diffidence, and acknowledged the necessity of recurring to the Divinity to learn the true method of honouring and serving him; and on this account the wisest of their legislators, as Solon among the Greeks, Numa Pompilius among the Romans, and some others, to give greater authority to their laws, and make them more esteemed and respected by the people, pretended to have received them from some of their divinities, with whom they had a close connection and particular communications. But, if these fictions were founded on a general opinion, that religion is the work of God, and not of man, it originates also from another general idea, included in the idea of a God, that, goodness being an essential attribute of Deity, he loves to reveal himself to his creatures: and indeed it is for this reason that God reveals himself to men, and that he enters and teaches them himself, and gives them a knowledge of the truths which he draws from his own inexhaustible treasures.

Now this is precisely what God has done. The lights which he had communicated to the soul of the first man being extinguished by sin, God takes pity upon him; and, instead of what may be called natural religion, which was suitable to man in a state of innocence, God reveals to him another religion, conformable to man in a state of sin, promising him a Saviour; which promise should be his consolation, and revive his hopes. Thus God continued afterwards to manifest himself, in a peculiar manner, to certain chosen persons, whom he preferred to all others as the depositaries of his divine truths. At length, having selected the family of Abraham, he collected into one code of laws and of religion all the mysteries of salvation, and all the worship that he demanded from mankind; and communicated these laws to the Jews, whom he made his chosen people for the purpose.

Moses was the first who reduced the laws of God to writing. He, however, was soon followed by other prophets, to whom God miraculously revealed himself in various ways: and thus, by little and little, from age to age, the Church has seen the whole canon of the Scripture completed by the gradual labours of divinely-inspired men, Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles.

We must either have never read the holy Scriptures with an ordinary degree of attention, or else have no taste for heavenly things, if we cannot discern and acknowledge, that God, and not man, speaks in these sacred writings, and is the primary and real author of them. We find in them a majesty, a grandeur, which surprises, and gives such an elevation to the soul, as it experiences on the reading of no other book: and that majesty is at the same time so tempered with mildness, and so adapted to our weakness, that the enlightened mind

can readily discern, that it is God who is speaking to man, and, without lessening his own greatness, perfectly adapting himself to our weak capacities.

There are three characteristics, among others, peculiar to the Scriptures; which establish the truths above delivered, and ought to convince the most stubborn mind that their origin is divine. The first is, the knowledge which the Scripture gives us of God; the second, what it teaches man of himself, and the instructions that it gives him to lead him to perfect holiness; and the third, the predictions with which it abounds, all of which have been followed by the event, predicted. Let us consider these leading points of the Scriptures, and insist upon each of them as far as may be consistent with the extent and design of our Preface.

1. The Scripture everywhere presents us with such a grand idea of God, that, were we to collect all that the most celebrated and admired sages and philosophers of antiquity have said upon the subject, and separate their purest meditations from the wretched load of fictions and reveries by which they are disgraced, we should find nothing to compare with the knowledge of God presented in the Scripture. What, indeed, can be conceived more noble, or can give a higher idea of the power of God, than the manner in which Moses relates the history of the creation, with which the Scripture opens? There we behold a God, who existed of himself before the world, and from all eternity, drawing from the bosom of his power a multitude of beings, which hitherto were absolutely a nonentity. It costs him but a word to bring any thing into existence. *Let there be light*, said he, *and there was light* immediately. *Let there be a firmament*, or *a heaven*, whose immensity even our imagination cannot measure; and by that word the heaven is made. By the operation of four other words added to the two first, the stars are formed in the firmament, the earth and the sea receive their being, birds are produced in the air, and fishes in the sea; the earth is furnished with plants, trees, and animals; and from her own dust and clay, at the fiat of the same God, arises man, who is to rule over all, as being the last work and the master-piece of the Creator.

While the Scripture thus lays open to us the wonders of God's power in the creation of the universe, it also manifests, in a manner equally striking, the infinite wisdom of God in the government of the world. According to the Scripture, it is God who sustains every creature, and turns them as he thinks proper in the execution of his will; he is the absolute master of all events, directing them all for the advancement of his glory. Now this is so essential to God, that to suppose a god without a general and particular providence, as most of the heathens did, is either, with the Epicurean school, to conceive a god who is deficient either in wisdom or power, and who leaves the world to itself; or, with that of Zeno and most of the other sects, a god dependent on a kind of blind destiny or fate, and who, unable to break the chain of second causes, is led and carried away against his own will.



The other perfections of the Divine Nature, such as his holiness, his goodness, his mercy, his justice, his truth, are in the Scripture no less forcibly delineated than his power and his providence; but we need not enlarge upon these topics, as they are sufficiently known. We will therefore propose two or three questions to those who deny the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Do they think that God has not the power of revealing himself secretly to those whom he thinks proper to honour with that high favour? If they doubt it, they might as well believe that there is no God; and, if they believe that God is able to do this, what difficulty can they find in believing that a God who is infinitely good, and infinitely communicative of good, (for this is a property of infinite goodness,) may not have really thus revealed himself? On this subject they have in their hands a book, which for near 4000 years has publicly passed in the world for Divine Revelation, wherein are contained those things which at different times and in various places have been revealed by God to sundry persons. This book speaks of God as we might expect God himself would have spoken, on the supposition that he were pleased to make himself known by revelation, or by his word; this is an evident truth, and no candid person will dispute it: why then refuse to own the divinity of the Scriptures in the grand and sublime idea of God which they every where exhibit?

2. The second mark of the divinity of the Scripture is, "that it teaches man to know himself, and instructs him how to attain to perfect righteousness." Man has never thoroughly known himself by the powers of nature; he has ever supposed himself less corrupt and less miserable than he really is. The Scripture, accompanied by the Spirit of God, shews him the origin of his blindness, and the depth of his corruption. It informs him what he was; makes him sensible what he is; and, thus placing the first state of man in opposition to the second, it dissipates the illusions with which he is continually deceiving himself, prevents him from boasting of his condition and qualities, confounds and debases him, makes him sigh and mourn, and draws from him such lamentations as these: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It speaks to him of sin in a manner sufficient to inspire every attentive hearer with horror; shewing him that sin provokes the wrath of God against the sinner, that his justice pursues him to conviction, that his mouth pronounces the sentence of death, that thereupon hell opens, and the sinner is thrust therein; to suffer without end the torments which an all-powerful God is able in his vengeance to inflict. To this degrading picture of sin, presented in the Bible, the same Scripture contrasts the beauty and excellence of a holy life; shewing continually its reward, its necessity, its utility; and it is so diffuse, and at the same time so earnest and so impressive, in the instructions which it gives on this important subject of virtue, piety, and zeal, that it can proceed only from a Being infinitely holy, and anxious for the happiness of his creatures. The mind of man is too much in league with his heart, to admit of his imposing upon himself such severe laws, that allow not of the smallest fault, that leave him not even the liberty of cherishing in secret the

the inclinations in which he delights, and which gratify him in the most sensible manner,—  
concupiscence and pride. The most rigid philosophers never went so far, nor could human  
nature attain to it. Of what nature then must be that book which leads us so far; and  
whence can have proceeded a light so clear, instruction so holy? Is it not worthy of God?  
Or, supposing once more that God were pleased to manifest himself, and to give laws and  
precepts to man, as we have shewn that his wisdom and his goodness incline him to do, is  
it not thus that he would speak?

3. If the spirit of incredulity yield not before the first two evidences of the inspiration of  
the Scripture, and it be necessary, in order to dispel all the clouds which it forms around  
the truth from whose light it shrinks, to produce from the Scripture itself, a third mark of  
its Divine origin, this will be no difficult point. It is only to read: predictions will be met  
with of every kind, except only of that species which might be attributed to human pene-  
tration, in matters regarding policy; or to human wisdom, in matters purely natural, and  
which are submitted to certain rules in nature, as the eclipses of the sun and moon, &c.  
The books of Moses are full of predictions, the events of which are so concealed in futurity,  
that none but God, to whom the most distant time is always present, could possibly have  
discerned them, have drawn them from such profound obscurity, and revealed them to man  
in the way of prophecy. In the book of Genesis, we see Noah threatening the earth with  
a general deluge, whose waters were to change the face of it entirely, and to drown the  
world; and one hundred and twenty years after a prediction so strange, so unheard of, so  
improbable (if we look no farther than natural principles, than human reasoning), the event  
justified the prophecy. A man of a hundred years of age, his wife barren and old, receives  
a promise that at the end of a year they shall have a son; that from that son shall proceed a  
powerful people, numerous as the stars of heaven; that this people shall however be at first  
in bondage for several ages; that at the end of four hundred years, they shall recover their  
liberty, and possess the land of Canaan. All this comes to pass: Isaac is born of Abraham  
and Sarah; from Isaac spring the patriarchs; the patriarchs become a numerous people in  
Egypt; they are long kept in bondage in that country; at length their misfortunes cease,  
and they become masters of all the land of Canaan. Jacob, on his death-bed, points out  
to each of his children what should happen to their descendants and their families, for five  
or six hundred years to come, and much longer; and, as if he were reading in a book  
concerning events already past, he tells Judah, that from him shall proceed kings, and that  
the sceptre shall be long in his family; he tells Zebulun that his posterity should inhabit the  
sea-coasts, and be in the neighbourhood of Sidon. We will proceed no farther here with  
the predictions of the patriarch; but will ask those who dispute the divinity of the Holy  
Scriptures, whence this old man, who had spent his life in feeding sheep, and always dwelt  
in tents, could have learned that his seed should become a mighty nation; that the posterity  
of Judah, who was not his eldest but his fourth son, should sit upon the throne; and that the

tribe of Zebulun, emigrating at a distant day with the rest, from Egypt, where Jacob was then talking with them, should go and settle in Palestine, seizing on that particular part of it which forms the coasts of the sea of Galilee, and possess lands nigh to the ancient and famous city of Sidon? Here we find nothing human; all is divine.

These prophecies, and many others of a similar kind, which respected the establishment of the Jews in the land of Canaan, were no sooner accomplished, than, that people growing insolent in prosperity, God was angry with them, and, to punish their ingratitude, resolved to deliver them up to the king of Babylon, to be carried into captivity. The prophets foretold this fatal revolution long before it happened: their predictions were accomplished even to the minutest circumstances; and Babylon saw this celebrated people led captive, their kings and their princes in chains, according as the prophets had foretold. Yet God had said, that he would not leave his people long under the Babylonish yoke; that at the end of just seventy years the Jews should be set at liberty, and restored to their former possessions; and all this has been accomplished accordingly. The books of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, and of Ezekiel, are full of predictions of the same kind; and that of Daniel, among others, contains such clear prophecies of the rise, growth, and fall of the famous monarchies of the Persians and Medes, the Greeks and the Romans, with a thousand remarkable circumstances, that we must either profess to deny the most established facts, and obstinately withstand every species of proof, or we must acknowledge that it is God who speaks in the book which contains all these particulars.

A few words now upon the prophecies relating to the Messiah. The books of the Old Testament are full of these; we find them almost in every page. This Messiah was to proceed from the tribe of Judah, and from the family of David; and he was to come into the world while the Jews were in subjection to a foreign power, 490 years after their return from the Babylonish captivity. These are ancient prophecies, upon the faith of which a whole nation depended for many ages; this is certain, and cannot be disputed. Jerusalem was to be destroyed soon after the coming of the Messiah, and the Jews were to be consumed by the wrath of heaven. Daniel and Malachi, two of their prophets, are explicit on these things; (see the ixth chapter of Daniel, and the latter end of Malachi). All this we see also came to pass. But who could have foretold it so long before, except He who inhabits eternity, and to whom all things past, present, and to come, are open and clear? It must therefore be truly the book of God which contains these astonishing predictions.

The proofs relating to the divinity of the Old Testament are equally applicable to the New; because the doctrine is constantly the same. There is the same relation between them as the events have to the prophecies, and the prophecies to the events; thus, if the event throws a light upon the prophecy, and proves its truth, so does the prophecy reflect its light upon the occurrence, and point out the finger of God. But, besides this perfect agree-  
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ment of the New Testament with the Old, so that they may be regarded as the same work, the New Testament has the same marks of a divine origin as we have been tracing in the Old ; and the characteristics are not less striking. 1. God makes himself known, as in the books of the prophets, by every means which can give us a true idea of his greatness and of his infinite perfections ; but he manifests himself in a manner still more clear, luminous, and extensive, than he had done under the old dispensation. 2. Man is here, through divine grace, more than ever brought to a knowledge of himself ; and is taught so perfectly to deny himself, so absolutely to renounce every kind of vice and sin ; he gains such a love of holiness, such a lively affection towards God, that the renewed heart finds no need to ask whether this be the voice of God or of man. Lastly, the New Testament contains prophecies as well as the Old ; and these are so clear and so striking, that we may sometimes doubt whether we are reading a prophecy or a history. The 24th chapter of St. Matthew, and the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 21st of St. Luke, are incontestable proofs of this truth ; but we shall refrain from producing any more examples, not choosing to detain the reader longer upon facts which are so well known.

It is clear, then, that the Scripture is the Book of God ; that it was dictated by God to the prophets and apostles ; and that God himself speaks therein. This being the case, we are indispensably obliged to give attention to what it contains, and to believe all that it says, whatever difficulties the understanding may meet with ; because the first law and notion of reason itself is, that we should make the light of reason subordinate to that of God. If a man relates any thing to us, we are under no obligation to believe it any farther than it appears to us credible, because a man may deceive us, or may be himself deceived ; but it cannot be thus with God, who is the essence of truth and goodness. All that reason requires upon these occasions is, that we do not receive as the word of God that which is not so ; and that we carefully examine whether the words of Scripture have in themselves, independent of our prejudices, such or such a meaning. If, after such an examination, it appears that the Scripture teaches a doctrine which overpowers and staggers our reason, the difficulty of believing that doctrine is no longer a reason for disbelieving it ; but we are guilty of stubbornness, pride, and rebellion against God, if we reject it. The Holy Scripture, for instance, informs us, according to reason, that there is but one God ; but it teaches, besides, that there are three persons united in the divine essence. God, who only half unveils himself (if we may use the expression) in nature, which is the book of reason, has therein shewn us his power, his wisdom, his goodness, and some other of his attributes ; but has not shewn us that his Divinity, which is unity and simplicity itself, subsists in three persons ; of which one is the Father, another the Son, and the third the Holy Ghost : it is in the Scripture that he reveals to us this profound truth : and, appearing as from behind the veil, he exposes at once to the eye of faith the Trinity of Persons in the most perfect simplicity and unity of nature. The texts which teach this mysterious truth are everywhere to be found,

found, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of the Revelation. When God is pleased to make man, we hear him speak in the plural number, *Let us make man in our own image*; and soon after, when, scorning the mad temerity of this man, who thought that by tasting of the tree of knowledge he should become like God, we find the Lord saying from heaven, *the man is become as one of us*. In vain will the unbelieving Jew, and the heretical Antitrinitarian, labour to elude the force of these passages, wherein the idea of plurality so naturally presents itself to the mind: they can never accomplish it. This plurality, thus early pointed out, even from the creation of the world, in terms somewhat vague and general, is in the following books restrained and fixed to the number three; which are, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Respecting the Father no difficulty arises, since to the first Person unbelievers confine the whole unity and simplicity of the divine nature. With regard to the Son, the proofs are everywhere to be found, even in the books of the Old Testament, as we shall shew a little farther on; and the New Testament is full of him. With respect to the Holy Ghost, we have evident proofs of his divinity, as well as of the whole Trinity; Acts, v. 3, 4. 1 Cor. ii. 10. Rev. i. 4, &c. There are also express indications of the Trinity in the command which is given us to baptize *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; and in that celebrated passage, 1 John, v. 7. where it is said, *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one*.

Does the mind require so many assurances that this truth is taught in Scripture; and might we not have believed our eyes without seeing it so constantly before us? Finding it, however, in so many places, and revealed in so many different ways, all difficulties as to believing it must sink under the weight and authority of revelation; and whatever repugnance the mind, ever proud and stubborn, may find in yielding to it, reason tells us that we should believe God rather than reason; and that, since God must know himself infinitely better than we by the weakness of our understandings can possibly know him, it were unexampled presumption and folly to contend that God is not what he himself affirms that he is, or that he can be only just what our imagination tells us he ought to be.

It is the same with the other mysteries against which we have seen, and still do see, incredulity raise its head: a God-Man, for instance; and this God-Man redeeming the world by his death, and washing away the sins of men in his blood. It is not possible, says the heretic, who requires all truths to be brought to the level of reason, and who despises all that go beyond it; it is not possible that a God can be a man, and that the Divinity, which is an infinite essence, whose glory and majesty absorbs all our thoughts, can be united with a nature like our own, abject, capable of suffering, mortal, so as that the two natures should be but one and the same person. But whether reason can comprehend this, or not, is not the question; God has said that the thing is so; and he has affirmed it in so many parts of the sacred writings, with so much precision and clearness, that nothing in the whole Scripture is more clear and

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express. *The Word*, which is God, says an apostle, (John, i. 14.) *was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* God, says another, (Acts, xx. 28.) *hath purchased the church with his own blood.* And in another place (Phil. ii. 6, 7.), *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.* And again in another place (1 Tim. iii. 16.), *Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.* This therefore is a fact, a certain fact, according to the testimony of these apostles; now we do not reason upon a fact, but we believe it upon the evidence which is given of it, or else we reject the testimony. The heretic dares not pronounce against the Scripture; he believes, or affects to believe, its inspiration; and neither the Heathen, nor the Jew, nor he whom we are pleased to call the Free-thinker, can shake its authority after the proofs that we have brought in its favour. It only remains, therefore, to believe the incarnation upon the express word of God, without requiring our reason fully to comprehend it; since the best use that we can make of reason is, so to employ it as never to make use of it against God, or to call in question the truth of his word.

The chief object of the Holy Scriptures is always the Messiah; and, were we to enlarge our Preface beyond its proper bounds, we might shew that, from the time of Adam's transgression and fall, God had ever the Messiah in view, and that all the most grand events which are related in Scripture, and chiefly God's deep and mysterious dealings with the patriarchs and the ancient people of Israel, had a particular reference to him. But it must be recollected, that we are not writing a treatise on these points, but a Preface. Avoiding, therefore, every thing which might lead us from our immediate design, we shall only touch upon those texts wherein God has spoken of the Messiah; and this merely in a general way, to note the nature, the consequences, and the progress of the revelations which God has given of him, but not in this place to investigate those passages themselves. The first, which is as old as the fall of man, was that wherein God assured our first parents, *that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, but that the serpent should bruise his heel:* for such was the gracious will of God, in his love and in his wisdom, that the cure should thus quickly follow the disease. The whole mystery of redemption was contained in this oracle, but was therein concealed, like a plant in its germ or a large tree in the kernel or nut. For, as the indistinct and confused parts collected in the germ are in time unfolded and expanded, and display the true form of the plant; even so the salutary truths collected by divine grace in this first prophecy, were in time made clearer, and at length were perfectly developed. God therefore, adding some clearer predictions to this first oracle, which promised in general terms the birth of a Messiah, brings the honour of his birth into the particular family of Abraham. The Saviour, who had been promised to Adam under the general designation of *the seed of the woman*, is promised to Abraham as to proceed from himself: *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Of Isaac, the only son of Abraham by Sarah, were born two sons, Esau

Eſau and Jacob; Eſau, the elder, ſaw all the rights and privileges of his family paſs into the hands of his younger brother; and beheld the patriarchal benediction reſt upon Jacob's head by a peculiar diſpenſation of God. Jacob had twelve ſons, who were the twelve patriarchs. God was pleaſed that from the fourth of theſe ſhould proceed the Meſſiah; and it was revealed to Jacob, that the Redeemer ſhould be born of the tribe of Judah. About ſix hundred years after, God names the family in this tribe whence the Meſſiah ſhould ſpring; and, his wife and powerful hand having placed David on the throne, he promiſed him that the Meſſiah ſhould proceed from his loins. The little town of Bethlehem is the deſtined place of his birth. Divers oracles note the time of an event of which God was ever mindful. According to the word of one prophet, the ſceptre was not to depart from Judah, till Shiloh came. Gen. xlix. 10. According to the predictions of another (Malachi), Jeruſalem was to fall under the power of a conqueror who was to beſiege it. Some others prophieſied that the ſecond temple ſhould be ſtanding till after the Meſſiah ſhould appear. Hag. ii. 9. Mal. iii. 1. And, finally, another prophet marked the preſiſe time, foretelling that it ſhould happen at the end of ſeventy weeks after the Babyloniſh captivity. Dan. ix. 24. God always thus ſupported his church under that great promiſe, which was her grand conſolation, and which drew from her thoſe deep ſighs, thoſe ardent vows for the coming of the Meſſiah: *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the ſkies pour down righteouſneſs* (or, as ſome render it, “let them rain the juſt one”); *let the earth open, and let them bring forth ſalvation, and let righteouſneſs ſpring up together.* Iſaiah, xlv. 8. To theſe oracles, which were the ſeeds of faith in the firſt ages of the world, the prophets joined lively deſcriptions of the perſon of the Meſſiah. The Pſalms of David are full of them; Iſaiah ſpeaks as if he had ſeen him with his eyes; and the reſt of the prophets have pointed him out by various marks, which might be eaſily known. They have all endeavoured chiefly to deſcribe him in two particular points of view; in his abaſement and ſufferings, and in his exaltation and kingdom. Often, indeed, they labour to exhibit together theſe two ſituations of the Meſſiah; ſo different, and ſeemingly contradictory. The 2d, 8th, 16th, 22d, 69th, 102d, and 110th Pſalms, are evident proofs of the truth of this obſervation; and the 53d chapter of Iſaiah ſhews its peculiar importance: to this we may add Zech. ix. 9. where the Meſſiah is repreſented at once in his meekneſs and in his quality of King and Saviour. But were we to attempt to urge all that might be ſaid upon the preſent ſubject, we ſhould never have done.

By theſe reiterated aſſurances, God intended, no doubt, to render the foundation of faith, among his ancient people, of faith in the Meſſiah, more firm and durable, and thus to form a kind of anticipated Goſpel in favour of the church of that day. But it was alſo for thoſe who were to live in after-ages, and during the time of the accompliſhment of theſe promiſes, that he thus multiplied the oracles relating to the Meſſiah, and ſhewed him, as it were, in every point of view. It was neceſſary, that when God ſhould ſend this infinitely rich

present upon earth, it might be ascertained that it was really *the gift of God*; and that the church of the latter ages might exultingly say, when they saw and examined it, "Behold the man; he is the Holy One of God, the Messiah which was to come; and we need look for no other."

Prejudice, however, when joined to corruption of heart, is capable of any thing: as Isaiah says, "it calleth evil good, and good evil; and putteth darkness for light." The Jews, who for so many ages desired the coming of the Messiah, reject him as soon as he appears. He comes to them, saying, "Behold, here I am;" and they answer proudly, "We know thee not." Error, like disease, takes root with age, and becomes thereby the more incurable: the incredulity of the Jews has descended from father to son, and is become in them a second original sin accompanying them from their birth. This people still expect the Messiah; and with a degree of blindness and insanity which never was paralleled, and never will be, they look for him through faith in the ancient oracles, yet themselves overturn all those oracles, not leaving one of them entire. I know not whether, reduced as they are to advance nothing but absurdities, and tired of their own reveries, they have not in their hearts renounced the hope of ever seeing the Messiah appear; or whether they still continue to expect him, without knowing why, without having the support of any one clear text of Scripture, without being able to shelter their faith under any one of its oracles. Formerly their nation beheld the Messiah in this famous prediction of the patriarch Jacob, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.* The Jews of the present day, however, not only do not discern him in this passage; but they have tried every artifice, every grammatical and verbal subtlety, to give it a different turn. The second Psalm, (who would believe it?) though describing with the greatest pomp and brilliancy the glory of the Messiah and his kingdom, yet is nothing in their eyes; they find some things in it which are displeasing to them; and they choose rather to give it up entirely, than to make it one of the foundations of their faith. They labour to invent explanations of the 110th Psalm, which may prevent them from seeing therein the Messiah. There is no text in Isaiah on which they dare to say, *this is he.*—When that prophet foretels, chap. vii. 14. that *a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,* they cannot herein discern the Messiah. Nor are they much better satisfied with the description given of him in chap. ix. 6, 7. though perhaps there is not a passage throughout the Scripture which might more probably have flattered their imaginations, prejudiced in favour of the grandeur of the Messiah, than the expressions of the prophet in that place. *The branch which,* chap. xi. 1. *was to come out of the root of Jesse,* appears to some of their rabbins to be, as it really is, a prediction of the Messiah; but others of them fearing lest they might be asked, Where is this *stem or root of Jesse,* which has disappeared for near eighteen centuries? and not knowing what reasonable answer to give, they throw up this text to the Christians.—*The king having salvation,* whom Zechariah shews as coming to Zion, chap. ix. 9.



and in whom she was to *rejoice greatly*, would have pleased the Jews had the passage ended there; but, when this king is represented by the same prophet as meek and *lowly*, the Jew is disgusted, and will not acknowledge the Messiah in the prophecy.

But the Jew has more to do than to shut his eyes against the light of so many prophecies; he must either consider the general faith that his nation have ever had in the Messiah as a popular error, and pronounce that the prophets never have spoken of him; or else he must own that the Messiah really appeared 1800 years ago. Let him quibble as much as he will upon the meaning of the *Shiloh* whose coming was foretold by Jacob; it is as clear as the day, that this *Shiloh*, of whom Jacob gave this remarkable character, that *unto him should the gathering of the people be*, was to come at a time when the civil and political state of the Jews still subsisted, though much diminished and weakened. But the sceptre departed, and no legislative or supreme authority remained. Now it is more than 1700 years since the Jews were in the state mentioned in the prophecy; the Shiloh, therefore, must have appeared more than 1700 years ago. The same thing was foretold in a different manner by Haggai and by Malachi, who said that the Messiah should come before the destruction of the second temple, which was building in their time, as may be seen in the prophecies that we have quoted above; that temple has been destroyed these 1700 years; where then is the Messiah, if he did not appear previous to the destruction of that edifice? Lastly, Daniel had declared, that at the end of *seventy weeks* of years, which make 490 years, after the edict for the rebuilding of the walls and repairing of the breaches, the Messiah should come: these 490 years expired at the time pointed out in Jacob's prediction, and in the prophecies of Haggai and Malachi: namely, more than 1700 years ago; and is not the Messiah then come! to what purpose, then, are these prophecies, which all agree in predicting that an event should happen at a particular time, if the event do not accordingly come to pass? The Jews are much confounded; and their confusion is evident in their answers: "Our impenitence," say they, "retards the coming of the Messiah; God would long ago have sent him, had we been worthy to receive him." This is a specious reason; and, as we naturally love to see men humble themselves, and confess their sinfulness, the Jews could not veil their unbelief in a more imposing manner. But it is only an illusion with which they willingly deceive themselves, rather than renounce an error in which they have so long continued. For, when God inspired the prophets to foretel the coming of the Messiah at a particular time, did not he, whose eyes look into futurity, perceive that the Jews of that time would be exceedingly corrupt? Certainly he foresaw it; and, notwithstanding this, it was prophesied that the Messiah should appear in the second temple, and that he should appear there in seventy weeks after the return from the Babylonish captivity. It is not true, therefore, that the impenitence and corruption of the Jews hinder the coming of the Messiah. This prejudice has arisen from their education and pride; they suppose that the coming of the Messiah was for the benefit of the people of Israel only, and that therefore it could be retarded for 1700 or

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1800 years, through the impenitence of that people. The Messiah was promised also to the Gentiles, and to bring the most distant nations into alliance with God, as appears from a hundred passages in the Old Testament. Were the Gentiles then to be deprived of this advantage through the impenitence of the Jews? were they to be kept out of the visible church till the Jews should think proper to be converted, and to renounce their sins? Men must have little knowledge of the ways of God, little acquaintance with the books of the prophets, to entertain an opinion, which, under the appearance of honouring God's justice and righteousness, does really overturn the truth of his predictions, and would have deprived a multitude of souls of those glorious privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah, which he came to bestow upon them. The Jews have no reply to these things; they sink under the weight of so many difficulties; and their only resource is, to turn away from the oracles of Jacob, of Daniel, of Haggai, of Malachi, and of many others, who had all fixed the coming of the Messiah to the same period of time. They dare not take a retrospective view, lest they should see spring forth at Bethlehem a branch from the root of Jesse, on which rested the Spirit of the Lord; lest they should see the Messiah personally in his temple, and filling all the cities of Israel with his doctrine and miracles. They forbid the time which the prophets had fixed for the coming of the Messiah to be spoken of or examined; and, as they are always in extremes in their prejudices and caprices, they say, "Woe to him that reckoneth up  
"the times!"

Were they indeed to look back so far as to the last period of their republic, and of the existence of their temple, to the time in which Daniel's 70 weeks were accomplished, they would behold in Judæa the appearance of a Jesus, the son of Mary, of the family of David, born at Bethlehem, drawing forth the admiration of all, for his holiness, his zeal, and his preaching; a Jesus, the model of meekness, of patience, of humility; ever employed in the advancement of God's glory, and in procuring salvation for men; taking no rest, but going from place to place throughout all the cities of Israel, and leaving every where in his course the most striking manifestations of his goodness and power. In one place, he heals a leper; in another, one possessed by a demon: elsewhere he restores sight to the blind, yea, even to those who were born so. In one place, he cures a palsy of thirty-eight years' duration by a single word: *Arise*, saith he to the diseased; and the man, stretched out helpless on his bed, springs up, and walks. At another time, he meets a funeral procession in the streets of a city called Nain; it was a young man, the only son of a widow, whom they were bearing to the tomb: his pity was awakened: *Stop*, said he to those who carried the bier; then to the lifeless corpse, *Young man, I say unto thee, arise*; and the dead man immediately sat up, and spoke. Some time after that, there died, in the town of Bethany, a man named Lazarus; Jesus was then in Galilee; and after four days he comes to the house of Lazarus, where he finds the sisters of the deceased overcome with grief and drowned in tears; he desires to be brought to the sepulchre of Lazarus: it was a cave, with a stone at the mouth

of it: Jesus speaks; his voice reaches the depth of the tomb; to the dead he calls; and Lazarus, then a mere putrid carcase, receives life, and comes forth in the sight of the wondering crowd.

Who or what then is this man that has wrought so many miracles, and gained by various means such a vast reputation in Judæa? Every where he is admired; all Israel have their eyes fixed upon him; and we hear these poor people, whose minds were more in subjection to their teachers than their bodies to the Romans, saying one to another at the sight of so many prodigies, "Is not this the Messiah?" or, "when the Messiah shall come, will he do more wondrous works than these?" We easily discern what they would have said; their meaning is clear; but respect for their rulers makes them hold out a doubtful language, and stifle the conviction of the heart. Jesus observes their timidity and weakness; he tells them himself who he is: "I am the Messiah; if ye will not believe me, believe my works." The prophets had pointed him out by these very marks,—that he should heal the lame and the maimed, give ears to the deaf, and sight to the blind: but the prophets nowhere had mentioned all his miracles; and the mysterious silence which they had in part observed, gave Jesus an opportunity of carrying the importance and number of his miracles to an extent infinitely greater than the expressions of the prophets (in other respects so rich and so full) had represented them. To fix the attention of the Jews still more upon the miracles performed by Jesus Christ, God in his wisdom had left an interval of more than 500 years between those which some of the prophets had formerly wrought, and those of Jesus. And for this reason, John the Baptist, that extraordinary man, the messenger of heaven, who was followed by all Judæa, performed no miracle: it had been improper in the servant, when the master was so near; ignorance might have confounded them together. The apostles wrought miracles after Jesus Christ; but these were the miracles of Christ rather than their own; and they always gave him the glory of them, declaring aloud, that they wrought them in the name of Jesus, and through his power. Would God have united so many characteristics of the true Messiah in one man, and that man not be the Messiah? neither the time, the birth, the sanctity, the wisdom, the miracles, nothing which the prophets had foretold was wanting in him; and yet is he not *he that should come*? Jesus declares himself the Messiah; he asserts it; and, to overcome unbelief, he performs miracles without number, miracles in which there could be no fraud or illusion, since the witnesses to them were as numerous as the inhabitants in all Judæa, Galilee, and the country round about. And shall this man not yet be believed? Certainly God is too mindful of his own glory to lend his aid to a deceiver; and to put the seal of his miracles upon the most notorious of impostures, as would have been that of Christ if he were not the real Messiah. Moses, by his miracles, made himself known throughout Egypt as the messenger and true minister of God; and thereupon all Israel acknowledged him as such, and revered him as a prophet. In like manner were the other prophets received, whom God from time to time sent to his people; though we do

do not read in Scripture that they all confirmed by miracles the truth of their mission. Is Jesus only then unworthy to be believed? It must be owned, that the Jews are very unfortunate in not being able to do this injustice to our Jesus, without openly exposing and calling in question the honour of their own prophets; for their obstinate refusal to believe, after these numberless miracles, that Jesus is the Messiah, is a direct charge against their ancestors, and the whole church of Israel, of having lightly believed that Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and many others, were sent immediately from God, and were his real ministers, upon the authority of certain miracles. But it is a striking advantage for the truth we maintain, that God has given us the authority of all the prophets in favour of it, and that thus Judaism itself becomes as it were a rampart of the Christian faith. It is strange, that this reflection, which arises so naturally in the mind, should not have struck and convinced the Jews. But such is the nature of man; agitated by a certain passion, with a degree of interest or advantage attached to it, his movements are so violent, that the heart no longer leaves the understanding at liberty to reflect. The Jews wanted and expected a Messiah, rich, powerful, warlike, who should put himself at the head of a large army, deliver their country from the Roman yoke, and by a series of victories raise the glory of their nation so high as to make it formidable to all the earth. Jesus is, on the contrary, a man poor and lowly, who, till the age of thirty, leads an obscure life in the house of a carpenter, and at length shews himself publicly in the company only of a few fishermen, whom he picked up on the borders of the lake of Gennesareth, and with whom he travels throughout Judæa and Galilee. He is so meek and humble, that *he maketh not his voice to be heard in the streets*; and, when a great multitude, struck with admiration at hearing him speak, and seeing him perform such amazing miracles, would fain have made him a king, he steals away from the sight of the people, and retires into the wilderness. His doctrine also displeases, and his preaching becomes troublesome; he requires that all men should be meek and lowly like himself; he commends nothing so much as disinterestedness, and self-denial; he constantly preaches peace, unity, concord, and the love of our enemies; he attacks ambition, pomp, and the luxury of the very heads of the synagogue. It must be owned, that the heart is often disturbed at the least privations, and that the mind, naturally fond of its own prejudices, is extremely reluctant to give up flattering ideas, to make room for an object, where, according to the depraved views of the natural man, every thing displeases, every thing mortifies. Yet such as the above is the portrait which the prophets drew of the Messiah: they said, that he should be *marred more than any man*; Isaiah, lii. 14. that he should have *no form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire him*; that he should *be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*; ch. liii. 2, 3. *poor and needy*, Psalm cix. 22. Zech. ix. 9. and lastly, *a worm and no man*, Psalm xxii. 6. The Jews read all this in their prophets; yet they would not see Christ therein. They must, therefore, have an extraordinary share of pride and obstinacy, to expect that God should send them a Messiah formed upon

upon a plan which they had imagined for themselves, rather than according to his own will.

Lastly, their own unbelief witnesses against themselves, and, by an admirable contrivance of God's wisdom, becomes evidence of the truth of the Messiah. The prophets foretold this obstinacy, this incredulity, in express terms. Moses foresaw it fifteen or sixteen centuries before, and predicted it, Deut. xviii. 19. and more at length in the 32d chapter of the same book. The Psalmist often lamented it, as we may see throughout almost the whole of the 22d Psalm; in the 102d, 109th, and 118th. Isaiah is full of similar prophecies, as we may read in chapters xlix. lii. liii. In short, all the prophets have innumerable expressions of the same import. If the Jews do not discern themselves in those oracles, assuredly they have no spiritual eyes; if they do, and still refuse to acknowledge that the Jesus whom they despised, rejected, persecuted, and killed, was the Messiah, they possess neither honesty nor shame.

And they are still more culpable, because events have happened since the death of Christ, which are manifest proofs of the truth that they deny, and upon which their attention ought ever to have been fixed. The Lord Jesus had threatened the Jews, that, as a punishment for their unbelief, he would deliver them over to the sword of the enemy; that Judæa should become a dreadful scene of all the horrors of war; that Jerusalem should be besieged, taken, plundered, and totally demolished; that the temple itself should be razed to the very foundation; and a thousand things of a similar nature, which came to pass about forty years after Christ's death, or which are still fulfilling every day, in the wrath of God which continually pursues that unhappy people. Yet Jesus Christ reigns throughout the earth, and his name is worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. His Gospel has shed its light from one end of the earth to the other; the idols of the heathen have been confounded, the Gentiles have been converted; and, while the synagogue still persists, according to the predictions of her own prophets, in refusing to own that Jesus is the Christ, the Gentile world does him homage, and reveres his authority, in conformity to the oracles of the same prophets.

What can the Jews say to this? Will they deny, that those grand events, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the fall of idolatry, were set down in the prophecies as one of the marks of the Messiah? Let them recollect, that God said to Abraham, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*; Gen. xxii. 18. and this seed, they well know, was the Messiah. Let them attend to these remarkable words of Jacob, *unto him shall the gathering of the people be*, Gen. xlix. 10. Let them read in the book of Deuteronomy this threat of Moses, or rather of God speaking by Moses; *I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, and I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation*. Deut. xxxii. 21. Let them consult the Psalms, and almost at the beginning they will find these words of God to the Messiah, (Psalm ii. 8.) *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*.—And in Psalm xxii. ver. 27. *all the ends of*

*the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*—Also in Psalm cii. 22. *The people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.*—If they consult Isaiah, he will tell them, chap. ii. ver. 2, 18, 20. *that in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow unto it. And the idols be shall utterly abolish: in that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.*—In the 42d and 49th chapters, they will hear the Lord speaking thus to the Messiah: (chap. xlii. ver. 6, 7.) *I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.* (chap. xlix. ver. 6.) *It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.* And in chap. lii. ver. 13, 14. *behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.* O ye Jews, do ye not behold yourselves in these passages? do ye not here recognize the meek and lowly Jesus, whose exterior so much displeased you? But let us continue to hear what God says of him in the following verse: *so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.* Upon which the Messiah himself exclaims in the following terms, chap. lxxv. ver. 1. *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.*—I should only fatigue the reader, were I to quote all the predictions contained in Isaiah and the other prophets which refer to the calling of the Gentiles and the fall of idolatry. But what can be urged by the Jew of the present day, straitened amidst so many prophecies and the accomplishment of them? These prophecies are too clear, too precise, too numerous, to be eluded by grammatical or chronological subtleties; and, the events or accomplishments appearing on all sides, it is impossible to contradict ocular demonstration. Jesus then is the Messiah; and, after such evident proofs, (each of which taken separately is a demonstration, but which taken collectively form such a conviction as it is impossible for the mind to resist,) the heart which can still hold out must have incredulity strongly intrenched between malice and obstinacy. But God alone can pursue it into such a fortress, and cause it to yield.

From this first truth we pass to another, no less essentially connected with it; namely, that Jesus is *the son of God*, and is himself the *true God*. And here we have the same adversaries to contend with, reinforced by a multitude of heretics, who under various names, and in divers manners, have laboured to rob Christ of his Divinity; but, by the grace  
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of God, it is too strongly established in the Scripture to allow us to fear its sustaining the least degree of injury, or that hell should ever deprive the church of that grand consolation.

God has pronounced hereupon in the second Psalm, where he speaks thus of the Messiah, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.* And the Messiah, under the name of Wisdom, says, Prov. viii. 24, 25. *when there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water—Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were brought forth.—Micah, in a similar view, said, the goings forth (i. e. according to the Hebrew idiom, the generation), the goings forth of the Messiah have been from of old, from everlasting.* Mic. v. 2. And Isaiah on that account (chap. ix. 6.) called him *A Son* (in some translations it is *The Son*, by way of eminence). The books of the New Testament are full of the same doctrine; and scarcely any thing is of such frequent recurrence in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, as the title of *Son of God* given to the Messiah. The banks of the Jordan resounded with it at the baptism of Christ; and the Jews, who were acquainted with the Scriptures, had it often in their mouths, and confounded it with that of Messiah; as we may collect from the testimony which *John the Baptist* renders to Jesus Christ in John i. 34. and the answer of Nathanael in the 49th verse of the same chapter. The Jew and the heretic reckon these texts as nothing; and, under pretence that the title of *Sons of God* is given sometimes to the *angels*, sometimes to *kings and magistrates*, and often to the *faithful*, in a vague and figurative manner, they think that they may easily elude the force of the argument, by saying that it is merely through a metaphor that the Messiah is called the *Son of God*. He is so called on account of his dignity and office, say the Jew and the heretic. The Arian and Socinian, who acknowledge Christ for the Messiah, add, that his being born of a Virgin by the immediate operation of the Spirit of God, the extraordinary gifts that he was endowed with, his resurrection, and ascension into heaven, have gained him the title of *Son of God* in a signification which places him far above the faithful, above kings, and even above the angels; but still in a metaphorical sense, so as to leave an infinite distance between the Son and the Father, and to include the Son absolutely in the order of created beings. All this might be tolerated, had we only the expression *Son of God* to consider; but there is such an inequality between the beings to whom the Scripture occasionally gives the name, and our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is an almost constant appellation, that it is impossible not to see an infinite difference, unless we are determined to be blind. In the second Psalm it is a *Son of God* who is to reign over the uttermost parts of the earth, whom both kings and people are to serve with fear and trembling. In the book of Proverbs and in the prophecies of Micah, it is a *Son* begotten before the world, and who is consequently from everlasting; for by that expression the Scripture designates eternity. In Isaiah, this Son is the *mighty God, the everlasting Father*. In the books of the New Testament, it is a *Son of God* who is the *well beloved* of the eternal Father, in whom

he is *well pleased*, according to the strong and energetic terms which the Almighty used on the banks of the Jordan and on the mount of transfiguration: a *Son of God*, who, as himself had said in the Proverbs, *was in the beginning with God*, John i. 1. and who was in glory with the Father *before the world was*, John xvii. 5. a *Son of God* who is *his only-begotten Son*, John iii. 16. a *Son equal with the Father*, John v. 18. and *one with him*, John x. 30. a *Son of God, who*, before he took upon him our sinful flesh, *being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. a *Son of God by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made*; John i. 3. *by whom were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist*. Col. i. 16, 17.: a *Son of God*, whose laws all Nature reveres, and bows to his authority; a *Son of God*, in fine, (for how can we ever exhaust the subject?) who is the Saviour and Redeemer of the world; to whom the whole church renders the homage of adoration; and at whose feet the blessed, who have been already received into glory, humbly lay their crowns, and worship him upon the throne, as we see in the Revelations. After this, will any one dare to say, that Jesus Christ is called the Son of God only in an improper and metaphorical sense? and that, with certain allowances, (which, however, do not alter the nature of the thing,) the title is bestowed in the same sense upon kings and angels? Henceforth, then, there is only a difference of *more or less* between the governor of the world and his creatures; between a king of dust and ashes, who commands a handful of men, who is not able to make a drop of water fall from heaven, who cannot stop the smallest breath of wind, nor defend himself from the fears, the dangers, the pains, which often spare the poor in the cottage, while they respect not the palaces of kings;—henceforth it shall be only a difference of *more or less*, between an eternal being and a being of a day, who cannot look a foot behind him without seeing the nothingness from which he arose; the difference between the Creator and the creature; between a *Son of God* who is worshipped as God by men and angels, and those sons of God who under that glorious title conceal the poverty and worthlessness inseparable from the creature. Certainly those who cry up reason so much, know but very little of it, if they do not discern an infinite difference between these things which we have been contrasting; and if they do, nothing can be more contrary to reason than for them to deny that Christ is properly and essentially the *Son of God*. They do not comprehend, they say, how God can have a son, who is, like himself, God, unless there be more Gods than one; nor how the Father who begets, and the Son who is begotten, can be equally eternal. This then is all that occasions unbelief; and it is not that the Scripture has not sufficiently declared it; it is because reason would know too much; and that, not content with being wise with soberness, it has no more respect and deference for the assertions of the sacred books when they affirm things beyond its comprehension, than they have for the writings of a mere man.

Thus



Thus it is no longer, in fact, the testimony of God which these men believe, but the testimony and direction of their own reason alone.

For, indeed, if reason, proud assuming reason, would only believe what God says of his Son, besides the other testimonies which are borne to him, and which are as clear as any testimonies possibly can be, it would be requisite only to turn for a moment to the Scriptures, and they will everywhere shew that Jesus Christ is God. Now, if they do assert it (which the heretic does not deny), why should any one say that he is not God? The reason, they reply, is, because the title of God, which is a name implying majesty and excellence, is sometimes in Scripture bestowed upon the angels, and upon kings, on account of a certain resemblance between the elevation of these creatures and the majesty of God. That is true.

Now in this sense, say they, is Christ called God. The heretic has only this to urge; and if we deprive him of this distinction between a God properly so called and a God improperly so called, he will not have a word remaining to reply. But this will require no great labour, since nothing can be more easy. We find throughout the Scripture, that the word *Jehovah*,

which in our bibles is commonly translated *the Lord*, is the proper and essential name of the true God: he thus explains it himself in *Isaiah*, xlii. 8. *I am the LORD; that is my name: and in chap. xlv. 5. I am the LORD, and there is none else; there is no God beside me:* and, which imprefs this truth upon the mind, he repeats it in the following verse in the same words: *I am the LORD, and there is none else.* Yet we find that Christ also is *JEHOVAH*,

which name is given him in a great number of passages in the Old Testament; of brevity we shall cite only two or three. *Isaiah* relates, chap. vi. that the Lord appeared to him sitting upon his throne, and that he heard the Seraphim round about

*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; ver. 1, 2, 3. and St. John, chap. xii. 41. it was Jesus Christ whom Isaiah saw in his glory. Jeremiah calls him expressly, righteousness, chap. xxiii. 6. He bears the same name, JEHOVAH, in Zecha-*

*ii. xi. xiii. and in various other places. This name is peculiar to the true God; certain there is but one JEHOVAH. Hear, O Israel, says Moses, Deut. vi. 4. the Lord is one Lord. The Scripture gives this name to Jesus Christ, and bestows it with pomp and majesty proper to that august and adorable title, as appears from the words we have quoted. Jesus Christ is then the true God. No heretic can elude this distinction.*

To make this fundamental truth still more evident, and not to leave the smallest doubt in the mind, that it is properly and literally, and not improperly and metaphorically, that Jesus Christ is called God in so many parts of Scripture, let us ask those who fly to this distinction as their only resource, in what manner a name must be given to a person

as to be attributable to it in its true and literal signification? and then let us ask whether all this does not unite in Jesus Christ. When we call a picture or a man; seeing that this man has neither flesh, nor bones, nor life, nor motion; that

that it has neither speech nor understanding; we say, or rather it is understood, that such a picture or statue is called a man, not literally, but in an improper sense, from some distant resemblance. But when we give this name to a living and animate being; a being who with the human figure unites sight, hearing, speech, action, reason; we should regard that man as destitute of reason who should say that such a being cannot literally and properly be called *man*. When actors appear on a stage, one in the character of a soldier, another as a captain, another as a king, every body knows this to be feigned, nor is it necessary that any one should tell us that such names do not properly belong to such actors; the thing speaks for itself. But when we see a man giving laws to a whole country, obeyed by a whole people, receiving tribute and every other homage appertaining to royalty, we hesitate not for a moment in calling that man *a king*; and, when we hear him so named, we do not childishly ask, whether it is in a literal or a figurative sense that the title is bestowed upon him? The Holy Scripture speaks of Christ by the names of *God*, of *Jehovah*, of *Lord of Hosts*, the *God of Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and by many other titles which are never bestowed except upon the true God. Farther, it acknowledges in Christ all the characteristics which are proper and essential to the true God, as being *eternal*, *knowing all things*, *all-powerful*, &c. Isaiah calls him *the mighty God*, *the everlasting Father*, chap. ix. 6. And St. John, Rev. i. 8. *the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*. The same apostle, in his Gospel, calls him *the God by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made*. John, i. 3. St. Peter said to him, *Lord, thou knowest all things*; John, xxi. 17. and the apostles collectively addressed him with the most profound humility (Acts, i. 24.), *Thou, Lord, knowest the hearts of all men*. They worshipped him, and all the church with them and after them, as the *Creator* of the world, the *King* of men and of angels, the *Redeemer* of mankind, and the *sovereign Judge* of quick and dead. Can a metaphorical and figurative God be thus designated? and has the Scripture ever described in terms more lofty the JEHOVAH adored by the Jew, or the God whom the heretic professes to worship? The time may come for the conversion of these men; but in the meanwhile, till their consciences, freed from the prejudices of the mind, shall make them own, *vivâ voce*, that Jesus Christ is properly and truly God, let us rest upon the express declaration of an apostle who beheld Jesus Christ in his glory in the third heaven, and who tells us that Jesus Christ is the *great God* (St. Paul to Titus, ii. 13.); and upon the testimony of the beloved disciple, who assures us, that *Jesus is the true God*. 1 John, v. 20. And upon the testimony of these two witnesses, the truth, of which we have given so many proofs before, is firmly established.

Such then is the Messiah whom God had promised from the beginning of the world as the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind; *the Son of God*, *the Everlasting God*; and, in the fulness of time, *born of a woman*, *of the blessed seed of Abraham*, *the son of David*; and thus the true *Immanuel*, *God and man*. In this mysterious union of two natures, so unequal and dissimilar, the divine and the human, the Almighty laid open the glory of all his attributes more than they

they had yet been manifested in the creation and subsequent government of the whole universe. His *mercy*, that virtue or attribute which in so many ways exalts the glory of God, had never appeared but for this; and his *holiness*, which includes all his other moral perfections, and which seems peculiarly to draw upon him the wonder of angels, has appeared with more glory in the death of a God-man, than in all the laws that he could have formed for man, or in all the rigour of his justice by punishing everlastingly the infraction of those laws. Jesus died, as marked in all the prophecies, and by his death has satisfied the divine justice for all that will believe, has expiated their sins, and has reconciled them to God. This is the uniform doctrine of Scripture; it is the Law, and the Prophets, and the Gospel. The sacrifices under the Law were all shadows of his sufferings, and types of his death. The 22d, 69th, 102d, and 109th Psalms were descriptive of his sufferings; in the 40th Psalm we behold him presenting himself as a sacrifice for us, instead of those sacrifices which were offered daily under the law, and which, with all the rivulets of blood that the priests poured out at the foot of the altar, could not of themselves do away one single sin. Isaiah, in his time, at the distance of near 800 years, beheld the sins of men collected from all parts, and resting upon this victim, who washed them all away in his own blood. *Surely* (breaks forth the prophet, ch. liii. 4, 5, 6.) *he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* These expressions, and a hundred others of a similar nature, are too strong for us to look upon, and then to regard the death of Jesus Christ as that of a man who dies merely to leave an example of patience and resignation, or only to seal by his death the doctrine that he had preached. We must be strangely perverse and prejudiced, if we do not discern in all these transactions a victim who dies for the sins of others, and washes them away with his blood. The apostles unanimously taught the same doctrine; and St. Paul strongly insists upon it in the 3d chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, as may be seen in the text, and in the comment thereon. He is still more express to the purpose in the 5th chapter of the 2d Epistle to the Corinthians; and it is the chief foundation of his whole Epistle to the Hebrews. St. John says, that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin; and that he is the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John, i. 7. 9. ii. 2. And if the apostle Peter lays before the faithful the death of Christ as an example of meekness and patience upon which they should often meditate, it was not (God forbid it should!) to restrain it from being viewed in any other light, as some heretics pretend; since, on the contrary, there is no doctrine more clearly taught by that apostle than the doctrine of the Atonement. He (St. Peter) declares, in the consultation holden at Jerusalem, that *through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.* Acts, xv. 11. In the 1st chapter of his first General Epistle we read, that *we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. And in chap. ii. 24. speaking of Christ's death as of a model, he says, *imitating the language of Isaiah, that Jesus Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree;*

*tree*; as if he intended to prevent any misunderstanding or abuse of those words, wherein he lays down a doctrine which ought never to be separated from that of the Atonement.

But, not to enlarge farther on these great doctrines of Christ's divinity, and of his propitiatory sacrifice, let us conclude with an important consideration drawn from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Herein the apostle, ever labouring to support the honour of the Christian religion, devoutly declaims against the arrogance of the unbelieving Jews and Heathens, who, judging of it, like our heretics, according to the prejudices and vain reasonings of a carnal mind, considered the Gospel as a mad extravagant system; and he declares that, whatever may be the opinions of these pretended teachers in the synagogue or in the schools of philosophy, he would never preach any other than Christ crucified, *to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*. Why it was a *stumbling-block* to the Jews, is easily understood: the Jew had figured to his imagination a Messiah that should be rich, powerful, full of glory; and Jesus, after leading an abject life, expires upon the cross. But the Greek, who had no share in the dreams of the synagogue, and had none of these prejudices, why did he treat the cross of Christ as *foolishness*? for, supposing the apostles to have taught nothing more of Christ than the heretics against whom we are contending believe of him, namely, that he was an extraordinary man, full of zeal for God and for the good of mankind, who, having taught a heavenly doctrine, was content to seal it with his blood, and to exhibit in his death an example of moderation, patience, charity, and many other virtues; what could there be in all that to offend the reason of the philosopher, or which a heathen sage should denominate *foolishness*? Nothing, on the contrary, could have been more agreeable to reason; and certainly a religion thus constituted could never have raised the philosophers against it; since the Gentiles so much honoured those persons who sacrificed themselves for the public good, that they invented the name of *hero*, and applied it to those extraordinary men. But the Greek found *foolishness* in this, that a man stretched out dead upon a cross should be God; and that the blood of one crucified should atone for the sins of mankind. This then was really what the apostles preached; and in the belief of these two mysteries the whole church has persevered, and still subsists.

AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.

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PART I.

**T**HREE propositions I shall endeavour to establish in this Introduction, as preparatory to the consideration of the **NEW TESTAMENT**, that Divine Revelation which is peculiarly intended of God for the infinite benefit of mankind.

First, That religion, the only mean by which men can arrive at true happiness, or by which they can attain to the perfection and dignity of their nature, does not, in the present circumstances of the world, depend on human reasoning or inventions: for, were this the case, we need not go from home for religion, or seek farther than our own breasts for the means of reconciling ourselves to God, obtaining his favour, and, in consequence of it, life eternal.

Secondly, That the great end of religion is future happiness; and, consequently, the best religion is that which will most surely direct us to eternal life.

Thirdly, That the authority and word of God is the only sure foundation of religion, and the *only* reasonable ground for us to build our hopes upon.

In this state of the case, the necessity of religion in general is supposed; and the only question is, from what fountain we must derive it? The dispute can only lie between natural and revealed religion: if nature be able to direct us, it will be hard to justify the wisdom of God in giving us a revelation, as the revelation can only serve the same purpose which nature alone could well supply.

Since the light of the Gospel has shone throughout the world, nature has been much improving in speculative things: we see many things clearly, many things that reason readily

readily embraces, to which, nevertheless, the world before was generally a stranger. The Gospel has given us true notions of God and of ourselves, right conceptions of his holiness and purity, and of the nature of divine worship. It has taught us a religion, in the belief and practice of which our present ease and comfort, and our hopes of future happiness and glory, consist; it has rooted out idolatry and superstition; and, by instructing us in the nature of God, and discovering to us his unity, his omnipresence, and infinite knowledge, it has furnished us even with principles of reason, by which we reject and condemn the rites and ceremonies of heathenism and idolatry, and may, through the grace of God, discover wherein the beauty and holiness of divine worship consist: for the nature of divine worship must be deduced from the nature of God; and it is impossible for men to pay a reasonable service to God, till they have just and reasonable notions of him. But now, it seems, this is all become, in the judgment of the infidel, pure natural religion; and it is to our own reason and understanding that we are indebted for the notion of God and of divine worship: and whatever else in religion is agreeable to our reason, is reckoned to proceed entirely from it.

But let us examine this pretence, and see upon what ground this plea of natural religion can be maintained. If nature can instruct us sufficiently in religion, we have indeed no reason to go anywhere else: so far we are agreed. But whether nature can or not, is in truth rather a question of fact, than mere speculation; for, the way to know what nature can do, is to take nature by itself, and try its strength alone. There was a time when men had little else but nature to go to; and that is the proper time to look into, to see what mere unassisted nature can do in religion. Nay, there are still nations under the sun, who are, as to religion, in a mere state of nature. The glad tidings of the Gospel have not reached them, nor have they been blessed, or (to speak in the modern phrase) *prejudiced* with divine revelations, of which we, less worthy of them than they, so much complain. In other matters they are polite and civilised; they are cunning traders, fine artificers, and in many arts and sciences not unskilful. Here then we may hope to see natural religion in its full perfection; for there is no want of natural reason, nor any room to complain of prejudice or prepossession. But yet, alas! these nations are held in the chains of darkness, and given up to the blindest superstition and idolatry. Men wanted not reason before the coming of Christ, nor opportunity nor inclination to improve it. Arts and sciences had long before obtained their just perfection; the number of the stars had been counted, and their motions observed and adjusted; the philosophy, oratory, and poetry of those ages are still the delight and entertainment of this. Religion was not the least part of their inquiry; they searched all the recesses of reason and nature; and, had it been in the power of reason and nature to furnish men with just notions and principles of religion, here we should have found them: but, instead of them, we find nothing but the grossest superstition and idolatry; the creatures of the earth advanced into deities; and men degenerating and making themselves lower than the beasts

of the field. Time would fail me to relate the corruptions and extravagancies of the politest nations. Their religion was their reproach, and the service which they paid their gods was a dishonour to them and to themselves; the most sacred part of their devotion was the most impure; and the only thing which was commendable in it was, that it was kept as a great mystery and secret, and hid under the darkness of the night; and, were reason now to judge, it would approve of nothing in this religion, but the modesty of withdrawing itself from the eyes of the world.

This being the case wherever men have been left to mere reason and nature to direct them, what security have the great patrons of natural religion now, that, were they left only to reason and nature, they would not run into the same errors and absurdities? Have they more reason than those who have gone before them? In all other instances nature is the same now that it ever was, and we are but acting over again the same part that our ancestors performed before us: wisdom and prudence and cunning are now what they formerly were; nor can this age shew mere human nature in any one character exalted beyond the examples which antiquity has left us. Can we shew greater instances of civil and political wisdom than are to be found in the governments of *Greece* and *Rome*? Are not the civil laws of *Rome* still held in admiration? and have they not a place allowed them still in almost all kingdoms? Since, then, in nothing else we are grown wiser than the heathen world, what probability is there, that we should have grown wiser in religion, if we had been left, as they were, to mere reason and nature? To this day there is no alteration for the better, except only in the countries where the Gospel has been preached. What shall we say of the *Chinese*, a nation that wants not either reason or learning, and in some parts of it pretends to excel the world? They have been daily improving in the arts of life, and in every kind of knowledge and science; but yet in religion they are ignorant and superstitious, and have but very little of what we call natural religion among them. And what ground is there to imagine that reason would have done more, made greater discoveries of truth, or more entirely subdued the passions of men, in *England* or *France*, or any other country of *Europe*, than it has in the eastern or southern parts of the world? Are not men as reasonable creatures in the east as they are in the west? and have they not the same means of exercising and improving their reason? Why then should it be thought that reason would do that now in this place, which it has never heretofore been able to do in any time or place whatever?

This fact is so very plain and undeniable, that I cannot but think that, were men to consider it fairly, they would soon be convinced how much they are indebted to the revelation of the Gospel, even for that natural religion of which they so fondly boast: for how comes it to pass, that there is so much reason, such clear natural religion, in every country where the Gospel is professed, and so little of both everywhere else?

But is there then, an objector may ask, no such thing as natural religion? Does not *St. Paul* lay the heathen world under condemnation for not attending to the dictates of it?

*Because, says he, that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.* A sad account this of the state of religion in the heathen world, and a manifest proof how much nature stands in need of divine assistance! What we learn from St. Paul is plainly this: that notwithstanding the care which God had taken to display the evidences of his own being and Godhead in every work of the creation, so that men could not but have a notion of the Deity; yet, so little did they profit by that knowledge, that it served only to render them inexcusable in their superstition and idolatry: for, when they *knew God*, (as indeed all the heathen world had a notion of a supreme being) yet they *glorified him not as God, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.* And was not nature an excellent guide to follow, which thus stumbled at the very threshold, and, having from natural reason the notion of a supreme Deity, sought to find him among the four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth? Can you say what it was that thus debased the reason and understanding of mankind; what evil it was which had diffused itself through the whole race, and so possessed their senses, that *seeing they did not perceive, and hearing they did not understand?* Or, do you think that you alone are exempt from this common, this universal blindness; and that the same reason and nature, which hitherto have misguided all the world into error and idolatry, would lead you, out of the common road, into truth and pure religion?

Is it not the height of presumption to think thus, and to imagine that we alone are able to surmount those difficulties under which all the world before us have sunk? And yet thus every man must think, who sets up natural religion in opposition to revelation; for has mere nature ever yet, in any one part of the world, extricated itself from error? Do the nations of old, or those of our time, afford any instance of this kind? But still you think that nature is sufficient to direct you; and what is this, but † distinguish yourself from all the world, as if you alone were privileged against the common failings and corruptions of mankind?

But you will ask, Are there not complete schemes of natural religion drawn from principles and axioms of reason, without calling in the help of revelation; and are they not evident demonstrations that nature is able to furnish us with a religion which is pure and holy, and agreeable to the divine attributes? Let us suppose this for the sake of argument: but let us then be informed, how it came to pass, that there never should be any system of this pure religion in use and practice in any nation, or indeed ever fully discovered, till the Gospel had enlight-



enlightened the world. You may boast of *Socrates* and *Plato*, and some few others in the heathen world, and tell us perhaps of their great attainments upon the strength of mere reason. Suppose it to be so (though I doubt not but both *Socrates* and *Plato* were divinely assisted); yet what is this to the present question? Must millions in every age of the world be left in ignorance, because five or six among them may rise above the errors of their times? Or, will you say that all men are seven feet high, because we now and then see some that are?

What was it, I ask, that suppressed, for so many ages, that light of reason and nature of which you so much boast? and what has now set it free? Whatever the distemper was, nature, it is plain, could not cure it, being unable to disengage herself from the bonds and fetters in which she was held: we may disagree perhaps in finding a name for this evil, this general corruption of nature; but the thing itself is evident; the impotence of nature stands confessed; the blindness, the ignorance of the heathen world are too plain a proof of it. This general corruption and weakness of nature made it necessary that religion should be restored by some other means, and that men should have other helps to resort to, than their own strength and reason. And if it be admitted for argument, that natural religion is indeed arrived at that state of perfection so much boasted of, it gives a strong testimony to the Gospel, and evidently proves it to be an adequate remedy and support against the evil and corruption of nature: for, where the Gospel prevails, nature is restored; and reason, delivered from bondage by grace, sees and approves what is holy, just, and pure: for to what else can it be ascribed, but the power of the Gospel, that, in every nation which names the name of Christ, even reason and nature see and condemn the follies and vices which others still, for want of the same help, consider as innocent, or do not condemn.

Can this truth be evaded or denied? What a return then do we make for the blessing that we have received? And how despitefully do we treat the Gospel of Christ, to which we owe that clear light even of reason and nature which we now enjoy, when we endeavour to set up reason and nature in opposition to it? Ought the withered hand, which Christ has restored and made whole, to be lifted up against him? or should the dumb man's tongue, just loosened from the bonds of silence, blaspheme the power which set it free? Yet thus foolishly do we sin, when we make natural religion the engine to batter down the Gospel; for the Gospel only could, and alone has restored the religion of nature, and an infidelity, heightened by the aggravating circumstance of unnatural baseness and dishonesty.

Nor will the success of the attempt be much greater than the wisdom and piety of it; for when once nature leaves its faithful guide, the Gospel of Christ, it will be as unable to support itself against error and superstition, as it was to deliver itself from them, and will by degrees fall back into its original blindness and corruption. Had you a view of the disputes

disputes which arise even upon the principles of natural religion, it would shew you what the end must be; for the wanderings of human reason are infinite. Under the Gospel dispensation we have the immutable word of God for the support of our faith and hope. We know in whom we have believed; in Him, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived; and, poor as our services are, we have his word for it, that our labour of love shall not be forgotten, through the merit of his blood. But for them who rely on nature only, it is not evident, nor can it be, that any future reward shall attend their religious service. No other religion can give any security of eternal life and happiness to its votaries. To what refuge then shall we fly, but to Jesus Christ; or to whom shall we seek for succour, since he alone can bestow upon us pardon, holiness, and heaven?

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## PART II.

THE second thing to be considered is, That the excellency of religion consists in affording certain means of obtaining eternal life and happiness.

Religion is founded in the principles of right reason; and, without supposing this, it would be as rational an act to preach to horses as to men. A man, who has the use of reason, cannot consider his condition and circumstances in this world, or reflect upon his notions of good and evil, and the sense which he feels in himself that he is an accountable creature for the good or evil that he does, without asking himself how he came into this world, and for what purpose, and to whom it is that he is, or possibly may be, accountable? When, on tracing his own being to the original, he finds that there is one supreme, all-wise Cause of all things; when by experience he sees that this world neither is, nor can be, the place for taking a just and adequate account of the actions of men; the presumption that there is another state after this, in which men shall live, grows strong and almost irresistible. When he considers, farther, the fears and hopes of nature with respect to futurity, the fear of death common to all, with the desire of continuing in being, which never forsakes us; and reflects for what use and purpose these strong impressions were given us by the Author of nature; he cannot help concluding that man was made not merely to act a short part upon the stage of this world, but that there is another and more lasting state, to which he bears relation. And hence it must necessarily follow, that his religion must be formed on a view of securing a future happiness.

Since then the end which men propose to themselves by religion is such, it will teach us wherein the true excellency of religion consists. If eternal life and future happiness are the objects

objects of our desire, that will be the best religion which will most certainly lead us to eternal life and future happiness. And it will be to no purpose to compare religions together in any other respects, which have no relation to this end.

Let us then by this rule examine the pretensions of revelation, and, as we proceed, compare it with the present state of natural religion, that we may be able to judge on this important point.

Eternal life and happiness it is out of our power to give ourselves, or to obtain by any strength and force, or any policy or wisdom. Could our own arm rescue us from the jaws of death, and the powers of the kingdom of darkness; could we set open the gates of heaven for ourselves, and enter in to take possession of life and glory; we should want no instruction or assistance from religion.

But since we have not this power of life and death; and since there is one that has, who governeth all things in heaven and in earth, who is over all, God blessed for evermore; it necessarily follows, that either we must have no share or lot in the glories of futurity, or else that we must obtain them from God, and receive them as his gift and favour: and, consequently, if eternal life and happiness be the end of religion, and likewise the gift of God, religion can be nothing else than the means proper to be made use of by us to obtain of God this most excellent and perfect gift of eternal life and happiness.

It is the perfection of religion to instruct us how to please God; and since to please God, and to act according to the will of God, are but one and the same thing, it necessarily follows, that that must be the most perfect religion, which most perfectly instructs us in the knowledge of the will of God. Allowing then nature to have all the advantages which the greatest patrons of natural religion ever laid claim to on her behalf; admitting reason to be as clear, as uncorrupted, as unprejudiced, as even our fondest wishes would make it; yet still it can never be supposed that nature and reason, in all their glory, can be able to know the will of God so well as he himself knows it: and therefore, should God ever make a declaration of his will, that declaration must, according to the nature and necessity of the thing, be a more perfect rule for religion, than reason and nature can possibly furnish us with. Had we the wisdom and reason of Cherubim and Seraphim to direct us in the worship and service of our Maker, it would nevertheless be our highest wisdom, as it is theirs, to submit to his laws, that is, to the declarations of his will.

Secondly: Hence it appears, how extremely wrong it is to compare natural religion and revelation together, in order to inquire which is preferable; for it is neither more nor less than inquiring, Whether we know God's will better than he himself knows it? False revelations are no revelations; and therefore to prefer natural religion before such pretended revelations, is only to reject a forgery: but to suppose that there is, or may be, a true revelation, and yet to say that natural religion is a better guide, is to say that we are wiser than God, and know better how to please him without his directions than with them.

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Upon this state of the case then a revelation must be entirely rejected as a forgery, or implicitly submitted to; and the only debate between natural religion and revelation must be, whether we really have a revelation or not; and not whether revelation or nature be the best and surest foundation of religion: which dispute but ill becomes our condition, and is a vain attempt to exalt ourselves and our own reason *above every thing that is called God.*

Since then revelation, considered as such, must needs be the surest guide in religion, every reasonable man is bound to consider the pretensions of revelation, when offered to him; for no man can justify himself in relying on natural religion, till he has satisfied himself that no better directions are to be had. As it is the business of religion to please God, is it not a very natural and very reasonable inquiry to make, whether God has anywhere declared what will please him? at least it is reasonable; when we are called to this inquiry, by having a revelation tendered to us, supported by such evidence, which, though it may be easily rejected without reason, yet to reason will ever approve itself.

We are not now arguing in behalf of any particular revelation, which may be true or false for any thing that has hitherto been said. But this I urge, that revelation is the surest foundation of religion; and this requires no other proof than an explication of the terms. Religion, considered as a rule, is the knowledge of serving and pleasing God; Revelation is the declaration of God how he would be served, and what will please him: and, unless we know what will please God better than he himself does, revelation must be the best rule to serve and please God by; that is, it must be the best religion.

Hence then, I say, it is incumbent on every man of sense and reason, upon every one who judges for himself in the choice of his religion, first to inquire whether there be a revelation, or not? Nor can the precepts of natural religion singly be drawn into question, till it is first certain that there is no revelation to direct us: and therefore there can be no comparison stated generally between natural and revealed religion, in order to determine our choice between them; because the revelation must be first rejected, before natural religion can pretend to the direction.

And yet this is the beaten path which infidels tread. They consider in general, that revelation is subject to many uncertainties; it may be a cheat at first, or it may be corrupted afterwards, and not faithfully handed down to them; but in natural religion, say they, there can be no cheat, because in that every man judges for himself, and is bound to nothing but what is agreeable to the dictates of reason and his own mind: and upon these general views they reject all revelations whatever, and adhere to natural religion as the safer guide. But attend to the consequence of such reasoning, which is this; that because there may be a false revelation, therefore there cannot be a true one: for unless this conse-

quence be just, they are inexcusable in rejecting all revelations, because of the uncertainties which may attend them.

But now, to apply what has been said to the Christian revelation: it has such pretences, on the face of it, as make it worthy of a particular consideration: it pretends to come from heaven; to have been delivered by the Son of God; to have been confirmed by undeniable miracles and prophecies; to have been ratified by the blood of Christ, and also by that of his apostles, who died in asserting its truth: it can shew likewise an innumerable company of martyrs and confessors: its doctrines are pure and holy, its precepts just and righteous; its worship is a reasonable service, refined from the errors of idolatry and superstition, and spiritual like the God who is the object of it: it offers the aid and assistance of Heaven to the weakness and corruption of nature; which makes the religion of the Gospel to be as practicable as it is reasonable: it promises infinite rewards to faith and obedience, and threatens eternal punishment to obstinate offenders; which makes it of the utmost consequence to us soberly to consider it, since every one who rejects it stakes his own soul against the truth of it.

Are these such pretences as are to be dismissed with general and loose objections? Because miracles may be pretended, shall not the miracles of Christ be considered, which were not so much as questioned by the adversaries of the Gospel in the first ages? Because there may be impostors, shall Christ be rejected, whose life was innocent, and free from any suspicion of private design; and who died to seal the truths that he had delivered? Because there have been impostures introduced by worldly men endeavouring to make a gain of godliness, shall the Gospel be suspected, which, in every page, declares against the world, against the pleasures, the riches, the glories of it; which labours no one point more than to draw off the affections from things below, and to raise them to the enjoyment of heavenly and spiritual delights?

But whether you *will* consider it, or not; yet there is such a call to you to consider it, as must render your neglect inexcusable. You cannot say that you want inducement to consider it, when you see it entertained by men of all degrees. The Gospel does not make so mean a figure in the world, as to justify your contempt of it: the light shines forth in the world, whether you will receive it or not; if you receive it not, the consequence is upon your own soul, and you must answer it.

Were men sincere in their professions of religion, or even in their desires of salvation and immortality, the controversies in religion would soon take a new turn: the only question would be, whether the Gospel were true, or not: we should have no reasoning against revelation in general; for it is impossible that a sincerely religious man should not wish for a revelation of God's will, if there be not one already: we should then see another kind of industry used in searching the truths of God, which are now overlooked, because men have lost their regard for the things which make for their salvation. Were the Gospel but a title to an estate, there is not an infidel of them all, who would sit down contented

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with his own general reasonings against it: it would then be thought worth looking into; its proofs would be considered, and a just weight allowed them: and yet the Gospel is our only title to a much nobler inheritance than this world knows; it is the patent by which we claim life and immortality, and all the joys and blessings of the heavenly *Canaan*. Had any man but a pedigree as ancient as the Gospel, what a noise should we have about it? And yet the Gospel is despised, which sets forth to us a nobler pedigree than the kings of the earth can boast; a descent from Christ, who is head over the whole family; by which believers claim as heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ: and did we not despise our relation to Christ as our Saviour, and secretly abhor and dread the thoughts of immortality, we could not be so cold in our regard to the Gospel of God.

I wish that every man, who argues against the Christian religion, would take this one serious thought along with him; that he must hereafter, if he believes that God will judge the world, argue the case once more at the judgment-seat of God: and let him try his reasons accordingly. Do you reject the Gospel because you will admit nothing that pretends to be a revelation? Consider well; is this a reason which you will justify to the face of God? Will you tell him, that you had resolved to receive no positive commands from him, nor to admit any of his declarations for law? If it will not be a good reason then, it is not a good reason now; and the stoutest heart will tremble to give such an impious reason to the Almighty, which is a plain defiance of his wisdom and authority\*.

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### PART III.

A FAIRER issue there cannot be for the trial of any religion: for, since eternal life and happiness is the end that all men aim at by religion, that must necessarily be the best religion, which most certainly leads us to this great and desirable blessing.

But the grand objection of the infidel against the Christian revelation is, that it is full of mysteries.

Though this objection is levelled against the Christian revelation particularly, yet it must conclude equally against revelation in general, considered as a principle of religion, if it makes any addition to the things to be believed or done beyond what reason teaches us. The question then will be, whether it can be reasonable for God to propose any articles of faith, or any conditions of salvation, the reason and propriety of which do not appear to man? And this is a question of great importance, it being confessedly the case of the Gospel.

\* I recommend to my readers the perusal of the Sermons, Dissertations, and other writings of Bishop Sherlock; in which they will find the ideas I have now held out to them enlarged upon in the most masterly manner. And here I must, to the glory of God, acknowledge my unspeakable obligations to the works of that learned prelate. During part of the time of my residence at the University of Oxford I was a Deist—an infidel: but by reading the works of Bishop Sherlock I was restored to a belief of the Bible, that blessed book, which is the delight of my heart!

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In the sense of the Gospel, whatever is the effect of God's secret counsels, in order to the redemption of the world, is a mystery. That men ought to obey God in truth and holiness, that they may obtain his blessing,—and, that sinners ought to be punished,—are not, nor ever were, mysteries. But all the methods of religion beyond these were, and still are, mysterious: the intention of God to redeem the world from sin by sending his own Son in the likeness of man, is a mystery unknown to former ages, if we speak of the world in general: it is a mystery still, inasmuch as we cannot penetrate into the depths of this divine œconomy, or account by the principles of human reason for every step or article of it. But let it be remembered, that not human reason, but the will of God, is the rule and measure of religious obedience: and, if so, the terms of religious obedience must be tried by their agreeableness to the will of God, and not measured by the narrow compass of man's reason. If reason can discover, either by internal or external signs, the conditions of salvation proposed to us to be the will of God, the work of reason is over, and we are obliged to use the means that are prescribed by God, as we hope to obtain the end, which is the gift of God: and how little soever reason can penetrate into the mysteries of God, yet if it can discover them to be indeed the mysteries of God, and by him proposed to us as necessary to salvation, it discovers plainly to us that these mysteries of God make an essential part of the grand system that leads to eternal life and happiness, which is all, I think, that a reasonable man would desire to find in his religion: for, since all that he desires to obtain by his religion is eternal life and glory, what more has he to look for in his religion than *the means of eternal life and glory?*

This is true, you will say, upon the supposition of God's requiring from us the belief of mysteries or the practice of any positive duties; then it will be our duty to hearken to his voice, and entirely submit our wills and understandings to him: but how does this prove it reasonable for him so to do, or remove the prejudice which lies against the Gospel, because of its mysterious doctrines?

To come then to the point: it will, I suppose, be easily granted to be agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God to reveal whatever is necessary to be revealed in order to perfect the salvation of mankind; as, on the other side, it must be allowed, that it is not consistent with infinite wisdom and goodness to reveal mysteries merely to puzzle the minds of men. These allowances being made on each side, the question is reduced to this; whether it can be ever necessary to reveal mysteries in order to save mankind? When it is necessary it must be reasonable, unless it be unreasonable for God to save the world: and upon this ground it will be found, that any thing proposed to us as a revelation, cannot be from God without opening to us all necessary truths, how abstruse and mysterious soever some of them may be.

With respect to infinite wisdom, there is no such thing as mystery in nature: all things are equally clear in the understanding of God; all things lie naked before his eye, having no darkness, obscurity, or difficulty in them. A mystery, therefore, is no real or positive thing

thing in nature; nor is it any thing that is inherent or belonging to the subjects of which it is predicated. When we say this thing or that thing is a mystery, according to the form of our speech, we seem to affirm something of this or that thing; but, in truth, the proposition is not affirmative with respect to the thing, but negative with respect to ourselves: for, when we say this thing is a mystery, of the thing we say nothing; but of ourselves we say, that we do not comprehend this thing. With respect to our understanding, there is no more difference between truth which is, and truth which is not mysterious, than, with respect to our strength, there is between a weight which we can lift, and a weight which we cannot lift: for, as defect of strength in us makes some weights to be immoveable, so likewise defect of understanding makes some truths to be mysterious.

The complaint then against mysteries in religion amounts to no more than this; that God has done something for us, or appointed something for us to do, in order to save us, the reason of which we do not understand; and requires us to believe and to comply with these things, and to trust in him that we shall receive the benefit of them.

But to return to the question, Whether it can be ever necessary for God to reveal mysteries, or appoint positive duties, in order to perfect the salvation of mankind; or, in other words, to use such means for the salvation of the world, the agreeableness of which to the end intended the reason of Man cannot discover? This is certain, that, whenever it is out of our power by natural means to save ourselves, if we are to be saved at all, it is necessary that supernatural means be made use of.

Suppose then, that all men have so far sinned as to have lost the right and pleas of obedient subjects: that an universal corruption has spread through the whole race, and rendered them incapable of performing the duties of reason and nature, or, if they could perform them, precluded the merit and title of all such works to reward; for the works of nature, if they could prevent a forfeiture, yet cannot reverse a forfeiture once incurred: in this case what shall be done? Is it unreasonable for God to redeem the world? God forbid! and yet by the means of reason and nature the world cannot be redeemed. Will you allow that God may freely forgive the sins of the world, and remit the punishment, and bestow even on sinners the gift of eternal life? How mysterious would even this grace be, and how far beyond the power of reason to comprehend? Could you, from any of the natural notions of your mind, reconcile this method of redemption with the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God? Consider the essential difference between good and evil, the natural beauty of one, and the natural deformity of the other; compare them with the essential holiness of the Deity; and then tell me the ground upon which he reconciles himself to sin, pities and forgives it, and offers immortal glory to the sinner perseveringly returning to him through his grace; or, if this way please you not, consider his wisdom, by which he rules and governs the world, and try, by all the notions you can frame of wisdom, whether it be not necessary for the good government of the rational world, that

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rewards and punishments should be divided with an equal hand to virtue and vice; and then tell me, where is the wisdom of dropping all the punishment due to sin, and receiving sinners not only to pardon, but to glory? There may be wisdom and holiness in this, but not human wisdom, nor holiness which human reason can discern; but infinite mysterious wisdom and holiness. If, from your notions of wisdom and holiness, you can have no help in this case, much less will the natural notion of justice assist you: is not justice conversant in rewards and punishments? Is it not the essence of justice to distribute both where they are due? Is there not in nature and reason a connection between virtue and reward, between vice and punishment? How then comes nature to be reversed, and the laws of reason to be disturbed? and how, as if justice were more than poetically blind, come sinners to be intitled to life and happiness? Even in this case, therefore, of God's finally forgiving the sins of penitent and faithful souls, which is the lowest that can be put, religion would necessarily be mysterious, and not to be apprehended by reason or nature, but to be received by faith; and our only refuge would be, not in the reason and nature of the thing, but in the unfathomable goodness and incomprehensible mercy of God.

But, should it really be, as to human reason it appears, inconsistent with the wisdom and justice of God, so freely to pardon sin as not to leave the marks of his displeasure upon it; or to remit the transgressions of men, without vindicating, in the face of the whole creation, the honour of his laws and government; in what a maze must reason then be lost in searching after the means of reconciliation and redemption! How shall sin be punished, and yet the sinner saved? How shall the honour of God's government be vindicated in the face of all the world, and yet in the face of all the world the rebels justified and exalted? These are difficulties irreconcilable to human reason and nature; and yet they must be reconciled; or the world, once lost, must lie for ever under condemnation. The religion that can adjust this difficulty, and give us the clue to lead us through these mazes, in that human reason must for ever wander, can be the only religion that can possibly be suitable to human nature in its present corrupted state, and must necessarily abound with inconceivable mysteries, but with mysteries of grace and mercy.

So far is it from being an objection against the Gospel of Christ, that it contains many wonderful mysteries of the hidden wisdom of God,—that, as our case stands, without a means of rescuing sinners from punishment, and of making atonement to the justice of God: since they cannot prescribe a proper satisfaction for sin, in which the honour of God and the salvation of men shall be at once consulted: since they cannot remedy the corruption which has spread through the race of mankind, or infuse new principles of virtue and holiness into the souls already subdued to the lust and power of sin; since, if they could procure our pardon for what is past, they cannot secure us for the future from the same temptations, which, by fatal experience, we know we cannot, but by grace, withstand: since, I say, these things cannot be done by the means of reason and nature, they must be done

done by such means as reason and nature know nothing of; that is, in other words, they must be done by mysterious means, of the propriety of which we can have no adequate notion or conception.

If you stand in need of no new favour, if you aim not so high as eternal life, religion without mysteries may well serve your turn. The principles of natural religion tend to procure the peace and tranquillity of this life; and the not distinguishing between religion as a rule of life for our present use and well-being here, and as the means of obtaining pardon for sin and eternal life hereafter, may have in some measure occasioned the great complaint against the mysteries of the Gospel: for mysteries are not indeed the necessary parts of religion, considered only as a rule of action; but most necessary they are to it, when considered as a means of obtaining pardon and eternal glory. And this farther shews, how unreasonably men object against the mysterious wisdom of the Gospel, since all that the Gospel prescribes to us as our duty is plain and evident; all that is mysterious is on God's part, and relates intirely to the surprizing acts of divine wisdom and mercy in the redemption of the world. Consider the Gospel then as a rule of action, no religion was ever so plain, so calculated upon the principles of right reason: so that natural religion itself had never more natural religion in it. If we consider the end proposed to us, and the means used to intitle us to the benefit of it, it grows mysterious, and soars above the reach of human reason; for God has done more for us than reason could teach us to expect, or can now teach us to comprehend. Let us then do our part by receiving Jesus Christ into our hearts, through that simple and sincere faith which works by love; and let us trust in God that he will do his, though it exceeds the strength of human wisdom to comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height of that wisdom and mercy which God has manifested to the world through his Son Christ Jesus our Lord.

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#### PART IV.

UPON the supposition of men's becoming sinners, and liable to the displeasure and wrath of God, religion itself becomes a new thing. Innocence, which once was all the care that religion had, is now vanished, and, with it, all our hopes of glory and immortality. The natural attributes of God, which to the eyes of innocence afforded a pleasant prospect, to the eyes of sinners are exceedingly dreadful. What then shall the sinner do? Shall he resort to natural religion in this distress? But if this religion be nothing but a rule of living well, what is that to him, who has already lived so ill as to be obnoxious to condemnation? As well may you send the condemned malefactor to study the law by which he dies, in order to save his life, as the sinner to the perfect rule of life which he has transgressed, in

order to save his soul. The more he studies the rule by which he should have lived, and compares it with his own transgressions, he will but the more fully comprehend how much he deserves punishment, and how desperate the state is to which sin has reduced him. In a religion that is barely a rule of life, there is no sure comfort or support to be had against the terrors of guilt and sin. Unbelievers may think we ask too much of them to be granted, when we argue upon this supposition, *That all are sinners, and are fallen short of the glory of God.* But, as this is the supposition upon which the Gospel uniformly proceeds, pretending to no more than to provide means of salvation for sinners, whoever takes upon himself to question the reasonableness of the Gospel, must consider it as being what it pretends to be; otherwise he will not argue against the Gospel, but against something else formed in his own imagination. If, upon examination of the Gospel, it appears to be indeed what it pretends to be, a means for saving sinners, you must necessarily come to one or other of the following resolutions: If you are conscious to yourself that you are a sinner, you must gladly receive the remedy provided for you, and which, upon examination, you find to be proper for your case: or, If you are satisfied with yourself, and want no help, you must reject it as unnecessary and improper in your case, and trust entirely to your own merit; and must appear before God, and demand life and immortality as due from his justice and equity, which you will not accept as a gift from his grace and mercy.

Let us then consider what is necessary to be done for a sinner, in order to restore him to eternal life and glory; and that will teach us the true notion of the religion of the Gospel.

First, then, It is necessary, in order to restore a sinner to eternal life, that God be reconciled to him:

Secondly, That the sinner be purged from the impurity contracted by sin.

Thirdly, That, for the future, he be enabled to obey the holy laws of God, without which his reconciliation to God would be fruitless and of no effect.

I think there needs but little to be said to prove the necessity of these conditions: if the sinner's case be desperate, because God is provoked by his iniquity, and justly angry at his offences; there can be no foundation for him to hope till God be reconciled to him: if the sinner is impure in the sight of God because of his sins, his impurity must be cleansed before he can abide with God for ever: if the transgression of the laws of reason and nature, which are the laws of God, was that which lost him the favour of God; that he may not lose it again after being reconciled to him, it is necessary that he sin no more; or, if he do, that a remedy be provided to restore him.

Allowing then these conditions to be necessary to the salvation of a sinner, and likewise that religion must contain the means of eternal life and glory; it necessarily follows, that the sinner's religion must contain the means by which he may be reconciled to God; the  
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means by which he may be purified and cleansed from sin; and the means by which he may be enabled for the future to obey the will of God: for these are the necessary means by which a sinner must be saved; and, therefore, they must necessarily be contained in the sinner's religion. How imperfect a notion then have we of such a religion, when we consider it only as a rule of action! and how weakly must we argue against it, when our arguments are pointed only against this notion or idea of it!

A rule of action must be plain and intelligible, or else it is no rule; for we can neither obey nor disobey a law which we cannot understand: and, therefore, from this idea of religion that it is a rule of action, there lies a very plain objection against admitting mysteries in religion. And let the objection have its full force, the Gospel is secure from the blow; for the rule of life contained in the Gospel is the plainest as well as the purest that ever the world was acquainted with. In the precepts of Christianity there is no mystery, no shadow of a mystery to be seen; they are all simple, and, to men of the lowest understandings, intelligible; the duties which it requires us to perform to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbours, are such as, when offered to us, we cannot but in our minds and consciences speculatively approve: and, therefore, the Gospel, as far as it is a rule of life, is far from being mysterious, since both the sense and the reason of the law are open and plain, and such as we cannot but see, and, when we see, acknowledge in speculation.

But since this is not the only notion or idea of religion, that it is a rule of life; let us consider whether, according to the other ideas which belong to it, it be equally absurd to suppose it in some points mysterious. Let us examine it then under this notion, as containing the means by which God is reconciled to sinners.

And, first, it is obvious to observe, that here is not the same reason against mysteries as in the other case: for, though we cannot practise a law without understanding it, yet God may be reconciled to us, and we have the assurance of it, without our being able to comprehend and account for every thing which was done in order thereto. A malefactor may receive a pardon, and enjoy the benefit of it, without knowing what it was that induced his prince to grant it; and would, without doubt, be thought mad to stand out against the mercy, merely because he could not dive into the secret reasons of it. Could not a sinner receive the benefit of God's mercy without understanding all the methods of it, it would then be necessary indeed, that even this part of religion should be free from mysteries, and made plain to every man's understanding: but, since a sinner may be saved by a mercy which he cannot comprehend, where is the absurdity of offering sinners mercy, and requiring them to rely on it, or, in other words, to believe in it, though it be ever so incomprehensible or mysterious? Were it unreasonable or impossible to believe things to be, without knowing how they came to be, faith could never be reasonable in religion, or in any thing else: but, since the knowledge of the essence of things, and of the existence of things, are two distinct kinds of knowledge, and independent of one another; our ignorance of the essence of things, and of the relation which they have to each other, can never be a  
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good argument against the belief of their existence: and yet this objection contains all the argument that unbelievers bring against the mysteries of Christianity. Why do they, for instance, refuse to believe Christ to be the Son of God? Only because they cannot comprehend how he can be the eternal Son of God. And, if they will be true to their principle, and carry the objection as far as it will go, they must in time come to deny the existence of every thing in the world, themselves not excepted. Since then to comprehend the reason and nature of things is neither necessary to our believing the reality of them, nor yet to our receiving benefits and advantages from them; how comes it to be necessary, that in religion there should be nothing which we do not understand? Necessary it cannot be to our salvation, for we may be saved by means that we comprehend not; nor yet to our faith is it necessary; for we may, and do, daily believe the reality of things, without knowing any thing of the nature and reasons of them. And if mysteries may set forward our salvation, and are not destructive of our faith, upon what other views they can be excluded from religion I cannot conceive.

Thus much then may serve to shew, that according to this notion of religion, That it contains the means by which God is reconciled to sinners, no argument can be drawn to weaken the authority of any religion because some parts of it are mysterious: but if you consider it farther, it will appear, that this part of religion must necessarily be mysterious, and the means of reconciliation such as reason and nature cannot comprehend.

The principles from which this consequence will follow, are these: That men are sinners; that God must be reconciled to sinners in order to their salvation; that religion must contain the certain method by which we may obtain eternal life and happiness. The consequence of these principles is evident, That religion must contain the means by which God is reconciled to sinners; for, since this reconciliation is necessary to eternal life and happiness, religion cannot produce eternal life and happiness without it. Now then, if there be no such means of reconciliation, which reason and nature can either discover or comprehend, this part of religion must necessarily be mysterious; since what reason cannot comprehend is mysterious. Now from the natural notion that we have of God, and his attributes, there arises such a difficulty in this case, as reason cannot get over: for it is certain, according to all the natural notions of our mind, that it is just for God to punish sinners. It is likewise certain, that God can do nothing but what is just: if, therefore, he forgives sinners, receives them to mercy, and remits their punishment, it is then certain, that it is just for God in this circumstance not to punish sinners. Now, reason cannot comprehend how it should, with respect to the same individual sinners, be just to punish, and just not to punish them. If it be not just to punish sinners, there wants no reconciliation for sinners; and, if it be not just not to punish them, no reconciliation can be had, for it is contrary to the nature of God to do what is not just.

The same argument lies from all the attributes of the Deity which are at all concerned in the redemption of mankind: his wisdom and holiness, and even his mercy, are as indiscernible as his justice. Now try how far reason can go towards discovering the means of reconciliation. Lay down first these certain and allowed principles; That it is just for God to punish sinners; that God can do nothing but what is just: and try how you can come at the other conclusion, which must be the foundation of a sinner's reconciliation to God; namely, That it is just for God not to punish sinners, and righteous in him to receive them to favour. If reason cannot discover nor comprehend how both these propositions should be true at the same time with respect to the same persons, it is impossible that it should discover or comprehend the means which God makes use of to reconcile himself to sinners; that is to say, it is impossible for God to make use of any means which are not mysterious, that is, above the reach and comprehension of human wisdom.

This difficulty must for ever remain, as long as we attempt to scan the divine justice by our narrow conceptions of it; and this is the very difficulty which makes many things in the Gospel to be mysterious. The Scripture tells us, *that God has been reconciled to sinners by the death of Christ; that he made atonement for the sins of the whole world.* These are great mysteries. But if we could see the reasons upon which the justice of God proceeds in this case, here would be no mystery: and therefore the mysteriousness of the whole proceeding arises only hence, that our finite minds cannot comprehend the reasons and limits of the divine justice. Most certain it is, that, if God be reconciled to sinners, satisfaction must be made to his justice; for he may as well cease to be God, as cease to be just. Whatever satisfaction is made, it must be founded in the reasons of his own justice, that is, of justice directed by infinite wisdom. The reasons of such justice we cannot comprehend; and therefore we must either be saved by means which are mysterious to us, or God must give us infinite wisdom to comprehend the reason of his justice. You see then, that from this notion of religion, considered as containing the means by which God has reconciled himself to sinners, it is so far from being absurd to suppose it in some parts mysterious, that it is not possible it should be otherwise.

To redeem the world is the work of God: he only could find the means of reconciliation, and he only could apply them: it is our part merely to accept them, and to obey the terms and conditions upon which he offers them. Religion, therefore, which is founded upon redemption, must needs consist of these two parts;—an account of the redemption wrought by God; and instructions to men upon what terms they may reap the benefit of the redemption. As far as our part goes in the Gospel, there is nothing mysterious. As to the other parts of the Gospel, we are not required to comprehend and account for God's methods of salvation, but only to accept them; which, as I before observed, are two distinct acts of the mind, and not dependent upon each other. As  
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for the work of God in our redemption, it is indeed wonderful and mysterious: and why should it seem strange to you that it is so? Are there any other works of God which are not mysterious? Consider the creation and formation of this world; consider the sun, the moon, and the stars, the works of his hand; tell me by what secret power they move, by what rule their different motions were at first impressed, and by what secret in nature or providence ever since preserved. Or, if you think it hard to be sent to consider the heavens at a distance, do but consider the earth, and the meanest creatures of it. Can you tell how they are formed? how they *live, and move, and have their being*? Nay, can you name that work of God which is not mysterious? Is there any thing in nature, the first principles of which you can discover and see into? If in all the works of God there is no such thing, why should we think it strange that in his work of redemption he has appeared so like himself, and that in this, as in every thing else, *his ways are past finding out*? We live by the preservation of Providence, and enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this life; and yet how mysterious is our preservation! How little do we know of the methods by which we are preserved! and yet the benefits of it we enjoy, notwithstanding our ignorance of the means: and why is it a greater absurdity to suppose that men may be redeemed without comprehending all the means made use of in their redemption? In all other instances whatever, the miraculoufness of an escape adds to the pleasure and joy of it, and is always remembered with a kind of ecstasy in the relation. Salvation is the only instance in which men demur upon the means, and are unwilling to receive the mercy because they cannot understand the methods of obtaining it. In any other case, a man would be thought beside himself who should act in the same manner.

As to the two other points, the cleansing of sinners from their iniquity, and enabling them to live virtuously for the future, or, in other words, the sanctification and grace promised in the Gospel; I shall not here enter into the consideration of them particularly, because the same way of reasoning is applicable in these cases, *mutatis mutandis*; and therefore I shall leave them at present to your own reflection.

Upon the whole: The only true and fair way of judging of the Gospel is, to consider what is the true state of mankind in the world. If men are in a state of purity and innocence, no redemption is wanting, and the methods prescribed in the Gospel bear no relation to their circumstances: but, if men have everywhere sinned, and come short of the glory of God, the law of nature cannot help them to those blessings which by the law of nature are forfeited; and there is manifestly a necessity to have recourse to other means to obtain salvation.

Considering, therefore, religion in this view, we shall have reason to conclude, that our only hope is in Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Redeemer; and to say with St. Peter, *Lord, whither shall we go? Thou, thou only, hast the words of eternal life: and we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

## PART V.

WHEN we consider the great and wonderful work of our redemption, though we cannot account for every step of it to our own reason and understanding, yet neither can we imagine it to be the effect of mere will and arbitrary appointment, and void of all foundation in the reason and propriety of things. All the works of God are works of wisdom; and, as far as our capacities give us leave to judge, we discern evident marks of wisdom in them all, and discover a fitness and propriety in every thing with respect to the end which it is intended to serve or promote. If this be so in every instance in which we are able to make any judgment, it is a great presumption that it is, and must be so, in all other instances which are too high and great to be viewed and measured by human understanding: and we have one positive argument that it is so, arising from the natural notion that we have of God, and of his attributes of wisdom and justice. It is impossible to suppose such a Being to do any thing by chance, or in compliance to mere will and humour. No: every act of God is the act of infinite wisdom, and is founded in the necessary reason and propriety of things: and it is as true of the works of grace, as it is of the works of nature, that *in wisdom he has ordained them all*.

It is one thing, not to be able to discern the reasons of providence and grace; and another, to suppose there is no reason in them. The complete reasons which made it either necessary or proper for Christ to die for the sins of mankind, may be removed out of our sight: but to suppose that Christ really did die for the sins of the world, and yet that there was no reason or propriety in his so doing, is to found revealed religion upon a principle destructive of all religion; for no religion can subsist with an opinion that God is a Being capable of acting without reason.

The publication of the Gospel has given us new views in the scheme of religion, by revealing to us the eternal Son of God, *whom God hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power.* Heb. i. 2, 3.

The knowledge of the Son of God, of his power and dominion in the creating and upholding of all things, became necessary as the foundation of the faith required to be placed in him as our Redeemer. The character of Redeemer would be but ill supported by any person who had not power equal to the great undertaking.

When we consider what expectations we have from our Redeemer, and what great promises he has made to us in his Gospel, we cannot possibly avoid inquiring who this person is: when we hear his promise to be always present with us to the end of the world, to support us under all our difficulties, it is but a reasonable demand to ask by what authority he does these things: and when we are told that he liveth for ever, and is the Lord



of life and of glory, there is no room to doubt but he is able to do every thing which he has promised for his faithful people. St. Paul tells us, that the Lord Jesus Christ *shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*: a great expectation this! but consider what the reasonable foundation of this expectation is: St. Paul informs us, that it is the energy of power which Christ possesses, *whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself*. Our Saviour places this article upon the same ground: hear his declaration; *Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall bear the voice of the Son of God; and they that bear shall live*. In the next verse, the reason follows: *For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*, John, v. 25, 26. If the Son has life in himself, even as the Father has life in himself; if he be really endued with power to which all nature submits and obeys, a power sufficient for the creation of the world at first, and for the preservation of it ever since; we have reason to conclude, that he is now as able to restore life as he was at first to give it; to call men from the grave into being, as well as to call them out of nothing at the first creation.

St. Paul tells us expressly, that Christ is the head of the Church; a title founded in the right of redemption, *that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*; that, as he was the head of all creatures in virtue of having created them, so he might be the head of the church, the faithful people of God, in virtue of having redeemed them: *For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*; that is, that Christ should be all in all, the head of the second as well as of the first creation, Coloss. i. 18. According to St. Paul's reasoning here, if any other person had redeemed the world, or if the world had been redeemed without Christ, he would not *have had the pre-eminence in all things*; which yet he had before sin came into the world; and, consequently, the sin of the world would have been the diminution of the headship and power of Christ. Upon these principles of the Gospel revelation, we may discern vast propriety in Christ's coming to redeem the world: the work was such, that no person of less power could undertake it; and his relation to the world was such, as made it fit and proper that he should be the Redeemer of it when lost.

The redemption of mankind is a work which in the event seems to concern men only: but, considered as a vindication of the justice and goodness of God towards his creatures, it is a work exposed to the consideration of every intelligent being in the universe. Whether they may be supposed to inquire into God's dealings with the children of men, we may judge by ourselves. It is little that we know of the fall of angels; yet how has that employed human curiosity! For every man considers himself as having an interest in the justice and equity of that Supreme Being under whose government he lives, and by whose judgment he must finally stand or fall. If we doubt whether the superior orders of beings have the like inclination, St. Peter will tell us, *That the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,—are things the angels desire to look into*. 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. And indeed

indeed the method of God's dealing with any rational creature is a common concern to all; and it is for the honour of God's government to be vindicated in the sight of every intelligent being, *that he may be justified in his saying, and overcome when he is judged.*

If this be so, it must necessarily follow, that the redemption by Christ, though it relates immediately to men, must be agreeable to all the reason and relation of things, known or discoverable by the highest intellectual beings.

St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, *that Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.* Angels sinned, and men sinned: men only are redeemed. If God is just, there must be reason for this, though not within our reach at present.

What relation these angelic beings stand in to us in many respects, I will not now inquire: but that they are not unconcerned spectators in the work of our redemption, is evident. Our Saviour tells us, *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* Luke, xv. 10. Again; *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* Rev. iii. 5. Here the angels are mentioned as witnesses of the justice of the judgment, and not merely as attendants to make up the pomp and ceremony of judicature.

Since then the justice and equity of God in redeeming men are things which the angels desire and are concerned to look into; it is evident, that his justice and equity, and the reasons of Providence in this great affair, may be discernible to the highest order of intellectual beings, though not perfectly discoverable by us.

That this is probably the case may be hence learnt, that, where the Gospel has revealed to us any of these relations not discoverable by human reason, so far we can see the reason and propriety of this great work of our redemption.

But let us consider how well these principles and doctrines of the Gospel agree together, and how naturally the one flows from the other. When we view the sad condition of mankind, the sin, folly, and misery, which are in the world; and then turn to contemplate the perfections, the wisdom, and the goodness of Him who made us; some hopes spring up in us, that this confusion will some day find a remedy, and ourselves a release, from the goodness and wisdom of Him who formed us. I blame not these hopes, for they are just. But if we once have the knowledge of the eternal Son of God, and can discover that the world was made and is upheld by his power; that we are his immediate creatures and subjects, is it not reasonable in that case to found some hopes upon this relation? Ought we not to be willing to believe, that this great Person who made us will have some compassion upon the work of his own hands, if we seek him in his own prescribed way? Ought we not to hope to find in him at least an Intercessor on our behalf, an *Advocate with the Father*? Ought we not to be inclined to recommend to him all our pleas, to put all our interest into his hands, trusting that he cannot want bowels of affection towards the

creatures whom he originally formed after his own image and likeness? We are indeed by nature dead in trespasses and sins; and it is the Spirit of Christ alone who can give the spiritual eye to discover effectually the sacred relations existing between Christ and his church. However the Gospel discovers to the believing soul these relations between Christ and the world, and particularly the relations subsisting between Christ and his church; it requires from us such faith and hope, and such obedience, as flow from this relation; and could it possibly require less? Would it not be absurd to tell us, that Christ is Lord of the world that is, and of that which is to come, and not to require us to have hope and confidence in him? Would it not be absurd to tell us, that he is the Lord of life and glory, and to bid us expect life and glory through any other hands than his?

From these and the like considerations we may discern how reasonable the religion of the Gospel is. It has indeed opened to us a new scene of things, discovering to us the ever-blessed Son of God, the Creator and Governor of the world, who is God over all, blessed for ever. What else it proposes to us results naturally from this relation between Christ and the world. This mysterious work of our redemption itself seems to have arisen from the original relation between the only-begotten and eternal Son of God, and man the creature of God; and our Christian faith, in every article and branch of it, has a just foundation and support in the power, authority, and pre-eminence of the eternal Son of God. We may well believe that he has redeemed us, since we know that he made us. And, though all nature seems to frown on us, and to threaten death and destruction, from which no human power or cunning can deliver us; yet the hope of the faithful is steadfast and unmoveable, being placed in him who is *able to subdue all things to himself*.

The belief, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and arise to life, is one of the grand fundamental articles of a Christian's faith: if this be not well established, our hope and confidence are vain, and the preaching of the cross of Christ is foolishness.

Let us reflect a little how our case stands with respect to the prospect beyond the grave.

When we view the world in its present circumstances, and see the misery and oppression which are in it; when we consider that the distresses and sorrows arising from the weakness and the wickedness of men are in number and in weight ten times more than all the sufferings to which we are exposed by the mere frailty of our condition; we can hardly imagine that a wise and just God made the world to be what we find it is. When we look farther, and find that the best men oftentimes fare worst; that even the desire and endeavour to please God frequently exposes them to infinite sorrows in this world; we stand amazed, and are ready to doubt whether these appearances can be reconciled with the belief that God governs the world. But, since all nature proclaims the being and the power of God, and the visible things of the creation declare in every language of the world the wisdom and goodness of him who made them; under the force and conviction of this evidence that there is a God, we can find no possible way to account for his justice and  
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goodness towards the children of men, but by supposing that *he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness* : and since this world evidently is not the scene of this judgment, we conclude there must be another, in which we shall stand before his tribunal. Scholars may reason of the nature of the soul, and the condition of it when separated from the body ; but the common hopes of mankind, receive no support from such inquiries. But something farther is necessary to give ease to the mind in this painful search after life and happiness. The numberless instances of mortality which we hear and see, the remains of those who left the world ages before we came into it, and are still mouldering in their tombs, form an undeniable evidence that death destroys this compound being which we call man. How to revive this union nature knows not ; and as for those who make the spirits of men in the divided state to be perfect men, they seem to have formed a conclusion without consulting the premises.

Look now into the Gospel : there you will find every reasonable hope of man, nay, every reasonable suspicion, cleared up and confirmed, every difficulty answered and removed. Do the present circumstances of the world lead you to suspect that God could never be the author of such corrupt and wretched creatures as men now are ? Your suspicions are just and well founded : God made man upright ; but through the temptation of the devil sin entered, and death and destruction followed after.

Do you suspect, from the success of virtue and vice in this world, that the providence of God does not interpose to protect the righteous from violence, or to punish the wicked ? The suspicion is not without ground. God leaves his best servants here to be tried oftentimes with affliction and sorrow, and permits the wicked to flourish and abound. The call of the Gospel is not to honour and riches here, but to take up our crosses, and follow Christ.

Do you judge, from comparing the present state of the world with the notion that you have of God, and of his justice and goodness, that there must needs be another state in which justice shall take place ? You reason right ; and the Gospel confirms the judgment. God has appointed a day to judge the world in righteousness : then those who mourn shall rejoice, and the persecuted and afflicted servants of God shall be heirs of his kingdom.

Have you sometimes misgivings of mind ? Are you tempted to mistrust this judgment, when you see the difficulties which surround it on every side ; some which affect the soul in its separate state, some which affect the body in its state of corruption and dissolution ? Look to the Gospel : there these difficulties are accounted for ; and you need no longer puzzle yourself with dark questions concerning the state, condition, and nature of separate spirits, or concerning the body, however to appearance lost and destroyed ; for the body and soul shall once more meet to part no more.

Would you know who it is that gives this assurance ? It is one who is able to make good his word ; one who loved you so well as to die for you ; yet one too great to be held a prisoner in the grave. No ; he rose with triumph and glory, the first-born from the dead,  
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and will *in like manner* call from the dust of the earth the bodies of all those who put their trust and confidence in him.

But who is this, you will say, that was subject to death, and yet had power over death? How could so much weakness and so much strength meet together? That God has the power of life, we know; but then he cannot die: That man is mortal, we know; but then he cannot give life.

Consider; does this difficulty deserve an answer, or does it not? Our blessed Saviour lived among us in a low and poor condition, exposed to much ill-treatment from his jealous countrymen. When he fell into their power, their rage knew no bounds: they reviled him, insulted him, mocked him, scourged him, and at last nailed him to a cross, where by a shameful and wretched death he finished a life of sorrow and affliction. Did we know no more of him than this, upon what ground could we pretend to hope that he will be able to save us from the power of death? We might say with the disciples, *We trusted this had been he who should have saved Israel*; but he is dead, he is gone, and all our hopes are buried in his grave.

If you think this ought to be answered, and that the faith of a Christian cannot be a reasonable faith, unless it be enabled to account for this seeming contradiction, I beseech you never more complain of the Gospel for furnishing an answer to this great objection, for removing this stumbling-block out of the way of our faith. He was a man, and therefore he died. He was the eternal Son of God, yea, God over all, blessed for ever; and therefore he rose from the dead, and will give eternal life to all his true disciples. He it was who formed this world and all things in it, and for the sake of man was content to become man, and to taste death for all, that all who faithfully receive him, may live through him. This is a wonderful piece of knowledge which God has revealed to us in his Gospel; but he has not revealed it to raise our wonder, but to confirm and establish our faith in Him to whom he hath committed all power, *whom he hath appointed Heir of all things*, even his own eternal Son.

Had the Gospel required of us to expect from Christ the redemption of our souls and bodies, and given us no reason to think that Christ possessed power equal to the work, we might justly have complained; and it would have been a standing reproach, that Christians believe they know not what. But to expect redemption from the Son of God, *whose goings forth have been from everlasting*, (Micah, v. 2.)—the resurrection of our bodies from the same hand which at first created and formed them, are rational and well-founded acts of faith; and it is the Christian's glory, that he *knows in whom he has believed*.

That the world was made by the Son of God, is a proposition with which reason has no fault to find. That He who made the world should have power to renew it to life again, is highly consonant to reason. All the mystery lies in this, that so infinitely great a person should condescend to become man, and be subject to death for the sake of mankind. But are

we the fit persons to complain of this transcendent mysterious love? Or, does it become us to quarrel with the kindness of our blessed Lord towards us, only because it is greater than we can conceive? No; it becomes us to bless and to adore this exceeding love of the great Jehovah, by which we may be saved from condemnation, by which we expect to be rescued from death; knowing that the power of our glorious Lord and Head is equal to his love, and that he is *able to subdue all things to himself*.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE

F O U R   G O S P E L S .

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**C**ONCERNING the authority of the Four Gospels, unquestionably owned by all Christians as sacred Scriptures, indited by those *Apostles* and *Evangelists* whose names they bear; and the reason why they, and they only, have obtained to be received as the authentic records of what our Saviour did, and spake, let it be noted :

1<sup>st</sup>, That *Irenæus* informs us concerning *Polycarp*, that he was made bishop of *Smyrna* by the *Apostles*, and conversed with many who had seen the Lord : and from him *Victor Capuanus* cites a passage, in which we have the names of these four Gospels as we at present receive them, and the beginning of their several *Gospels*.

2<sup>dly</sup>, That *Justin Martyr*, who, says *Eusebius*, lived not long after the *Apostles*, shews that these books were then well known by the name of *Gospels*, and such as were read by *Christians* in their assemblies every Lord's day ; and we learn from him that they were even read by *Jews*, and might be read by *Heathens* ; and, that we may not doubt that by the memoirs of the *Apostles* which, says he, we call *Gospels*, he meant these four received then in the church, he cites passages out of every one of them, declaring that they contained the words of Christ.

3<sup>dly</sup>, That *Irenæus*, in the same century, not only cites them all by name, but declares that there were neither more nor less received by the church, and that they were of such authority, that though the *heretics* of his time complained of their obscurity, depraved them, and lessened their authority, saying, they were written in *hypocrisy*, and in compliance with the errors of those to whom they wrote, and with whom they conversed ; yet durst they not wholly disown them, or deny them to be the writings of those *Apostles* whose names they bore : and he cites passages from every chapter of *St. Matthew*, and *St. Luke*, from fourteen chapters of *St. Mark*, and from twenty chapters of *St. John*.

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4<sup>thly</sup>, That

4thly, That *Clemens of Alexandria*, having cited a passage from the Gospel according to the *Egyptians*, informs his reader that *it was not to be found in the four Gospels delivered by the church.*

5thly, That *Tatianus*, who flourished in the same century and before *Irenæus*, wrote a *Catena*, or *harmony of the four Gospels*, which he named τὸ διατυσσέζον, *the Gospel gathered out of the Four Gospels.* And that the *apostolical constitutions* name them all, and command that they be read in the church, the people standing up at the reading of them.

6thly, That these Gospels, being written, says *Irenæus*, by the will of God, to be the pillars and foundation of the *Christian faith*, the immediate successors of the *Apostles* (who, says *Eusebius*, did great miracles by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, as they performed the work of *evangelists* in preaching Christ to those who had not yet heard the word,) made it their business, when they had laid the foundations of that faith among them, to deliver to them, in writing, the holy Gospels.

II. The mention of other gospels bearing the names of other *apostles*, or of gospels used by other nations, is so far from being derogatory from or tending to diminish the testimonies of the church concerning these four Gospels, that it tends highly to establish and confirm them, as will be evident from the following considerations :

1st, That we find no mention of any of these Gospels till the close of the second century, and of few of them till the third or the fourth century ; that is to say, not till long after the general reception of these four Gospels by the whole church of Christ. For *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus*, who cite large passages from these four Gospels, make not the least mention of any other gospels noticed either by the *heretics* or by the *orthodox*.

2dly, They who speak of them in the close of the second, or in the following centuries, do it still with this remark, that *the Gospels received by the church were four ;* and that these belonged not to them, nor to the *evangelical canon.* *Clemens of Alexandria* is the first ecclesiastical writer who cites *the Gospel according to the Egyptians*, and he does it with this note, that the words cited thence *are not to be found in the four Gospels.* In the same book, he cites another passage quoted by the *heretics*, as he conjectures from the same Gospel ; but then he adds, these things they cite *who would rather follow any thing than the true evangelical canon.* Ibid. p. 453. *Origen* is the next who makes mention of them, and he does it with this censure, that they were *the gospels not of the church, but of the heretics ;* among these he reckons, *the Gospel according to the Egyptians, the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, the Gospel according to St. Thomas, and Matthias, and others ;* but, says he, *there are only four, whence we are to confirm our doctrine ; nor do I approve of any other.*

*Eusebius* is the next ecclesiastical writer who speaks of other Gospels, viz. *The Gospel according to St. Peter, St. Thomas, and Matthias,* and also of the *Acts of St. Andrew, St. John, and other Apostles ;* but then, as *Origen* had told us that the *heretics* only had them, so he says, that *they were published by them, and that they had no testimony from those ecclesiastical persons who continued down the other Gospels in a succession to them ; and that the doctrine*



contained in them was much different from the catholic doctrine; whence he concludes, that they are the inventions of heretics, and are not so much as to be ranked among spurious books, but are to be rejected as wicked and absurd.

Seeing then that these four Gospels were received without doubting or contradiction by all Christians from the beginning, as the writings of those *Apostles* and *Evangelists* whose names they bear; and they both owned and testified that they were delivered to them by the *Apostles* as the pillars, foundations, and elements of their faith, even by those who preached that very Gospel to them which in these writings they delivered, or rather by that God who enabled them to preach, and directed them to indite these Gospels for that end: (2.) Seeing they were delivered by the immediate successors of the *Apostles* to all the churches which they converted or established, as a rule of faith: (3.) Seeing they were read from the beginning, as *Justin Martyr* testifies, in all assemblies of Christians, and that not as some other ecclesiastical writings were in some assemblies upon some certain days, but in all Christian assemblies on the Lord's day, and so must have been early translated into those languages in which alone they could be understood by some churches, viz. the *Syriac* and *Latin*: (4.) Seeing they were generally cited in the second century for the confirmation of the faith, and the conviction of *heretics*; and the president of the assemblies exhorted those who heard them to do and imitate what they heard: (5.) Seeing we never hear of any other gospels till the close of the second century, and then hear only of them with a mark of reprobation, or a declaration that they were ψευδοπροφητα, falsely imposed upon or ascribed to the *Apostles*, that they belonged not to the *evangelical canon*, or to the Gospels delivered to the churches by succession of ecclesiastical persons, or to those Gospels which they approved, or from which they confirmed their doctrines, but were to be rejected as wicked and absurd, and the inventions of rank *heretics*: All these considerations must afford us a sufficient demonstration, that all Christians then had an unquestionable evidence that they were the genuine works of those *Apostles* and *Evangelists* whose names they bore, and so were worthy to be received as the records of their faith: and then what reason can any persons of succeeding ages have to question what was so universally acknowledged by those who lived so near to that very age in which these Gospels were indited, and who received them under the character of the holy and divine *Scriptures*?

III. And yet even to this general and uncontrolled tradition we may add farther strength from the following considerations:

1<sup>st</sup>, That since our adorable Lord was a *prophet*, or a teacher sent from God, he must have left to his church some records of his Father's will; this *King Messiah*, being to reign for ever, must have some laws by which his subjects must be for ever governed; this *Saviour* of the world must have delivered to the world the terms on which they may obtain the great salvation purchased by him; or he must be in vain a *Prophet*, *King*, and *Saviour*; and so some certain records of those laws and those conditions of salvation must be extant. Now, unless the Gospels and other scriptures of the *New Testament* contain these laws,

laws, they must be wholly lost, and we must all be left under a manifest impossibility of knowing, and so of doing his will, and of obtaining those blessings which he has promised to his faithful followers. For to say tradition might supply the want of writing, is to contradict experience, since the traditions of the *Jews* made void that word of God which they had received in writing; and then how reasonable is it to believe that they would have much more done it, had no such writing been delivered? Again; our blessed Lord spake many things which were not written; he taught the multitude *by the sea*, Mark, ii. 13. *beyond Jordan*, Mark, x. 1. *in the synagogues of Galilee*, Luke, iv. 15. *at Nazareth*, ver. 22. *Capernaum*, ver. 31. *out of Simon's ship*, Luke, v. 3. and very often *in the temple*, John, vii. 14.—viii. 2. He interpreted to the two disciples going to *Emmaus throughout all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*, Luke, xxiv. 27. He discoursed with his disciples after his resurrection *touching the things of the kingdom of God*, Acts, i. 3. St. *John* assures us that there were exceeding many miracles that *Jesus did which were not written*, chap. xx. 30. Now, whereas all those miracles and sermons which were written are intirely preserved, and firmly believed, tradition has not preserved one miracle or sermon to us which was never written, and therefore can be no sure record of the doctrine or the laws of *Christ*.

2dly, That it was necessary that the Christian doctrine or revelation should be preserved in some writing, may fairly be concluded from the Holy Scriptures; for if St. *Paul* thought it necessary to write to the church of *Rome*, to put them in remembrance, because of the grace given to him of God, Rom. xv. 15. as also to send to the *Corinthians*, in writing, the things they had read or did acknowledge, 2 Cor i. 13. and to write the same things which he had taught to his *Philippians*, chap. iii. 1.: If St. *Peter* thought it needful to the *Jewish* converts, to testify to them that it was the true grace of God in which they stood, 1 Pet. v. 12. and to stir up their sincere minds by way of remembrance, that they might be mindful of the commands of the *Apostles of our Lord and Saviour*, 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2. though they at present knew them, and were established in the truth, 2 Pet. i. 12, 13.; and St. *Jude* to write to the same persons, to mind them of the common salvation, ver. 3.: If the beloved Evangelist closes his Gospel with these words, *These things were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing might have life through his name*: Surely these persons could not but think it necessary that the essential doctrines of Christianity should be written; and yet we are sure that they only have been written in those Gospels, and other Scriptures contained in the canon of the books of the New Testament, and therefore we cannot have any possible doubt of their authority. Add to this,

That the *Apostles*, and that Holy Spirit who did assist them in the inditing of these Gospels for the church's use, could not be wanting in causing them to be transmitted to those Christians for whose use they were indited, because they could not be wanting to pursue the end for which they were indited; for they being therefore written that they might know the certainty of those things in which they had been instructed, Luke, i. 4. and partly to engage

them more firmly to believe that Jesus was the Christ, they must very early commit them to those churches for whose sake they were written.

3dly, It is evident, that the immediate succeeding age could not be ignorant of what was thus delivered to them by the church from the *Apostles*, as *the pillar and the ground of faith*; nor is it easy to conceive that either they would have thus received them, had the *Apostles* given them no sufficient indication of them, or that they would have been esteemed so immediately the charters of the Christian faith, had not the *Apostles* delivered them to the churches under that character.

*Lastly*, We have good reason to suppose that the Providence of God, which was so highly interested in the propagation of the Christian faith, and making of it known to the world, would not permit false records of that faith to be so early and so generally imposed upon the Christian world.

IV. We may, with the strongest evidence of reason, conclude, that these four Gospels, and the other Scriptures received then without doubt or contradiction by the church, were handed down to them uncorrupted in the substantial of faith and practice. For, 1. These records being once so generally dispersed through all Christian churches, though at a great distance from each other, from the beginning of the second century: 2. They being so universally acknowledged and consented to by men of great parts and different persuasions: 3. They being preserved in their *originals* in the *apostolical* churches, among whom, says *Tertullian*, *their original letters are recited*, it being not to be doubted but they who received the originals from the *Apostles*, and who had authentic copies of them given to them by their immediate successors, would carefully preserve them to posterity: 4. They being multiplied into numerous versions almost from the beginning: 5. They being esteemed by the churches as *digesta nostra*, their *law books*, says *Tertullian*,—*Books which instructed them to lead a divine life*, say the *Martyrs*,—and believed by all Christians to be *divine scriptures*, says *Origen*, and therefore as the records of their hopes and fears: 6. They being so constantly rehearsed in their assemblies by men whose work it was to read and preach, and to exhort to the performance of the duties they enjoined: 7. They being so diligently read by Christians, and so riveted in their memories, that *Eusebius* mentions some who had them all by heart: 8. They being, lastly, so frequently quoted by *Irenaus*, *Clemens of Alexandria*, *Origen*, and many more of the early fathers of the church, as now we have them: It must be certain from these considerations, that they were handed down to succeeding generations pure and uncorrupt.

And indeed these things render us more secure that the Scriptures were preserved entire from designed corruption, than any man can be that the statutes of the land, or any other writings, histories, or records whatsoever, have been so preserved; because the evidence of it depends upon more persons, and they more holy, and so less subject to deceive, and more concerned that they should not be corrupted, than men have cause to be concerned for other records; and so we must renounce all certainty of any record, or grant that it is certain

certain these are genuine records of the Christian faith. Again; any supposed corruption of the word of God, or substitution of any other doctrine than what has been delivered by the *Apostles*, could not be done by any part or sect of *Christians*, in such a manner that they who had embraced the faith, and used the true copies of the word of God in other churches of the Christian world, would not have found out the cheat: and therefore this corruption, if it were at all effected, must be the work of the whole mass of *Christians*: whereas it cannot rationally be supposed that the immediate succeeding ages should universally conspire to substitute their own inventions for the word of God, and yet continue stedfast in and suffer so much for that faith which denounced the severest judgments against them who did corrupt this word: or that so many men should, with the hazard of their lives and fortunes, avouch the Gospel, and at the same time make such a change even in the frame and constitution of this doctrine, as made it ineffectual both to themselves and their posterity: nor can it reasonably be thought that they should venture upon that which, were the Gospel true or false, must needs expose them to the greatest evils, while they continued abettors of it. Lastly, that these sacred records of the word of God have not been so corrupted as to cease to be a rule of faith and practice, we argue from the Providence of God; for nothing seems more inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, than to inspire his servants to write the Scriptures for a rule of faith and practice for all future ages, and to require the belief of the doctrine, and the practice of the rules of life plainly contained in it, and yet to suffer this divinely inspired rule to be insensibly corrupted in things necessary to faith or practice. Who can imagine that that God who sent his Son out of his bosom to declare this doctrine, and his *Apostles* by the assistance of the Holy Spirit to indite and preach it, and by so many miracles confirmed it to the world, should suffer any wicked persons to corrupt and alter any of those terms on which the happiness of mankind depended? This surely can be esteemed rational by none but such as think it not absurd to say that God repented of his good-will and kindness to mankind in the vouchsafing of the Gospel to them, or that he so far maligned the good of future generations, that he suffered wicked men to rob them of all the good intended to them by this declaration of his will: For since those very Scriptures which have been received as the word of God, and used by the church as such from the first ages of it, pretend to be the terms of our salvation, Scriptures indited by men, commissioned from *Christ*,—by such as did avouch themselves *Apostles by the will of God, and for the knowledge of the truth which is after godliness in hope of life eternal, they* must be in reality the word of God, or Providence must have permitted such a forgery as renders it impossible for us to believe and perform our duty in order to salvation. For if the Scriptures of the New Testament should be corrupted in any essential requisite of faith and practice, it must cease to make us *wise unto salvation*; and so God must have lost the end which he intended in inditing it. The objections which the *Papists* make on account of the various lections, are fully answered by *Dr. Mills*.

GENERAL

GENERAL REMARKS  
UPON THE  
FOUR EVANGELISTS.

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THE Evangelists have given an abridged history of Jesus Christ. St. Matthew and St. Luke begin at his birth; the two others from the time of his receiving baptism at the hand of St. John the Baptist, which was at the beginning of the thirtieth year of his life, and the first of his ministry. It was sufficient to the comfort and faith of the church to know, that the Messiah, promised by so many oracles, and expected from the earliest ages of the world, was at length come; that in the course of his ministry he had fulfilled all the duties of his office, that he had died to atone for our sins, that he had risen again, and was ascended into heaven. And it could have been of little service to us to have been acquainted with all the particulars of his life from his birth till his ministry began. The prophets had foretold nothing in relation to it; and the Evangelists only acquainted us with what had reference to the predictions of the prophets; in order to shew us the full agreement of the events with the prophecies,—the Old Testament with the New.

Nothing essential, however, is wanting in the history of Christ: not one of the characteristics proper and essential to the Messiah is omitted; of this we have given undeniable proofs in the General Preface; and it would be superfluous to add any more, though it might easily be done. It is clear, then, that the whole of the Gospel History leads to the belief that Jesus is the Messiah: but it does not rest there: it shews us what the Messiah is, and what he has done for our salvation. Upon the first point it acquaints us, that the Messiah, who was born of a pure virgin, of the family of David, a man in that respect, and *like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, is the Son of God, his own Son, his only Son, begotten before all worlds; the image of the Father, the brightness of his glory; equal to him, and God as he is; true God; God ever blessed, God almighty; the Creator of the world; the Judge of quick and dead.* This truth appears throughout the four Gospels; and St. John's begins with it: *In the beginning, says he, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS GOD.*

*The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word was made flesh. John, i. 1, 2, 3. 14.* This then is really what the Scripture requires us to believe of the Messiah ; and not merely that *Jesus is the Messiah*. St. Peter well understood this, when, in reply to the question which Jesus asked of his disciples, *Whom do men say that I am ?* he did not content himself with saying, *Thou art the Christ*, but immediately added, *the Son of the living God*. But, this being a mystery beyond the comprehension of man, our Lord thus answered his apostle ; *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven*. To say, after this, that the name *Son of God* was merely a title of the Messiah, as is asserted by those enemies to our mysteries, who would have all religion upon a level with their reason, is following prejudice alone, not listening to the Gospel. According to the Gospel, indeed, the Messiah and the Son of God are the same ; but according to the same Gospel this Son of God existed actually and really before the Messiah was born into the world. John, i. 1, 2. viii. 58. xvii. 5. and, according to the doctrine of the apostles, this Son of God *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. *the great God*, Titus, ii. 13. and *over all, God blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. Thus, according to the Gospel, the *Messiah* and the *Son of God* are the same, only because the Son of God, being made man, became, by the personal union of the human nature with the divine, an *Immanuel*, God and man, and thereby *Messiah*, *Jesus*, *King of Israel*, and *Saviour of the world*. And if the Jews, at the time that Christ came into the world, did commonly use the title *Son of God* to designate the Messiah, as may be collected from some parts of the Gospel, and if they understood the expression in a low and improper sense, the fault was in themselves. The royal prophet understood it very differently in the second Psalm, whence it probably came by degrees to be used commonly in the synagogue ; for neither David, nor Isaiah, nor Jeremiah, nor Micah, nor Zechariah, nor Malachi, who all spoke of the Messiah as of God, as appears in the General Preface, had ever given the Jews any latitude to use the august title of *Son of God*, as belonging to the *Messiah*, in any sense of diminution, or as merely an official title. But, if the ignorant Jews did give the title of *Son of God* to the Messiah in an improper and figurative sense, is it from them that we are to learn in what sense the Gospel calls the Messiah the *Son of God* ? They certainly attached wrong ideas to the words *Messiah*, *King of Israel*, *Son of man*, *Saviour*, *redemption*, *kingdom of heaven*, and many other expressions which Christ and his apostles found in common use among them, and which they retained. But, as we need not inquire of the Jews in what sense Christ and his apostles used these expressions, but of Christ and his apostles themselves, neither is it of the Jews, but of the evangelists and apostles, that we are to learn in what sense they called the Messiah the *Son of God*. Now the passages which we have quoted so clearly shew that it was not used as a title of dignity or office, but as a natural and specific name, that we must have a different gospel, before we can teach or understand it otherwise.

From these two truths, which shine throughout the Gospel, that Jesus is the *Messiah*, and that he is the *Son of God*, of the same nature with God the Father, the Evangelists lead us to a third, which depends upon the other two; namely, that the Messiah is the Saviour of the whole world, but especially of them that believe. It is impossible to give a clearer idea of a victim who dies to atone with its blood for the sins of others, than is given in an abundance of passages in sacred writ. And it is the uniform doctrine of the apostles, that it is *the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*, which cleanseth from all sin, 1 John, i. 7. and that he was made *to be sin for us* (or the offering for our sins), *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21.

On these premises, that Jesus is the Messiah, that he is the Son of God, and God like his Father, that he died for us as a victim dies in the stead of the culprit, and that by his blood he has made expiation for our sins, the Evangelists everywhere teach us,—that there is salvation only through Jesus Christ;—that *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*. Acts, iv. 12. Now, to believe in Jesus Christ, as he is depicted in the Gospel, is not only to believe that *he is the Messiah*, and that, having lived a holy life, and confirmed by miracles the truth of what he taught, he died on the cross to seal the truth of the same doctrine, nearly as we believe, by a faith merely historical, that St. Paul was sent from heaven to preach the Gospel, and that he piously and generously suffered martyrdom for the gospel that he preached;—but it is to believe in Christ's death and resurrection for pardon and real internal salvation. It is to such as thus believe in Christ, and not such as have merely an historical faith that he is the Messiah, that Christ has said, *they have passed from death unto life, &c.*

To all this Christ has added such strict rules of life, such frequent exhortations to preserve believers in obedience to God's commandments, that holiness could not be more strongly enforced under the law of works. This we find in all his discourses; and the Evangelists insist no less upon holiness and good works, than upon faith, as necessary to salvation. If faith produces not holiness in our heart, it is a false faith, *which has the appearance of life, but is dead*. God loves us that we may love him, and *he forgives us that we may fear him*. Such is the foundation of the Gospel, and a summary of the covenant of grace. The Evangelists are explicit upon these things, and we can scarcely read a page without finding them clearly expressed.

They have taken much pains also in detailing the frequent disputes which Christ, during the three years and a half of his ministry, had with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the severe censures that he uttered against those two sects. John the Baptist had not spared them in his discourses (Matth. iii. 7.); but Christ opposed them wherever he found them; and he found them almost everywhere; for it may be asserted, that the Pharisees and Sadducees divided the synagogue between them. The Pharisees by their traditions were become the leaders of the people; and, through the authority of their doctors, and the antiquity of  
certain

certain dogmas and usages, they imposed what ordinances they pleased upon the timid minds of the ignorant. Our Lord freed them from this unjust servitude; he thundered against the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; and, by his constant exhortations to the people not to follow such treacherous guides, he taught the whole church by no means blindly to submit to their leaders, or to admit into their religion, or receive among the articles of their faith, any doctrine merely upon the authority of their teachers, or of its antiquity. As for the Sadducees, they taught such monstrous errors, that it is almost incomprehensible how they could have raised a party or sect in the synagogue; for, had it been only that they denied the resurrection, that were sufficient to stamp them as impious men, who at one blow would overturn the whole of religion. Jesus Christ contended with them against this wicked doctrine; and, though they had great credit in the nation, and were almost at the head of the Sanhedrim, on account of the extraordinary corruptness of the synagogue at that time, as appears from Acts, v. 17, our Lord opposed them powerfully, and publicly confounded their impiety. Hence he had both sects, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, for his bitter enemies; and it was these chiefly who conspired against his life, and brought him to the death of the cross. Their intentions were merely to destroy him, and to satisfy their revenge; but God availed himself of their injustice and cruelty to accomplish the greatest of all his designs.



# THE GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

## S A I N T M A T T H E W.

*GOSPEL signifies good tidings; and is of the same import with the original word εὐαγγέλιον. See Luke, ii. 10. The Gospel, according to St. Matthew, signifies the history of the good tidings preached by Jesus Christ, as it is related by St. Matthew, one of his immediate disciples and followers; who was the first Evangelist, and who, it is generally agreed, wrote his Gospel for the use of the Jewish converts at Jerusalem, as some suppose, about the year of our Lord 48 or 49; but as others, with more show of probability, about the year 38. See Dr. Campbell's fifth Preliminary Dissertation to the four Gospels, for a very full and accurate criticism on the word Gospel.*

### CHAP. I.

*The genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph: he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, when she was espoused to Joseph. The angel satisfieth the anxious thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the name of Jesus.*

[Year of the World 4004.]

**T**HE <sup>a</sup>book of the generation of Jesus Christ, <sup>b</sup>the son of David, <sup>c</sup>the son of Abraham.

2 <sup>d</sup>Abraham begat Isaac; and <sup>e</sup>Isaac begat Jacob; and <sup>f</sup>Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And <sup>g</sup>Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and <sup>h</sup>Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat <sup>i</sup>Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz of <sup>k</sup>Rachab;

<sup>a</sup> Luke, 3. 23—38. with Gen. 5. 1. & 10. 1. & 6. 9. & 2. 4. & 11. 10, 27. & 25. 12. & 36. 1, 9. Numb. 1. 20. Ruth, 4. 18. <sup>b</sup> 2 Sam. 7. 12—14. Pf. 132. 11. 1f. 11. 1. Jer. 23. 5. & 33. 15. ch. 22. 42. Luke, 1. 31, 32. Acts, 13. 23. Rom. 1. 3. <sup>c</sup> Gen. 12. 3. & 22. 18. & 26. 4. & 28. 14. Luke, 3. 23—34. Gal. 3. 16. <sup>d</sup> Gen. 21. 3. Acts, 7. 8. Heb. 11. 11, 12, 17. Luke, 3. 34. Josh. 24. 3. <sup>e</sup> Gen. 25. 26. Josh. 24. 4. <sup>f</sup> Gen. 29. 35. Acts, 7. 8. Gen. xxix. xxx. xlvi. Exod. 1. 1—4. 1 Chr. 2. 1, 2. <sup>g</sup> Gen. 38. 27. 1 Chr. 2. 4. <sup>h</sup> Ruth, 4. 18—22. 1 Chr. 2. 5, 9—15. Luke, 3. 31—33. <sup>i</sup> Num. 1. 7. & 10. 14. <sup>j</sup> Josh. ii. & 6. 22—25. Heb. 11. 31. Jam. 2. 25.

### CHAP. I.

*Ver. 1. The book of the generation] The lineage of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. Campbell. Commentators are divided with regard to this phrase; some supposing that it means, and should be rendered, the history of the life of Jesus Christ; and that it is a general preface to St. Matthew's Gospel; while others, and, I think, with greater probability, render it, An account of the lineage or genealogy, and conceive it merely as the introduction to the genealogy following. See the note on Gen. v. 1. As St. Matthew wrote for the Jews, he deduces the genealogy of Christ only from Abraham, and brings it down from him through David, to shew his title to the kingdom.*

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of Israel; while St. Luke, who wrote for the use of the Gentile converts, deduces the genealogy from Adam. See Gen. xxii. 18. Pf. ii. But concerning these genealogies, and the variations in them, we will speak when we come to St. Luke, ch. iii. 23. St. Matthew gives to Jesus the name of *Christ*, which signifies *anointed*, and marks out the royal, sacerdotal, and prophetic offices; answering to the name of *Messiah*, by which the Redeemer was always known and spoken of by the Jews. One right way of estimating things, says Dr. Heylin, (in nearly these words,) is by our want of them. If we look into ourselves, we shall find a want of Christ in all his offices; for, before some considerable proficiency is made in religion through

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and <sup>1</sup>Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And <sup>m</sup>Jesse begat David the king; and <sup>1</sup>David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;

7 And <sup>o</sup>Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

8 And <sup>p</sup>Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;

9 And <sup>q</sup>Ozias begat Joatham; and Joa-

tham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;  
10 And <sup>r</sup>Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;

11 And <sup>\*</sup>Josias begat <sup>s</sup>Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

12 And after they were brought to Babylon, <sup>t</sup>Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and

<sup>1</sup> Ruth, ii.—iv. <sup>1</sup> Chr. 2. 17, 19. <sup>m</sup> 1 Sam. 16. 1. & 17. 12. <sup>1</sup> Chr. 2. 15. <sup>n</sup> 1 Sam. 12. 24. <sup>1</sup> Chr. 3. 5. & 14. 4. <sup>o</sup> 1 Chr. 3. 10—17. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 11. 43. & 14. 31. & 15. 8. <sup>2</sup> Chr. 9. 31. & 12. 16. & 14. 1. <sup>p</sup> 1 Kings, 15. 24. <sup>2</sup> Kings, 8. 16. & 14. 27. <sup>2</sup> Chr. 17. 1. & 21. 1. & 26. 1. <sup>q</sup> 2 Kings, 15. 32. & 16. 20. <sup>2</sup> Chr. 26. 23. & 27. 29. & 28. 27. <sup>r</sup> 2 Kings, 20. 21. & 21. 18, 26. <sup>1</sup> Chr. 3. 13, 14. <sup>2</sup> Chr. 32. 33. & 33. 20, 25. <sup>s</sup> Some read, *Josias begat Jakim, and Jakim begat Jechonias.* <sup>t</sup> Or Jehoiakim. <sup>1</sup> Chr. 3. 15, 16. <sup>2</sup> Kings, 2. 30, 34. & 24. 17. <sup>2</sup> Chr. 36. 1, 4, 10. <sup>2</sup> Kings, 24. 12. & 25. 27. <sup>1</sup> Chr. 3. 17, 19. Hag. 1. 1, 12. & 2. 2, 23. Ezra, 3. 2. & 5. 2. Neh. 7. 7. & 12. 1. Luke, 3. 27.

the grace of God, men are at a distance from God, alienated from him, and incapacitated for that free access to the Creator, which, it should seem, an intelligent being might naturally hope for. Hence we want a mediator, an intercessor; in a word, a *Christ*, in his *priestly* functions. This regards our situation with respect to God. With respect to ourselves, we find a total darkness, blindness, ignorance of God, and the things of God: here we want a *Christ* in his *prophetic* office, to enlighten our minds, and teach us the whole will of God. We also find within us a strong misrule of appetites and passions, and discordant interests, blindly espoused: for these we want a *Christ*, in his *regal* office, to govern our hearts, and establish his *kingdom* within us. Calmet observes, that as the Jewish converts, for whom this Gospel was principally written, had no doubt of the Divinity of the Messiah, St. Matthew did not judge it necessary to dwell here upon that subject. He contents himself with giving an account of his incarnation and birth, of a virgin; not that these truths were disputed by the faithful, but because they had been gain-said by the credulous and hardened Jews. St. John, on the contrary, who wrote among the Gentiles, applied himself to set forth and make known the Divinity of the Saviour; for this was the point to which they made the strongest objections.

*Ver. 3. Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar*] It is remarkable, that only four women are mentioned in this genealogy, and all of them branded in the sacred history with a mark of infamy; Thamar for incest, Rachab for fornication, Ruth for heathenism, and Bathsheba for adultery. Perhaps the Holy Spirit designed to obviate the cavils of the Jews, who entertained low thoughts of Christ, because he was born of so mean a mother; for they could not but see the absurdity of such a prejudice, when they considered that their most illustrious heroes sprang from women, whose actions rendered them infinitely meaner than the mother of our Lord: her spotless character, and unaffected piety, were nobler ornaments than all the boasted gifts of fortune. We may just observe, that the Hebrews do not commonly mention women in their genealogies, except as here, when some particular reason obliges. He who came

into the world to save sinners, and to call all men, the just and unjust, to partake of his salvation, did not disdain to have sinners numbered among his ancestors; and therefore no sinner should despair of his mercy. See Macknight and Calmet.

*Ver. 5. Rachab*] See the note on Josh. ii. 1. Dr. Doddridge observes, that though it is not expressly said that this person was Rahab of Jericho, commonly called *the harlot*; yet there can be no room to doubt, as we know that she was contemporary with Salmon, and may conclude that she, as all the other women mentioned in this list, was a remarkable person. Now there was no other of that name, especially of this age, of whom the Evangelist could, so far as we can judge, suppose his reader to have any knowledge.

*Ver. 6. Solomon, of her that had been, &c.*] In the original it is, *by her of Urias*; a mode of expression common both among the Greeks and Romans. See the note on 2 Sam. xii. 24.

*Ver. 8. Joram begat Ozias*] It is undeniably evident, from 2 Chron. chap. xxii. and following, that three princes are here omitted. There are instances of the like omissions in other genealogies. See Ezra, vii. where, by comparing that chapter with 1 Chron. vi. it is found that five generations are left out. We may well suppose that it was by some peculiar divine direction, that the sin of Jehoram is thus animadverted upon even to the fourth generation; his intermediate descendants being thus blotted out of the records of Christ's family, and overlooked as if they had never been. See Doddridge, Beaufobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 11. Josias begat Jechonias, &c.*] Dr. Doddridge renders this verse thus, after the reading of the Bodleian and other manuscripts, notice of which is taken in the margin of our English bibles; *And Josiah begat Jehoiachim and his brethren; and about the time of the Babylonish captivity Jehoiachim begat Jechonias*: a reading, which seems absolutely necessary to keep up the number of fourteen generations. Instead of *the time they were carried away, &c.* in this and the next verse, we may read, *the time of the transmigration, or carrying away*: and so ver. 17.

*Ver. 13. And Zorobabel begat Abiud*] Among the sons of Zorobabel

Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband

of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

\* Ver. 18, 19. Luke, 1. 27. & 2. 4, 5, 41. \* Ver. 18, 20, 25. Luke, 1. 35. & 2. 7. Mark, 6. 3. Il. 7. 14. & 11. 1. & 53. 2. & 9. 6. Mic. 5. 2. Jer. 31. 22. Rom. 1. 3. & 9. 5. 1 Tim. 3. 16. John, 1. 14. Gen. 3. 15.

Zorobabel (which signifies a stranger in Babylon), reckoned up 1 Chron. iii. there is no mention of Abiud, or his posterity; but as the Jews were very careful to keep genealogical tables of their families, St. Matthew had, in all likelihood, what he mentions here, out of some authentic genealogies preserved in the family of Joseph, whose ancestors, from Zorobabel, are likewise omitted in the genealogies extant in the Chronicles, because, in all probability, their condition was but mean and obscure.

Ver. 16. *Jacob begat Joseph*] It is a maxim among the Jews, that the family of the mother is not called a family; all their pedigrees are reckoned and deduced from the father. This is the reason why St. Matthew has here set down the genealogy of Joseph. It is also very probable, that Mary was an only daughter, and, in some degree, an heiress, and consequently obliged to marry in her own family. See Numb. xxxvi. 7. 9. So that by giving the genealogy of Joseph, St. Matthew gives at the same time that of Mary. He is called the husband of Mary; for the names of husband and wife were given by the Jews to persons who were only betrothed. See Gen. xxix. 21. Deut. xxii. 24. Some copies, however, read, *Joseph, to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed*. It is added at the end of this verse, *who is called Christ*; that is to say, who is known by that name, and is really the Christ, or the Messiah. Compare Luke, i. 32. 35. For to be called is a frequent Hebraism, to express that the person spoken of shall really and effectually be what he is there called, and actually fulfil that title. So, ver. 23. it is said, *They shall call his name Emmanuel*; which is no common appellation of Christ, but indicates his nature and office; the Deity incarnate, who by his Spirit dwells in the hearts of the faithful. See Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Heylin.

*Who is called Christ*] What first gave rise to this term was, the ceremony of anointing, by which the kings and the high-priests of God's people, and sometimes the prophets, were consecrated and admitted to the exercise of their holy functions: for all these functions were accounted holy among the Israelites. As this consecration was considered as adding a sacredness to their person, it served as a guard against violence, from the respect had to religion. Its efficacy this way was remarkably exemplified in David. By this consideration principally, as he acknowledges, he was restrained from avenging himself on Saul his enemy, who sought his life, when he had it in his power to kill him. *The Lord forbid, said he, that I should do this thing*

*unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.* 1 Sam. xxiv. 6. The word here translated *anointed* is, as in other places, in Hebrew *Messiah*, and in the Greek of the Seventy, *Christ*. It was a term, therefore, in its original use, applicable to all the succession of kings and high-priests, good and bad, of the people of Israel.

But the most eminent use and application of the word is, when it is employed as the title of that Divine Personage typified and predicted from the beginning, who was to prove, in the most exalted sense, the Redeemer and Lord of God's people. He is spoken of by the prophets under several characters, and, amongst others, under this of *God's anointed*, the Messiah or the Christ. Those of the prophets, who seem more especially to have appropriated this title, formerly more common, to the Mediator of the New Covenant, were the royal prophet David, Isaiah, and Daniel. The first represents him as anointed of God King of God's heritage, the second as set apart and consecrated to be the Messenger of good tidings to the inhabitants of the earth, the third as appointed to make expiation for the sins of the people. See Ps. ii. 2. cv. 15. 1 Chr. xvi. 22. Is. lxi. 1, &c. Dan. ix. 25, 26.

Ver. 17. *So all the generations, &c.*] St. Matthew, designing to shew that Jesus was the Messiah, begun his genealogy at Abraham, to whom the promise was originally made that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed: but the succession of Christ's ancestors downward naturally resolves itself into three classes; namely, first, of private persons, from Abraham to David; next of kings, from David to Jehoiachim; and then of private persons again, from the Babylonish captivity, when an end was put to the royal dignity of our Lord's progenitors in the person of Jehoiachim; who, though he was born twenty-six years before the captivity, and really swayed the sceptre, is properly enough reckoned among the private persons, from the captivity to Christ; because the Babylonians stripped him of his dignity, and reduced him to the condition of a private man. It is observable, that in the second clause the sacred writer does not say, *all the generations*, as knowing that for good reasons he had omitted three belonging to that interval; but only that the whole number of those which he had named was fourteen, as they really were. See Macknight, and Whitby.

18 ¶ Now the <sup>7</sup>birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with <sup>2</sup>child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her <sup>2</sup>a public example, was minded to put her away privately.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, <sup>b</sup>the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is <sup>†</sup>conceived in her <sup>c</sup>is of the Holy Ghost.

21 <sup>d</sup>And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: <sup>e</sup>for he shall save his people from their sins.

<sup>7</sup> Luke, 1. 27.    <sup>2</sup> Luke, 1. 35. Jer. 31. 22. Gal. 4. 4. Heb. 10. 5.  
<sup>†</sup> Gr. begotten.    <sup>c</sup> Ver. 18. Luke, 1. 35. Heb. 10. 5. Jer. 31. 22.  
<sup>d</sup> Luke, 1. 31. & 2. 7, 21. Gen. 3. 15. If. 7. 14.    <sup>e</sup> Gen. 22. 18. & 49.  
 10. Pf. 72. 17. Jer. 23. 6. & 33. 16. Dan. 9. 24. Hof. 1. 7. Acts, 4. 12. & 5. 31. & 13. 23, 32, 38. Tit. 2. 14. Heb. 7. 25. 1 John, 3. 5, 8.  
 Rev. 1. 5, 6. 1 Pet. 1. 19.

*Ver. 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ, &c.] Now the birth of Jesus Christ was in this manner; literally, was thus; not only the birth, but the conception of Christ, and what preceded it, are here included, in the word γέννησις, which we translate birth, and which some critics have unwarily confuted with the word γενεσις, generation, used in the first verse of this chapter. Among the Jews there was a considerable space of time (generally a year, or six months) between the betrothing or wedding; and during this space of time it was that Mary was found with child by the power of the Holy Ghost. See Luke, i. 26. The last clause of the verse is better rendered by some, *She was found to be pregnant, or with child, by the Holy Ghost.**

*Ver. 19. Being a just man] Dr. Doddridge observes very well, that it is without any good reason that this text is often assigned as an instance, that the word is used to signify merciful or good-natured. If we consider the information which Joseph might have received from persons of such an extraordinary character as Zecharias and Elizabeth, who would certainly think themselves obliged to interpose on such an occasion, and whose account so remarkably carried its own evidence with it; besides the intimation given by the prophesy of Isaiah, and the satisfaction he undoubtedly had in the virtuous character of Mary herself;—we must conclude, that he would have acted a very severe and unrighteous part, had he proceeded to extremities without serious deliberation; and that putting her away privately would, in these circumstances, have been the hardest measure which justice would have suffered him to take. He was therefore determined not to make her a public example; παραδειγματίσαι, which possibly refers to that exemplary punishment inflicted by the law on those who had violated the faith of their espousals, before the marriage was completed. See Deut. xxii. 23, 24. where it is expressly ordered, that a betrothed virgin, if she polluted herself with another man, should be stoned. We may suppose, however, that the infamy of a public divorce, though she had not been stoned, may also be expressed by this same word. But then there was a private kind of divorce, in the bill for which, delivered before two witnesses only, no reason for the divorce was assigned; the dowry was not forfeited as in the former case, and the woman consequently was not so much defamed. Joseph thought upon this last method of proceeding; ignorant as*

he then was of the divine conception in Mary, there was doubtless a conflict in his breast from opposite considerations. Justice shewed, on the one hand, what was due to himself; on the other, what was due to one of Mary's character. In justice to himself, he would not cohabit with one whom he ignorantly thought to be defiled; in justice to Mary, he would not give up to the rigour of the law a person hitherto so blameless. His purity must not consort with supposed pollution; therefore he would put her away: her character was in all other respects such, that she ought not to be exposed to public infamy; therefore he would put her away privately. While he was thus deliberating within himself, and innocently in danger of doing wrong, to give us a remarkable instance of the care which God takes of good men, both in affording them direction, and keeping them from sin, God graciously interposed for the direction of Joseph, and associated him with Mary in the most glorious charge that ever creature was dignified with; even the tuition and care of the Saviour. See Heylin and Wettstein.

*Ver. 20. The angel of the Lord] Probably Gabriel, who had been sent to Zecharias and Mary. That Joseph's scruple did not proceed, as some of the fathers suppose, merely from veneration, appears from the reason given why he should take Mary, which in that case would have been the only reason against it. Some read the next clause, *Scruple not the taking of Mary thy wife.* The last phrase, *is of the Holy Ghost,* means, "Hath been formed by the Holy Ghost." See Pf. cxviii. 23. It is observable, that the angel reminds Joseph of his descent from David, as it were to awaken his hopes, and to raise his thoughts to the great event which was now about to open to his view.*

*Ver. 21. Thou shalt call his name Jesus] That is, He shall be God the Saviour; for he shall prove that glorious and divine Person, the long-expected Messiah, intended by God to save his people, even all that truly and perseveringly believe in him; by procuring an ample pardon for them, and raising them, after a life of holiness on earth, to a state of consummate perfection and eternal happiness. Bishop Pearson seems to have set the etymology of the name Jesus in the clearest light in his large discourse upon it, where he endeavours to prove that *Jah*, one of the names of God, enters into the composition of the Hebrew name*

22 Now all this was done, that <sup>f</sup> it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying,

23 <sup>g</sup> Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and <sup>h</sup> they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, <sup>i</sup> God with us.

<sup>f</sup> Num. 23. 19. 1 Sam. 15. 29. 1f. 41. 26. 1 Thess. 5. 24. Tit. 1. 2. Heb. 6. 18. <sup>g</sup> 1f. 7. 14. Gen. 3. 15. Jer. 31. 22. <sup>h</sup> Or, his name shall be called. Acts, 26. 19. <sup>i</sup> John, 1. 14. Rom. 1. 3, 4. & 9. 5. 1 Tim. 3. 16. 1f. 9. 6. <sup>k</sup> Deut. 12. 32. 1 Sam. 15. 22. Acts, 26. 19. <sup>l</sup> Ver. 21. Luke, 1. 7, 21. 1 Thess. 1. 10. Heb. 7. 25.

name *Josbua*, to which *Jesus* answers; a derivation, which plainly shews how Christ's being called *Jesus*, that is to say, God our Saviour, was in effect an accomplishment of the prophecy, that he should be called *Emmanuel*; for what *elic*, says the bishop, is *God with us*, than God our Saviour? Well, therefore, has the Evangelist conjoined the prophet and the angel, asserting that Christ was therefore named *Jesus*, because it was foretold he should be called *Emmanuel*. See Pearson on the Creed, p. 69—71. and Doddridge.

Ver. 22. *Now all this was done, &c.*] In all this, what was spoken by the prophet was verified. Campbell. The original words found as if the prophecy was the cause of the event predicted; but, generally speaking, things do not come to pass because they are foretold, but are foretold because they certainly will come to pass. The difficulty here lies in the particle *that*, put for the Greek *na*, which does not always signify the cause, but sometimes the event or consequence. The Evangelists so often use it in this latter sense, that there will be frequent occasion to have recourse to it; and therefore the reader will do well to bear this remark in mind. It may be proper just to observe, that the phrase, *it might be fulfilled*, and the like, were frequently designed and understood to mean no more than that something answered alike in both cases. There was an aptness or suitableness in the cause, the parts, or circumstances, of one event to the other. Even to this day the Jews in their comments say, *That is it which was spoken*; and use the term *to fulfil*, upon relating a similar fact, and not the same referred to in the prophet which they cite; so that we must not always understand this phrase as applicable to immediate prophecies only. See Wetstein, Hammond, and Heylin.

Ver. 23. *Behold, a virgin, &c.*] To what we have said on this prophecy in its proper place, Isai. vii. 14. may now be added, that it is not possible to understand it of any other persons than of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, in whom alone it is completely and literally fulfilled: but Bishop Chandler has, with so much learning and ability, explained this text to the satisfaction of all rational persons, that I have nothing more to do than to refer my readers to the 237th and following pages of his Defence of Christianity. See also Green's fourth letter to Mr. Collins, and Usher's Annals, A. M. 3262. The last clause of this verse seems to supply us with a full proof that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek, and not in Hebrew or Syriac, as many writers have supposed.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep <sup>k</sup> did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till <sup>l</sup> she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

Ver. 24. *Being raised from sleep—bidden him*] Awaked out of sleep—directed him.

Ver. 25. *And knew her not till, &c.*] Some may infer from this passage, that Mary had other children afterwards; but the original here only excludes the time preceding the birth, without any consequence as to the future. Thus Michal *had no child until the day of her death*; 2 Sam. vi. 23. where the LXX has the Greek word *εως*, as in the text. Nor do the words which follow in the Evangelist alter the case; *her first-born son*; for there may be a first-born without a second; and the commentators abound with instances where the term *first-born* is used, though there are no subsequent children. On what terms Joseph and Mary afterwards lived, is of so little consequence to us, that I cannot but wonder, says Dr. Doddridge, it should have been the subject of so much debate among Christians. The present passage surely is clear enough, wherein the Evangelist, in the plainest manner, asserts that Joseph cohabited not with Mary till she was delivered of her wonderful Son, who is truly the first-born among his brethren, and which alone was of consequence for Christians to know.

*Inferences.*—As all our hopes depend upon the salvation purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ, it is most satisfactory to observe how convincing the evidence is, that he is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the son of man, in whom the prophecies of the Old Testament and the promises made to the fathers were fulfilled.

When we survey such a series of generations as this before us, it is obvious to reflect, how, like the leaves of a tree, one passeth away, and another cometh; yet the earth still abideth, and with it the goodness of the Lord; which runs on from generation to generation, the common hope of parents and children. Of those who formerly lived upon the earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure, how many are there whose names have perished with them; how many, of whom only the name is remaining! Thus are we passing away, and thus shall we shortly be forgotten: happy if, while we are forgotten of men, we are remembered by God: happy, if our names, lost on earth, are at length found written in the book of life.

Never was any daughter of Eve so dignified as the Virgin Mary; yet was she in danger of falling under the imputation of one of the worst of crimes. We find not, however, that she tormented herself about it; but, conscious of her own innocence, she kept her mind calm and easy,

## C H A P. II.

*The wise men out of the east are directed to Christ by a star: they worship him, and offer their presents. Joseph fleeth into Egypt, with Jesus and his mother. Herod slayeth the children: himself dieth. Christ is brought back again into Galilee, to Nazareth.*

[Year of the World 4004.]

**N**OW when <sup>a</sup> Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod

<sup>a</sup> Mic. 5. 2. Luke, 2. 4—7. ch. 1. 25. Gen. 49. 10. Dan. 9. 24—26. Hag. 2. 7, 9. Mal. 3. 7, 4a. <sup>b</sup> Gen. 22. 18. & 49. 10. If. 11. 10. & 60. 3. Zech. 8. 23. <sup>c</sup> Gen. 25. 6. 18. Job, 1. 3. Judg. 6. 7. 1 Kings, 4. 30. <sup>d</sup> If. 9. 6, 7. & 52. 13. Num. 24. 17. If. 60. 3. <sup>e</sup> Ps. 2. 1—6. Acts, 4. 27, 28. John, 15. 18. ch. 8. 29. <sup>f</sup> Heads of the 24 courses. 1 Chr. 24. 4—18. 2 Chr. 36. 14.

easy, and committed her cause to him who judgeth righteously; and, like her, those who are careful to keep a good conscience, may cheerfully trust God with the keeping of their good name.

We have in Joseph an excellent pattern of gentleness and prudence (ver. 19.). In an affair which appeared dubious, he chose, as we should always do, rather to err on the favourable than on the severe extreme; he was careful to avoid any precipitate steps; and in the moments of deliberation God interposed, to guide and determine his resolves. It is good for us to think, to reflect on things, as Joseph did. Were there more of deliberation in our censures and judgments, there would be more of mercy and moderation in them.

The angel appeared to Joseph in a dream (ver. 20.). When we are most quiet and composed, we are in the best frame to receive the notices of the divine will. Extraordinary direction, like the present, is not to be expected by us; but God has still methods of making known his mind in doubtful cases, by hints of Providence, debates of conscience, advice of faithful friends, and by the study of, and light thrown upon, his sacred word. We should therefore from each of these (till applying the general rules of the written word) take direction from God in all the steps of our life, and more particularly in the great concerns of it.

With what wonder and pleasure must Joseph have received the glad tidings, so honourable to Mary, so satisfactory to himself! With what pleasure should we also receive them! For we too are informed of Jesus, who came to save his people from their sins. How important and glorious a salvation! Blessed JESUS! answer thy character, in delivering us not only from sin's condemning, but from its reigning and existing power. May our souls bow to EMMANUEL, our incarnate God, and gratefully adore that wonderful condescension,—God and man united in one Christ, that God and man may be for ever reconciled!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As the Old Testament opened with the generation of the heaven and the earth, the New begins with the generation of Him who, in the fulness of time, became incarnate for man's redemption from the curse he had brought upon himself, and under which the whole creation groaned. We have here his genealogy

the king, <sup>b</sup> behold, there came wise men from <sup>c</sup> the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is <sup>d</sup> born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 ¶ When Herod the king had heard these things, <sup>e</sup> he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all <sup>f</sup> the chief

from authentic records, to prove the accomplishment of the prophecies which went before concerning him, as sprung, according to the flesh, from David and Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. 2 Sam. vii. 12. for which purpose these genealogical tables are produced, abundantly sufficient for the conviction of those in that day, that Jesus was descended from these patriarchs, whatever cavils have since been raised, or difficulties started against them.

In this genealogy we may observe, (1.) That the line of descent is not always through the first-born, but in many, as Abraham, Jacob, Judah, David, &c. from the younger sons. (2.) That of the four women mentioned, we have two Gentiles and two adulteresses, who would seem to add no honour to their descendants; but herein we have an intimation, that Christ's salvation was not designed to be confined to the Jewish people, but to be extended to the Gentiles also; and that the most guilty need not despair, when they see that our Lord, in taking the likeness of sinful flesh, humbles himself to derive his descent from such as these. (3.) In the genealogy there are several persons passed over; for what reason, it is difficult, and of little import, to resolve; and the lineal descendant, though at the distance of three generations, is said to be the son of his remote ancestor, as in the case of Ozias. (4.) The generations are divided into three fourteens, not that there were no more persons really in the descent, but that the Evangelist thought fit to mention no more. In the first, we see the family of David rising to the throne; in the second, a race of kings descend from him; in the last, the royal family declines even to a poor carpenter; so fading is this world's greatness. Yet then, when to human view all prospect of the kingdom's being restored to David's house seemed desperate, Jesus arose to sit on his father's throne, Luke, i. 32.: when God promises, we never need despair. (5.) Jesus is called *Christ*, or *Messiah*, the Anointed One, uniting in his person the threefold offices, to which men were anointed under the law, of prophet, priest, and king; and all his followers are called *Christians*, an honourable title, and most applicable to those who have indeed received an unction from the holy One, and are consecrated to God as kings and priests through their exalted Head.

2dly, The account of the birth of Jesus follows his genealogy. And we have,

1. His miraculous conception. His mother Mary had been

priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

• Ezra, 7. 11, 12. 1 Chr. 24. 6. 2 Chr. 34. 13. ch. 7. 29. & 13. 52. Jer. 8. 8.

been betrothed to Joseph; but before the marriage was consummated she was found with child, through the wondrous operation of the Holy Ghost, who formed Christ's human nature, that it might be pure from every spot of that corruption which naturally descends to every son of Adam with his being; and that he might thus be a Lamb without blemish, fit for God's altar.

2. Joseph's prudent resolve. Probably Mary herself communicated to him the circumstances of her case; and though a thousand suggestions might rise up to question her veracity; (and to take her to his bed in such a situation he could not think of, being a just man;) yet was he unwilling wishal to make her a public example, and have her punished with death as an adulteress: her artless relation and unaffected simplicity, though wonderful, might well have caused him to hesitate; and where the shadow of a doubt remains, a just man will ever lean to the side of mercy and charity: therefore he resolved to put her away privately, as little as possible to wound her character, while duty bade him preserve his own. Note; (1.) Though apparently the greatest injuries may be done us, it is wise to suppress rash anger, and deliberate before we punish. (2.) In very dark cases, where any circumstances appear which will admit of a favourable interpretation, love, which thinketh no evil, will gladly entertain them.

3. The Lord relieves Joseph from his perplexity: while he deliberates what was fit to be done for God's glory and his own peace in Mary's case, the angel of the Lord in a dream directs him how to act. For, when we are in doubt, yet in simplicity desire to know and follow the will of God, we shall be directed, if not by an angel or a dream, yet by some word of God, or intimation of Providence. Joseph is now diverted from his purpose, and bidden, without hesitation, to take to him his wife, since her conception is not the fruit of adultery, but of the Holy Ghost; and the angel calls him Joseph, thou son of David, to lead his thoughts from this extraordinary circumstance to the Messiah who should descend from him; assuring him, that this child now conceived is designed to be the very person, as the name given him imports; he shall be called Jesus, or the Saviour; this being the great end of his appearing, to save his people from their sins, from the punishment, the power, and the nature of them. Note; They to whom Jesus is become a Saviour, are distinguished from others by their holiness; every one who nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity, or they are none of his; yet it is by his grace that they are enabled so to do.

4. The accomplishment of the Scriptures herein is observed by the Evangelist. The prophecy of Isaiah, ch. vii. 14. had foretold, a virgin should conceive, and bring forth a son, and his name be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us; which was now fulfilled; Mary being that virgin, and God himself by the incarnation uniting the human nature to the divine. Jesus Christ was thus enabled to execute the office of a Saviour, having the humanity thus united to his godhead,

to offer for the sins of men: infinite worth was therefore annexed to this sacrifice, arising from the dignity of his person; by which means God became reconciled to us, and we who were far off were brought nigh unto God. How mysterious this union! Let us wonder, love, and adore!

5. Joseph no sooner awaked, than he obeyed the heavenly vision, which carried undoubted evidence to his mind of its original; and in obedience to the angel's command, he called the child's name Jesus. Note; (1.) When God commands, we must obey without hesitation. (2.) Since Jesus is now come into the world, we are called upon to accept of his salvation: for, if we neglect or despise it, how shall we escape?

## CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. Bethlehem of Judæa—wise men, &c.] Bethlehem was a small town in the tribe of Judah, which lay on the south of Jerusalem; there was a city of the same name in Galilee, which belonged to the tribe of Zebulun, Josh. xix. 15. and this is the reason why the former is here called Bethlehem of Judæa. In the days of Herod the king, is an Hebraism for the time of king Herod the Great; who was at first tetrarch or governor of Judæa, and afterwards declared king of the same country. See Joseph. Hist. Jud. l. xiv. c. 3. and l. xvii. c. 10. The evangelical and apostolical history begins with Herod the Great, and ends with Agrippa, the last king of the Jews. Concerning these wise men, four things are pretty generally agreed; that they were Persians, or Parthians; that they were priests, or ministers of religion; that they frequently travelled into different countries; and that they applied themselves very much to the contemplation of the stars. As to the title here given them, it is certain that the word Μαγοι, Magi, was not appropriated in ancient times to such as practised wicked arts, but frequently was used to express philosophers or men of learning; and those particularly who were curious in examining the works of nature, and in observing the motions of the heavenly bodies. Compare Daniel, ii. 2. 27. and v. 11. and the Septuagint; and see Wetstein and Doddridge.

Ver. 2. Saying, &c.] Saying, Where is this new-born king of the Jews? Campbell. There does not seem to be any need of supposing, with some of the fathers, that the wise men knew the signification of this star which they saw while they were in the east, by comparing it with Balaam's prophecy, Numb. xxiv. 17. or Daniel's, ch. ii. 44. ix. 25. Nor can we think, as Grotius seems to intimate, that they discovered it by the rules of their art. It is much more probable that they learned it by a divine revelation, by which it is plain they were guided in their return. See ver. 12. It was a common observation among the ancients, that the appearance of a new star denoted either the birth or death of great men. Chalcidius, in his comment upon Plato, mentions the appearance of this star

6<sup>h</sup> And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a <sup>1</sup> Governor, that shall <sup>k</sup> rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had <sup>1</sup>privily called the wife men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, <sup>m</sup> Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that <sup>n</sup> I may come and worship him also.

9 ¶ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the <sup>\*</sup> star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they <sup>o</sup> rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 ¶ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and <sup>p</sup> worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they <sup>q</sup> presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>h</sup> Mic. 5. 2. John, 7. 42. <sup>1</sup> If. o. 6, 7. Pf. 2. 6. Col. 1. 18. Eph. 1. 22. <sup>k</sup> Or *seed*. If. 40. 11. Ezek. 34. 23, 24. & 37. 24. <sup>1</sup> Gen. 3. 1. Exod. 1. 10. Pf. 10. 8. 9. & 12. 2. & 40. 14. & 55. 21. & 64. 4. <sup>m</sup> Job, 5. 12. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 19. 2. If. 59. 13—15. <sup>n</sup> 2 Sam. 15. 7. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 21. 9. Tit. 1. 16. Pf. 12. 2. & 55. 21. ch. 26. 48, 49. ver. 16. <sup>\*</sup> It appears to have been a fiery meteor in the lower sky. <sup>o</sup> Luke, 2. 10, 11. Deut. 32. 47. Pf. xcvi.—c. & 105. 3. <sup>p</sup> Pf. 2. 12. & 45. 11. John, 5. 23. Pf. 22. 29. & 72. 17. <sup>q</sup> Or *offer'd*. Pf. 72. 10—15. If. 60. 6. with Gen. 43. 11, 25. <sup>1</sup> Sam. 9. 7, 8. & 10. 27. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 10. 2. Prov. 18. 16.

*star* in a very remarkable manner; “as foretelling the descent of a god upon earth, for the preservation of mankind; and as occasioning some *wise men* among the Chaldeans to go in search of him, and *pay him adoration*.” Dr. Doddridge and others render the latter clause of the verse, *And are come to prostrate ourselves before him*.

*Ver. 3. He was troubled*] *Alarmed*. Our translation suits well to Herod, jealous for his crown, but not to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were oppressed by him; and (according to their notions of a Messiah) would conceive hopes of their deliverance from the news of his death. The original word *ταρασσω* signifies only a great emotion, whatever the cause be, whether of joy, or fear, or admiration, Judith, xiv. 7. See Heylin and Mintert on the word.

*Ver. 4. And when he had gathered, &c.*] *And having assembled*. Campbell. *All the chief priests*, must comprehend here not only the high-priest for the time being, and his deputy, with those who formerly had borne that office; but also the heads of the twenty-four courses, as well as any other persons of peculiar eminence in the priesthood. See 1 Chron. xxiv. 6. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14. *The scribes of the people*, mean the rabbies or doctors, who explained the law to the people. See Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament.

*Ver. 5. In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus, &c.*] For a full explanation of this passage we refer to the notes on Micah, v. 2, &c.; just observing, with Dr. Doddridge, that when this and several other quotations from the Old Testament, which we find in the New, come to be compared with the original, and even with the Septuagint, it will plainly appear that the apostles did not think it necessary always to transcribe exactly the passages they quoted, but sometimes contented themselves with giving the general sense, in some little diversity of language.

*Ver. 8. Search diligently for, &c.*] *Make exact inquiry about, &c.* It is an amazing thing that so suspicious and artful a prince as Herod should put such an important affair on so precarious a footing; when, if he had not gone himself, it would have been so easy, under pretence

of doing honour to these learned strangers, to have sent a guard of soldiers with them, who might, humanly speaking, without any difficulty, have slaughtered the child and his parents on the spot. Perhaps he might have been unwilling to commit such an act of cruelty in the presence of these sages, lest their report of it might have rendered him infamous abroad: or rather, we must refer it to a secret infatuation with which God, whenever he pleases, can confound the most sagacious of mankind. See Doddridge and Calmet.

*Ver. 10. When they saw the star*] Dr. Doddridge reads *a star or meteor*; because, says he, no *star* could point out not only a town, but a particular house. The original, in the conclusion of this verse, is remarkably emphatical, *They rejoiced with a joy which was exceeding great*.

*Ver. 11. And fell down and worshipped him*] *Prostrating themselves they adored him*. Heylin. The original word for *treasures* signifies not only a collection of rarities and precious things, but also whatever serves to hold them. Here it signifies the vessels or boxes wherein these sages had put the presents they designed for the King of the Jews. It was the custom of their country to offer presents to the illustrious personages whom they came to visit, as appears from many passages of the Old Testament; (see Gen. xliii. 11. 25. 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8. x. 27. Pf. lxxii. 10. and Prov. xviii. 16.) and Maundrell, Chardin, and many other writers of the best credit, assure us, that the custom is yet retained. We cannot help noting how reasonable and providential an assistance this was to furnish Joseph and Mary for so long and expensive a journey as that into Egypt; a country where they were intirely strangers, and yet were to abide there for some considerable time. Several commentators have observed a significancy and propriety in these gifts; which, whether true or not, is at least ingenious. They offered him, say they, *gold* as a king, paying him tribute; *frankincense* as a god, for they honoured God with the smoke of incense; and *myrrh*, as a man who should die; for myrrh was used in embalming dead bodies. See Doddridge, Beaufovre and Lenfant, and Henry.

V. r.



12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt; and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14\* When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son.

16 ¶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts

\* Exod. 1. 17. Acts, 4. 19. & 5. 29. † Ch. 1. 20. Num. 12. 8. Heb. 1. 1. ‡ Hof. 11. 1. Rev. 12. 4. ch. 10. 23. \* Whether this happened about two months, or about a year after Christ's birth, we know not. † Hof. 11. 1. with Num. 24. 8. ‡ Prov. 27. 3. Dan. 3. 13. § Prov. 1. 16. || 37. 7. ch. 10. 34. John, 15. 18. Prov. 20. 21. & 21. 30. Thus the time of Christ's birth was publicly marked; and none left to rival his honours.

Ver. 13. Into Egypt] There were great numbers of Jews in Egypt: some fled thither in the time of Jeremiah; and great numbers were brought there afterwards, on account of the temple of Onias. We may just observe, once for all, that the particle *idou*, *behold*, is a frequent Hebraism in the evangelists, which commonly is but an expletive, though sometimes it is emphatical. *The angel*, would be rendered more properly *an angel*.

Ver. 15. That it might be fulfilled, &c.] So that what the Lord had spoken by the prophet was verified. Campbell. The reader will remember the general observation which has been made on ch. i. 22. respecting the phrase, *that it might be fulfilled*, and will refer to Hosea, xi. 1. concerning this text; which Grotius, Heinsius, and many of the best critics, both ancient and modern, understand as a mere allusion. See Calmet on the verse. The editors of the Prussian Testament observe, that the words *out of Egypt*, &c. belong, in their proper and literal sense, to the people of Israel, as appears from the beginning of the verse in Hosea. Compare Exod. iv. 22, 23. Numb. xxiv. 8. St. Matthew applies them to the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the method of the Jewish doctors, who considered several particulars in the Old Testament as relating to the Messiah typically, though, in a literal sense, they referred to other matters.

Ver. 16. Then Herod, when he saw, &c.] Perceiving that he was mocked by the Magi—slew all the children—entering in the second year and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned, &c. Knatchbull. The word *ἐνπαίζων*, in the original, rendered *mocked*, signifies properly to be played with, and well expresses the view in which the pride of Herod taught him to regard this action, as if it were intended to expose him to the derision of his subjects, and to treat him as a child, rather than as a prince of so great experience and renown. Haman's rage against Mordecai is expressed by the LXX in the same terms as Herod's anger is here. See Esth. iii. 5. v. 9. It is probable that Herod in his passion ordered the slaughter of the infants, as soon as he perceived that he was disappointed in his expectation of the return of the wise men; lest otherwise the child, of whom he was so jealous, might be removed: and, as his cruelty extended even to those who had entered on the second year, which is expressly

said to be according to the time of which he had got exact information from the sages; it must be natural hence to conclude, that it was not till some considerable time after the birth of Christ that he was visited by the wise men; even though we should allow the first appearance of the star to have been, as some suppose, about the time of Christ's conception. The truth is, it is very difficult to determine the exact period of time when the wise men paid their visit to Christ; though it appears to me most probable from the 11th verse that it was at the time of his nativity. See Sir Norton Knatchbull, and Bedford's Chronology, p. 740. The reader will find, at the end of Bishop Chandler's Vindication of his Defence, a piece which well deserves his perusal, intitled, 'The Slaughter of the Children in Bethlehem, as an historical Fact in St. Matthew's Gospel, vindicated, &c.'

Dr. Campbell reads, *all the children, all the male children*, *ὅς πάντας*. I do not deny, says he, that there may be instances wherein the Greek term *ὅς πάντας*, like the other *ὅς πάντας*, may mean children in general. The phrase, both in Hebrew and in Greek, is, *the sons of Israel*, which our translators render *the children of Israel*, as nobody doubts that the whole posterity is meant. We address an audience of men and women by the title *brethren*; and under the denomination *all men*, the whole species is included. But in such examples, the universality of the application is either previously known from common usage, or is manifest from the subject or occasion. Where this cannot be said, the words ought to be strictly interpreted. Add to this, 1st, That the historian seems here purposely to have changed the term *παιδῶν*, which is used for *child* no less than nine times in this chapter; as that word, being neuter, and admitting only the neuter article, was not fit for marking the distinction of sexes; and to have adopted a term which he nowhere else employs for infants, though frequently for men-servants, and once for youths or boys: 2dly, That the reason of the thing points to the interpretation that I have given. It made no more for Herod's purpose to destroy female children, than to massacre grown men and women; and, tyrant though he was, that he meant to go no farther than, in his way of judging, his own security rendered expedient, is evident from the instructions which he gave to his emissaries, in regard to the age

thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

17 Then was \* fulfilled that which was spoken by <sup>2</sup> Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

19 ¶ But when Herod was dead, <sup>2</sup> behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead who sought the young child's life.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that † Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, <sup>b</sup> being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called

\* Again fulfilled, as it had been at the Babylonish captivity. <sup>2</sup> Jer. 31. 15. with Gen. 35. 19. Josh. 24. 21, 23. Jer. 40. 1. & 41. 3. The 3d year before the account called *Annus Domini*. <sup>a</sup> Ch. 1. 20. ver. 13. Pf. 32. 7, 8. Prov. 3. 5, 6. Pf. 91. 11, 12. Exod. 4. 19. † Who was very furious and cruel. <sup>b</sup> Pf. 32. 8. & 121. 8. & 48. 14. 1 Sam. 2. 9.

of the infants to be sacrificed to his jealousy, that they might not exceed such an age, nor be under such another.

*Ver. 17, 18. Then was fulfilled, &c.] Then, &c.—a cry heard, lamentation, and weeping, and bitter complaint.* See, for an explanation of this text, the notes on Jer. xxxi. 15. Dr. Doddridge understands this also as an allusion. But the notes above referred to will convince the reader, that this passage may, with strict propriety, be understood as a prophecy of that event to which the sacred historian applies it.

*Ver. 19. But when Herod was dead]* It will be worth the reader's while to peruse the particular and affecting account which Josephus has given of the dreadful death of this inhuman tyrant, whom God so remarkably made a terror to himself, as well as to all about him. See *Antiq. l. xvii. c. 6. Jewish War, l. i. c. 33.* and *Univ. History, vol. x. p. 638.*

*Ver. 20. Who sought the young child's life]* Greek. *Who sought the soul;* a Hebraism, of which our version gives the sense. See 1 Kings, xix. 10. 14. Exod. iv. 19. to which last passage the angel seems to allude. It is an ingenious conjecture of Mr. Manne, that Antipater, the son of Herod, who, at the time when Christ was born, was heir apparent to his crown, and was a prince so cruel and ambitious, that he had procured the death of his two elder brothers to clear his way to the succession, would very probably be an active counsellor and instrument in seeking the destruction of the new-born Jesus, and in advising the slaughter of the infants; and as this Antipater died but five days before Herod, both might be referred to in these words of the angel, *they are dead.* See Manne's *Dissert. p. 74.* Doddridge, and Westein.

*Ver. 22. Archelaus]* He was the sixth son of Herod, and the most cruel of all those who survived him. He caused three thousand citizens to be murdered at one time in the temple. Herod in his will appointed him his successor, and bestowed upon him the regal authority; but Augustus gave him only the title of *Ethnarch*, or prince of the nation; of which, however, he deprived him afterwards, and sent him into banishment for his tyranny and cruelty. Galilee belonged to the jurisdiction of Anti-

pas, another of the sons of Herod, and who was himself afterwards called *Herod*. See ch. xiv. 1. He was of a much milder disposition than Archelaus, and was then upon such hostile terms with him, that there was no danger of his giving up Joseph and Mary into his power. The reader, the better to understand this part of the sacred history, will do well to read Josephus, or the *Universal History* as above referred to.

*Ver. 23. A city called Nazareth]* Which was a small town of the lower Galilee, near the frontiers of the tribes of Zebulon and Issachar. In the description of the Nazarite given Numb. vi. we learn that he was first to abstain from wine and all vinous liquors; secondly, to let his hair grow; thirdly, not to defile himself with the dead. Now in each of these particulars, as we have observed on the 21st verse of that chapter, the Nazarite was a lively type of Christ; whose extraordinary endowments, as man, were not from any natural causes, but from above, even from the Spirit of God: who was invested with all power and authority, of which *hair* was an emblem; (see Judg. xvii. 17. 20. 22. Compare 1 Cor. xi. 7. in the Greek;) and who was intirely *separate from dead works*, from sin and sinners. It would be needless, and far exceed my present bounds, to quote the prophecies wherein the Messiah is described as endowed with these high qualifications. Many of the predictions concerning Christ may be reduced to one or other of these heads; and, in order to turn the attention of men to him as the true *Nazarite*, in which the type was completely fulfilled, it is remarkably observed here by St. Matthew, that *he came and dwelt at Nazareth; that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, he shall be called*, that is to say, shall be truly and justly *Ναζωραϊος*, a *Nazarite*; so the Vulgate, *Nazaraeus*. Thus, while the Jews and Romans were calling him in contempt *the Nazarene*, the providence of God was at the same time pointing him out to mankind as the true *Nazarite*, from the circumstance of his dwelling in that city which had been prophetically, with a view, no doubt, to this important event, called *Nazareth*, or *the City of the Nazarites*. Parkhurst on the word *נָצְרָה* *nezer*. It may be proper just to observe, that there are other and different expositions given of this prophecy. The editors of the Prussian Testament agree with

Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

\* i. e. *Branch, the Saviour; separated, or crowned one.* If. 11. 1. Zech. 6. 12. Num. 6. 2. Judges, 13. 5, 7.

with the margin of our English Bible, and think that the passage referred to is either Judg. xiii. 5. where Samson, a type of the Messiah, is spoken of; or Isaiah, xi. i. where the Messiah is styled the *Netzer* or *Branch*; while Wetstein, Doddridge, Macknight, and many others, suppose that the expression refers to the mean and despicable circumstances of the Messiah, and the reproachful manner wherein he was treated, agreeable to several prophetic passages of Scripture. But Houbigant is of opinion, that the evangelist refers to the blessings of Jacob and Moses, in each of which Joseph, as a type of the Messiah, is called *Nezir*, or *Nazarite*. See Gen. xlix. 26. Deut. xxxiii. 16. and Houbigant's note on the last place.

*Inferences.*—The love of our Redeemer for a mean and private life appears from the first moment of his birth, in the choice which he makes of Bethlehem.

Those who are nearest to Christ very often know him not, when those who are farther off seek and adore him. How great was the faith of these *wise men*, and how illustrious a testimony did they bear to the dignity of our Lord's person! Surely the readiness that they shewed, and the fatiguing journey which they so willingly undertook to pay their adoration to their infant Saviour, should awaken in our souls an anxious concern, not to be excelled by them in duty and devotion to this divine Lord, now that we enjoy the better and more abiding light of his Gospel, that glorious *day-spring from on high*. With what cheerfulness should we present ourselves and all we have to him! opening the *treasuries* of our hearts, and offering before him the valuable presents of humble faith and adoring love!

It is not to be supposed that God would have guided these wise men in this extraordinary manner, merely to pay a transient compliment to Jesus; their *prostrations*, no doubt, expressed religious adoration as well as civil respect; and it is not unlikely that their report might in due time make way for the reception of the Gospel, in the country whence they came. Gentiles as they were, we cannot help looking upon them as the first-fruits of the nations to Christ. This circumstance of the sacred history affords a beautiful emblem of that glorious state of the Christian church, foretold by the prophets, when the *Gentiles should come down to its light, and sages and kings to the brightness of its rising; when the abundance of the sea should be converted to it, and the wealth of the Gentiles consecrated to its honour.*

We may observe here how Jews and Gentiles conferred together about Jesus Christ. The Gentiles know the time of his birth by a *star*; the Jews know the time of it by the Scripture; and so they are capable of informing one another. It would contribute much to the increase of knowledge, if we were thus mutually to communicate what we know. Men grow rich by bartering and exchange; so, if we have knowledge to communicate to others, they will be ready to communicate to us. Thus many shall *discourse, shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall*

be increased. Even a Herod, you may remark, consults the priests and teachers of the law in matters of religious concernment: and to inspire us with reverence for the oracles of God, these priests presume not to answer the question, but by a reference to the Scriptures of truth.

How very conspicuous did the wisdom and power of divine Providence appear in the preservation of the infant Jesus! and in thwarting the vile hypocrisy and execrable cruelty of the tyrant Herod! There is *no understanding, or wisdom, or counsel against the Lord*; no scheme so artfully disguised that he cannot penetrate it; or so politically formed, that he cannot with infinite ease confound it.

To what perplexity and grief might these sages have been brought, had they been made even the innocent instruments of an assault on this holy child! But God delivered them from such an alarm, and happily guided their return (ver. 12.); so that through his care and favour they carried home, in the tidings of the new-born Messiah, far richer treasures than they had left behind. Thus shall they, who in all their ways acknowledge God, by one method or another find that *he will graciously direct their paths!*

We may remark how God in his providence makes the cruelty of a Herod subservient to the publication of his Son's birth, and to the accomplishment of his designs with respect to him. He reduces, within the order of his goodness, the greatest disorders of human wickedness. He makes that Egypt, which was once the seat of persecution and oppression to his chosen people, a refuge to his Son; and thus all places will be to us what the providence of God shall be pleased to make them.

How many instructive lessons may we derive from this inhuman *massacre* of the innocents at Bethlehem! We are hence taught that, afflictions are not arguments of guilt, since innocent children were made a sacrifice to the ambition of a cruel tyrant: that we ought to be ready to part with what is dear to us as our own children, whenever they may become instruments of God's glory: that what oppression soever innocence meets with from the hands of wicked men, it is for the good of those who suffer it: that the conduct of those parents who neglect the education and instruction of their children in Christian and virtuous principles, exceeds the cruelty of a Herod—(he only deprived little innocents of this life; they expose their own bowels to eternal death): and that to be true disciples of Christ, we must become as little children in the frame and temper of our minds; without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. "Mortify, therefore, and kill in us all vices, great God of our salvation; and so strengthen us through thy grace, that by the innocence of our lives, and the constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though the birth of Jesus, the King of kings, was ushered into the world with none of those rejoicings that usually attend the nativity of the prince

## C H A P. III.

*John preacheth : his office, life, and baptism : he reprehendeth the Pharisees, and baptizeth Christ in Jordan.*

[Anno Domini 26.]

**I**N those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 1. 4. Luke, 1. 2. 3. & 1. 5—15, 37—80. John, 1. 6, 7, 20. Joh 15. 61. If. 40. 3. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 4. 17. Acts, 2. 38, 39. & 3. 19. Luke, 13. 3, 5. If. 50. 7. Ezek. 33. 11. <sup>c</sup> Dan. 2. 44. & 7. 13, 14. i. e. the Gospel-dispensation. Ch. 4. 17. & xiii. xxv. <sup>d</sup> If. 40. 3. Mark, 1. 3. Luke, 3. 4. John, 1. 23. Mal. 3. 1. & 4. 2, 5, 6.

princes of the earth, we have some instances of very distinguished notice paid to the infant Saviour.

1. Wise men came from the east, led by the observance of an extraordinary star which appeared in the heavens. Who they were, and whence they came, we are not clearly told; the most approved opinion seems to be, that they were of the Persian Magi, among whom some tradition seems to have obtained of a great prince at that time about to come into the world, which possibly might arise from Baalam's prophecy, or from their acquaintance with the Jewish scriptures; which, during the captivity, were probably brought among them: and this expectation, Tacitus observes, was spread through the east. (But see the critical notes.) As these Magi were very conversant in astronomy, the uncommon luminous phenomenon, a meteor, or star, which they observed over Judæa, might have led them thither, concluding that this was the signal of his appearing, as they might be assured also by a divine impulse on their minds. They were Gentiles, it is certain, and this was a happy preface of their future conversion; and their wisdom most eminently appeared in coming to him, the knowledge of whom alone could make them wise unto salvation. The highest attainments in science, without this wisdom, are no better than splendid ignorance.

2. They directed their journey to Jerusalem the capital, naturally concluding there to meet with all needful information. Herod at that time reigned in Judæa, an Edomite, set up by the Romans, under whose power the Jews were, the sceptre being now departed from Shiloh; and to him it should seem they applied themselves, inquiring after the child who was born King of the Jews, concerning whom they speak with the greatest confidence; and having seen his star in the east, the intimation of his birth, were come to worship him; either to pay him their civil homage, or rather to offer divine adoration. *Note;* (1.) They who know the value of Christ's favour, will stop at no pains in following him whithersoever he calls them. (2.) Jesus is truly the object worthy of our adoration, even in his lowest humiliation; the babe in the manger is still the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

3. This inquiry of the wise men exceedingly affected Herod. He could be no stranger to the prophecies concerning the Messiah; and the time of the accomplishment of them was confessedly now at hand. He was troubled therefore lest his own throne should be shaken; and the people in general who heard the account seem alike disturbed, fearing possibly the tumults which they might perhaps suppose would be the consequence of a struggle for the crown, as they had, in general, no notion of the Messiah as

2 And saying, <sup>b</sup> Repent ye: for <sup>c</sup> the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, <sup>d</sup> The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

a spiritual Saviour, but as a mighty prince and conqueror. (But see the notes.) *Note;* Worldly hearts are ever afraid, lest the spreading of the kingdom of Jesus should clash with their interests.

4. To give them a resolution of the question, and perhaps to gain particular information himself, for purposes that his mind already harboured, he called a council of the chief priests, those most distinguished for station and abilities, and the scribes learned in the law, and most conversant with the prophecies, that he might have their concurring sentiments concerning the place where *the Christ*, the Messiah should be born. And thus, by divine providence, this wicked king, who consulted them with the vilest design, is made the instrument of obtaining a distinguished suffrage, even from the wisest of the Jewish nation, to the place of the Messiah's birth, and where the babe Jesus actually was born.

5. They are unanimous in their opinion; for the prophet Micah has expressly determined the place to be Bethlehem of Judæa, chap. v. 2. and they cite the prophecy, in sense the same with the original, though with some variation in the expression. Thence the ruler and governor of his Israel should arise, and who is and ever will be the Lord of his faithful saints, reigning in their hearts, and bringing them into subjection to his blessed self.

6. Herod hereupon dismisses the wise men in search of this child, after examining them in private with the greatest accuracy concerning the time when the star appeared, and having concerted in his own mind the bloody project of cutting off him whom he eyed already with jealousy as the rival of his throne: and therefore he strictly charges them, after having made diligent search at Bethlehem, to return, and acquaint him with the place of his abode, hypocritically pretending a desire to pay his worship to the young child born and destined of God to such distinguished honour. So often has the mask of religion concealed the foulest designs.

None of his courtiers were sent with these strangers: perhaps he was afraid to awaken the suspicion of the parents of Jesus, his ambition and cruelty being fully known; or so God, in his over-ruling providence, ordered it; who taketh the wife in their own craftiness, and can divert the enemies of his people from using the most obvious means which they seem to have in their power to distress or destroy them.

2dly, With attention and respect the wise men received their directions, and departed in search of the king of the Jews. And,

1. We find them happily conducted to the spot where he

4 And the same John<sup>e</sup> had his raiment of loins; and his meat was locusts and wild camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his honey.

<sup>e</sup> Mark, i. 6. <sup>2</sup> Kings, i. 8. Mal. 4. 5. Luke, i. 17. Zech. 13. 4. <sup>f</sup> Ch. ii. 18. Lev. xi. 22.

he is. The star which they had seen at Christ's birth, afterwards disappeared; at least, if, as some suggest, it led them to the borders of Judæa, it then left them, but now returned, hanging low in the sky, and moving on before them till it stood over the house where Jesus was: for before this, it seems, his parents had changed the place of his birth in a stable, for a more commodious abode. The return of the star, as it promised them a happy issue of their journey, rejoiced them exceedingly; and under its guidance being led to the house, they entered without farther inquiry: and finding the child with his virgin-mother, they immediately prostrated themselves before him, worshipping him as their God, or honouring him as their king. And according to the eastern custom, of making presents to their monarchs when they make their addresses to them, they opened their treasures, and presented him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, Isai. lx. 6. and thus also providentially supplied Joseph and Mary with a sufficiency for the long journey they were quickly after called to undertake. *Note;* (1.) When we are found in the way of duty, using the means that God hath given us, we shall not be left without a guide. (2.) The word of God, and the ministry of it, is now this star to lead us to Jesus; and blessed and happy are they who follow its direction. (3.) When for a while we have been in the darkness of affliction, temptation, or desertion, with double joy we behold the re-appearing of the day-star to our benighted souls, and rejoice with exceeding great joy. (4.) Jesus is the object of our adorations; to him every knee must bow. (5.) The Lord by strange and unexpected ways often supplies the wants of his people: they who trust him, will assuredly find that he has never failed them in time of need.

2. To prevent their return to Jerusalem according to Herod's desire, God, by a dream, which carried its own evidence that it came from him, probably the very day or night after their arrival at Bethlehem, warned them not to go back to Herod; and accordingly they immediately departed into their own country another way. So easily can God blast the malicious designs of the ungodly.

3dly, No sooner were the wife men departed, than God, who knew the cruel intentions of Herod, takes care of the safety of the child Jesus.

1. The Lord in a dream apprizes Joseph of the danger to which the young child was exposed; and bids him, without delay, secure the babe with his mother in Egypt, from the fury of this bloody king, and expect farther directions there. Immediately that very night he arose, and fled with his family to this appointed place of refuge, and there continued till the death of Herod, which soon followed the massacre of the infants. *Note;* (1.) The place where God's people suffered the bitterest persecution affords an asylum for his Son: so easily can he who has in his hands the hearts of all men, make our once inveterate enemies our firmest friends. (2.) The faithful heart obeys God's commands without hesitation or delay: having

committed our all to him, we must be safe under his guidance.

2. Particular notice is taken of the fulfilling of the scripture herein; *out of Egypt have I called my son*, Hof. xi. 1. which, whatever reference it has to Israel as a people, had now its most direct accomplishment in the flight of Jesus thither, and his return thence.

4thly, We are told, as we might have expected from the character of this wicked prince,

1. The fury he was in at being disappointed by the wife men. He waited from day to day, in expectation of receiving intelligence from them; but hearing at last they were gone home another way, his jealousy was more inflamed against his supposed rival, and his wrath more exasperated.

2. The politic but inhuman contrivance that he formed to rid himself of his fears. He slew all the male children under two years of age, in all Bethlehem, and the territory belonging to it; being satisfied from the information he had received of the wife men, that the infant king could not exceed that age, and therefore must perish in this general massacre—An instance of barbarity, which though most agreeable to the character of that savage monarch, who had with his own hand slain his own children, we cannot read without horror; so that Augustus might well say, *it was better to be Herod's swine than his son*. The first crown of martyrdom for Jesus was won by these infant sufferers; and the honour to which they are advanced, infinitely repays the torments that they endured.

3. The fulfilment of the scripture herein is again observed; and to this event, no doubt, the prophet had immediate regard, Jer. xxxi. 15. For, though we see it fulfilled in a measure, when the sword of the Chaldeans, and the captivity of the Jews which ensued, awakened Rachel, as it were, from her grave, which was near Bethlehem, to lament her children destroyed, or led to Babylon; yet, in a peculiarly striking manner may this tender mother's griefs be now said to overflow, when so many of her daughters raved with inconsolable anguish for their infants torn from their bosoms, and writhing on the spear of inhuman-murderers. *Note;* Though God does not forbid us to bewail the ravages that death makes in our families; yet inconsolable grief is sinful. Christians must never sorrow as if they had no hope, or as if their comforts were all bound up in a dying worm.

5thly, The sojourning of our Lord in Egypt was but short. Quickly after the massacre of the infants, Herod was struck with a mortal disease, loathsome, and incurable, which made him a spectacle to others, and a torment to himself. So soon can God humble proud tyrants, and make them feel that wrath which they would not fear. Hereupon,

1. The Lord sent his angel, who informs Joseph, in a dream, of Herod's death, and bids him arise, since he may now safely return to the land of Israel. They who are driven far from the ordinances of God, and his people, with

5 ¶ Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pha-

<sup>c</sup> Mark, 1. 5. Luke, 16. 16. & 3. 3. 7. John, 1. 6. 7, 15—28. & 5. 35. ch. 11. 12. Acts, 19. 3, 4, 18. & 2. 38, 39. Mal. 4. 6. <sup>d</sup> Acts, 15. 5. & 26. 5. & 23. 8, 9. ch. 22. 23, 34. & 23. 1—29. Luke, 7. 30.

wish to be no longer absent from them than necessity obliges them.

2. Joseph is all obedience, cheerful readiness in following God's direction being the sure effect of real devotedness to his will. He returns with the child and his mother to the land of Israel; but hearing that Archelaus, a son of Herod's, and an inheritor of his brutal temper, reigned in Judæa, he was justly afraid of settling under his jurisdiction; and in this emergence again the Lord signifies his pleasure to him by his angel, and points him out a place of safety, in the obscure retreat of Nazareth, a little town in Galilee, then under the government of Antipas, another of Herod's children, but a man of a milder temper than his brother. *Note;* (1.) They who are willing to follow the path of duty if they knew it, shall be directed aright. (2.) No danger must deter us when we have God's call to go; but we must not willingly rush into temptation. (3.) God will find a quiet resting-place for his faithful people sometimes under the sun, but assuredly above it.

3. This was done also, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which said, *He shall be called a Nazarene*: either this refers to Isai. xi. 1. where Christ is called a branch, *netzer*, out of the root of Jesse, the city Nazareth deriving its name from this word: or to Judg. xiii. 5. Samson being the type of the great Nazarite and Saviour Jesus. Or rather in general, the prophecies which foretold his mean appearance, and the contempt and reproach that he should be exposed to, were thus fulfilled; Nazareth being a despicable place, and his very coming thence was urged by his enemies as an argument against his mission, *can any good thing come out of so mean and contemptible a place as Nazareth?* *Note;* They who are followers of Jesus of Nazareth, must not be ashamed of his reproach, nor of any opprobrious names with which his enemies and theirs may seek to render them odious or despicable. The disciple is then but as his Lord.

### CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. In those days*] That is, while Jesus was yet at Nazareth, where he dwelt till he entered on his public ministry, in the thirtieth year of his age. It is usual with authors to denote the times they are speaking of in an indeterminate manner. St. Luke, chap. iii. 2. has specified this period very particularly; and as he has given us a more full and exact account of John the Baptist than St. Matthew, we shall refer our readers to the notes on his Gospel. The *wilderness of Judea* was not a place wholly void of inhabitants; but hilly, and not so fruitful or so well inhabited as the rest of Judæa; though there were several cities in it. Joshua reckons six. See Josh. xv. 61, 62. St. John was born and had been brought up in this wilderness. Compare Luke, i. 39, 40.

*Ver. 2. Repent ye*] This was only the substance and

result of his preaching. The *kingdom of heaven*, and the *kingdom of God*, are but two phrases for the same thing, agreeably to the style of the Hebrews; who frequently used the word *heaven* to denote God himself who dwells there. Hence what is here called by St. Matthew the *kingdom of heaven*, is by St. Mark and St. Luke called the *kingdom of God*; Mark, i. 15. Luke, vi. 20. The *kingdom of heaven*, therefore, signifies here the *kingdom of God*, which was founded and established by the Lord Jesus Christ,—the kingdom of grace here, introductory to the kingdom of glory hereafter; and this expression is founded on Dan. ii. 44. vii. 13, 14. Now, as the kingdom of heaven was to be opened by the preaching of the Gospel, John the Baptist rightly says, that it *was at hand*; since the Lord Jesus Christ entered on his public ministry about six months after. See Luke, iii. 2, 3. The demand of *repentance* shewed that this was a spiritual kingdom, and that no wicked man, how politic or brave, how learned or renowned soever, could possibly be a genuine member of it. See Whitby, Beaufobre and Lenfant, Doddridge, and Heylin, p. 19. For the next verse we refer to the notes on Isai. xl. 3.

*Ver. 4. His raiment of camel's hair*] The Jews used to wear *hairy* or *coarse garments* in time of sorrow and humiliation. See Matt. xi. 21. The Nazarites did the same till they had fulfilled their vow. It was also a dress sometimes worn by the prophets; Zech. xiii. 4. 2 Kings, i. 8. Rev. vi. 12. xi. 3. In all these respects it suited John the Baptist, as he preached repentance, as he was a prophet, and as he imitated the austerity which was practised by the Nazarites. He wore too a *hathorn girdle*, as did some of the old prophets, and in particular Elijah, whom John the Baptist represented in habit, as well as in spirit and office. See 2 Kings, i. 8. and compare Heb. xi. 37. Matt. xi. 14. His food was *locusts*, the eating of which was allowed by the law, and customary in the eastern parts of the world, as we have shewn in our note on Lev. xi. 22. Sir Norton Knatchbull, and some others, not attending to this particular, have supposed that the original word *καυδης* implies not *locusts*, but a *plant*, the buds of which in some degree resemble asp ragus. But it is undeniable, that the word both in the LXX, and elsewhere, generally signifies the animal which we call a locust. See Mintert on the word. The *wild honey* was such as he found in the holes of rocks and trees; for bees were very numerous in Palestine. Josephus, speaking of the fountain by Jericho, says, "There are by it, many sorts of palm-trees, the better sort of which, when they are pressed, yield an excellent kind of honey, not much inferior in sweetness to other honey." "The country also produces honey from bees." See Jewish War, book iv. chap. 8. sect. 3. Hence some have conceived, that the honey whereupon St. John fed, was of that kind which is found upon and pressed from the leaves of trees in Syria. St. John made use of clothing and food which were mean and easily procured, not through poverty, (for

Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? O generation of vipers, who come?

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 12. 34. & 23. 33. Luke, 3. 7. & 18. 9, 11. Acts, 23. 8. <sup>2</sup> 1 Theff. 1. 10. 2 Theff. 1. 9. Rom. 5. 9.

(for he was the only son of a priest,) but of his own free choice, that the severity of his manners might correspond with his doctrine, which enjoined frequent fastings and abstinence on his disciples, ch. ix. 14. and also that by this means he might strengthen both his body and mind, and prepare himself to meet, with intrepidity, dangers, and death at the last. See Wetstein, Beaufobre and Lenfant.

The camel's hair spoken of in this verse was not of the fine hair of that animal, whereof an elegant kind of cloth is made, which is thence called *camlet*, (in imitation of which, though made of wool, is the English *camlet*,) but of the long and shaggy hair of camels, which is in the east manufactured into a coarse stuff. It is only when understood in this way that the words suit the description here given of John's manner of life.

Ver. 5. *And all the region round about Jordan*] As the river Jordan runs through a vast tract of land, it cannot be supposed that all they who lived nearest it came to John's baptism. By *all the region*, &c. St. Matthew therefore must mean some of those countries near Jordan, which bordered upon Judæa; as the plain of Jordan, which is by the LXX called *the country about Jordan*. The novelty of a prophet's appearance in Israel, the family of John, the circumstances of his birth, the extraordinary character which he had maintained for strict and undissembled piety, all concurred, no doubt, with the time of his appearance, and the people's impatient desire of the Messiah's arrival, and uneasiness under the Roman yoke, to draw such vast multitudes after him. See Calmet, and Doddridge.

Ver. 6. *Were baptized of him*] There were two kinds of baptism in use among the Jews; one was that of the priests at their consecration, Lev. viii. 6.; the other was that of the heathens profelyted to the Jewish religion. It was therefore no unheard-of rite which the Messiah's harbinger made use of. His countrymen were well acquainted both with the thing itself, and with its signification: they knew that it denoted some great change, either in the opinions or practices of those who submitted to it, and implied a promise of acceptance with God, on the part of him who administered it. They had also been led by a passage in their sacred books, Zech. xiii. 1. to expect that either the Messiah himself, or some of his attendants, would baptize; as is evident from the question which the messengers of the Sanhedrim put to the Baptist, John, i. 25. *Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ?* &c. They must have known, therefore, that John's baptism represented purification both of heart and life as necessary even to Jews themselves, before they could become the subjects of so holy a prince as the Messiah; and that it was a solemn obligation, binding those who received it to lead such lives. Hence, as Dr. Whitby observes, they are mistaken who think John's baptism the same in kind with that which Christ afterwards instituted for the admission of disciples into his church. The difference between the two was considerable: *First*, John did not baptize either in the name of Christ, or of the Holy Ghost. *Secondly*, They

who were baptized with John's baptism, did not profess their faith in the Messiah, as actually come, neither did they receive his baptism in testimony of their entertaining that belief; for, after having administered it, he exhorted his disciples to believe on him who was to come. Therefore his baptism could not initiate men into the Christian church. See Acts, xix. 4, 5. *Thirdly*, John's was the baptism of repentance, whereby all who had a sense of their sins, and professed repentance, were promised pardon, and exhorted to believe in the Messiah, who was soon to appear; or it was a washing with water, to shew the Jews that they might be cleansed both from their prejudices and vices, in order to their becoming fit members of the Messiah's kingdom. Accordingly we read, that they who were baptized, *confessed their sins*. If those who were baptized had committed any great crime or scandalous offence, they were to make a public and open confession of it, as appears from Acts, xix. 18. Otherwise this confession implies only a general acknowledgement that they were sinners; that they repented of their sins, and were resolved to forsake them. See Whitby, Macknight, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

Ver. 7. *Pharisees*] A Jewish sect so called from a Hebrew word signifying *separated*, or *set apart*, because they distinguished themselves from the rest of the Jews, by pretending to a greater degree of holiness and piety than the generality of them did; and by some particular observances. The *Sadducees* were another Jewish sect, so named from *Sadoc*, the founder of it. The most authentic account of these sects may be seen in Josephus, Antiq. b. xviii. c. 1. and Jewish War, b. ii. c. 8. All writers of Jewish antiquities describe them largely, but none better than Dr. Prideaux, Connect. vol. ii. p. 335. and the editors of the Prussian Testament, in their excellent introduction, which is translated into English, and well deserves the perusal of all who would thoroughly understand the New Testament. It is manifest from St. John's reproof of these Pharisees and Sadducees, that they did not come to his baptism with true faith; or else that they fancied that baptism could procure them the remission of their sins. See Luke, vii. 29. Matt. xxi. 25; from which passages it appears, that the Pharisees in general did not receive the baptism of John. It is also evident, from Luke, iii. 7. that there were among the multitude some persons of no better dispositions than the Pharisees, since the Baptist gives them the same reproof, calling them, *ye brood of vipers*, as the words may be rendered. "As to this term of reproach, I take the reason of it," says Dr. Heylin, "to be as follows:—It is a probable conjecture, that men (*quatenus* animals) have each a peculiar resemblance to some peculiar species of animals; which may be the reason why Jesus is called *the Lamb of God*, or *the Divine Lamb*; and his disciples, or those who are in such a state as renders them capable of becoming such, are named *sheep*; as, on the other hand, the politic Herod is called *a fox*; and persons noted for an insidious, ravenous, profane, or sensual disposition, are called respectively, *serpents*."

8 'Bring forth therefore fruits \* meet for repentance :

9 And think not to say within yourselves, "We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able " of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And ° now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : ° therefore every tree which

bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance : but he that cometh after me ' is mightier than I ; whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : ' he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire :

12 ' Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will

<sup>1</sup> Acts, 26. 20. Gal. 5. 22, 23. 2 Pet. 1. 4—10. 2 Cor. 7. 1, 11. <sup>2</sup> Or answerable to amendment of life. <sup>3</sup> John, 8. 33, 39. Acts, 19. 26. Jer. 7. 4. <sup>4</sup> John, 4. 3, 8. with ch. 8. 11, 12. & 21. 43. Luke, 19. 40. <sup>5</sup> Deut. 20. 20. Luke, 3. 9. & 23. 31. & 19. 42. John, 12. 35. 2 Cor. 6. 8. Heb. 2. 1, 3. & 3. 7—13. & 4. 1. & 10. 26—29. <sup>6</sup> Ch. 7. 19. John, 15. 2, 6. 1 Peter, 4. 17, 18. 11. 33, 14. Heb. 6. 8. & 10. 27. Ezek. xv. 9. Mark, 2. 8. Luke, 3. 10. John, 1. 26. Acts, 1. 5. & 11. 16. & 19. 4. <sup>7</sup> John, 1. 15, 27. & 3. 28—36. Luke, 1. 16, 17. <sup>8</sup> 11. 44. 3. Mal. 3. 2. 3. Gal. 4. 6. Titus, 3. 5. Acts, 1. 5. & 2. 3, 4. & 11. 15. John, 1. 33. <sup>9</sup> Luke, 3. 17. ch. 13. 30, 42. Mal. 4. 1. & 3. 3. Micah, 4. 12. Job, 21. 18.

"pents, dogs, wolves, and swine; which terms, when they occur in the Gospel, are not the random language of passion, and "calling names," as we speak; but a judicious designation of the persons meant by them; for it was fitting that such men should be denoted by their proper signature, either for a caution to others, or a warning to themselves. The Baptist had probably both these ends in view, when he called these Pharisees and Sadducees a brood of vipers. As they were persons of a public character, it was proper that the world should be informed what kind of men they were, to prevent the infection of their bad example; and upon their own account, it was proper to describe them to themselves, and denominate them (mere animal-men as they were, 1 Cor. ii. 14.) by their animal properties; because, being already hardened in the use of religious ordinances, if they were not thus roughly dealt with, and alarmed by a true sense of their dangerous condition, they would probably abuse baptism, as they had other holy institutions, to quiet their consciences, which were now somewhat awakened, and struck as with a panic fear, upon the general concourse to the preaching of St. John.—From the wrath to come, means not only from the Gehenna, chap. v. 29. but also from the dreadful calamities which were ready to fall on the Jewish nation.

Ver. 8. Fruits meet for repentance] That is, "Do such works as may manifest the truth and sincerity of your repentance." See Acts, xxvi. 20.

Ver. 9. Think not to say, &c.] Dr. Whitby has shewn fully how great was the presumption of the Jews, on their relationship to Abraham. Munster upon this text quotes a remarkable passage from the Talmud, wherein it is said, "That Abraham sits next the gates of hell, and does not permit any wicked Israelite to go down into it." These Jews might perhaps pervert the promise in Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. to support this vain and dangerous confidence, in opposition to the most express and awful warnings; particularly Deut. xxx. 19, &c. The Baptist, taking his ideas from the objects before him, (as we shall find, in the course of this work, was familiar with our blessed Saviour,) intended to say thus much only to the Pharisees: "I declare it unto you, as a certain and solemn truth, that God is able, of these very stones, here before your eyes, which he can animate and sanctify whenever he sees fit, to raise up

"those, who, though not descended from human parents, shall be, in a much nobler sense than you, children of Abraham, as being made the heirs of his faith and obedience; and he would sooner work such a miracle as this, than suffer his promise to fail, or admit you to the blessings of his approaching kingdom, merely because you have the abused honour to descend from that holy and favoured patriarch." See Doddridge.

Ver. 10. And now also the axe, &c.] The axe is already laid to the root of the trees: every tree then, &c. "There is now no more time for delay: God is going to offer the last dispensation of repentance and mercy; which if you accept not, his vengeance hangs over you; destruction will speedily overtake you." See Isai. x. 33, 34. It may be proper to observe, once for all, that in Scripture language, what is very sure and very near is spoken of as if it were already done; accordingly, the Baptist speaks here in the present tense. So Christ speaks of himself, as if as man he were already in possession of his glory while upon earth; John, xvii. 24. See also Ephes. ii. 16. Beaufobre and Lenfant observe, that this verse contains a prophecy of the total ruin and destruction of the temple, the city, and the nation of the Jews, which happened forty years after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ver. 11. I indeed baptize you] This is the answer which John made to the question put to him, John, i. 19—27. in which he shews what difference there was between him and the Messiah. "I indeed, says he, baptize you with water, to bring you to repentance; for they who were baptized, not only declared that they had repented of their sins, but they bound themselves never to commit the like again, and to lead a life of holiness and virtue;" which is the meaning of the Baptist in this place. He that cometh after me, says he, (namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, who entered on his ministry about six months after John, and was about six months younger; see Luke, i. 36.) is mightier than I; whose shoes, &c. a proverbial and humiliating expression, meaning, "whose lowest servant I am not worthy to be," and denoting the great superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ above John. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost; the effusion of which on the day of Pentecost, St. John styles a baptism; shewing thereby the copiousness and abundance of it: and indeed it was a glorious effusion for the church, of which the Lord Jesus Christ



thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have

need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

\* Mark. 1. 9. Luke. 3. 21. with ch. 8. 22.    † Gen. 32. 10.    ‡ Chr. 29. 14.    § Chr. 2. 6.    ¶ Eph. 3. 8.    \*\* Ps. 40. 6—8.    †† Jer. 30. 21.    ††† Heb. 7. 22.    †††† Dan. 9. 24.    ††††† Phil. 2. 6—8.    †††††† Gal. 4. 4, 5.    ††††††† Rom. 5. 15—21. & 3. 25, 26.    †††††††† 2 Cor. 5. 21.    ††††††††† If. liii.

Christ in this peculiar sense was the author; Acts, ii. 3, 33. He adds, *and with fire*; because the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles in the shape of fire, and had the same power and virtue as that element, of purifying, enlivening, &c.

Ver. 12. *Whose fan is in his hand, &c.*] This expression is taken from the prophetic writings. See Isai. xli. 16, &c. Dr. Shaw observes, that in the eastern countries, after the grain is trodden out, they winnow it, by throwing it up against the wind with a *shovel*, answering the original word *το σιτοει* here, and Luke, iii. 17. rendered a *fan*, or *winnowing*, too cumbersome a machine to be thought of. The text should rather run; *whose shovel or fork is in his hand*; for this is a portable instrument, and is agreeable to the practice recorded, Isai. xxx. 24. where both the *shovel* and the *winnowing* are mentioned, as the *chaff* which is thereby carried away before the wind, is often alluded to in Scripture. See Travels, p. 139. To understand the Baptist's meaning right, we should observe, that in this verse he describes the authority of Christ's ministry, as in that preceding he had described the efficacy of it. "The Messiah is infinitely mightier than I; not only as he will bestow on you the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, will purify and enliven your souls, and kindle in your hearts pious and devout affections; but also as he has power to reward those who obey him with eternal life, and to punish such as reject him with everlasting destruction." See Macknight. There is, in what the Baptist here declares, as Dr. Doddridge remarks, an evident allusion to the custom of turning the chaff after winnowing, that it might not be blown back again, and so be mingled with the wheat: and though it may in part refer to the calamities to come upon the Jewish nation for rejecting Christ, as Bishop Chandler, Beausobre and Lenfant, and others, have observed; yet it seems chiefly to intend the final destruction of sinners in hell; which alone is properly opposed to the gathering the wheat into the garner. Dr. Heylin understands the passage in a very different sense, as implying the total purification of our sinful nature, through the grace of Christ; and, to keep up the metaphor he reads, *He shall baptize you with holy wind and fire*. Though I have no doubt that the exposition above given is the true one, yet there is something so ingenious as well as instructive in that of Dr. Heylin, that I cannot help referring my reader to it, assured that he will find great satisfaction in the perusal. See his Lectures, vol. i. p. 24. Dr. Campbell renders the verse, *His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his grain; he will gather his wheat into the granary, and consume the chaff in unquenchable fire*.

Ver. 13. *To be baptized of him*] By this he intended to

do an honour to John's ministry, and to conform himself to what he appointed for his followers. It was for this last reason, that he drank of the sacramental cup. See Diodati. And certainly our Lord's baptism tended to promote the ends both of his own mission and of his forerunner's, as it established the authority of both. It established John's mission; great honour being done him by the Messiah's receiving his baptism. It established our Lord's mission also; for after he was baptized, the testimonies of the Spirit and voice from heaven, were given him in the presence of the multitude assembled at Jordan. That these testimonies should have been given him on this occasion, rather than on any other, was fit, because it was an august manner of opening our Lord's ministry; was the most public occasion which could be found; and pointed him out as the Messiah to the Baptist, who was thereby qualified for the principal duty of his mission. See Macknight.

Ver. 14, 15. *But John forbad him, &c.*] *But John excused himself*. See the note on John, i. 31. Doddridge and others have it, *Would have hindered or prevented him*, saying, *I have need to be baptized of you, and do you come to me?* But Jesus was, in his own person, to pass through and sanctify all states; and, although the last stage wherein holiness and virtue attain their highest purity was his reserved province with regard to others, yet he himself began in the first; so that there was no kind or degree of moral goodness wherein he did not excel. He was, if I may so speak, at the head of every form in the school of holiness and virtue. *He had in all things the pre-eminence*, as his apostle declares. To this end he practised the virtues of every rank and condition. He accordingly appeared among the penitents at Jordan; and when John objected to his superior character, incompatible, as he thought, with such condescension, Jesus replied, *Let it be so for the present, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; δικαιοσύνην, justice*; which, taken in general, as it commonly is in Scripture, signifies a combination of all the virtues, and is used as a compendious name for all duty; because, to give each thing its due, and treat it according to its desert, which is the office of justice, comprehends the whole of religion and morality. *All justice* is a Græcism for "all kinds of justice." So we have in the next chapter *all sickness* and *all disease*, according to the original; that is to say, all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. See more in Dr. Heylin's Discourse concerning Justice, p. 31. The editors of the Prussian Testament define *all righteousness* by "*whatever befits us, and is suitable to our employment and profession*." To fulfil righteousness, and to fulfil the law, says Wetstein, is "to fulfil those things which the law enjoins, and which are esteemed just and laudable."

16 <sup>a</sup> And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and

lighting upon him:

17 And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, <sup>a</sup> This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 1. 10. Luke, 3. 21, 22. John, 1. 32, 31. & 3. 34. Pf. 45. 7. & 89. 20. If. 11. 2—4. & 42. 1. & 61. 1. Col. 1. 19. <sup>a</sup> Pf. 2. 7. If. 41. 1, 4, 21. ch. 12. 18. & 17. 5. Mark, 1. 11. Luke, 3. 22. & 9. 35. <sup>a</sup> Peter, 2. 17. Col. 2. 13. Eph. 1. 6.

*Ver. 16. The heavens were opened unto him*] That is to say, to John; to whose view, as well as to that of the Saviour, this wonderful vision was presented. St. Mark has so expressed it, as plainly to refer the *seeing it to Christ*; and John the Baptist has in another place assured us, that *he saw it*, and took particular notice of it, as the sign he was directed to observe, as the distinguishing characteristic of the Messiah. See John, i. 32, 34. The Greek word εἶδεν, rendered *straightway* in our version, denotes the immediate opening of the heavens after our Lord's baptism. See Blackwall's Sacred Classics, vol. i. p. 89. The *Spirit of God* is said here to have *descended like a dove*: in St. Luke it is added, σωματικῶ ἔιδει, *in a corporeal form*; a phrase which might have been used with propriety, though there had not been, as is generally supposed, any appearance of the shape of the animal here mentioned, but only a *lambent flame* falling from heaven, with a *hovering, dove-like motion*, which Dr. Scott and others suppose to have been all. But Justin Martyr says expressly, that it was in the *form of a dove*; adding that all Jordan shone with the reflection of the light; and Jerome calls it, *the appearance of a dove*. It resembled a *dove*, says Wetstein, both in appearance and flight. See Hammond, and Whitby.

*Ver. 17. This is my beloved Son*] As both St. Mark and St. Luke have it, *Thou art my beloved Son*, one would be inclined to follow those copies of St. Matthew which agree with them, rather than the more common reading. See Mills and Wetstein. Chemnitz, however, and some others, imagine that both sentences were pronounced, the voice uttering the words, *Thou art my beloved Son*, &c. while the Spirit was descending, as if they had been directed to Jesus alone; and that after the Spirit rested on Jesus, the voice, speaking to the Baptist and the multitude, said, *This is my beloved Son*, &c. On this supposition, which, without doubt, renders the miracle very remarkable, the words of the preceding verse may be well referred to the Baptist, as we have there observed. The Greek word ἄγαπᾶτός is frequently used by authors to denote *an only Son*, and the LXX make use of it when the word in the Hebrew signifies *only*, Gen. xxii. 12. Zech. xii. 10. and elsewhere. The original word εὐδόκησα, expresses an entire acquiescence in what we love and approve. This passage is taken from Isai. xlii. 1. with very little variation. See Pf. ii. 7. xliii. 3. and xliv. 4. Wetstein, and Beaufobre and Lenfant; and for more in the Inferences. It may be proper just to observe, that we have here a glorious manifestation of the ever-blessed Trinity; the *Father* speaking from heaven, the *Son* spoken to, and the *Holy Ghost* descending upon him.

*Inferences.*—It is surely matter of unspeakable thankfulness, that the kingdom of heaven should be erected among men, and that the only-begotten Son of God is the king and governor of that kingdom: how happy are we

that it is preached among us, and we are called to it! It should be our great care to become not only nominal, but real members of it.

Repentance is the true preparation for the kingdom of heaven. We should therefore every moment be prepared for it, because this kingdom is every moment approaching nearer to us. If this kingdom be a kingdom of love, the repentance which prepares us for it must likewise be a repentance of love; that is, evangelical repentance, which flows from a sight of Christ, from a sense of his love, and the hope of forgiveness through him. Kindness is conquering; abused kindness is humbling and melting. The language of the truly penitent heart is, "What a wretch was I, to sin against such grace! against the law and love of such a kingdom!"

He who preaches repentance, ought to perform it himself, and to join the outward part to the inward: this persuades more than words. All is singular in St. John the Baptist (ver. 4.), not to attract the esteem and praises of men, but to awaken their attention: with an awful severity of manners and of doctrine, he was sent before Christ to prepare his way. It is necessary that the law should introduce the Gospel; but the terrors of Moses and Elijah should render the mild and blessed Redeemer so much the more welcome to our souls. St. John the Baptist preaches in the *wilderness*: no place is so remote as to exclude us from the visits of divine grace; nay, commonly the sweetest intercourse which believers enjoy with heaven, is when they are withdrawn farthest from the noise and distractions of the world.

Behold the dreadful danger of all hypocrites, and unfruitful hearers of the word, whatever their pretences or their external privileges may be! Miserable they who shall be found in their sins! Their covenant relation to Abraham, their baptism with water, their mere external professions, will avail them nothing: God will abandon them to unquenchable flames.

Warned by this awful notice, may we forsake our sins, and bring forth the proper fruits of repentance: and that we may be prepared for the great and final trial, let us be earnest in our applications to our gracious Redeemer, that as we are baptized with *water* in his name, he would also baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire! That by the operations of his blessed Spirit, he would enkindle and quicken that divine life, that sacred love, that flaming yet well governed zeal for his glory, which distinguishes the true Christian from the hypocritical professor, and is indeed the seal of God set upon the heart.

Our Lord's submitting himself to baptism, ver. 13. should teach us a holy exactness and care in the observance of those positive institutions, which owe their obligation merely to a divine command; for *thus also it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*, "every thing just and needful in itself, as well

CHAP. IV.

*Christ fasteth, and is tempted. The angels minister unto him: he dwelleth in Capernaum, beginneth to preach, calleth Peter and Andrew, James and John, and healeth all the diseased.*

[Anno Domini 29.]

**T**HEN was <sup>a</sup> Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be <sup>b</sup> tempted of the devil.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 1. 12, 13. Luke, 4. 1—13. 1 Kings, 18. 12. Ezek. 3. 14. & 8. 3. & 11. 1, 24. & 40. 2. & 43. 5. Acts, 8. 39. <sup>b</sup> Heb. 4. 15. & 2. 18. Gen. 3. 15. John, 14. 30. <sup>c</sup> Exod. 34. 28. Deut. 9. 9, 18. 1 Kings, 19. 8. <sup>d</sup> Mark, 1. 13. Luke, 4. 2. ch. 21. 18. John, 4. 6. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 4. 2, 3. with ch. 3. 17. & 17. 5. <sup>f</sup> Eph. 6. 17. 1 Peter, 5. 9. <sup>g</sup> Deut. 8. 3. Exod. 23. 25. Luke, 4. 4. & 12. 15. 1 Tim. 4. 5. Prov. 10. 22. & 30. 8.

“as every thing meet, decent, regular, exemplary, and of good report.”

We behold at this baptism, the sacred Three, distinctly appearing in characters of personal and divine glory, and concurring in the great design of salvation! How inconsiderable and unworthy are the best of men, compared with Christ! And what exalted and endearing thoughts should we have of him, as the *Son* of God, and a Saviour of sinners; and as the *Beloved* of the Father, who makes us *accepted in him!*

The heavens were opened when Christ was baptized; to teach us, that when we duly attend on God's ordinances, we may expect communion with him, and communications from him. What an encomium was that which was heard from the opening heavens: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I delight!* How poor are all other kinds of praise! To be the *delight* and joy of God, this is praise indeed; this is true glory; this is the highest, brightest light that holiness and virtue can appear in.

That holiness, and the virtues which flow from that blessed source, are objects of divine complacence, as it is a most important truth, so it is obvious to every pious soul: Christ is the foundation; holiness with all its concomitant virtues is the superstructure; and therefore what the poet says of virtue, when built on *this* foundation, and flowing from *this* source, is both beautiful and true:

If there's a Pow'r above us,  
(And that there is, all nature cries aloud  
Through all her works,) he must *delight* in virtue;  
And that which he *delights* in, must be happy. ADDISON.

God must delight in holiness and its concomitant virtues, for the same reason that he delights in himself: for holiness is his *own image* and *likeness*, which, extinct in the first Adam, and revived in the second, even Jesus Christ our Lord, began her mysterious course at his incarnation, producing every virtuous fruit, and went on gradually through all her process, with the highest perfection in each degree; till she had finished the first stage, which is called the *justice of the law*, at his baptism by John, when the Almighty Father pronounced *audibly* to the lower world his approbation.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Prophecy under the Old Testament closed with the promise of the coming of Elijah, that is, of one in his spirit and temper; and here we find that prophecy accomplished in John the Baptist, so called from the ordinance of baptism which he administered to his disciples;

2 And when he had <sup>c</sup> fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward <sup>d</sup> an hungered.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, <sup>e</sup> If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, <sup>f</sup> It is written, <sup>g</sup> Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

who appeared *in those days*, not immediately after the events related in the preceding chapter, but at about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years distance, during which time we never but once hear any thing of our blessed Lord, who lived in obscurity, and not improbably maintained himself by manual labour. We have,

1. The place where John opened his ministry, in the wilderness of Judæa; not a place literally uninhabited, but not so populous as the other parts of the country.

2. The doctrine he preached: *repentance*; a change of mind and principles, and of manners and practice, in both which respects the Jewish people were exceedingly corrupt: and this he urges on that evangelical consideration, that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; the kingdom of the Messiah, the Gospel dispensation, which affords the strongest engagements to draw the minds of sinners to return to God, from the views of the riches of his grace therein revealed.

3. Herein John fulfilled the prophecy delivered concerning him, *Isai. xl. 3, 4.—the voice of one crying*, intimating the fervour and vehemence with which John preached, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight*. As the harbinger, or herald, he goes before to clear the way for the King of glory, preaching that repentance which was so peculiarly needful at a time when the traditions of men had made God's word of no effect, and the corruption of the general practice was the natural effect of their corrupt principles; and pointing them from their sinful courses to him who was *the way, the truth, and the life*, by whom alone they could be saved. *Note*; (1.) The ways of sin are crooked ways, which lead down to death and hell. (2.) Nothing can save us from them, but repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. His garb and diet were austere, as his word was piercing. He seemed an uncouth courtier to prepare the way of the eternal King. A rough garment, girt with a leathern girdle, was his clothing, as being the promised Elias; and his meat was plain and abstemious, such as the wilderness afforded, locusts and wild honey. *Note*; They who preach mortification and repentance to others, should themselves show a becoming indifference to this world, and the gratifications of it.

5. A numerous auditory attended his ministry, struck by the singularity of his appearance and manners, and, above all, by the power of the word he preached. Multitudes from Jerusalem, Judæa, and the country beyond Jordan, resorted to him, a general expectation of the Messiah

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5<sup>h</sup> Then the devil taketh him up into the<sup>1</sup> holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

<sup>h</sup> Job, i. 11—19. & 2. 6. John, 19. 11. <sup>1</sup> Neh. 11. 1. If. 48. 2. & 52. 1. Dan. 9. 16. ch. 5. 35. & 27. 53.

Messiah being now raised through the land; and so far were many affected with his discourses, that they made profession of repentance, confessed their sins, and were baptized in Jordan. But among the multitude of professors, the sequel shewed there were few real penitents. Uncommon zeal and striking delivery will often collect an audience, and excite curiosity; but we must sincerely yield to the power of divine grace, before we can be really converted.

It has been a much-disputed point, respecting the manner of administering the ordinance of baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling; and where the form is rested upon, instead of the power of godliness, there is room open for abundant debate. I must confess, for my own part, I see no reason to suppose such immense multitudes were all dipped in Jordan, nor how it would be practicable to provide dipping garments for them; nor does the word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) convey the same meaning as βαπτω (*bapto*), but rather seems to intimate sprinkling or pouring water upon them; and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which this baptism of John's prefigured, would lead us strongly to that meaning of the word. But while we should avoid all rigid censures on those who differ from us in these ceremonials, and see that, in whatever manner baptism be administered, we do not rest upon the ordinance, it is an essential concern, that our souls be really partakers of the thing signified, even sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

2dly, The Pharisees and Sadducees were men of very different characters; the one pretended uncommon sanctity, and were rigid observers of the rituals of religion, deriving their name from that separation of themselves from other men in which they gloried. The Sadducees, on the other hand, so denominated from their master Sadok, were the very reverse; avowedly infidel in their principles, and, it is to be feared, as licentious in their practice. Yet many of both these sects, either struck with John's preaching, or more probably to gain the higher veneration with the people, who were strongly engaged in John's favour as a prophet sent from God, applied to him for baptism; and to them he addresses his discourse.

1. He opens with a most severe reproof, and mortifying appellation: *O generation of vipers*, specious, yet venomous as a serpent, *who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* either from their temporal calamities which were approaching, and which their repentance might have averted; or from the eternal ruin which they had provoked by their pride, hypocrisy, infidelity, and wickedness. *Note;* (1.) To fly from the wrath to come, is every sinner's great concern; but none will take the warning, till they see and feel the imminence of their danger. (2.) Ministers must deal plainly and freely with men's consciences; nor must the self-righteous formalist be addressed with less severity than the abandoned sinner.

2. He admonishes them of their duty. *Bring forth*

*therefore fruits meet for repentance*, without which all the water in the river would never profit them any thing; for all who are baptized unto repentance must see, that in all humility and lowliness of mind, in all patience and perseverance in well-doing, in all holy conversation and godliness, they prove the truth of the grace which is in them; else shall the baptized sinner be as the heathen man and the publican.

3. He cautions them against trusting on their external privileges, on which he knew they depended for acceptance before God. Because they were Abraham's children they flattered themselves with safety, and thought repentance in their case unnecessary: but John would undeceive them; and pointing perhaps to those stones which Joshua set up in Jordan, Josh. iv. 20. assured them that God could from these raise up children to Abraham, and needed not his descendants after the flesh to compose his church. *Note;* (1.) Many flatter themselves, that their being members of the visible church, and having partaken of baptism and the Lord's supper, will stand them in stead in the day of God, who will find themselves woefully disappointed. (2.) Ministers must lay open those refuges of lies to which the self-righteous and the sinner betake themselves, and rouse those to a sense of their danger, who rock themselves asleep in vain imaginations. (3.) The nearer we are related to great and good men, so far from being a protection to us, it will but aggravate our guilt if we degenerate from their piety.

4. He gives them fair warning. The time was short ere judgment would begin at the house of God: the axe was now laid to the root of the tree, by the preaching of the Gospel. If they rejected the counsel of God, and refused to repent and amend their ways, then they were marked for ruin, as trees which bear no fruit, fit only for fuel. The temporal judgments of God shall consume them with their city; or, worse, the eternal wrath of God shall overwhelm them in hell. *Note;* The day of grace is a precious season not to be trifled with; our eternity of happiness or misery depends on our neglect or improvement of it.

5. He directs them to that glorious Personage whose forerunner he was, acknowledging his pre-eminence in all things. He could indeed call them to repentance, and administer baptism to those who made profession of it; but from a greater than himself the grace of repentance flows; concerning whom he owns that he was not worthy to perform the meanest offices to him, even to carry his shoes after him: so lowly are the faints of God in his own eyes. *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*; either at the day of Pentecost, Acts, ii. 3, &c. or his influences, like fire, should purify, warm, and enliven their souls. Or, as some suggest, this baptism may refer to the judgments that he would pour out on the impenitent, when having, like the husbandman, separated the wheat, his faithful people, from the chaff of hypocrites and unfaithful professors, he would burn up the latter with unquenchable fire. *Note;* (1.) The

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, <sup>k</sup> He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee

<sup>k</sup> Pf. 91. 11, 12. Luke, 4. 9—11. 1 Tim. 3. 16. ver. 11.

(1.) The operations of God's Spirit in the believer's heart, like fire, illuminate his understanding, consume his vile affections, and raise him, as the flame mounts upwards, to high and heavenly things. (2.) The church is Christ's floor; in it there is a mixed multitude of good and bad, faithful and hypocrites, as the chaff and wheat lying together: but the day is near when the separation shall be made; sometimes even here by the divine word and providence; assuredly at Christ's appearing, when the eternal state of men shall be determined. The faithful saints of God shall then be gathered as the wheat into God's garner in heaven, separated from all chaff for ever; and the impenitent be consigned to the everlasting burnings.

3dly, Christ, who had hitherto lived in obscurity, began now to enter upon his glorious work; and, in order thereto, comes to John to be baptized, whose preaching had raised men's expectations concerning the glorious Person of whom he spake. Not that Christ needed this baptism; but he would shew his approbation of it, as well as receive that public testimony which John on this occasion was appointed to bear to him.

1. John, who knew Jesus by divine revelation, John, i. 33. appears unwilling to admit his Master to the ordinance of baptism which he administered. He who had no sin, could surely need no repentance. Besides, counting himself unworthy of pouring water upon him, from whom himself needed the greater baptism of the Spirit, he would humbly have excused himself from the office. *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* Note; (1.) The most holy souls are ever the most humble. (2.) Christ's condescensions are so amazing, that our faith is sometimes ready to stagger at the view of them. (3.) The greatest saints and prophets have need of the baptism of Jesus; both of the sprinkling of his blood, and of the influences of his Spirit to purify their hearts, or to preserve them pure; and they are always most sensible of their wants. (4.) They who preach repentance to others, had need be deeply concerned to be baptized with the Holy Ghost themselves, lest, after having been the means of saving others, they themselves should be cast away.

2. The Lord over-rules John's objection. In his present state of humiliation it became him to submit to this among other divine institutions, that he might in all things be a pattern of righteousness; and therefore John must for the present comply. Nor does he any longer hesitate, but admitted him to baptism accordingly, fully satisfied in the will and wisdom of his Lord. Note; (1.) It is becoming to countenance and encourage every good work; and those who may be higher in wisdom and grace than their teachers, are bound nevertheless to attend their ministry, and set an example to others. (2.) Christ fulfilled all righteousness, ceremonial as well as moral; and by his obedience to the death of the cross, is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (3.) There are often reasons for the divine procedure, concerning which we

must be content to be ignorant. *Thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

3. God is pleased to bear a signal attestation to the glory of the Redeemer on this occasion. Immediately as he went up from the river's brink, or from the water, where he had been baptized, *the heavens were opened*, a chasm being made in the firmament, as if the everlasting doors were wide unfolded; and John, as well as Jesus, beheld the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, in a hovering, dove-like motion; and it rested upon or over his head. He being constituted the great prophet of his people, as the man Christ Jesus, had the Spirit without measure bestowed upon him, to enable him for the discharge of his office; and in him, as the head of his church, all fulness dwells, that he may thence communicate both gifts and graces to his faithful members according to their wants. And besides the visible appearance here described, an audible voice was heard from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*; God's Son, not by creation as angels, or by adoption as the saints, but by a filiation peculiar to himself, being eternal as the Father, yet standing in this relation towards him;—*beloved*, because the express image of his person, and now become incarnate for our redemption: therefore God the Father delighted in him, expressing his entire satisfaction in his undertaking: *in whom I am well pleased*; which he could never say in this high sense of any of the sons of men beside, all having sinned and come short of the glory of God. Jesus alone is the one glorious character on which God can look with entire approbation; and for whose sake it is, as having made the atonement, that any of the sons of men can find acceptance before God. Because he is well-pleased with Jesus, he has now opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers in him; and whosoever cometh to God by him shall be in no wise cast out. Thus, while every other character, considered in a state of nature, from the first man to the last, must be God's abhorrence, since altogether born in sin, we may notwithstanding be sure of acceptance in this Beloved, when we by faith receive him as God hath sent him forth to us, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; our all in all.

#### CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. *Then was Jesus led up, &c.]* Then, that is to say, immediately after his baptism, *was Jesus led*, or borne by a strong impulse of the Spirit on his mind, (see Luke, iv. 14.) *into the wilderness*: which Mr. Maundrel is of opinion was the wilderness near Jordan; a miserable and horrid place, according to his account, consisting of high barren mountains; so that it looks as if nature had suffered some violent convulsions there. Our Lord probably was assaulted in the northern part of it, near the sea of Galilee; because he is said, Luke, iv. 1. to be *returning*, or going back to *Nazareth*, whence he came to be baptized. See Mark, i. 9. Hither Christ retired to prepare himself for the discharge

up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, <sup>1</sup>It is written again, <sup>m</sup>Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 4. 10. Rom. 15. 4. Eph. 6. 17. 1 Peter, 5. 9. <sup>m</sup> Deut. 6. 16. Luke, 4. 12. 1 Cor. 10. 9. Heb. 3. 8, 9. Exod. 17. 2, 7. Num. 14. 22. Ps. 78. 18. & 106. 14.

discharge of his great office; and hence obtained so much the greater glory, that he conquered the devil in a *wilderness*, who subdued our first parents in *paradise*, where with joint strength they ought to have resisted him, and might easily have overcome him. Christ, the second Adam, was to remedy all the evils of the fall. The original word *διεβουλεω* signifies properly a *slanderer*, or a *false accuser*, and answers to the Hebrew *Satan*: it is found in the Scripture only in the *singular number*, and signifies that evil spirit who tempted our first parents; and who is represented in the sacred writings as the head of the rebellious angels, and the *adversary* of all good men. See 1 Theff. iii. 5. 1 Pet. v. 8. The *existence of good and bad spirits*, is the plain doctrine of Scripture; and we must be perfect Sadducees, to doubt or deny the being of either, upon the faith and credit of the divine word. It may be proper just to observe, than an ingenious writer has endeavoured to shew that this very remarkable transaction was not real, but visionary; grounding his arguments upon the many difficulties which occur to our understandings in the literal account of it. I conceive that by the same arguments it would be easy to prove almost any part of the sacred history to be visionary. There is no intimation of any thing of this sort in the sacred historians; the detail of facts is plain, and in their usual manner: it is positively said, that *Jesus was led up, that he fasted, that he hungered, &c. &c.* Nor does there appear any thing in the letter whereupon to ground the idea, that what is here related was not real. That the whole event was most wonderful and extraordinary, we readily allow; and may as readily allow, that from the very short narration we have of it, it is not possible for us to enter completely into the whole meaning and purport of it. But this should be no objection against our receiving and acknowledging the truth of the fact; which, the more miraculous it is, the more it requires the submission of our faith, and the humble adoration of our minds. See more on ver. 8. and Farmer's Inquiry into the Temptation of Christ.

*Ver. 2. And when he had fasted forty days*] So much greater was Jesus than Adam. Jesus, worn down by fasting and hunger, oppressed with want, and in a wild howling wilderness, overcame the devil; by whom Adam was overcome in full strength, and abounding with all things. It was usual for persons to prepare themselves for any sacred office by fasting, and prayers so intense, as to cause a neglect of common food. See Acts, xiii. 3. xiv. 23. The number *forty* is remarkably distinguished in Scripture: Moses and Elijah fasted *forty days*. See also Gen. 1. 3. Jonah, iii. 4. Ezek. iv. 6. It is a very just remark of Dr. Whitby, that to institute, or pretend to keep a *fast for forty days*, in imitation of this example of our Lord, is to place *morality in numbers*, and introduce an endless heap of *superstitious follies*; for it is certain, that so great and so long abstinence is inconsistent with the frailty of our nature, and so can be no duty. Better is the note

of Theophylact and others, that "we are then especially to expect temptations, when we are in straits and exigencies, from which we see no ordinary way of deliverance;" which was here the case of Christ.

*Ver. 3. When the tempter came to him, he said, &c.*] We may infer from Mark, i. 13. that during the forty days which Jesus spent in the wilderness, he was exposed to several other temptations besides those mentioned here; and therefore Dr. Doddridge very well translates and paraphrases the passage thus; "Just at that time, when he was very hungry, and entirely unprovided with food, the tempter coming to him, in a visible form, putting on a human appearance (as one that desired to inquire farther into the evidence of his mission) said, if thou art the Son of God, &c." It is only in the original, *If thou be Son of God*, without any article; but it seems to be properly inserted in our version, because the miracle which the devil required of Jesus, was not that he might shew himself to be a *child of God*, but the *Son of God*; that is to say, the Messiah. The Jews were persuaded that the Messiah was to be the Son of God; and they commonly applied to him the 7th verse of the 2d Psalm, and the 14th verse of the 7th chapter of the 2d book of Samuel. By comparing several passages in the New Testament, it appears, that in the language of the Jews, the words *Messiah* and *Son of God* were of the same import. See Matt. xxvi. 63. Luke, xvii. 66—70. John, i. 41, 44, 45. and Matt. xvi. 16. compared with Mark, viii. 29. Luke, ix. 20. *Christ was tempted in all things*, Heb. iv. 15. and as the things which solicit us to sin may be referred to three kinds, pleasures, honours, and riches, (1 John, ii. 16.) Christ, being tempted by all these, came off victorious. When he refused to command the stones to become bread, he shewed his conquest over pleasure, or the animal appetite; when he cast not himself down from the temple, he shewed his triumph over vain-glory; and in the third temptation, expressing his contempt of the goods of this world, he shewed that nothing in this life could conquer his piety and integrity. See Beaufovre and Lenfant, and Wetstein. We may read the last words, *Command these stones to become bread.*

*Ver. 4. But by every word, &c.*] *But by every thing which the mouth of God shall ordain.* Prussian Testament. The original, to which our version is agreeable, is a Hebrew expression, taken from Deut. viii. 3. *Whatever proceedeth out of the mouth, is the same as whatever God appoints or commands.* *Word* is not in the Hebrew, but only in the LXX, whom the evangelist has here followed. Dr. Heylin is of opinion, that the diabolical temptation did not, perhaps could not begin, till after Jesus had fasted forty days; and then, when the first fervours of the new state he was entered upon were considerably abated; when his new abilities of body and mind were greatly exhausted by so long an abstinence; when nature languished, and hunger called for the needful repair of food; then the tempter found access to him. It should be observed, that in the style of Scripture,

8 \* Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him

all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ;

\* Luke, 4. 5—7. a Cor. 4. 4. 1 Cor. 7. 31. 1 John, 2. 15, 16. James, 4. 4. Pl. 17. 14.

Scripture, feeding, feasting, and fasting, are applicable to the mind as well as to the body. The mind has its hunger and thirst. It feeds and ruminates on thought ; and when it fails of a due supply, it palls, and sickens, and starves for want of food. Now the forlorn wilderness was as barren of what could recreate the mind, as of what could feed the body. Here Jesus sojourned, in perpetual silence and solitude, with no entertainment of sense, no secular occupation, no external objects to employ the imagination. His fast there was total ; total, I mean, as to the animal part, which, wasted with long want of necessary refreshment, at last pined with hunger ; and this hunger would probably be attended with dejection of spirits, or other disorders, which debilitate the mind, and lay it open to temptation. It was *when the tempter came to him, and said, if, &c.* So the evangelist briefly relates the substance of this first temptation ; which certainly was then displayed with all the colourings of reason ; and which, by way of illustration, and only to shew what might be suggested on the occasion, may be thus represented : “ If you really are the Son of God, and the voice you imagine to have heard from heaven be no delusion, assert your prerogative : do not let a Son of God starve ; vindicate your sonship, and justify your Father’s goodness, who has not given you the miraculous powers you think yourself endowed with for nothing. “ If these powers are to be used, when so reasonably as now ? Can any one want them more ? Can any one deserve them better than you do ? Consider what you owe to yourself and your Father’s glory, if you be indeed his Son. His Spirit, as you deem, led you into this inhospitable wilderness ;—for what ?—To perish here ?—and so to frustrate all the prophecies which you conceive yourself destined to accomplish, and deprive men of the salvation you undertake to earn for them ?—For your own sake, for their sake, for the sake of your Father’s glory, which is so highly interested in your preservation, hearken to the just calls of nature in you : speak but the word ; *bid these words become bread.*” Jesus answered, *Man, &c.* The quotation is very apposite : for it is taken from *Deuteronomy*, where Moses, recapitulating to the Jews the hardships and temptations with which they had been exercised in the desert, the more effectually to remind them of the great lesson that he was to inculcate, says, *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee* [the original here is the same word, which, in other places, is rendered, *to tempt thee,*] *to know what was in thine heart ; whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no : and he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna* [a food before unknown], *that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, &c. ;* that is to say, by whatever God appoints, or by whatever way he pleases. This answer, we see, was fully to the purpose, and so decisive as not to admit of a reply ; yet the adversary, though baffled, did not desist,

but renewed the attack with a second temptation : whereby it should seem, that he hoped to take advantage from the total resignation wherewith Jesus confided in the divine protection, so as to drive him into some excess. See Houbigant on Deut. viii. 3.

*Ver. 5. Then the devil taketh him, &c.]* The original word *παράλαβέναι*, signifies no more than *to lead, to take along with one* ; as in the LXX. Numb. xxii. 41. xxiii. 27, 28. See Matt. xvii. 1. That it has no other sense in this place, and also in the eighth verse, is plain from Luke, iv. 5, 9. By the *holy city* is meant Jerusalem, which is frequently so called. Instead of *pinnacle*, Dr. Doddridge very properly reads *battlement* ; observing, that though *pinnacle* agrees very well with the etymology of the Greek word *πτερυγιον* : yet, according to its use among us, it leads the English reader to imagine, that he stood on the point of a *spire*. The truth is, that the roof of the temple was flat, and had a ballustrade round it, which in some parts was so exceeding high, that one could hardly bear to look down from it. See Deut. xxii. 8. and Joseph. Antiq. l. 15. c. 11. Somewhere on the edge of this battlement, we may suppose, was the scene of this temptation. We must not imagine, that the devil took the Lord Jesus Christ, and disposed of him as he would ; but only that our blessed Saviour, who yielded to be placed in the temptation, was pleased so far to do what the devil required of him. It is a common thing to say a person does a thing, when he orders or causes it to be done.

*Ver. 6. If thou be the Son of God]* The Jews were undoubtedly right in thinking that the Messiah is spoken of by Daniel, ch. vii. 13, 14. But they fell into a gross mistake, when, interpreting that passage literally, they believed the Messiah would actually come in the clouds of heaven, and wrest the kingdom from the Romans. See Matt. xxiv. 30. The Pharisees, however, had the destruction of the Romans and the miraculous erection of a temporal empire in view, when they required our Lord to shew them a sign from heaven ; Matt. xvi. 1. And the people in general were so strongly impressed with the belief of it, that they overlooked all the proper proofs of Christ’s mission, and rejected him, because he did not confirm it by that sign, John vii. 27. *Howbeit we know this man whence he is ; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is :* “ No man knoweth from what particular place he shall first come :” for the doctors thought that though the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, he was immediately to be conveyed thence, and concealed, till Elijah the Tishbite came from heaven, and prepared matters for his reception ; after which he was to be manifested in a miraculous manner : and as they expected that the Messiah was to come in the clouds of heaven, they thought his first appearance was to be in the temple ; grounding this opinion on Mal. iii. 1. Psal. cx. 2. Isai. ii. 3. Now the second temptation, considered in the light of this popular error, had considerable strength in it ; for the tempter’s meaning was, “ Since thou art the Son of God, thou shouldst call  
“ thyself

9 And faith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.  
10 Then said Jesus unto him, ° Get thee

° Ch. 16. 23. James 4. 7. 1 Peter, 5. 9.

“thyslf down from this battlement into the courts below, where the numerous worshippers, seeing thee borne up by angels, will immediately acknowledge thee as the Messiah coming to them in the clouds of heaven: for it is written, he shall give his angels charge, &c. Had not this been the devil’s meaning, there was not the least reason for carrying Jesus to Jerusalem, and setting him on the battlements of the temple. He might as well have bidden him cast himself down from any precipice in the wilderness, or from the turret of any neighbouring town; where the interposition of angels in his preservation, would have been as conspicuous a proof to himself of his Messiahship as in the holy city of Jerusalem. It may be objected indeed, that the text cited by no means promises a visible interposition of ministering spirits for the preservation of the Messiah, as this sense of the temptation seems to require. But the answer is, that there was nothing to hinder the father of lies from putting an artful gloss upon a text of Scripture in order to delude; as if he had said, “Since God hath promised that his angels shall bear good men up in their hands, and particularly the Messiah, he may therefore well expect the favour, if he be the Son of God, and especially when it is necessary for the erecting of his kingdom.”—And farther, the tempter’s argument would have the more weight, if, as is probable, he was now transformed into an angel of light, and feigned a willingness to assist Jesus in the undertaking. See Macknight, Sherlock on Prophecy, appendix, p. 304. and the notes on Psal. xci. 11.

Ver. 7. *It is written again*] Or also. So *παλι* here elegantly signifies, in opposition to the quotation that the tempter had made, which was indeed very imperfect: but many, after St. Jerome, have observed, that Satan made his advantage of quoting Scripture imperfectly and by scraps. The cause of truth, and sometimes of common sense, has suffered a great deal by those who have followed his example. Jesus repels his attack by Scripture also; which, like that cited in his former answer, again relates to the children of Israel, exercised in circumstances not unlike his own, in the wilderness, when, murmuring and impatient for want of water, as they had been before for want of food, they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is Jehovah among us, or not?* See Exod xvii. 7. They questioned his presence with them, and wanted proofs of it by a new miracle. To tempt, is to try; and the trial they would make argued their doubt and distrust. See the note on Deut. vi. 16. The perfect faith of Jesus excluded all diffidence, and therefore would not admit any act on his part whereby to put the divine goodness to the test, since he already had the fullest assurance of it. “I will not provoke God, either by acting otherwise than he has appointed, or by requiring proofs of his power and veracity, after such as are sufficient, and have already been given.” See Heylin, and Wetstein.

But Dr. Campbell reads, *Thou shalt not make trial of*, instead of, *Thou shalt not tempt*. What we commonly mean, says he, by the word *tempting*, does not suit the sense of the Greek word in this passage. The English word means

properly either *to solicit to evil*, or *to provoke*; whereas the import of the Greek verb in this and several other places is *to assay*, *to try*, *to put to the proof*. It is thus the word is used, Gen. xxii. 1. where God is said to have tempted Abraham, commanding him to offer up his son Isaac for a burnt-offering. God did not solicit the patriarch to evil, for, in this sense, as the apostle James tells us, chap. i. 13. he neither can be tempted, nor tempteth any man. But God tried Abraham, as the word ought manifestly to have been rendered, putting his faith and obedience to the proof. His ready compliance, so far from being evil, was an evidence of the highest faith and the sublimest virtue. And on the present occasion, it was God’s love to his only Son and faithfulness in the performance of his promise, that the devil desired our Lord, by throwing himself headlong from a precipice, to make trial of.

Ver. 8. *Again, the devil taketh him, &c.*] The adversary, enraged, as it should seem, with his ill success in the two former attempts, casts off all disguise in this. He speaks no more of *Son of God*; but desperate, and thence impudent and audacious, he offers at once his whole stock of gaudy trumperies, all worldly power, dominion, and glory, and arrogantly sets the price at which they are to be purchased. Le Clerc is of the same opinion with the author referred to on ver. 1. that what is here related, may more safely be conceived to have happened to Christ in a vision or dream, than really; but this, says Dr. Whitby, is a vain dream and a vision of his own brain; and that which robs us of all the practical improvement of our Lord’s temptation. For, why should Christ have been led into a wilderness to have this dream or vision? Did he fast only in a vision forty days and forty nights? Or, why is it said, that he afterwards was hungry? Why is it said, that the devil spake to him, *set him on a pinnacle, upon a high mountain, &c. &c.*? and looks it not far more odd to give the devil power over the fancy of our Lord, to raise such imaginations in him, and suggest such dreams to him, than barely to give him that power over our Lord’s body, which neither did nor could do him any hurt? I observe again, that as God caused Moses to see the whole land of promise from the top of Nebo, either by strengthening his eyes to see it thence, or else by representing it to him as it were in a large plan or map in all the valleys round about him; so might the devil, in the valleys round about that high mountain upon which Christ stood, make a large draught of the stately edifices, guards and attendants of kings, appearing in their splendour, visible to the eyes of Christ; which appearance could not be so well made to him, or advantageously seen, had he been in a plain. Wetstein is of opinion, that the devil might point out the kingdoms of the world to him in some such manner as this; “Turn thine eyes to the east, there is the kingdom of the Persians, to whom thy ancestors were subject, and the kingdom of Arabia, rich in gold, in frankincense and myrrh: Turn to the south, there is the kingdom of Egypt, where the descendants of the patriarchs suffered so long and severe



hence, Satan: for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

11 ' Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

12 ¶ ' Now when Jesus had heard that John was \* cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

13 ' And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

14 ' That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15 ' The land of Zabulon, and the land of

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 6. 13. & 10. 20. <sup>1</sup> Sam. 7. 3. Luke, 4. 8. <sup>9</sup> James, 4. 7. Luke, 4. 13. Mark, 1. 13. <sup>1</sup> Tim. 3. 16. ch. 26. 53. <sup>7</sup> Mark, 1. 14. & 6. 17. Luke, 4. 14. & 3. 19, 20. John, 4. 43. ch. 14. 3. <sup>8</sup> Or delivered up. <sup>1</sup> Luke, 4. 30, 31. Mark, 6. 1—6. <sup>1</sup> Num. 23. 19. <sup>1</sup> Sam. 15. 29. <sup>1</sup> If. 44. 26. Titus, 1. 2. <sup>1</sup> Thess. 5. 24. <sup>2</sup> Tim. 2. 13. <sup>1</sup> Heb. 6. 17, 18. <sup>1</sup> Pl. 12. 6. <sup>1</sup> Prov. 30. 5, 6. <sup>1</sup> If. 9. 1, 2. & 29. 18. & 30. 26. & 42. 6, 7. & 60. 1—3. & 11. 10. & 52. 15. & 53. 11. <sup>1</sup> Zech. 14. 7, 8.

“severe a servitude: Turn to the west, there you see Tyre and the isles, abounding in merchandize and wealth; you see Rome, the queen and empress of the world: On the north, you see Syria, whose king Antiochus once profaned the temple, and brought such evils on the Jews; you see Galilee, whose fertility you know, and where you have hitherto lived in obscurity.” Thus the devil pointed out to Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and their grandeur. Macknight, with several others, is of opinion, that this prospect was confined to the land of promise; and that the mountain of Nebo, whence Moses had a prospect of the whole land, was very probably that from which the devil shewed our blessed Saviour all the kingdoms of the world, that is, the whole of promise; for so the word is used, in the literal sense at least, of Romans, iv. 13. The land of promise, in its largest signification, reached from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, east and west, and from Egypt on the south to beyond Sidon northwards, Deut. xi. 24. In Joshua’s time, that extent of country contained thirty distinct principalities, besides the Philistines and Sidonians, as Spanheim observes; and even in our Lord’s time it comprehended several kingdoms, some of which are mentioned Luke, iii. 1. All these the devil pointed out to Jesus in the temptation; taking particular notice of *their glory*; that is, their great and opulent cities, their rich fields, their hills covered with wood and cattle, their rivers rolling through fertile valleys, and washing the cities as they passed along; and promised to put him in possession of the whole instantly, if he would fall down and worship him. By confining this prospect to the land of promise, the third temptation in Dr. Macknight’s judgment had a peculiar force. The devil, that he might know whether Jesus was the Messiah, offered to give him all the kingdoms of the land to which the Messiah, as such, had a peculiar right; see Psal. ii. 8. lxxii. 8. He hoped thus to have enticed him to commit idolatry; thinking that, if he was not the Messiah, he would eagerly embrace this, as the speediest way of accomplishing his design.

Ver. 9, 10. *All these things will I give thee*] “If thou be the Son of God, take care to be esteemed as such; if the kingdom of the Jews be destined for thee, add to it other kingdoms: seize the present occasion, which is the most desirable; comply with the present terms which are the most easy: fall down, and pay me homage.” He requires Jesus to pay him that honour which the satrapes or inferior kings were accustomed to pay to the king of the Persians, who was therefore called “the king of kings.”

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The word *ὑπάγε*, get thee hence, plainly expresses the authority of Jesus over Satan, as well as his detestation of so vile a suggestion. See the note on Luke, iv. 6.

Ver. 11. *Ministered unto him*] The Greek word *διακονεῖν* signifies to serve or wait upon in general, and so to wait at table. See chap. viii. 15. Luke, xvii. 8, &c. As one celestial spirit might have been abundantly sufficient for the relief of our Lord’s necessities, it is reasonable to suppose, that the appearance of a number of them upon this occasion was to do him the more illustrious honour, after this horrible combat with Satan, to which, for wise and good reasons, he was pleased to condescend. See Doddridge, and the Inferences.

Ver. 12. *Now when Jesus had heard, &c.*] John the Baptist was not imprisoned till after the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Between these two events, there happened what is related in the three first chapters of St. John’s Gospel. It is commonly supposed, that the ministry of John the Baptist lasted but about eighteen months at most, and that he was in prison a year after Christ’s baptism. We will just transcribe out of St. John’s Gospel, for the sake of connection, what is here omitted in the history of Christ. He went from Nazareth into Judæa, where he was baptized by John, Mark, i. 9. From Judæa he returned into Galilee, John, i. 43. ii. 1. He went again into Judæa, and there celebrated the passover at Jerusalem, John, ii. 13. He baptized in Judæa while John was baptizing at Enon, John, iii. 22. All this time John was at liberty, ib. ver. 24.; but the Pharisees having conspired against Jesus, John, iv. 1—3. and Jesus hearing that John had been put into prison by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, Mark, i. 14. he went again into Galilee. See Beaufobre and Lenfant. Instead of, *he departed*, in this verse, we may read, *he retired*.

Ver. 13. *And leaving Nazareth*] Namely, when they had wholly rejected his word, and even attempted to kill him. See Luke, iv. 29. and for an explanation of the next verses, the note on Isai. ix. 1, 2. and Mede’s works, p. 101, 102. Christ chose Capernaum for the place of his residence, as being a large city, and where he was likely to bring numbers of people to the knowledge of his Gospel. See chap. xi. 23. For an account of the lake of Gennesareth, and the fruitfulness of the neighbouring country, see Josephus, Jewish War, b. iii. c. 18.

Ver. 14. *That it might be fulfilled which*] *Whereby was fulfilled that which.*

Ver. 15. *By the way of the sea, beyond Jordan*] *Situate on the*

K

Nephtalim, *by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;*

16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

17 ¶ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

18 ¶ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

23 ¶ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

24 And his fame went throughout all Sy-

\* Mark, i. 14. Luke, 9. 2. ch. 9. 2. & 10. 7. † Gospel-dispensation. Ch. xiii. xv. Acts, i. 3, 8. ‡ Mark, i. 16. Luke, c. 2. John, i. 42. § Num. 34. 11. Deut. 3. 17. Josh. 11. 2. & 19. 35. ch. 14. 34. John, 6. 1. ¶ John, i. 37. Acts, 2. 1. ch. 16. 24. 1 Cor. 11. 1. † Luke, c. 10. Ezek. 47. 10. Acts, ii—xix. 1 Cor. 3. 5. † Ps. 119. 60. Gal. 1. 16. ch. 10. 37. & 19. 27. Mark, 10. 28. 1 Kings, 19. 19, 20. † Mark, i. 19. ch. 10. 2. & 17. 1. & 20. 29, 21. & 26. 37. Luke, 9. 54. Acts, 12. 1, 18. Rev. 1. 1. † Mark, i. 20. Luke, 14. 33. & c. 11. 1 Kings, 19. 19, 20. † Gen. 3. 15. & 49. 10. Deut. 18. 15, 18. Il. 61. 1. & 42. 4, 7. & 35. 3—6. ch. 9. 35. Mark, i. 25. Luke, 4. 43, 44. † Luke, 4. 37, 40. Il. 53. 13. 53. 12. & 45. 22. Exod. 15. 26. Dan. 2. 44. Acts, 10. 38. Gen. 3. 15. & 49. 10. Il. 11. 10. & 49. 6. & 60. 1, 2. Zech. 2. 20—23. Deut. 32. 43. Heb. 7. 25. John, 6. 37. Rev. 7. 4, 9, 30. Mark, 3. 7.

*the Jordan, near the sea.* Campbell. *By the way of the sea* is rather an indefinite and obscure expression. What is here called *sea* is properly not a *sea*, but a *lake*. It was customary with the Hebrews to denominate a large extent of water, though fresh water, and encompassed with land, by the name *sea*. It was on this sea, that Capernaum, and some other towns of note, were situated. Here also Peter and Andrew, James and John, before they were called to the apostleship, exercised the occupation of fishermen. *The sea of Galilee* and *the sea of Tiberias* are become in scripture-style so much like proper names, that it might look affected to change them for *the lake of Galilee* and *the lake of Tiberias*. Besides, where it can conveniently be done, these small differences in phraseology which diversify the styles of the evangelists in the original, ought to be preserved in the translation.

*Ver. 17. From that time, &c.]* Namely of his departure into Galilee. Jesus had already preached at Jerusalem and in other parts of Judæa: see John, iv, 3. and the note on ver. 12. But St. Matthew, having omitted this part of the evangelical history, dates the beginning of Christ's ministry from his preaching in Galilee. John the Baptist gave notice that the *coming of the Messiah was at hand*: the Lord Jesus Christ declares *that he is come*; and orders his apostles to publish the same great truth to the world. See Beaufobre and Lenfant. Though Christ, as legislator and Lord, could have commanded his subjects, yet he chose rather, by the milder methods of persuasion, to teach and instruct them. See ver. 23. and on chap. v. 31, 12. It is the peculiar business of Christ to establish the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men. Yet he himself begins his preaching in the same words with John the Baptist, because the repentance which John taught, still was and ever will be the necessary preparation for that inward kingdom. But that phrase is not only used with regard to the individuals in whom this

kingdom is to be established, but also with regard to the Christian church,—the whole body of believers. In the former sense, it is opposed to repentance; in the latter, to the Mosaic dispensation. See more in Heylin, p. 42.

*Ver. 18. And Jesus, walking, &c.]* Respecting the calling of Peter, &c. see the notes on Mark, i. Instead of *fishers*, we may read, *fishermen*. It appears from John, i. 35, &c. that they had already acknowledged Jesus for the Messiah, upon the testimony of John the Baptist.

*Ver. 21, 22. Ship] Bark, or boat.*

*Ver. 23. Synagogues]* This is a general word, which in its original meaning signifies both civil and ecclesiastical assemblies, and also the places where these assemblies were kept. Here, as also chap. xiii. 54. and almost all through the New Testament, it is taken for the places or buildings where the Jews met to pray, and to hear the interpretation of the law and the prophets; and this is a common acceptance of the word *synagogue*. It is manifest from Acts, xv. 21. that there had been of a long time synagogues in each city, and that the Jews were accustomed to meet therein every Sabbath-day. These *synagogues* had several heads and officers, who performed different functions: that of the scribes was to teach and instruct the congregation; but it is evident from Acts, xiii. 15. that after the reading of the law and the prophets, the heads of the synagogue desired such learned and grave persons as happened to be there to make a discourse to the people; and by virtue of this custom it was, that the Lord Jesus Christ and St. Paul were allowed to preach in the synagogues: Acts, ix. 20. xiv. 1. See Beaufobre and Lenfant, and the authors referred to on chap. iii. 7. Respecting the different diseases, possessions, &c. mentioned in this and the next verse, we shall have occasion to speak more particularly when we come to those miracles of our Lord, where

ria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed

with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

25 And there followed him great multitudes

where they are distinctly described. The *Gospel*, that is to say, the *glad tidings*, or *joyous message*, is the proper name of our religion, and will be amply verified as such to all who cordially embrace it. See Heylin, and more on this subject in the Inferences.

*Ver. 24. Torments, &c.] Pains; demoniacs, lunatics, and paralytics.*

*Ver. 25. From Decapolis]* A country of Palestine, so called because it contained *ten cities*; concerning the names of which the learned are not agreed. It bordered upon Syria, a province near Galilee, and extended on both sides of Jordan and the lake of Tiberias. It formerly belonged to the half tribe of Manassch. See Joseph. Jewish War, b. iii. c. 16. and Pliny's Nat. Hist. l. v. c. 18. Instead of *beyond*, Campbell reads, *from the banks of the Jordan*.

*Inferences.*—To have just ideas of Christ's temptations, we must consider them in two lights. *First*, as they were permitted by God. *Secondly*, as they were executed by the tempter.

The reasons for which God permitted his Son to be tempted of the devil were such as these: 1. That he might become a faithful and merciful high-priest, one who can succour his people in time of need, and pity them when they happen to fall by temptation. The apostle assigns this reason expressly, Heb. ii. 17, 18. iv. 15. 2. That his example might be a complete pattern of all purity, virtue, and excellence: Jesus, like a wise and valiant general, underwent himself all the hardships attending his service, that we his soldiers might be animated to sustain them together with him. He has gone before us, not only in poverty and reproach, and contempt of sensual pleasure, but was given up to be tempted of the devil, that his people might not be dismayed by such dispensations of Providence, but be taught to expect them, especially after having had proofs of the divine love and manifestations of his presence: also that we might know both what sort of an enemy we have to encounter, and the kind of temptations that he will assault us with; particularly that there is no impiety or wickedness so gross, but he will tempt even the best of men to commit it.

Farther, it was designed to shew us, that the devil, though a strong enemy, may be overcome, and by what means; and to stir us up to constant watchfulness. Hence this conflict, though managed in the fight of God and the angels only, was in due time made public for the instruction of mankind. 3. That our Lord might with the greatest advantage begin and carry on his ministry, in the course of which he was to accomplish the salvation of men, it was necessary that he should first vanquish the strongest temptations of the old serpent, who had formerly brought ruin on mankind. His sustaining the temptations of the devil, therefore, when he entered on his ministry, teaches us, that no man is so rightly qualified to preach the Gospel, as he who by temptation has been fortified against luxury, ambition, pride, lust, covetousness, and such like

passions, with which the devil overthrows the minds of the unstable.

On the other hand, the motives which induced the devil to undertake this temptation, might be, 1. His general desire of seducing men to sin: 2. Some particular end which he proposed to accomplish thereby. It is reasonable to believe, that God's gracious intention to save the world by his Son, was not intirely concealed from the evil spirits: If so, they might be led by the prophecies to conjecture, that this was the period fixed in the will of heaven for the advent of God's Son. That the devils are acquainted with the Scripture is evident from the citation which we find the tempter making out of the Psalms on this occasion. Besides, they might be confirmed in their opinion, by the general expectation of the Messiah, with which the east was now filled. If therefore they had any how received intelligence of the wonderful things which accompanied the birth of Christ; or, having been witnesses to the descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism, some of them had heard the voice from heaven declaring him the Son of God; they could not but have a great curiosity to know whether he was really the grand personage so long expected by men.

The resolution of this point was undoubtedly of the greatest moment to them; because the part they were afterwards to act, in carrying on their own projects for destroying the human race, depended in a great measure upon it. Wherefore, all the time Jesus was in the wilderness, the chief of the evil spirits, as being best qualified for the undertaking, beset him with a multitude of temptations, in order, if possible, to discover who he was: the form in which two of his temptations run, seems to favour this conjecture. *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*—*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.* Besides, unless the tempter had been in doubt as to the character of Jesus, it is not to be imagined that he should have attempted to seduce him at all.

Satan's conduct in the present instance is a lively example of what St. Peter has told us, 1 Pet. v. 8. *Thy adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:* the malice, the cruelty, and the fury with which the evil spirit attacks mankind, is but faintly represented by the fierceness of the most ravenous wild beasts. The devil, on this occasion, seems to have assaulted our Lord in some visible form, and with an audible voice. He could hardly do it otherwise, the human nature of Jesus being incapable of sinful thoughts. Commonly, however, his strongest temptations are those wherein he least appears; for example, when he suggests evil imaginations, in order to raise evil desires. A man, therefore, in such cases, should enter into himself, and, with the help of the Spirit of God, should courageously expel those detestable sentiments, the devil's auxiliaries, by which he takes and keeps possession of the soul. And as for the assaults which he makes upon us by means of things without us, they must be sustained and repelled by

of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

a firm resolution through Almighty grace, as waves by a rock. The Christian has good encouragement thus to exert himself with vigour; for his Master has shewed him, that there is in the word of God applied by the divine Spirit sufficient armour to preserve him invulnerable against all the fiery darts of the adversary. Farther, as Christ, after having vanquished the devil, was ministered unto by angels; his followers, who endeavour to do their duty, shall have such assistance as is necessary to their continuing immoveable amidst the rudest shocks of temptation. They may be amid legions of devils; but their integrity shall be happily preserved. See Macknight.

We observed on ver. 23. that the Gospel is *glad tidings*, a *joyful message*: and could we effectually represent the full purport of this JOYFUL MESSAGE, so as to make you sensible what a solid and superlative happiness it imports, your hopes must presently be raised, and all your desires engaged in dependence on the grace of God in pursuit of the promised good: but though all men incessantly seek after happiness, yet they are too commonly so mistaken in their notions of it, that these heavenly tidings make no impressions on them.

Consider we then, that happiness of every kind requires a proper disposition for its enjoyment. Without *bodily health* we cannot relish the pleasures of *sense*; and, for the same reason, without *holiness*, which is the soul's health, we cannot participate of *spiritual joys*. To judge, therefore, what interest we have in the Gospel, or glad tidings of the kingdom of God, consider the holy angels, who are its native inhabitants: they, doubtless, are happy in the supreme degree; but their happiness is the result of a more intrinsic part of their character, *viz.* holiness. And this brings to my mind a fine saying of a modern writer:

Then, to be good, is to be happy; angels  
Are happier than men, because they're better.

They are perfectly happy, because they are perfectly holy. Now holiness consists in having only *pure* desires: that is to say, *just* desires: they cannot desire any thing but what is just, fit, and proper for them: and thence, although their desires may be various, yet they can never be (as in the human race) inconsistent; but, being excited with due subordination and harmony among themselves, they are all fully gratified. In a word, duty and pleasure are the same in heaven. The angels have all they can wish, because they can wish only for what they ought to have. And the more intense their desires are, the higher are their graces and virtues, and the greater their beatitude.

Things are quite contrary in the present state of the human nature; for holiness is so distinct a thing from the gratification of our natural desires, that it principally consists in denying them. Our natural desires, *viz.* our appetites and passions, are often unjust; and so exorbitant, that, for the sake of our own ease, and the little happiness which can be found here, we are bound to resist and subdue them. And herein (quite opposite to the angelical nature) consists the human excellence. To refrain from what we

wish; to choose what we are averse to; to reject the poisonous sweet, and prefer the wholesome bitter; to strive against sloth and voluptuousness, with other numberless vices and follies, to which we are prone; and climb the arduous rugged paths of duty; these are our first task, in which we shall often miscarry. But this will not always be the case: we shall not always be left to our own mismanagement; for, if we persist in using the grace bestowed upon us, God will at length take us under his more immediate and peculiar government; and, by a faithful service in a constant, simple and entire dependence on divine grace alone, we shall enter into his kingdom.

This momentous truth, grounded on the great sacrifice and intercession of Jesus, is the genuine *Gospel* of Christ: such are the *glad tidings* which he publishes; assuring us, that God's kingdom is accessible, is *near*; so that all may enter it, who will in true repentance lay hold of Jesus Christ in all his offices, and in simple faith cast themselves on his alone power to save.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jesus, being now prepared for the battle, enters the lists against the great enemy of souls, whose kingdom he came to destroy. We have,

1. The time of this conflict.—*Then*, immediately after he had received the attestation of God to his Sonship, and the fulness of the Spirit for the exercise of his office as Mediator. *Note*; (1.) Before God calls us into temptation, he will furnish us with spiritual strength, with which we may conquer, if we be faithful. (2.) Great manifestations are often the prelude to our severest conflict. (3.) The confidence of our adoption of God will be the most effectual shield to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

2. The place.—*In the wilderness*; far from the abode of men, amid lonely wastes, where only the savages of the forest roamed, to give the enemy every advantage against him, and therein more gloriously to display his own power and all-sufficiency. The first man fell in a paradise of delights; the second man stood unmoved against every blast of temptation, firm as the rocks of the wilderness, his present dreary dwelling.

3. The preparatives to the combat. *He was led up of the Spirit*, by a divine impulse on his mind, into the higher, more mountainous, and uninhabited part of the country; and this with design to meet the tempter, and defeat all his wiles. And hereunto he condescended, (1.) That, feeling what fore temptations mean, he might be a compassionate high-priest, having been tempted in all points as we are, only without sin. (2.) To encourage us to trust him in every time of need. He who defeated that enemy once himself, can by the same strength make the faithful soul more than conqueror. Forty days, like Moses in the mount, he continued there alone, and without sustenance: at last he felt all those acute cravings of hunger which, as man, he was subject to in common with us, and which gave the enemy another advantage against him, and rendered the Redeemer's triumphs more illustrious. The first representative

CHAP. V.

*Christ beginneth his sermon on the mount: declaring who are blessed, who are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city on an hill, the candle: that he came to fulfil the law. What it is to kill, to commit adultery, to swear: exhorteth to suffer wrong, to love even our enemies, and to labour after perfectness.*

[Anno Domini 30.]

**A**ND seeing the multitudes, <sup>a</sup> he went up into a mountain: and when he was set,

<sup>b</sup> his disciples came unto him:

2 And he <sup>c</sup> opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 <sup>d</sup> Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 <sup>e</sup> Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 <sup>f</sup> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 <sup>g</sup> Blessed are they which do hunger and

<sup>a</sup> If. 42. 2. John, 5. 41. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 4. 18—22. & 10. 2—4. Luke, 6. 13—16. <sup>c</sup> Prov. 10. 21. Eph. 6. 19, 20. Deut. 18. 15, 18. If. 50. 4. Prov. 8. 1. 2, 6. & 1. 20, &c. <sup>d</sup> If. 57. 15. & 66. 2. & 61. 1. Prov. 16. 19. & 29. 23. ch. 11. 25. & 13. 16. & 19. 23. Luke, 6. 20, 24. & 14. 25, 33. Pf. 51. 17. 1 Cor. 1. 26—31. James, 2. 5. <sup>e</sup> Ezek. 7. 16. & 9. 4. If. 61. 3. Eccl. 7. 2, 3. Luke, 6. 21. & 16. 25. John, 16. 20. 1 Cor. 1. 4, 7. James, 1. 12. Rev. 7. 17. If. 35. 10. & 51. 11, 12. & 30. 19. & 57. 18. Pf. 51. 17. <sup>f</sup> Pf. 22. 26. & 37. 11. & 76. 9. & 149. 4. If. 57. 15, 16. Zeph. 2. 3. 1 Peter, 3. 4, 13. Rev. 5. 10. <sup>g</sup> Luke, 1. 53. & 6. 21. 25. Pf. 42. 1, 2. & 63. 1, 2. & 84. 2. & 17. 15. & 65. 4. John, 4. 14. & 6. 35. & 7. 37, 38. If. 65. 13. & 44. 3. & 66. 10. Rev. 7. 17.

representative of mankind, when enjoying the utmost plenty, was tempted by one forbidden tree; the last, though famishing for want, is deaf to every sollicitation of the wicked one.

4. The temptations themselves; a threefold cord, and yet broken with ease. The design of them was, to shake Christ's confidence in God, and lead him to some dishonourable step, which, had it been possible, must have utterly unqualified him for the work of redemption.

[1.] In the first temptation the devil sought to lead him to a distrust of God's providential care and goodness; and, in order thereto, *the tempter came to him*. He had possibly by his secret suggestions, during the forty days before, sought to disturb the mind of Jesus, but in vain; (see the Inferences;) now therefore he assumes a visible form; not such a fearful figure as our early misguided apprehensions suggest, and our delusive prints hold him forth, but some pleasing human shape, or perhaps transformed into an angel of light. The tempter well knew the circumstances of our Lord, and directs his assault where the weakest side appeared: he hoped that the cravings of hunger might lead him to some undue means of relief. Thus vigilant and crafty is the wily adversary to suit his temptation to our situation and condition; and particularly, in want and distress, to suggest some sinful expedient to extricate ourselves from our troubles, without waiting God's leisure, or consulting his will. He often says, Better steal than starve; though God says, 'Tis better die than sin. He prefaces his temptation with a sly insinuation; *If thou be the Son of God*, as if he doubted the fact, though so lately the voice from heaven had affirmed it; and he desired to shake the faith of Jesus, suggesting, that if this really were the case, it was inconceivable that God would leave such a one to starve in the wilderness. Or, *seeing thou art the Son of God*; he perhaps admits the fact, and wishes to see a present exertion of his divine power in a miracle so necessary for his own support; *command that these stones be made bread*. (See the Annotations.) Note; (1.) The great battery of the devil is raised against our faith; for if the foundation of our confidence be removed, the superstructure must needs fall. He is ever striking at this to make the children of God doubt their adoption; and, in order

thereto, he urges against them sometimes their outward distresses, sometimes their inward weakness and infirmities, as if both the one and the other were inconsistent with the relation that they claim. (2.) If once the enemy can engage us to entertain hard thoughts of God, then he is sure to prevail.

Christ repels the assaults of the wicked one with the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and therein teaches us how to ward off the like temptations. *He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*. The Lord has other ways of supporting men's bodies than by bread merely; and therefore it was not so absolutely necessary for his sustenance, but that he could be supported without it; nor would he at Satan's instigation do that which might look like distrust of his Father's care, doubt of his word, or suspicion of his relation to him. Note; (1.) The written word is the only rule of our faith and practice: if Christ himself adhered to that alone, let no pretences of the Spirit's superior teaching lead us off from this sure guide. (2.) God's time is the best time, and *he that believeth will not make haste*; will take no rash step for his own relief under his trials, but patiently expect the salvation of God.

[2.] The first attack being repelled, a second is prepared: since he cannot lead the Saviour to distrust or despair, he will try to puff him up with presumption. So unwearied is the tempter, and often changing his wiles, according to our circumstances, from one extreme to the other.

*He taketh him up* by divine permission, with the consent of Jesus, or *leadeth him into the holy city, Jerusalem*, so called from the peculiar privileges that it enjoyed of God's worship and ordinances; and *set him upon a pinnacle or wing of the temple*; one of the battlements probably, which was of an immense height. And since Jesus had expressed such confidence in his Father, and unshaken dependence on his word, he grounds thereon his temptation: *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down*, and give an incontestable proof of it to the priests and people worshipping below, who will, no doubt, receive thee as the Messiah, when thus coming as if immediately from heaven into the temple:

thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7<sup>h</sup> Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>h</sup> James, 2. 13. Pf. 41. 1—3. & 18. 25. & 37. 25, 26. Prov. 14. 21. & 19. 17. ch. 6. 14. Mark, 11. 25. Heb. 6. 10. Dan. 4. 27. & Tim. 1. 16. Mos. 4. 16.

temple: nor will there be any danger in the experiment, since *it is written*, and therein thou art fully satisfied, *He shall give his angels, &c.* The application of which words to Christ was right; but a part of the text is artfully suppressed, *in all thy ways*; for out of the way of duty we may never hope for protection. And it is misapplied, being designed not to tempt men to rush into temptation, presuming upon the divine care; but to engage the believer to trust God in time of trial, assured of divine support. From all which we may observe, (1.) That one grand engine of the tempter is, to make our heads giddy by setting us up on high. The pinnacle of the temple is a dangerous exaltation. Those who are eminent in station, fortune, or reputation; advanced to dignities in church or state; or distinguished with abilities, gifts, graces, or even success in their ministry; need to tremble for themselves, and, the higher they stand, to cleave the faster to Jesus their temple, lest their exaltation prove their destruction. (2.) Though the devil can tempt, he cannot compel. Sin is our own act; and without our consent the most dire temptations fasten not the least evil on our consciences. Should we be tempted to the greatest crimes, to self-murder, or blasphemy, the Son of God was himself thus tempted, yet without sin. (3.) Scriptures may be suggested by the enemy to the minds of God's people, much to their distress and discouragement on the one hand, or, on the other, to lull their consciences in fatal security; therefore we must search the Scriptures diligently, that we may know what is God's mind therein, and be kept from those dangerous errors and delusions, which often the Scriptures are vouchsafed to patronize. (4.) We must never separate the means from the end, nor expect out of God's way the protection of his providence and grace. Though Jesus is a Saviour to the uttermost, we may not sin that grace may abound.

The same word of truth supplies our Lord with a full confutation of Satan's sophistry; for in the Scriptures there is an answer ready for every case; and we can be in no circumstance or temptation, but that word will afford us direction, strength, and comfort. *It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* The tempter had said, *It is written*; but the Scripture cannot contradict itself; and therefore to know the mind of God, we must compare spiritual things with spiritual, and not mutilate the word of truth, nor apply it contrary to the intention of the Spirit. To trust God is duty; to tempt him is sinful. Christ needed no confirmation of what he was already assured; nor was he called unnecessarily to make an experiment of God's power in such a miraculous preservation.

[3.] Once more, though baffled, the enemy returns to the charge; and, summoning up all his force in one blow, by the most glaring display of this world's glory tempts our Lord to the horrid crime of idolatry. The severest of our temptations is sometimes reserved for the last, that God's

power and grace may be more gloriously displayed, and the devil's malice most bitterly disappointed.

*Again the devil taketh him up*, perhaps transported him through the air, *into an exceeding high mountain*, that the fictitious scene he was about to display might appear real; *and there he shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* (See the critical notes.) Whatever grandeur, wealth, pleasure, reigned in them, were set before him in the most enlivened colours, to catch his fancy, and engage his admiration: and all these he proffers to bestow on him, on one condition, which thousands, without any such reward, were daily complying with; *if thou wilt fall down and worship me*;—a proposal so horrid as would not bear a thought, and is rejected with detestation: *Get thee hence, Satan*; such insolence provoked the Saviour's righteous indignation, and he drives the tempter from his presence, unable to endure such a daring attempt upon the majesty of Jehovah, the only object of worship; *for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Note; (1.) The minds of God's greatest saints may be sometimes harassed with the most blasphemous suggestions, and they should not count this as if some strange thing happened unto them. (2.) The glory of the world is the grand snare that the enemy lays for men's souls; and it looks very desirable to the eye of sense; but true and effective faith sees through the delusion, beholds vanity stamped on every thing beneath the sun, and scorns *all this* which Satan offers as dung and loss, compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and the glories of his grace. (3.) Some temptations come under the guise of plausibility and harmlessness, and require recollection before we can discover the craft of the devil; others bring the brand of hell in their forehead, and would bear men down merely with the weight of the present advantage thence accruing: these must not be parleyed with a moment, but rejected with abhorrence. (4.) God is alone the object of worship; and whatever else be made the idol of our adoration, whether the horrid forms of monsters in a pagod, or the images of saints and virgins, and crucifixes in a popish chapel, it is no better than falling down to the devil.

5. Satan, now vanquished and unable to resist the commanding word of Jesus, quits the field. He found him more than man, invulnerable in every part, and feels himself a vanquished foe. Thus shall the faithful sons of God, through this great Captain of their salvation, tread Satan under their feet; enabled to wrestle with spiritual wickedness, and to prevail against the powers of darkness. Though hard the conflict, the victory is sure to all who stand fast, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

6. The angels, the attendant servants of Jesus, now visibly appeared, and ministered unto him. They had beheld, as spectators, the conflict and triumphs of the Lord, and now congratulate his victory, and supply him with those

8 Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

9 \* Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 2. 5. Heb. 9. 14. & 10. 29. Pf. 18. 33. & 15. 2. & 24. 4. 1 John, 3. 1, 3. Job, 19. 26, 27. 1 Cor. 13. 12. <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 20. Rom. 16. 20. 3 Cor. 14. 33. 2 Cor. 13. 11. Phil. 4. 9. 2 Thell. 3. 16. Heb. 43. 20. & 12. 14. Rom. 14. 17—19.

those needful refreshments which his exhausted body wanted. *Note;* (1.) Christ alone obtained the victory for us; his own arm hath brought salvation unto him. (2.) Though our relief be for awhile delayed, it shall assuredly come at last, if we continue to cleave to Jesus: *Trust in the Lord* therefore, *and verily thou shalt be fed.* (3.) Our Master was himself tempted, that he might feel for us, and supply us with all needful supports, when we are in like manner sore thrust at that we should fall.

2dly, Christ now having entered upon his ministry, began to publish the glad tidings of that salvation he came to procure. Many events are recorded which intervened between his temptations and his abode at Capernaum: these we shall meet with in the other evangelists. Matthew hastens forward to the time when John was cast into prison; on which occasion Jesus departed from Nazareth to Galilee, and fixed his abode at Capernaum, a city in the tribe of Nephthali, bordering on Zebulon, situate on the sea of Tiberias, called elsewhere the lake of Gennesareth. The men of Nazareth had rejected him, Luke, iv. 29. and therefore God justly leaves them to themselves, and sends his Son and his Gospel to a place which will more cheerfully welcome them.

1. Especial notice is taken of the fulfilment of the Scripture in this removal of our Lord; as Isaiah had before of old prophesied,—*that the people* in these regions of Zebulon and Nephthali, called *Galilee of the Gentiles* from the intermixture of a multitude of strangers of other nations among the Jews; *which sat in darkness*, in spiritual darkness and ignorance; *saw a great light*, Christ the sun of righteousness arising with healing in his wings, and bringing life and light and liberty to those *which sat in the region and shadow of death*, dead in trespasses and sins, till quickened by the power of the Saviour's grace, and enlightened by the glorious Gospel that he preached. *Note;* (1.) They who are destitute of the knowledge of Christ are in darkness respecting all the things which make for their everlasting peace, and near the borders of eternal death. (2.) Christ is to the soul what the sun is to the world; yea, more; for he is not only the author of light, but gives, in the different stages of grace from initial salvation, the faculty of vision also, without which the light would shine in darkness, and the darkness never comprehend it. (3.) The way in which spiritual light is chiefly diffused is by the preaching of the Gospel.

2. We are told what was the subject of his ministry from the time he began to open his commission; *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; the same words and the same subject on which John his harbinger had preached before; for in the great essential doctrines all faithful ministers of the Gospel perfectly agree.

3dly, Christ being now about to erect his kingdom in the world, he is pleased to make choice of certain persons to be the constant attendants of his ministry and spectators of his miracles, that they might afterwards go forth to tell

of the things they had heard and seen, and spread the Gospel of their Master to the ends of the earth.

1. The persons he made choice of were such as to human view were very unfit instruments for the work; but the more evident would it be that the power was of God, and not of them, when afterwards they appeared so mighty in word and deed. They were by occupation fishermen, whom Jesus, as he walked by the sea-shore, saw employed in their honest and laborious vocation: the first two were casting a net into the sea, brethren by blood as well as business, their names Simon and Andrew, men unlettered, unknown, and unnoticed; the next two were of the like employment, and with their father Zebedee mending their nets. *Note;* (1.) Not only to the poor was the Gospel preached by our Lord, but from them the great pillars of the church were taken: let them therefore never be despised. (2.) It is happy in a family when brethren in blood are brethren in the Lord, and heirs together of the grace of life. (3.) Industry is highly commendable, and Jesus wills that all his servants should be found well employed: idleness is the sure characteristic of Satan's service.

2. They had, it seems, before (see John, i. 37.) become acquainted with Christ; but now they are called to constant attendance upon him, *Follow me*; and, by an image taken from their present employment, he lets them know the more honourable service for which he designed them, *I will make you fishers of men*, the instruments of gathering souls by the Gospel into his church. And what he calls them to, he will qualify them for: in following him they shall learn a wisdom which the schools can never teach them. *Note;* (1.) Unless ministers have a divine call, they will run without being sent, and can expect no blessing in their work. (2.) None can truly preach Christ who have not first faithfully followed him. (3.) If, in our ordinary vocations diligence is necessary, how much more needful is it that fishers of men should be indefatigable and laborious, when the gain of immortal souls will so amply repay their toil.

3. These disciples immediately obeyed the call, quitting their employment, and leaving their dearest relatives to devote and attach themselves intirely to their divine Lord and Master. *Note;* (1.) There are seasons when, for the sake of Christ, we must be ready to part with all. (2.) Those who are employed in the ministry have especial need to detach themselves from worldly concerns, that they may give themselves wholly up to their awful trust and charge.

4thly, We have,

1. Christ's labours as a preacher. All Galilee heard his teaching; he appeared publicly in their synagogues, and published *the Gospel of the kingdom*, the glad tidings of salvation, exhorting his hearers to that repentance and newness of life which became those who had received the grace of God in truth.

2. His

10<sup>1</sup> Blessed are they which are persecuted kingdom of heaven.  
for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the 11<sup>m</sup> Blessed are ye when men shall revile

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 6. 22, 23. 1 Pet. 3. 14. & 4. 13. 2 Tim. 2. 12. & 3. 12. 2 Cor. 4. 8—17. 2 Thess. 1. 5—7. Rom. 8. 17, 18. <sup>m</sup> Luke, 6. 22. & 7. 33, 34. Pl. 35. 11. 1 Pet. 4. 14.

2. His cures as a physician, wrought in confirmation of his doctrine. He did good to men's bodies as well as souls, and by a word healed *all manner of sickness and diseases* among the people, however violent, inveterate, or of long standing: the incurables of other physicians went from him restored to perfect health and soundness. Nor did he merely relieve the most tormenting disorders of the body, but the more deplorable ones of the mind: the lunatic recovered the perfect exercise of his reason; and the possessed, whose bodies by divine permission Satan's legions had seized and miserably harassed, were set free, and the foul fiends ejected. No painful operations, no tedious course of medicine almost as bad as the malady, were employed: a word, a touch, completed the cure; and all was *freely* done, without money and without price. The most wretched, the poorest, never applied in vain. No wonder that his fame spread through the adjacent coasts of Syria, and that multitudes of patients sought this great Physician's help. His cures bespoke his character, and vouched for his mission; they were innumerable, public, immediate, perfect, such as none could dispute or gainsay, his very enemies being judges. And they represent the more noble cures of men's souls by divine grace from all the diseases of sin, wherein we see the Saviour's power still displayed.

3. His popularity arising from both. An immense auditory, from all parts, near and distant, assembled, curious to hear, or desirous to be healed, or convinced by his preaching and miracles, or enviously waiting for an opportunity to destroy him. *Note*: (1.) The preachers of the Gospel will generally be popular; their message engages the attention of an auditory. (2.) Multitudes hear the Gospel; but too many refuse to receive it in the love of it to the salvation of their souls.

#### C H A P. V.

*Ver. 1. And seeing the multitudes*] *And seeing such a multitude*: Heylin: who supposes this verse to be immediately connected with the last of the preceding chapter. It does not appear in what part of Galilee this mountain was situated; and if the cure of the leper which Christ performed at his descending from it, was wrought in the confines of some other city, and not of Capernaum, there is no reason to suppose, as most expositors do, that it was in the neighbourhood of Capernaum. See ch. viii. 1, 2. Luke v. 12. Maundrell says, that what is now called the *mount of the Beatitudes*, is a little to the north of mount Tabor. Travels, p. 115. And if this be its true situation, it must be at some considerable distance from Capernaum. Dr. Doddridge is of opinion, that this discourse was different from and previous to that which St. Luke has given us in the sixth chapter of his gospel, though many of the sentiments and expressions are the same. It is, however, more generally thought that these discourses are the same. And it appears from Luke, vi. 12, 17. that our Saviour

having gone up to the top of the mountain to pray, coming down thence, he stood on a plain and even part of the same mountain, whence he could easily be heard. So Moses first ascended mount Sinai alone, but afterwards accompanied by the elders; whence the law was promulged by God. Jesus *sat down*, according to the custom of the Jewish doctors, when they taught. *His disciples*, mean, not merely the twelve apostles, but all those in general who followed the Lord Jesus Christ. See Luke vi. 13. John ix. 27. and in most places in the Acts the Christians are called *disciples*.

*Ver. 2. And he opened his mouth*] This phrase denotes speaking in a solemn and authoritative manner, intimating the importance of what is going to be delivered, and is not always used as a pleonasm. Comp. Judg. xi. 35, 36. Job, iii. 1. xxxiii. 2. Matth. xiii. 35. Acts viii. 35. x. 34. In order to enter into the beauty of this discourse, it is necessary to consider it as addressed not merely to the apostles, but to Christ's disciples in general, and to vast numbers of people, who, affected with the sight or fame of his miracles, were now assembled around him; probably expecting that he would immediately declare himself the Messiah, and full of those false notions of his kingdom which so generally prevailed. Dr. Blair, in his excellent discourses on this sermon, has shewn beyond all others, how directly the beginning of it is levelled against these prejudices; calculated, as the whole of it is, to correct those erroneous notions of the Messiah's kingdom, which were so common, and which would prove so pernicious to those who were governed by them. He has also observed, as it is very necessary to do, what a beautiful correspondence there is between the *characters* described in these beatitudes, and the  *blessings* connected with them. Jesus began his sermon with the doctrine of *happiness*; a subject which the teachers of wisdom have always considered as the principal thing in morals; and for that reason they have laboured to give their true disciples an idea of it. Most of the Jews seem to have considered the enjoyments of sense, as the sovereign good. Riches, mirth, revenge, women, conquest, liberty, fame, and other things of the same kind, afforded them such pleasures, that they wished for no better in the Messiah's kingdom, which they almost all considered as a secular one: even the apostles themselves long retained this notion of a temporal kingdom, and were at first too much influenced by the expectation of the honours, profits, and pleasures attending the posts which they expected under him. Therefore, to shew his hearers in general, and his disciples in particular, the grossness of their error, our Lord declared that the highest happiness of men consists in the graces of the spirit; because from the possession and exercise of them, the purest pleasures result,—pleasures, which satisfy the great God himself, and constitute his ineffable felicity. See Wetstein, Doddridge, and Macknight.

It may be proper, before we enter upon this discourse,



you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you \*falsely for my sake.

great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for

13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: but

\* Gr. lying. † Rom. 5. 3. James, 1. 2. † Péter, 4. 13. Luke, 6. 23. Acts, 7. 52. † Theff. 2. 16. † Col. 4. 6. † 2 Cor. 2. 14, 16.

Acts, 5. 41. & 16. 25. Col. 1. 24. † Neh. 9. 26. † Chr. 16. 16. ch. 23. † Mark, 9. 49. 50. Luke, 14. 34. Heb. 6. 4—6. † Peter, 2. 20, 21.

to observe, once for all, that whoever examines the discourses of our Lord with attention, may find in them a certain character and way of speaking, in a great measure peculiar to himself. This manner, by which our Saviour's discourses are distinguishable, consists in raising matter of instruction and moral reflection from the objects which presented themselves to him and his audience while he was speaking. Hence his sermons to the multitude, and his conversation with his disciples, allude perpetually to the time of the year, to the place where he is, to the objects that surround him, to the occupation and circumstances of those whom he addresses, or to the state of public affairs, &c. Thus the blessed Jesus in the *spring* went into the fields, where he sat down on an eminence, and made this discourse, which is full of observations arising from things which presented themselves to his view. Hence, when he exhorts his disciples to *trust* in God, he bids them *behold*, *μειλιδων*, *look upon*, the *birds of the air*, which were then flying about them, and were fed by Providence, though *they did not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns*. Consider, says our blessed Lord, ver. 28. *take notice of the lilies of the field*, which were then blown, and were so beautifully clothed by the same power, and yet *tailed not* like the husbandmen, who were then at work. Being in a place where they had a wide prospect of a cultivated land, he bade them observe how God caused the sun to shine, and the rain to descend upon the fields and gardens, even of the wicked and ungrateful; and he continued to convey his doctrine to them under rural images; speaking of good trees, and corrupt trees; of knowing men by their fruits; wolves in sheep's clothing; grapes not growing upon thorns, nor figs on thistles; of the folly of casting precious things to dogs and swine; of good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, and a variety of other particulars, which will occur to every reader's observation. From this peculiarity in the style and genius of our Saviour's discourses, we may conclude that the writers of the gospel have given us always the substance, and often the very words of our Lord's sermons; and we may also plainly see in the discourses of the Lord Jesus Christ his great design,—which was to instruct; therefore he conveys knowledge in a familiar way: he adapts his language to his hearers. He speaks to their eyes, and to their ears. He chooses images and comparisons which would strike them most powerfully, and make the most lasting impression upon their minds. See *Jortin's Discourses*, p. 212. and the note on ver. 14.

Ver. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*] *Happy*, &c. Doddridge: and so throughout the beatitudes: I use the word *happy* rather than *blessed*, says he, as more exactly answering to the original word *μακαριοι*, as the word *blessed* does to the Greek word *ωλοθυμινοι*: and I the rather choose to render it thus, because our Lord seems to intimate by it,

not only that the dispositions here recommended would be the way to future *blessedness*, but that they would immediately be attended with the truest *happiness*, and the most noble pleasures. In order to render his hearers more attentive, Christ proposes his doctrine in certain paradoxical dogmas, which, at first appearance, may seem false to the carnal eye, but are found most true by the attentive and sincere considerer. "It is notable, says an old writer, "that all the beatitudes are affixed to unlikely conditions, "to shew that the judgment of the *word* and of the "world, are contrary." Bengelius observes, that in the present sermon we have, *first*, an *exordium*, containing a sweet invitation to true holiness and happiness, ver. 3—12.; *secondly*, a persuasive to impart it to others, ver. 13—16.; *thirdly*, a description of true Christian holiness, ver. 17.—ch. vii. 12. in which it is easy to observe, that the latter part exactly answers to the former; *fourthly*, the conclusion; giving a sure mark of the true way, warning against false prophets, and exhorting to follow after righteousness. St. Luke applies this first beatitude to the *poor*, properly so called; but though *poverty of spirit* may include a disposition which bears poverty rightly, there seems no doubt that it here primarily refers to humility of heart. Dr. Heylin's seems the true interpretation: the phrase, *poor in spirit*, says he, expresses an inward disposition or state of mind, by an outward worldly circumstance; namely, poverty, which signifies want; the sense whereof obliges men to dependence upon others for supply, by begging or servitude: so by exact analogy, *poverty of spirit* implies want, and consequently an habitual address to, and dependence upon God, for supply, by prayer, faith, and obedience. The beatitude therefore may be thus paraphrased: "You naturally congratulate the rich and the great, and expect, under the reign of the Messiah, to be advanced to wealth, dignity, and power; but your notions of these things are very false and vitiated; for I say unto you, *happy are the poor in spirit*; those humble souls, who, deeply conscious of their ignorance and guilt, can quietly resign to the divine teachings and disposals, and accommodate themselves to the lowest circumstances which Providence shall appoint them: for, however they may be despised and trampled on by men, *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*: they will be most likely to embrace the Gospel, and they alone will be intitled to its blessings, both in time and in eternity." See Doddridge, Wetstein, and Bengelius.

Dr. Campbell translates the verse, *happy the poor*, &c. observing that it has more energy, after the example of the original, and all the ancient versions, to omit the substantive verb. The idiom of our language admits this freedom as easily as the Italian, and more so than the French. None of the Latin versions express the verb. Another reason, he adds, which induced me to adopt this manner is

if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

to render these aphorisms, in regard to happiness, as similar in form as they are in the original, to the aphorisms in regard to wretchedness, which are, Luke vi. contrasted with them, *woe to you that are rich, &c.*

*Ver. 4. Blessed are they that mourn*] “Either for their own sins, or for other men’s, and who are steadily and habitually serious; *they shall be comforted*, most solidly and deeply in this world, and eternally in heaven. “What they now *sow in tears*, they shall *reap in joy*.” See 1 Cor. v. 2. and Bengelius. Possibly our Saviour might refer still farther in this blessing to the *mourning* rightly improved on account of afflictions; and in this light nothing can be more true than the present aphorism; because, if any thing under the grace of God brings a man to holiness, it is affliction; the natural tendency thereof being to give him a feeling of the vanity of the world, and consequently to convince him how necessary it is that he should seek his happiness in things more solid and durable. Affliction awakens serious thoughts in the mind, composes it into a grave and settled frame, very different from the levity which prosperity inspires; gives it a fellow-feeling of the sorrows of others, and makes it, when accompanied by the operation of the Divine Spirit, sensible of the evil of departing from God, the source and centre of its joy. See Macknight.

*Ver. 5. Blessed are the meek*] That is, the men of mild and forgiving tempers, who hold all their passions and affections even; *they shall inherit the earth*; they shall enjoy the protection of civil government, with all the blessings of the present life, the greatest and best of which flow from *meekness itself*. Meekness, consisting in the moderating of our passions, makes a person beautiful and venerable in the eyes of others, so that he possesses their inward esteem; while the man devoid of this grace is despicable, though dignified with ever so many titles of honour. Hence it is called *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*. Farther, this grace secures a man against many injuries to which he may be exposed; a *soft answer* being powerful to *turn away wrath*; or, if an injury be done to a meek person, his meekness prevents the storm which pride, anger, and revenge raise within; enables him to bear the injury with tranquillity, and strengthens him to overcome it with good. Thus much seems to be implied in the blessing annexed to the character in this verse; which is a citation from Ps. xxxvii. 11. and seems to be produced to shew of how great a price the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God; for the words immediately put us in mind, that under the dispensation wherein God rewarded holiness and virtue with temporal advantages in a peculiar sense, as well as with spiritual blessings, he annexed the highest temporal blessing, even that of inheriting the promised land, to the lovely grace of *meekness*. See Macknight and Bengelius.

*Ver. 6. Blessed are they which do hunger, &c.*] Our Saviour uses the ideas of *hunger* and *thirst* metaphorically, to express vehement desire. By *righteousness* seems to be meant that holiness which the Gospel teaches and recommends,

in opposition to the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees. So that the persons here said to hunger and thirst are those who earnestly long for and are sensible of the want of that salvation which is procured by the Lord Jesus Christ. This beatitude, therefore, may be thus paraphrased: “Happy are they who, instead of desiring insatiably the possessions of others, and endeavouring to obtain them by violence or deceit, eagerly *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, and make it the delightful business of life, in dependence on divine grace, to improve in all the branches of evangelical holiness and goodness: for they shall, through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, never be disappointed in these pious pursuits, but be abundantly satisfied with the righteousness which they seek, and be competently supplied with every necessary good.” See ver. 10. Prov. xxi. 21. Matt. vi. 33., Dodridge, and Wetstein.

*Ver. 7. Blessed are the merciful*] Those who feel for the sorrows of others as their own, and with tender sympathy hasten to relieve them. Dr. Heylin remarks excellently upon this beatitude, nearly in the following words; that the frailty of human nature renders men continually liable to abuse, and perverts the good dispositions which religion would excite; thus mourning for sin may degenerate into a gloomy melancholy and moroseness of temper; and some, because they are displeased, as they have reason, with themselves, become peevish and fretful at all about them; and again, with regard to the *hunger and thirst after justice*, that is to say, universal holiness and virtue (see on ch. iii. 15.), men, when called to Christ and true religion, have commonly powerful convictions concerning the turpitude of vice, with the danger and guilt of neglecting Christ and holiness, of stopping short of the pardon of their sins, and the sanctification of their natures. And they ought studiously to cultivate these convictions, and impress them deeply upon their minds by assiduous meditation; but, above all, by going to Jesus Christ in ardent prayer, as the only refuge of the penitent soul. But, notwithstanding, as the speculations of justice are pleasing, and the practice of it laborious; and as it is much easier to desire that others should be holy, than to become so themselves; it too often happens that they misapply their concern for the interests of religion to the morals of other men, and are more intent upon their neighbour’s faults than their own. Thus they turn their zeal the wrong way, and suffer it to evaporate in chimeras of reforming the public; while they themselves are under the dominion of sin. But *hunger and thirst* are *personal*; for no man hungers for another’s want, but for his own. Those holy desires which the Spirit of God excites in his servants, chiefly tend to their own pardon, and their own purification: and in the progress of that work, I mean while they *grieve* for their own folly, and *pine* for their own want of justice, they will compassionately bear with the follies of other men, and be very indulgent to their want of justice; a want which they so sensibly experience in themselves. To ripen this good disposition to which, through almighty grace, the state already described

14 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. it under \* a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put

\* John, 1. 9. Phil. 1. 15. Rev. 1. 20. 1 Thess. 5. 5. John, 12. 36. Luke, 16. 8. Eph. 5. 8. 2 Cor. 6. 14. Prov. 4. 18. \* Mark, 4. 21. Luke, 1. 16. & 11. 33. \* The modius was about a peck measure.

described leads them, Christ here so seasonably pronounces his benediction, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* See the Reflections for farther views on this subject.

Ver. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart*] Dr. Blair supposes that this may refer to the expectation which the Jews had of possessing themselves of beautiful captives in the wars by which they fancied the Messiah's kingdom would be established. The large seraglios of eastern princes and great men, which, by a very mistaken taste, were regarded as matters of state and grandeur, might possibly give countenance to such an extravagant notion. Dr. Doddridge, therefore, in the following paraphrase, just touches upon it: "Indulge not a thought of those licentious gratifications which are often mingled with victory, and are accounted as the pleasures of the great; *happy are the men* who not only abstain from these gross enormities, but are concerned that they may be *pure in heart too*; avoiding every irregular desire, and mortifying every unruly passion. This resolute self-denial shall be the source of nobler and more lasting pleasures, *for they shall see God*: thus purified and refined, they shall enjoy him in his ordinances, and in all the communications of his grace here, and dwell with him for ever in heaven." Dr. Heylin in his usual manner observes, that the purification here pronounced *blessed*, is an arduous work; beginning in repentance, and attended with that *mourning for sin*, to which a former beatitude invites. Then must we receive a knowledge of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of the covenant. But this *purification* is carried on by that *hunger and thirst after justice* mentioned in the 6th verse; and it advances still more and more in the following benediction upon the *merciful*; who, by the violence they do themselves, in dependence on and by the power of almighty grace, to mortify their own pride and ill-nature, so as patiently to bear with and compassionate the infirmities of their brethren, draw down upon themselves, through the alone and infinite merit of Christ, the superabundant mercy of God, which at length so consummates their mortification, by a superabundant increase of divine grace, that they become *pure in heart*, and thereby are qualified for that sublime and efficacious knowledge of the Deity, which is here called *seeing God*; the mental eye being irradiated from above; for God, who maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, does also from himself illumine the minds of all men, in proportion to their desire of, and earnest search after, his light; *the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* See more in Heylin. See also the Reflections.

Dr. Campbell reads, *the clean in heart.* I admit, says he, that our translation, *pure in heart*, is a just expression of the sense, and more in the English idiom than mine. My only

reason for preferring a more literal version of the Greek word *καθαρος* here is, because I would, in all such instances, preserve the allusion to be found in the moral maxims of the New Testament to the ancient ritual, from which the metaphors of the sacred writers, and their other tropes, are frequently borrowed, and to which they owe much of their lustre and energy. The laws in regard to the cleanness of the body, and even of the garments, if neglected by any person, excluded him from the temple. He was incapacitated for being so much as a spectator of the solemn service at the altar. The Jews considered the empyreal heaven as the archetype of the temple of Jerusalem. In the latter, they enjoyed the symbols of God's presence, who spoke to them by his ministers; whereas, in the former, the blessed inhabitants have an immediate sense of the divine presence, and God speaks to them face to face. Our Lord, preserving the analogy between the two dispensations, intimates that *cleanness* will be as necessary in order to procure admission into the celestial temple, as into the terrestrial. But as the privilege is inconceivably higher, the qualification is more important. The cleanness is not ceremonial, but moral; not of the outward man, but of the inward. The same idea is suggested, Ps. xxiv. When such allusions appear in the original, they ought, if possible, to have a place in the version.

Ver. 9. *Blessed are the peace-makers*] *Blessed are the peaceable, for they shall become the children of God.* With respect to the term *peaceable* or *peace-makers* [*εἰρηνοποιοί*], it is to be noted, that in Scripture *ποιεῖν*, to make, or do, signifies a *habit of mind*, with its consequent actions. So by those who *do good* or *evil*, we understand *good* or *bad men*; and when St. Paul speaks of *making prayer*, Phil. i. 4. he means not to cause others to pray, but to pray ourselves. So the *peace* here spoken of is *personal*. It is the fruit of victory after successful conquests, through divine grace, over the inbred impurity of our nature. It is the peace and tranquillity of the soul; and it is an immediate disposition for the full accomplishment of regeneration, wherein, as St. Paul speaks, we shall be renewed by knowledge after the image of the Creator. See Heylin, Suicer's Thesaurus under the word *εἰρηνοποιος*, and the note on 2 Cor. iii. 18. Other expositors suppose, that this beatitude refers not only to those who are of a peaceable disposition, but is opposed to men of hostile and warlike minds; and therefore they paraphrase it thus: "Warriors and conquerors, the disturbers of the peace of mankind, are by no means happy in their victories, nor they who love to involve others in quarrels for their own purpose; but they are happy, who, loving peace, promote it to the utmost of their power; *they shall be called the children of God.* Having rendered themselves like to God, by imitating his greatest perfection, they shall be acknowledged by him as his children, and admitted to a participation of

16 Let your light so shine before men, rify your Father which is in heaven.  
 ' that they may see your good works, and glo-

17 ¶ Think not that I am come to destroy

1 Peter, 2. 12. Phil. 2. 15, 16. Prov. 4. 13. John, 15. 8. 1 Peter, 3. 1, 16. 1 Cor. 14. 25.

“ his happiness; an honour, which those who take pleasure in war, however eminent they may be for courage, shall certainly miss, though it be the aim of their ambition; because they pursue it not by the godlike disposition of diffusing happiness, but by spreading desolation and death among their fellow-creatures: so that, having divested themselves of the nature of God, they have no title to be called his sons.”

Ver. 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted, &c.*] One might imagine that a person of the amiable temper and behaviour described in the last-mentioned beatitude would be the darling of mankind; but our Lord well knew it would not be so, as long as Satan was the prince of this world; he therefore warns them beforehand of the treatment which all were to expect, who were determined thus to tread in his steps, by subjoining, *Happy are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.* “ Instead of those pomps and pleasures, those victories and triumphs, in expectation of which you may now be crowding around me, my followers must prepare themselves for the severity of suffering, and through my grace courageously endure the greatest extremities, for the testimony of their consciences; for the cause of true righteousness, holiness, and virtue. Their richest treasure is beyond the reach of their most inveterate enemies, for they shall reign with God in everlasting glory.” This is the last of these sacred paradoxes, says Heylin; paradoxes to the world, but savoury and luminous truths in the eye of right reason. This beatitude needs no farther explanation or proof, than what is obvious from the universal sentiment of mankind, who agree to place the heroic character in suffering for a good cause. So our Milton assures us,

— That suffering for truth's sake  
 With fortitude, is highest victory.

Book xi.

This was the prerogative of the martyrs in the primitive church, and justice has since had its martyrs in all ages. After declaring the general axiom, our Lord applies it (continues this writer) to his disciples now present, to animate their zeal, who were to lead the van in this magnanimous combat; see ver. 11—16. But though what is here said may be peculiarly applicable to the apostles and ministers of Christ, yet there can be no doubt that it is also applicable to all those who come within the character here described; all who are holy themselves, the *salt of the earth*, and therefore capable of *seasoning* others.

Ver. 11, 12. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile, &c.*] Macknight understands this as a distinct beatitude from that in the 10th verse, supposing the former to refer to liberty and external ease; the present to reputation: and accordingly he paraphrases it nearly in the following words: “ Fame, or the applause of the world, does not give true contentment, by satisfying true ambition; but to be *reviled falsely*, in the ways of righteousness, and to share in affronts with and for God, is a dignity which yields

“ infinitely greater joy, and is that by which the saints and prophets have been distinguished in all ages.” Instead of, *Be exceeding glad*, in ver. 12. the original word *Ἀγαλλισθεσθε*, would be properly rendered, *Triumphantly exult, or leap for joy.* See Luke, i. 14.

In conclusion of these beatitudes, we may observe upon them all in general, that to *bless men*, that is, to *make them happy*, was the great business for which our Lord came into the world; and accordingly, in the beginning of this divine sermon, he pronounces eight blessings together, annexing them to so many Christian virtues, and assigning the particular beatitude which attends each of them. Knowing that happiness is our common aim, and that an innate instinct continually urges us to the pursuit of it, he in the kindest manner applies directly to that instinct: he directs it towards its proper object, and shews the way to obtain it. Though all men necessarily desire happiness, yet the greater part continue miserable, because they seek it where it is not to be found. Our Lord, therefore, begins his divine instruction, which is the complete art of happiness, by laying before us the true and only method of acquiring it.

We may here farther observe the benevolent condescension of our Lord; how he seems to lay aside his supreme authority, as our legislator, that he may better act the part of our friend and our saviour; and, instead of using the lofty imperative style in positive commands, chooses rather in a more gentle and engaging way to insinuate his will and our duty, by pronouncing those blessed who comply with it. He also indulgently considers the great depravation of our nature; how its original corruption, and acquired malignity, by evil habits, together with the force of bad examples, and the sinful conversation and fashions of the world, had so darkened the understanding, and perverted the judgment of men, that they could but obscurely discern the genuine beauty of the sublime doctrines which he was to inculcate; and therefore he proposed them in such a light as would most effectually recommend them. He named the duty and its happy consequences together, guarding and enforcing each virtue with a beatitude. See Heylin.

Ver. 13. *Ye are the salt of the earth*] This relates to all the disciples who were then present, Luke, xiv. 34. and also to all Christians in general (1 Thess. v. 5. Philip. ii. 15.); but more especially to the apostles. See on ver. 16. *Salt* is the emblem of wisdom, and it serves also to preserve things from putrefaction. Now the first disciples of Christ were more especially appointed to diffuse the wisdom of the Gospel throughout the whole world, and to promote the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and holiness and virtue, among men by their doctrines and examples. The meaning is, “ Who could instruct and reform you, if you should happen to fall into error or vice; you that are to be entrusted under grace with the sanctification and instruction of others?” Compare Mark, ix. 49. Coloss. iv. 6. Livy calls Greece *sal gentium*, “ the salt of all the nations,”

on

the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, " but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, \*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall

\* Ch. 3. 15. Pf. 40. 6—8. Is. 42. 21. Gal. 4. 4, 5. Rom. 10. 4. & 3. 31. & 8. 3, 4. Col. 2. 17. Gal. 3. 24. John, 8. 29. \* Luke, 16. 17. If 51. 6. & 40. 8. Rom. 3. 31. & 8, 3, 4. & 10. 4. Dan. 9. 24. John, 17. 4.

on account of those intellectual improvements which they learned thence. The word *μωγεωβών*, rendered *Have left his favour*, may be translated, *Is become insipid*. This rendering has, I think, a peculiar beauty and strength here. The original might be literally translated, *If it be infatuated or grown foolish*; alluding to the common figure, in which sense and spirit are expressed by *salt*. Our Lord's supposition of the *salt's losing its favour* is illustrated by Mr. Maundrell, who tells us, that " in the valley of salt, near Gebul, and about four hours' journey from Aleppo, there is a small precipice, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt. In this, says he, you may see how the veins of it lie: I broke a piece of it, of which the part exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly *lost its favour*, as in Matt. v. The innermost, which had been connected with the rock, retained its favour, as I found by proof." See Grotius, and Wetstein.

Ver. 14. *Ye are the light of the world*] Jesus compares his disciples to the sun, representing the efficacy of their ministry (accompanied by his divine Spirit), to fill the world with the glad some light of truth; a thing as necessary in the moral world, as light in the natural: *ye are the light of the world*. This appellation was given by the Jews to their wise men and doctors. See John, v. 35. 2 Peter, i. 19. The Lord Jesus Christ bestows it on his disciples, because they were appointed to preach the Gospel (Philip. ii. 15.), and to reveal to mankind the knowledge of Christ, who is the true *light of the world*; John, i. 9. This is also applicable to Christians in general; and to excite them and all Christians to diligence in dispensing the salutary influences of their doctrine and example, he bade them call to mind, that *a city which is set upon a mountain cannot be hid*; or, that the disciples of Jesus Christ, and all Christians, being appointed to profess and preach the Gospel, the eyes of all men would be upon them, and so, their faults being by this means known and observed, might stop the progress of the Gospel: compare Philip. iii. 17. Mr. Maundrell tells us, that there is a city called *Sychar*, thought to be the ancient *Bethulia*, which, standing on a high hill, might easily be seen from the mountain on which Christ made this discourse; and he, very probably, supposes, that our Saviour might point to that here, as he afterwards did to the *birds* and the *lilies*; agreeably to what we have observed on ver. 2. of our Lord's manner of taking his similes from the most obvious things; a thought which Sir Isaac Newton has well illustrated in his *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 148., to whom the writer referred to in the note on ver. 2. is greatly indebted. See Doddridge, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

Ver. 15, 16. *Neither do men light a candle, &c.*] This seems to be a proverbial expression. See the application that Christ makes of it on another occasion; Mark, iv. 21. Luke, viii. 16. xi. 33. They formerly used *lamps* only, instead of *candles*, and the *candlestick* was the foot on

which they were set up. The meaning of this comparison is the same with that foregoing. The disciples and Christians, being the lights of the world, were designed to light men out of the ways of ignorance and vice to Jesus Christ, and, through him, into the paths of holiness and virtue.

" Men do not so much as light a common *lamp*, to put it under a bushel, and conceal it there; but they set it on a stand, to give light to all who are in the house. How much less will it become you, whom I have compared to the sun, to hide or suppress your rays? The knowledge of divine things is given you, not to be concealed, but to be imparted to mankind around you; therefore, ver. 16. *let your light*," &c. That is, " Make your doctrine and example bright in the eyes of all who behold you; that they may honour God; first, by acting up to the precepts of the Gospel, strongly impressed on their understandings by your penetrating sermons, accompanied by divine grace, and powerfully recommended to their hearts by your exemplary lives; next, by their returning thanks to God for sending such men to enlighten and reform the world; for to glorify God is not only to praise him (as Luke, ii. 20. and elsewhere), but also to acknowledge the truth of the Gospel." See Luke, xxiii. 47. 1 Peter, ii. 12. The Greek for *in heaven* is plural;—(*in the heavens*), for the Jews reckoned *three heavens*, the air, the firmament, and the third heaven, or the heaven of heavens, the usual place of God's residence. See Macknight, Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Pierce's fourth dissertation. Heylin observes, in nearly these words, That the beatitudes, containing the principal articles of Christian holiness and morality, were as so many texts for the apostles to preach upon, and allure men to the practice of them, by shewing them the happiness which would ensue: but the generality of the world so little know the way to true happiness, that they scorn and abuse those who propose it to them; like men in a phrensy, who spurn the offered medicine, and assault those who would administer it. Our Lord, who foreknew this, forewarned his disciples of it: and lest such ingratitude and ill usage should make them desist from their high office, and not persevere in their endeavours to do good to others, at the hazard of such indignities and calumnies and dangers to themselves; he encourages them with the assurances of the great reward with which their patience would be crowned. He animates their zeal (ver. 12.) by the example of the glorious company of *the prophets their predecessors*, who had faithfully persisted in publishing the truth, and doing good to mankind, notwithstanding the grievous persecution which thereby they drew upon themselves. And, further to engage his apostles to tread in their steps, our Lord represents to them, that this is their bounden duty, the great work to which they were divinely ordained, and for which they were especially qualified by supernatural abilities; and that as their reward would be great, if they rightly discharged their ministry, so their punishment would be proportionable,

in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach

them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That, except your righteousness shall exceed <sup>b</sup> the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> James, 2. 10. Pf. 2. 3. 1 Cr. 3. 15. 1 Sam. 2. 30. <sup>2</sup> Ver. 3. 20. ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. & 13. 11, 31, 41, 47. & 2. 1, 14, 31. <sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 30. ch. 19. 28. Dan. 12. 3. 1 Peter, 5. 4. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 23. 3—28. Rom. 9. 31. & 10. 3. Luke, 11. 39. & 18. 11. Ch. 15. 3. <sup>c</sup> John, 3. 3, 5. Heb. 12. 14. Rev. 21. 27. & 19. 8.

proportionable, if they neglected it. “*You are the salt of the earth*, and your destined office, under my grace, is, to “*preserve from corruption of heart and manners; but if the salt become insipid*,” &c. Their especial duty was, to teach others their duty; but if they flinched from it, through fear of persecution, or any other motive, they would be lost irrecoverably, and sink in perdition beneath the rest of mankind, as much as by their sacred office they were placed above them. He goes on, therefore, with repeated allusions to remind them of their high station: “*You are the light of the world*, exposed to public “*view; a light which should illuminate all around, and in which every the least eclipse will be visible, and of bad influence*.” They were to be a pattern to others: they were to recommend their doctrine by their example, and to shew how amiable holiness and virtue are in their own practice. *Let your light so shine*, &c. See his Lectures, p. 75. Dr. Campbell renders the first clause, *Thus let your light*, &c.

Ver. 17—20. *Think not that I am come to destroy*, &c.] Because the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning happiness was contrary to that which the Jews were accustomed to hear, and which their preachers pretended to derive from the prophets, whose descriptions of the glory of the Messiah’s kingdom they understood in a literal sense; also because he was about to give explications of the moral precepts, of very different tenor from those which the Scribes and Pharisees commonly gave, but which his disciples, as instructors of mankind, were to inculcate: he ended this branch of his discourse, and introduced that which followed, with declaring that *he was by no means come to destroy the law or the prophets*; that is to say, the moral precepts contained in them; for he came to destroy the whole ceremonial precepts of the law, the hand-writing of ordinances, which he blotted out and nailed to his cross, that its abolition might be known to all. See Col. ii. 14. Besides, we find the phrase *law and prophets* made use of elsewhere, to signify the moral precepts contained in them. See chap. vii. 12. xxii. 40. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*;—*ἵνα ἑκταύρωσάμι, to confirm*, for so the word is used, 1 Kings, i. 14. See the margin of our bibles on that passage. Accordingly it follows, ver. 18. *Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth*, &c. Eternity and immutability are by no means the attributes of any ceremonial precept whatever. They are the distinguishing characters of the precepts of holiness and morality enjoined in the law and the prophets. None of them shall *pass, or be abrogated*, till all be fulfilled: *ἕως ἄν πάντα γίνωνται*:

“till all the things mentioned be done;” that is, till the heavens and the earth pass, or are destroyed. Our Lord’s meaning therefore is, that there is nothing in the universe so stable as the eternal truths of morality: the heavens may fall, the whole frame of nature be unhinged; nay, every part of it be dissolved; but the rules of righteousness shall remain immutable and immortal: wherefore he ordered his disciples, on the severest penalties, both by their doctrine and example, to enforce the strict observation of all the moral precepts contained in the sacred writings, and that to their utmost extent. Ver. 19. *Whosoever therefore shall break*, that is, *destroy* (the original word *καταστρέψω* being here put for *καταστρέψω*, as it is likewise John, ii. 19.) *one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called*, that is, *shall be—the least in the kingdom of heaven*. Since the moral precepts of the law are eternal and immutable, whatever weakens their obligation shall never enter into heaven: for there is in the text a figure which the rhetoricians call *meiosis* (diminution), often elegantly used to convey a strong idea. Thus, Gal. v. 21. *They that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*; that is, shall be severely punished. Our divine teacher adds, ver. 20., *Except your righteousness*,—the righteousness which you experience and practise yourselves, and enjoin upon others, —*shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*,—the Jewish doctors of the strictest sects,—*ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*; for ye, like them, will be corrupters of others, and consequently monsters of the blackest kind. But because this was a subject of great importance, our Lord goes on to specify various particulars, wherein theirs should excel the doctrine and practice of the Jewish teachers. This appears to be the true and proper explanation of this passage; and, from the whole of what follows, it is manifest that Christ refers to the moral, and not the ceremonial law; for he does not give a single instance from the latter. The original word *ἕως*, which we render *not*, ver. 18. undoubtedly answers to the Hebrew letter *jod*, whence the English word here used seems to be derived; and which, being the least letter of their alphabet, might properly be used proverbially on this occasion. The original word *κεφαλαία*, which we render *title*, properly signifies one of those little ornamental flourishes or flourishes, which, when Hebrew is elegantly written, are generally used at the beginning and end of a letter, and sometimes at the corners. The clause might have been rendered, *Not the least letter or stroke*. The latter part of the 20th verse must have greatly surprised Christ’s hearers, if the proverb which has since prevailed were of so ancient a date: for it has been commonly said

21 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said \* by whomsoever shall kill shall be in danger of the them of old time, "Thou shalt not kill: and judgment:"

\* Or, to them. † Exod. 20. 13. Deut. 5. 17. Gen. 9. 5, 6. Lev. 24. 17. Numb. 35. 16, 17, 30.

by the Jews, "That if but two men were to enter into the kingdom of heaven, one of them would be a Pharisee, and the other a Scribe." See Chemnitz, Calmet, and Macknight. Dr. Heylin observes very well, nearly in these words\*, that it clearly appears from these verses, that our Lord certainly foresaw the great abuses which would be made of the Christian religion; how some would think that they might compensate for the neglect of moral duties, by deeds of superstition and will-worship; and how others, glorying in their *presumptuous assurances*, would insist upon a faith destitute of morality; and by taking away the moral law, and consequently all holiness and love, leave Christianity a mere rattle in the air, an enthusiastic system of absurdities. Christ therefore solemnly, and with great emphasis, asserts the perpetual obligation of the moral law, till nature itself should be so changed, as to render its dictates useless. In the present course of things the law is so far from abating, or being abrogated in any essential point of duty, that, on the contrary, all who faithfully practise the law through the power of almighty grace, find by experience that it increases, and spreads its jurisdiction farther, in proportion to the progress that they make; for the moral sense greatly improves by exercise, and as men advance in their obedience to the law, they also advance in the knowledge of it; so as to discover new duties, and stricter obligations, whereof they had not before been sensible. But Dr. Campbell translates the 19th verse, *Whoever shall violate, or teach others to violate, were it the least of these commandments, shall be in no esteem in the reign of heaven; but whosoever shall practise and teach them, shall be highly esteemed in the reign of heaven.* And he observes, that to be called great and to be called little, for to be esteemed and to be disesteemed, is so obvious a figure, of the effect for the cause, that it naturally suggests itself to every discerning reader. By rendering, therefore, the Greek phrase, *βραδύτα των υψιστων*, agreeably to its meaning in most places, *the reign of heaven*, that is, the Gospel dispensation, there is not the smallest difficulty in the passage. But if this phrase be rendered *the kingdom of heaven*, as referring to the state of the blessed, and if *he shall be called the least in that kingdom* mean, as some explain it, *he shall never be admitted into it*, a most unnatural figure of speech is introduced, whereof I do not recollect to have seen an example in any author, sacred or profane.

Ver. 21. *It was said by them of old time*] To them, &c. and so wherever it occurs. *It was said to them of former time—But I say to you.* So our Lord introduces his several

improvements of the law under the different articles hereafter specified. Christ here distinguishes his doctrines from those which, in former times, had been publicly taught and enforced by the authority of law; for as there is a gradual increase of knowledge in every man, who faithfully practises what he knows already; so, by divine appointment, it has proved in the course of the world. What is commonly called natural religion was the general rule of life till Moses, who gave the revealed law which bears his name, and was the standard of duty till the coming of Christ, whose instructions are the completion of all that appertains to moral rectitude: upon which account the season of his dispensation is called *the last days*, as the ages preceding it are here named *the former time* (though frequently the term is applied to the latter days of the Christian dispensation); and it is with this view that our Lord, when he was going to extend the boundaries of the law, takes distinct notice how far they were advanced already. The Greek for *them of former time* is *αρχαϊκων*, which may be well rendered *beginners*, or *novices*, and so rightly opposed to the apostles, who were in a state of proficiency. See Heylin. The Lord Jesus Christ instances in the commandments of the second table, how the Jews had *corrupted the word of God by their traditions*; and he proposes here these commandments in the same sense as they were understood by the Pharisees, and sometimes with the glosses they put upon them; and from these it is that he endeavours to vindicate and rescue them. He begins with the sixth commandment. It seems the doctors gave it as their opinion, that this law, *Thou shalt not kill*, prohibited nothing but actual murder, committed with a man's own hand; and therefore, if he hired another to kill a man, or turned a wild beast upon him, that slew him,—according to them it was not murder, punishable by the law, though they acknowledged it might deserve the judgment of God. The doctrine of Christ's disciples was to be more sublime, exhibiting the intention and spirit of the law, which forbids our *being angry with another*, our affronting him, and judging evil concerning his spiritual estate without good reason; for the limitation added to the first member of the sentence, ver. 22. must be understood throughout the whole. It may be proper to observe, that by *the judgment*, is meant that court of judicature among the Jews, which consisted of twenty-three judges, who had power of life and death; so that the meaning of the words, *He shall be in danger of*, or *liable to be punished by the judgment*, is, "He shall be guilty of death." Deut. xvi. 18. xxi. 2. But it is to be noted here, that though the Lord Jesus Christ made use of the same expressions as were used by the Jews to denote temporal punishments, yet his words are to be figuratively understood, and applied to the future punishments of the wicked, of which he distinguishes the different degrees according to the different crimes. See Grotius, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

Ver.

\* When I quote writers who are not perfectly evangelical, I make such alterations as I judge necessary, giving intimation to the reader of the liberty I take, if the alteration be of any importance, and referring him to the original work; as my intention is, in this Commentary, to present to the congregation of the Lord a work which shall, to the best of my judgment, be perfectly consistent with the whole analogy of faith.

22 But ' I say unto you, That ' whosoever be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall shall say to his brother, ' Raca, shall be in

\* If. 50. 4. Deut. 18. 18. Exod. 23. 21. Heb. 2. 3. ' 1 John, 3. 15. Prov. 3. 29. \* Empty sop. 1 Sam. 20. 3. 2 Sam. 16. 7. & 6. 20. not James, 2. 30.

*Ver. 22. But I say unto you]* Which of the prophets ever spake thus? *Their language is, Thus saith the Lord.* Who hath the authority to use this language?—he who is able to save and destroy. The Lord Jesus Christ does not mean here that anger, or every scornful or reviling word deserves the same punishment from the magistrates as murder; that is to say, death; but only that anger, being in direct violation of the sixth commandment, because it tends and disposes men to murder, the judgment of God will take cognizance of such anger, as well as of all desires of revenge, hatred, opprobrious or reviling language, &c. See 1 John, iii. 15. The word *χωρίς*, without cause, though found in almost all the Greek manuscripts, is omitted in most manuscripts of the Vulgate. By *brother* is meant another Christian; this is the meaning of the Greek word *ἀδελφός*, in the sacred writings; and that the same sense is put upon it here is evident from the next verse. The Jews would give the name of *brother* to no one who was not an Israelite. They vouchsafed to give that of *neighbour* to a proselyte, but would by no means bestow it on a Gentile. Our Lord did not design to authorize a like distinction, when he made use here of the word *brother*; for he elsewhere enjoins his disciples to forgive all men in general, and shews that our *neighbour* is any man whatever. Luke x. 29, 30, &c. The word *judgment* here unquestionably must signify punishment from God; since this *causeless anger* might be so concealed in the heart, as not to admit of conviction before men. "He shall be liable to a worse punishment from God, than any which your common courts of judicature can inflict." See the note on ver. 21. Our Saviour goes on, "*Whosoever* to his secret anger shall add opprobrious and contemptuous words,—for instance, shall say to his brother, *Raca*, that is, *thou worthless, empty fellow!* shall be exposed to yet more terrible effects of the divine judgment, and be obnoxious to a yet severer punishment; as far exceeding the former, as that inflicted by the Sanhedrim, which extends to stoning, exceeds that which follows the judgment of the inferior courts, which only have the power of the sword." *Raca* is a Syriac word, which, according to Lightfoot, signifies a *scoundrel*; according to Drusus, a *coxcomb*; and so is a term of great contempt. *Kiv*, *vain man*, used James ii. 20. seems to be a translation of it; for, as St. Jerome observes, it is derived from the Hebrew קִי רִיק, which signifies *vain* or *empty*. See Parkhurst on the word. *The council*—, in the Greek *συνοδὸν*, a word which the Jews adopted into their language, giving it a Hebrew termination, *sanbedrin*, signifies the *council* or *senate* of the nation. It consisted of seventy-two judges, or, according to others, of seventy, besides the president. It used to sit at Jerusalem. Concerning the place where it met, see John xix. 13. This was the supreme court of judicature among the Jews, and to it appeals were made from inferior tribunals. It took cognizance only of the most important matters; as, for instance, such wherein a

whole tribe was concerned; those that related to the high-priest, a false prophet, idolatry, treason, &c. and could, while the Jewish government continued independent, inflict the heaviest punishments; particularly stoning, and burning with melted lead poured down the throat of the criminal after he was strangled. See Beauobre and Lencfant, and Calmet's Dictionary. Our Saviour goes on, "*Whosoever*, in his unreasonable passion, shall say to his brother, *Thou fool*, [*Μωρε*] that is to say, thou graceless wicked villain;—thereby impeaching his moral character, as well as reflecting on his intellectual; shall be obnoxious to the *gehenna* of fire; or, to a future punishment, more dreadful even than being burned alive in the valley of Hinnom; whence the name of the infernal regions is borrowed." *Wicked men* are so often called *fools* in the Old Testament, especially in the writings of David and Solomon; that the appellation of *fool*, in the Jewish language, signifies not so much a weak thoughtless creature, as a man deliberately wicked; for, as religion is the highest wisdom, vice must be accounted the extreme folly. Dr. Sykes draws the same sense from the word, by deriving it from the Syriac *μαρα*, *rebellavit*, *he has rebelled*; so that, according to him, the original *μωρε* signifies a *rebel against God*, or an apostate from the true religion. The valley of Hinnom, called also *Tophet*, was the scene of the detestable worship of Moloch, as we have before observed, 2 Kings xxiii. 10. See also Isaiah xxx. 33. In after-times continual fires were kept in this valley, for burning the unburied carcases and filth of the city, that, being thus polluted, it might be unfit for the like religious abominations. The Jews, from the perpetuity of these fires, and to express the utmost detestation of the sacrifices which were offered to Moloch in this valley, made use of its name to signify *hell*, of which they conceived it a fit emblem. Hence our translators have given *Tophet*, or *Gehenna*, its metaphorical meaning in the present passage, whereas it ought rather to have had its literal signification; for our Lord, intending to shew his hearers that the punishment of causeless anger, contemptuous speeches, and abusive names, shall, in the life to come, bear a proportion to the guilt which is in these sins; and finding no means in the language of men, by which those different degrees of punishment could properly be expressed, he illustrated them by the punishment wherewith the Jews were acquainted. This interpretation of the punishment, in the latter clause of the verse, has a particular advantage attending it, as it prevents the reader from imagining, that only the sin of calling his brother *fool* will be punished with hell-fire. See Lightfoot and Macknight. St. Austin observes, that here is a gradation in the faults reprehended. The *first* is *anger*, deliberately and causelessly conceived in the mind; the *second*, when that breaks forth in *wrathful expressions*; the *third*, when it vents itself in *contumelious abuses*. It is by these steps that a man, enraged with anger, sometimes proceeds to actual murder, but much oftener to the commission



danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou <sup>h</sup> fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 <sup>1</sup> Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 <sup>k</sup> Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer,

and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, <sup>1</sup> Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said ¶ by them of old time, <sup>m</sup> Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, <sup>n</sup> That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 <sup>o</sup> And if thy right eye <sup>p</sup> offend thee, pluck

<sup>1</sup> Graceless wretch; not as ch. 3. 7. & 12. 34. & 23. 13, 17, &c. John, 8. 44. Acts, 13. 10. & 23. 3. Prov. 25. 8, 9. Mark, 9. 50. 1 Tim. 2. 8. Rom. 12. 18. & 14. 19. Phil. 4. 7. Eph. 4. 26, 27. Heb. 13. 1. James, 3. 13—18. Job, 42. 8. Lev. 19. 18. 1 Peter, 3. 7. <sup>2</sup> Luke, 12. 58. Gen. 32. 1—20. 1 Sam. 25. 28. Prov. 25. 8. with Job, 22. 21. Pf. 12. 6. If. 57. 6, 7. 2 Cor. 6. 2. Heb. 3. 7—13. <sup>3</sup> Luke, 12. 59. Prov. 25. 8. Job, 15. 22. with a <sup>4</sup> Heil. 1. 9. ch. 13. 41. & 25. 46. ¶ Gr. to them. <sup>m</sup> Exod. 20. 14. Deut. 5. 18. Lev. 20. 10. Deut. 22. 21—25. Eph. 5. 5. Heb. 13. 4. <sup>n</sup> Job, 31. 1. Prov. 6. 25. 2 Peter, 2. 14. <sup>o</sup> Ch. 18. 8, 9. & 19. 20. Mark, 9. 43, 45, 47. <sup>p</sup> Or, do cause thee to offend. Pf. 119. 37. Job, 31. 1. 2 Peter, 2. 14. Col. 3. 5. 1 Cor. 9. 27. Rom. 8. 13. Gal. 5. 24. Prov. 1. 10, 15. & 4. 14, 15, & 5. 8, —14.

million of it in his thought and intention; and we are here warned, that all these steps are criminal in their several degrees, and that the law not only prohibits murder, but even the remotest tendencies toward it.

Ver. 23, 24. *Therefore, if thou bring thy gift*] Farther, to quench the first and smallest sparks of enmity, and prevent all occasion of angry resentments, our Lord adds what follows from this to the 26th verse; for so far his advice extends, with regard to the sixth commandment. Our Lord insisted particularly on reparation, assuring us, that unless it be made, God will not accept the worship of such offenders; being infinitely better pleased with repentance than with sacrifices, or external worship of any kind, how precious soever those duties may appear in the eyes of carnal men. Vain, therefore, is their presumption, who fancy they can make amends for yet more gross acts of injustice, by acts of devotion: “*Therefore if thou bring thy gift, δῶρον,—thy free-will offering, to the altar, and there recollect that thy brother hath ought against thee,—any just cause of complaint; leave there thy gift before the altar:—do not lay aside the thoughts of worshipping God, because thou art not in a proper state, but prepare thyself for his worship without delay; go thy way; first be reconciled,*” &c. It is observable, that Philo, in explaining the law of the trespass-offering, tells us, that, when a man had injured his brother, and, repenting of his fault, voluntarily acknowledged it, (in which case both restitution and sacrifice were required,) he was first to make restitution, and then to come into the temple, presenting his sacrifice, and asking pardon. This is a very just and natural account of the matter, and adds a great illustration to this text. See Macknight and Doddridge.

Ver. 25, 26. *Agree with thine adversary*] Our blessed Saviour here enforces the exhortation in the preceding verses, from the consideration of what was reckoned prudent in ordinary law-suits. In such cases, wise and honest men always advise the party that has done the wrong to make up matters with his adversary whilst it is in his power, lest the sentence of a judge, being interposed, fall heavy on him. For the same reason, we, when we have offended

our brother, ought to make it up with him, whilst an opportunity of repentance is allowed us, and that, though our quarrel should have proceeded to the greatest lengths; lest the sentence of the supreme judge overtake us, and put reconciliation out of our power for ever. The original *ἵσθι εὐνοῖαν*, rendered *agree*, seems to imply not only *peace*, but *benevolence*; and therefore might be rendered, “Come to a friendly agreement.” The word *ἀντιδικός*, *adversary*, properly signifies a person who is going to law with another. The farthing, *κοδράντιος*, was the least brass coin that the Romans had. In a figurative sense, which is that of the Lord Jesus Christ here, the prison is taken for *hell*, out of which the unrelenting sinner can never come, according to our Lord’s declaration, because he can never be able to make satisfaction.—We are all thy debtors, O Lord, and in one sense the prisoners of thy justice; of ourselves most incapable, not only of paying the uttermost farthing, but even of discharging the least part of the debt. We bless thee for that generous Surety, who has undertaken and discharged it for us; and by the price of whose atoning blood we are delivered from the chains of darkness, and are translated into the glorious liberty of thy children! See Doddridge, Beaufobre and Lenfant, &c.

Ver. 27, 28. *Ye have heard, &c.*] What has been hitherto said refers to *meekness*; what now follows, to *purity of heart*. Dr. Lightfoot, to explain the opinion of the Jewish doctors, respecting the duty of this seventh commandment, cites the Targum upon Exod. xx. by which it appears, that they were very loose moralists indeed. In opposition therefore to them, our Lord declared, *that whosoever looketh on a woman, &c.* whosoever cherishes unchaste desires and intentions, or, as it is expressed in the tenth commandment, *covets his neighbour’s wife*, is really guilty of adultery, though he should never find the opportunity of committing the act with her; for which cause, all such use of our senses, as inflames the mind with lust, must be carefully avoided. See on the next verse, and Eccl’us, ix. 5, &c. xli. 21. xlii. 12.

Ver. 29, 30. *And if thy right eye offend thee, &c.*] The word rendered *offend thee*, *σκανδαλίζει*, signifies to be a stumbling

it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31 It hath been said, ' Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That 'whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of \*fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

33 ¶ Again, ye have heard that it hath been said † by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, 'Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool:

† Deut. 24. 1. Ch. 9. 7. Mark, 10. 4. † Mark, 10. 11, 12. Luke, 16. 18. 1 Cor. 7. 10, 11. Mal. 2. 14, 15. Ch. 19. 9. Rom. 7. 3. \* Fornication before marriage, or adultery after it. † Gr. *to the ancients*. † Exod. 20. 7. Lev. 19. 12. Deut. 5. 11. & 23. 21—23. Numb. 10. 2. Eccl. 5. 4. Pf. 76. 11. & 50. 14. & 119. 106. & 61. 5, 8. Nahum, 1. 15. † James, 5. 12. Eccl. 9. 2. † If. 66. 1. & 57. 15. Pl. 115. 3, 16. & 99. 5. Ch. 23. 22. Rev. 4. 2.

bling-block in a person's way, or the occasion of his fall; and so implies much more than merely to displease; a remark which deserves attending to, because the sense of many texts depends upon it. We may read, *make thee offend, or insnare thee*. We may just note, that the greatest part of Christ's auditors being people who lived by their daily labour, to these the loss of a *right hand* would be a much greater calamity than that of a *right eye*; so that there is a gradation and force in this passage, beyond what has been generally observed. Every one knows that the expressions in these verses are figurative, and not to be literally understood. The general meaning is, "Deny thyself the use of thy senses, though ever so delightful, in all cases where the use of them ensnares thy soul. Turn away thine eye, and keep back thy hand from the alluring object." This, says Chrysostome, is a most mild and easy precept: it would have been much more hard, had he given commandment to converse with and look curiously on women, and then to abstain from farther commission of uncleanness with them. Figurative and proverbial speeches, which may have great beauty and force in one language, often lose their grace and energy when translated into another tongue, wherein the novelty and exotic air of the expression may greatly obscure the sense intended by it. All our translations of the Scripture must labour under this difficulty. A superficial reader will find his imagination shocked at the bare proposal of *pulling out an eye, or cutting off an hand*, being not aware, that by the *eye* is meant the *intention*, and by the *hand* the *execution* of it. In the very next chapter we have the *eye* again in this sense, namely, to denote the intention, view, or design: and to express performance by the *hand*, is so agreeable to the general tenor of Scripture-language, that it is needless to insist upon it. With this explanation, it appears not only that the precept is reasonable and expedient, but also that the terms by which our Lord chose to express it, are peculiarly proper to the occasion. The occasion was the prohibition of impure desires, and the mental adultery; an odious subject, which requires great reserve, and a covering of darkness, even in reproving it. But it is known how those who are possessed with that

criminal passion, are apt to be transported by it; and that the exaggerating metaphors in which they delight to express their infatuation, amply justify the sacred language of *pulling out the right eye*, and casting it away, to express the extreme violence which they ought to do themselves, who would preserve their purity. See Heylin and Osterwald on uncleanness.

Ver. 31, 32. *It hath been said, &c.*] The doctors of the school of *Sammai* affirmed, that in the law concerning divorce, Deut. xxiv. 1. the words *some uncleanness* were to be understood of *adultery* only; whereas they of the school of *Hillel* interpreted them of *any manner of dislike whatever*. Hence the Pharisees asked Jesus, ch. xix. 3. if it was *lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?* The opinion of *Hillel* was generally espoused by the Jews, as appears both from their practice and their writings. Thus Malachi, ii. 16. the clause which in our translation runs, *The Lord says he hateth putting away*, that is to say, divorces on frivolous pretences, is by the Chaldee paraphrast and the LXX rendered, *If thou hatest, thou shouldst put her away*. Also the son of Sirach, Eccl'us, xxv. 26. *If she go not as thou wouldst have her, cut her off from thy flesh*; and Josephus, Antiq. l. 4. c. 8. "He that would be disjoined from his wife, for *any cause whatever*, as many such causes there may be among men, let him give her a bill of divorce." Nay, one of their doctors delivered it as his opinion, "That a man may put away his wife, if he likes any other woman better." As therefore they had perverted the law of divorce, that they might give full scope to their lusts, Jesus thought fit to reduce it to its primitive meaning; assuring them, that he who divorces his wife for any of the causes allowed by the doctors, *whoredom* excepted, layeth her under a strong temptation to commit adultery; unjust divorce being no divorce in the sight of God: and that since such marriages still subsisted, he who married the woman unjustly divorced, committeth adultery also. See Macknight, Calmet, and 1 Cor. vii. 15.

Ver. 33—37. *Again, ye have heard, &c.*] As to oaths, the doctors affirmed, that they were obligatory, according to the nature of the things by which a man swears. See ch. xxiii.

neither by Jerusalem; for it is <sup>x</sup> the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 <sup>v</sup> But let your communication be, Yea,

yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever <sup>is</sup> more than these <sup>z</sup> cometh of evil.

38 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, <sup>a</sup> An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, <sup>b</sup> That ye resist

<sup>x</sup> 2 Chr. 6. 6. Pf. 48. 2. & 87. 1, 2. & 78. 68, 69. <sup>v</sup> James, 5. 12. <sup>a</sup> Cor. 1. 17, 18. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 15. 19. & 15. 19. <sup>c</sup> Exod. 21. 24. Lev. 24. 10. Deut. 19. 19, 21. <sup>d</sup> Prov. 20. 22. & 24. 29. Lev. 19. 18. Luke, 6. 29. Rom. 12. 17, 19. <sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. 6. 7. <sup>f</sup> Il. 5. 6. Lam. 3. 30. <sup>g</sup> 1 Thes. 5. 15. <sup>h</sup> 1 Peter, 3. 9.

ch. xxiii. 15. Hence they allowed the use of such oaths in common conversation as they said were not obligatory; pretending that there was no harm in them, because the law which forbade them to forswear themselves, and enjoined them to perform their vows, meant such solemn oaths only, as were of a binding nature. It was this detestable morality which Jesus condemned in ver. 34—36. By comparing ch. xxiii. 16. it appears that our Lord is here giving a catalogue of oaths, which, in the opinion of the doctors, were not obligatory. Jesus by no means condemns *swearing truly* before a magistrate, or upon grave and solemn occasions, because that would have been to prohibit both the best method of ending controversies, Heb. vi. 16. and a high act of religious worship, Deut. vi. 13. Isai. lxxv. 16. an *oath* being not only a solemn appeal to the divine Omniscience, from which nothing can be hid, but also a direct acknowledgment of God, as the great protector and patron of right, and the avenger of falsehood. *But let your communication, says he, be yes, yes; no, no:* “Maintain such sincerity and truth in all your words, as will claim the belief of your acquaintance: so that in common conversation, to gain yourselves credit, you should do no more than barely assert or deny any matter, without invoking the name of God at all; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil;” or, as it may be translated, *cometh of the evil one*: *Ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ*. See ch. vi. 13. In common discourse, whatever is more than affirmation or negation, arises either from our own evil heart, or from the temptation of the devil, who prompts men to curse and to swear, that he may lessen their reverence for God, and lead them at length to perjury, even in the most solemn instances; considerations, which shew the evil nature of this sin in the strongest light. We may just observe, that the Jews have a proverb among them to this purpose: “The yea of the just is yea, and their nay, nay:” that is to say, they are sincere, and perform whatever they say or promise. See James, v. 12. In whatever sense the last clause be understood,—*cometh of evil*, it contains a demonstration, that the 34th verse is to be explained with the limitation proposed; for it is evident that oaths were in some cases not only allowed, but required by the Mosaic law. See Exod. xxii. 11. Lev. 5. 1. Numb. v. 19. 21. Deut. xxix. 12. 14. So that if Christ’s prohibition had here referred to swearing in solemn and judicial cases, he would in these words have charged the divine law with establishing an immorality; which is most absurd to suppose. See Macknight, Doddridge, and Wetstein.

Dr. Campbell well observes, that our Lord is to be

considered here, not as prescribing the precise terms wherein we are to affirm or deny, in which case it would have suited better the simplicity of his style to say barely, *yes and no*, without doubling the words; but as enjoining such an habitual and inflexible regard to truth, as would render swearing unnecessary. That this manner of converting these adverbs into nouns is in the idiom of the sacred penmen, we have another instance, 2 Cor. i. 20. *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen;* that is, certain and infallible truths.

*Ver. 38—42. Ye have heard, &c.]* With respect to men’s resisting and revenging such injuries as are done them, Jesus assured his disciples, that although, for the preservation of society, Moses had ordained the judges to give *eye for eye*, and *tooth for tooth*, if the injured party demanded it; yet the doctors were greatly in the wrong, not only when they enjoined men to insist on retaliation as their duty, but declared it lawful in many cases for the injured party to avenge himself with his own hand, provided, in his revenge, he did not exceed the measure prescribed in the law. Christ’s doctrine is, that the good man is so far from revenging private injuries, that oftentimes he does not even *resist* them, and always forgives them when they happen to be done to him; a Christian generosity which he warmly recommended to his disciples in the passage before us. To understand it aright, we must take notice, that there are five cases put, wherein Christian meekness must especially shew itself: first, when any one assaults our person, in resentment of some affront which he imagines we have put upon him: secondly, when any one sues us at the law, in order to take our goods from us: thirdly, when he attacks our natural liberty: fourthly, when one who is poor asks charity: fifthly, when our neighbour begs the loan of something from us. In all these cases, our Lord forbids us to *resist*: yet, from the examples he mentions, it is plain, that this forbearance and compliance are to be understood under due limitations; for it cannot be supposed that our Lord forbids us to defend ourselves against murderers, who would unjustly take away our life: neither can it be, that he commands us to give every idle and worthless fellow all he may think fit to ask, whether in charity or in loan: we are only to give what we can spare, and to such persons as out of real necessity seek relief from us; nay, our Lord’s own behaviour towards the man, who, in the presence of the council, smote him on the cheek, gives reason to think he did not mean that in all cases his disciples should be perfectly passive under the very injuries which he here speaks of. In some circumstances, *smiting on the cheek, taking away*

not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And 'if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

<sup>c</sup> Luke, 6. 29. <sup>1</sup> Cor. 6. 7. Ch. 27. 32. <sup>d</sup> Deut. 15. 8. 10. Luke, 6. 30—35. Rom. 12. 20. Prov. 3. 27, 28. & 19. 17.

*away one's coat*, and the *compelling of him to go a mile*, may be great injuries; and therefore we may be justified in vindicating ourselves in a way perfectly consistent with every Christian temper. The first instance was judged so by Jesus himself, in the case mentioned; for had he forborne to reprove the man who did it, his silence might have been interpreted as proceeding from a conviction of his having done evil, in giving the high-priest the answer for which he was smitten. But, in respect to small injuries, it is not only our duty to bear them patiently, and be passive under them, but it is advantageous even in a temporal point of view: for he who bears a slight affront consults even his own interest much better than he who *resists* or *resents* it; because he shews a greatness of mind worthy of a Christian man, and avoids quarrels, which frequently are attended with the most fatal consequences. In like manner, he who yields a little of his right, rather than go to law, is much wiser than the man who has recourse to justice in every instance; because, in the progress of a law-suit, such animosities may arise, as are inconsistent with charity. Again, benevolence, which is the glory of the divine nature, and the perfection of the human, rejoices in doing good; hence, the man possessed of this godlike quality cheerfully embraces every occasion in his power of relieving the poor and distressed, whether by gift or loan. Some are of opinion, that the precept concerning alms-giving, and gratuitous lending, is subjoined to the instances of injuries which our Lord commands us to bear: to teach us, that if the persons who have injured us fall into want, we are not to withhold any act of charity from them, on account of the evil they have formerly done us. Taken in this light, the precept is generous and divine. Moreover, as liberality is a virtue nearly allied to the forgiveness of injuries, our Lord joins the two together, to shew, that they should always go hand in hand: the reason is, revenge will blast the greatest liberality, and a covetous heart will shew the most perfect patience to be a sordid meanness of spirit, proceeding from selfishness. See Macknight, Blair, and Blackall. The original words, *μὴ ἀντιστέναι τῷ πονηρῷ*, are rendered by Dr. Doddridge, *Do not set yourselves against the injurious person*. See the force of the original word *ἀντιστέναι*, 2 Tim. iii. 8. where to *resist the truth*, is the same as to endeavour to destroy it. Instead of *coat* and *cloak*, in the 40th verse, Dr. Doddridge reads *vest* and *mantle*, which more exactly answer to the Greek words *χιτῶν* and *ἱμάτιον*, and are parts of dress, under different names, still retained in Barbary, Egypt, and the Levant. The *mantle* was much larger than the *vest*, and probably the more valuable. See John, xix. 23. and Shaw's Travels, p. 289. The word *ἀγγαζέειν*, rendered *compel*, in ver. 41, all the commentators have observed, is derived from the name of those officers

or public messengers among the Persians, who were wont to *press* the carriages and horses they met on the road, if they had occasion for them, and even to force the drivers or riders to go along with them. See ch. xxvii. 32. We may very properly render the word *press*. This custom was also in use in Judæa, and the Roman empire. The last clause of the 42d verse should be rendered, *and do not turn away him that would borrow of thee*. The advice, or rather the commands, given above by our blessed Lord are applicable to all who are called to be members of the Christian dispensation; and the following observation may be useful to set them in their proper light.

The essence of virtue consists in mental disposition; in our temper and frame of mind: but, as human language is adapted to express bodily action much better than mental disposition, it is usual to express the latter by the action that it would naturally produce: and, as the principles of action are complicated and various, and prudence or necessity may often oblige us to omit in respect to action what the frame and temper of our mind inclines to: hence it comes to pass, that some evangelical counsels, which prescribe an outward action, mean in particular cases only the proper inward disposition; namely, a readiness and inclination to perform it: so that the will, though not formally mentioned in the precept, is always required; and the deed, though nominally expressed, may on many occasions be omitted. For instance, it is said at ver. 42, *Give to him who asketh thee*, &c. Now this precept is in the letter, and, with regard to the outward act which it commands, very often impossible, very often improper to be put in practice: but in the spirit of it, that is to say, the disposition of heart which it enjoins, it is always possible, always practicable, always obligatory through divine grace: the narrowness of our own circumstances may make it impossible, or the circumstances of him who asks our bounty may make it improper, to put this precept in execution, as to the outward act; for we may be so poor ourselves, or the person who applies to us may, by his vices or other qualities, be so circumstanced, that we either cannot or ought not to relieve him. But an inclination to assist him, and do him service, is always in the power of the genuine Christian: the poorest man may have in the good treasury of his heart wherewithal to defray this universal debt of benevolence to all who ask or need his assistance; and thus the precept will be virtually fulfilled. So again, when our Lord commands us not to *resist* the man who injures us, &c. his meaning is, that we should not repel and strive against the occasions of suffering which occur in the order of Providence, but readily accept every cross which comes in our way. Those who are capable of this lesson know full well how salutary sufferings are, and that it is hardly possible to carry on their purification without these

43 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy:

44 But I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

which despitefully use you and persecute you ;  
45 That <sup>e</sup> ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : <sup>h</sup> for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

<sup>a</sup> Lev. 19. 17, 18. Exod. 17. 14, 16. Deut. 7. 1, 2. & 23. 3-6. & 25. 17. Pf. 139. 21. 22. <sup>f</sup> Luke, 6. 27. & 23. 34. <sup>g</sup> Kings, 6. 22. Acts, 7. 60. Prov. 25. 21. Rom. 12. 14, 20. 1 Cor. 4. 12, 13. 1 Peter, 3. 9. <sup>e</sup> May be manifested. John, 13. 35. 1 John, 3. 1, 14.—18. Luke, 6. 35, 36. <sup>h</sup> Job, 25. 5. & 5. 10. & 38. 26. Acts, 14. 17. Pf. 145. 9.

these means : so true are those words of our Lord, Luke, xiv. 27. *Whoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

Ver. 43. *Ye have heard, &c.*] It may be proper to note here, in this last quotation, the manner of our Lord's quoting the doctrines which he chose to speak of. He does not say, *Ye know that it was said, &c.* as he would have done if nothing but the *written law* had been in his eye; but he says, *Ye have heard that it was said*; comprehending not only the law itself, but the explications of it, which the doctors pretended to have derived from the mouth of Moses by tradition. The passage of the law referred to in the present case is Levit. xix. 18. where the clause, *and hate thine enemy*, is not found. But the doctors pretended that it was deducible from the first part of the precept, which seems to limit forgiveness to Israelites: besides, they supported their opinion by the tradition of the elders, and by the precepts concerning the idolatrous nations too rigidly understood. Hence their malevolence to all mankind but their own nation was so remarkable, that the Heathens took notice of it. "Their fidelity, says Tacitus, "is inviolable, and their pity ready towards one another; but unto all others they bear an implacable hatred." Hist. lib. v. cap. 5. and compare 1 Theff. ii. 15. Indeed, they were so excessively haughty, that they would not so much as salute a Heathen or a Samaritan. None but brethren received the least mark of respect from them; a behaviour which rendered them odious to all mankind. They certainly dishonoured God extremely, by pretending that his law countenanced such ferocity; the precepts upon which they laid so much stress having no reference at all to the disposition which particular persons among the Israelites were to bear to particular persons among the Heathens. They only prescribed what treatment the Israelites were to give those nations as bodies politic, in which capacity it was most just they should be destroyed, because of their abominations, and because they might have tempted God's people to idolatry; Lev. xviii. 25. 28. But the Jews, overlooking the reason of those precepts, extended them most absurdly to the heathens in general, nay, and to private enemies among their brethren also. In opposition to this narrow and abominable spirit, our Lord commands his disciples to shew benevolence, according to their power, to every individual of the human species, without respect of country or religion; benevolence even to their bitterest enemies. See Macknight, Chemnitz, and the next verse.

Ver. 44. *Which despitefully use you, &c.*] *Who falsely accuse, or traduce you, and persecute you.* Dr. Doddridge

renders it, *Who insult you and persecute you.* The particulars mentioned in this verse, are certainly the highest expressions of enmity; for what can be worse than cursing and calumny, insults and persecutions? Yet we are commanded to love and bless, and do good to, and pray for, our enemies, even while they persist in their enmity against us. This may seem contrary to the precept, Luke, xvii. 3. where forgiveness seems to be enjoined only on condition that the injurious party repents: *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him*: but the difficulty will disappear, when it is remembered, that in the two passages different persons and different duties are spoken of. In this sermon, the duty we owe to *mankind in general*, who injure us, is described; but in Luke we are told how we are to behave towards an offending *brother*; one with whom we are particularly connected, whether by the ties of Christian society, blood, or friendship. The forgiveness we owe to *mankind* is in this sermon said to consist in the inward affection of benevolence, civil language, and good offices, such as we would have done to them had they never injured us, and hearty prayers; all which men may receive even while they may persist in their enmity; whereas the forgiveness due to a *brother* implies that he be restored to the place in our friendship and affection which he held before he offended. But in order to this, his *repentance* is justly required; because, without a sense of his offence, and due evidence of his reformation, he is both unworthy and incapable of being restored. See Macknight, Whitby, and the note on chap. vi. 12.

Ver. 45. *That ye may be the children, &c.*] Our blessed Saviour enforces the doctrine of loving our enemies, so far as to do them good, from the noblest of all considerations, that it renders men like God, who is good even to the evil and unthankful. "Being thus benevolent towards all, the bad as well as the good, you shall be like God, and so prove yourselves his genuine offspring; for he maketh his sun common to them who worship, and to them who contemn him; and suffers his rain to be useful both to the just and to the unjust; alluring the bad to repentance, and stirring up the good to thankfulness, by this universal and indiscriminate benignity of his providence." "If you would imitate the gods," says Seneca, "do services even to the ungrateful; for the sun shines even upon the wicked." "To conquer one's passion, to refrain from revenge, not merely to raise but even to assist and dignify a fallen enemy," says Cicero, "is not only to be like the greatest men, but like to God himself." *Hæc qui facit, non ego cum summis viris comparo,*

46 <sup>1</sup> For, if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the <sup>k</sup> publicans the same?

47 And <sup>1</sup> if ye salute your brethren only,

what do you more *than others?* do not even the publicans so?

48 ¶ <sup>m</sup> Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 6. 32. ver. 47. <sup>k</sup> Infamously wicked, tax-gatherers. Ch. o. 10, 11. & 11. 19. & 18. 17. & 21. 31, 32. Luke, 18. 11, 13. <sup>1</sup> Exod. 23. 4, 5. Lev. 19. 17, 18. Deut. 15. 7, 8. & 22. 1. Ch. 10. 12. with Luke, 10. 5. <sup>m</sup> Lev. 11. 4. & 19. 2. & 10. 7, 26. Luke, 6. 16. Job, 2. 3. 1 Cor. 14. 20. 2 Cor. 13. 11. Eph. 5. 1, 2. Phil. 4. 8. Col. 1. 28. & 3. 8—15. & 4. 12. James, 1. 4. 1 Peter, 1. 15, 16. 1 John, 2. 6, 29. & 3. 3—10.

*paro, sed simillimum Deo judico.* See his oration for Marcellus.

*Ver. 46. The publicans]* These were the Roman tax-gatherers, some of whom were Jews: these were more extremely odious to their countrymen than those who were heathens. The other Jews would have no communication with them; Luke, iii. 12, 13. Mark, ii. 16. Luke, vii. 35. They looked upon the profession as scandalous; and the professors were the more odious to them, on account of their great extortion. See chap. ix. 10. Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Calmet.

*Ver. 47. And if ye salute]* The original word *ἀσπάζεσθε* denotes all outward signs of friendship, such as embracing, wishing well, &c. It is the word used by the apostles in their salutations, Rom. xvi. &c. The meaning of it seems to be the same with that of the word *to bless*, ver. 44. See ch. x. 12. and compare Luke, x. 5. Instead of, *your brethren*, some copies read, *your friends*, which seems to have been added by way of explanation. The Jews embraced their own countrymen, and allowed them as *brethren*; but the Gentiles they thought unworthy of that honour. Our Lord here teaches his disciples to make their charity extend to all men. See Rom. xii. 17, 18. Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Wetstein.

*Ver. 48. Be ye therefore perfect, &c.]* Father Hardouin observes, that this might be rendered, agreeably to the Greek, *You shall therefore be perfect*, so as to contain a promise, and not an exhortation. The perfection of the divine goodness is proposed to our imitation, as it is *promiscuous*, extending to the evil as well as the good, and not as it is absolutely *universal* and *infinite*; for in these respects the imitation of it is impossible. The precise meaning of the text, says Dr. Sherlock, is, "Let your love be universal, unconfined by partialities; and, with respect to its objects, as large as God's is. Not that our love either to enemies or friends can be supposed in other respects, and, as to the effects of it, to bear any proportion to the divine love." See Discourse 13. vol. iii. The *love to friends* enjoined by the Scribes and Pharisees was very imperfect: we are to labour after a more complete resemblance to God, by *loving enemies*. The same precept is therefore expressed in Luke, chap. vi. 36. by *Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful*.

*Inferences.*—How excellent is the genius and design of Christ's Gospel, which is calculated, to raise our hopes of the truest happiness, to support us under all trials, and allure us to cheerful obedience! They are blessed indeed, whom he blesses, whatever they may suffer for his sake. See how our divine Saviour begins with opening his mouth in blessings of rich variety to his faithful disciples

under their numerous sorrows, persecutions and reproaches, fears and dangers, to animate and encourage their holy desires, faith and hope, meekness and patience, humility, love and peace, self-denial, hope and joy: and, oh, how great shall their honour and felicity be at last, to their utmost satisfaction, in the full enjoyment of God, and of his glorious kingdom! What leading hints did our blessed Lord give of Gospel-grace, which, after his death and resurrection, were to be discovered with clearer evidence, and more at large! How perfect was his obedience; and with what wisdom and authority has he drawn out the beauties and obligations of that law, which is the sacred rule of duty, in all its spirituality, exactness and wide extent! What a becoming reverence of God, and of his great and awful name; what chastity and purity, and mortification of all sin; what a happy dominion over our appetites and passions; what a sacred guard upon our speech and behaviour; what forbearance under injuries; and what a diffusive beneficence to mankind, and imitation of our heavenly Father, does it enjoin, that God in all things may be glorified! But how unworthy are they of the name of servants or disciples of Christ, who relax the obligation, or encourage a disregard to the least of God's commands! And what will become of them for ever, if death and judgment seize them in their sins! How steadfastly then should we adhere to the pure word of God, in opposition to all corruptions of men! How concerned should ministers and Christians be to spread the favour of the knowledge of Christ in all places, and to act up to their characters and engagements with all integrity, and without reserve! How honourable would this be to him and themselves; and what a blessing would it make them to the church and the world! And yet, alas! in how many things do we all offend, and come short of the glory of God! How should this humble us, and put us upon desiring truth in the inward parts, and on believing in Christ with the heart unto righteousness.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Among the multitudes who followed Jesus, many professed themselves his disciples. For their sakes therefore especially, as well as for the improvement of all who attended him, he took the present opportunity to lay open to them at large the doctrines of truth. For the convenience of being heard, he went up to a mountain, where, surrounded by his disciples, and seated amid the attentive throng, *he opened his mouth, and taught them*; while they hung upon his lips, and in silence, with their eyes fixed on him, drank in the sacred truths which he uttered. *Note*; It is enlivening and encouraging to the ministers of the gospel to behold a numerous and attentive auditory; and that is sacred fire, which not the desire of being

CHAP. VI.

*Christ continueth his sermon on the mount; speaking of alms, prayer, forgiving our brethren, fasting, where our treasure is to be laid up, of serving God and mammon: exhorteth not to be careful for worldly things, but to seek the kingdom of God.*

[Anno Domini 30.]

**T**AKE heed that ye do not your <sup>a</sup>alms before men, to be seen of them: other-

wise ye have no reward <sup>\*</sup> of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore, <sup>b</sup>when thou doest *thine* alms, <sup>c</sup>do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have <sup>d</sup>their reward.

<sup>a</sup> Or righteousnesse. Deut. 24. 13. Pf. 112. 9. Dan. 4. 27. 2 Cor. 9. 6, 10. <sup>\*</sup> Or will. <sup>b</sup> Rom. 12. 8. Eph. 4. 23. Prov. 19. 17. <sup>c</sup> Or cast not a trumpet to be sounded. Prov. 20. 6. 2 Kings, 10. 16. 1 Cor. 10. 31. Hosea, 10. 1. Zech. 7. 5, 6. <sup>d</sup> Ver. 5, 16. i. e. human applause.

popular, but the hope of being extensively useful, kindles in their heart; and it is that which gives energy and warmth to their discourse.

2dly, To be happy is the universal desire; but, whilst all pursue this as their aim, few comparatively attain the accomplishment of their wishes: and the reason is evident; they mistake both wherein man's true happiness consists, and the means which lead to it: consequently, are ever bewildered in a fruitless search, and tormented with continual disappointment. To divert us from our wrong pursuits, to inform us what is our true good, and to direct us to the attainment of real blessedness, is the gracious design of our adored Lord. Yet to many, the doctrines that he advances will appear paradoxical and strange; though, blessed be his name! every enlightened and converted soul will own, that, however strange they seem to others, they are found by happy experience to be indeed the true sayings of God.

In eight characters Christ shews wherein true blessedness consists, and pronounces on each, *blessed are ye*: at present they are the truly happy souls on earth; and their eternal reward awaiteth them in heaven. Oh, may this blessedness be mine!

The first beatitude.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Wherein then does this *poverty of spirit* consist? Answer, (1.) In a deep and humbling sense of our own spiritual wants and wretchedness, which brings off the sinner from every dependence upon his own goodness for acceptance with God, and on his own natural abilities to walk and please him, to a constant renunciation of himself, to a repose of his confidence on the infinite merit and intercession of Jesus alone as his title to God's regard, and on the grace of Jesus for all-sufficiency to think or act aright. (2.) In an intire resignation of ourselves to God, and contentment with our lot; sitting loose to the world and all the things of it; in poverty cheerful, our minds conformed to our condition; in prosperity humble, condescending, kind, and sympathizing with the necessitous. (3.) In low thoughts of ourselves, our abilities, attainments, and possessions of whatever kind; in honour preferring others to ourselves, the last and least in our own opinion; and seeing much, very much, to humble us in the view of our misimprovement of those blessings which God hath bestowed on us, and in which he has made us to differ from others. Now such as these are blessed in the

present satisfaction arising from the exercise of such a spirit and temper, and in a happy freedom from the murmurs, repinings, and mortifications, which make the proud and discontented perpetually uneasy. They are blessed with the experience of God's love and favour, who looks with delight and approbation on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit; and, as the summit of all felicity, *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*: the riches of the kingdom of grace below, and all the unsearchable riches of Christ and glory above, are the eternal portion of all those who through the power of Almighty grace persevere in this divine temper.

The second beatitude.

*Blessed are they that mourn.* We are apt to count mourners miserable, and to judge of happiness by the smiles of the countenance; but Christ teaches us a different lesson. Not that all who mourn are blessed: there is the mourning of discontent, the sorrow of the world that worketh death, the inconsolable tears of those who lament like Micah after their idols, and the melancholy of despair; these bring a curse and torment instead of a blessing. The mourning here commended is, A penitential mourning over sin, in the views of our base ingratitude; a mourning after God, if under darkness and desertion; a mourning over the dishonour brought upon him by the impieties of the wicked and the unfaithfulness of believers; a mourning over the distresses of the miserable, and especially a mourning over lost souls, which makes our tears like those of Jesus flow, while we are pouring forth before God our fervent prayers on their behalf. These are blessed: the tears shed for sin have a sweetness unutterable; a sacred pleasure mingles with them, to which all the noisy mirth of fools, exclusive of the heaviness which succeeds, is not to be compared; and they are the seed of true joy; for *they shall be comforted*, here below, in a sense of God's love shed abroad in their hearts, in the consolations arising from a sense of pardoning love, in the sacred delight of beholding sinners turned from the evil of their ways; and, continuing thus to follow their divine master, shall be comforted hereafter in the eternal fruition of God, and the inconceivable blessedness thence arising, when every tear shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall drink of pure, un sullied, and eternal pleasures, as out of a river.

The third beatitude.

*Blessed are the meek—respecting God,* submissive to his word

3 But, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth :

4 That thine alms may be in secret : and

thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

5 ¶ And, when thou prayest, thou shalt

<sup>c</sup> Luke, 14. 14. <sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. 10. 31. ver. 3. <sup>e</sup> Ver. 6. 18. Pf. 44. 21. Jer. 23. 24. Pf. 139. 12. Heb. 4. 13. Rev. 2. 23. Jer. 17. 10. <sup>f</sup> Ch. 25. 34. Dan. 7. 10, 18, 27. Luke, 14. 14. <sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 5. Rev. 20. 12. Eccl. 12. 14. <sup>h</sup> Ch. 23. 14. Luke, 18. 11.

word and providences ; never replying against the one, or murmuring against the other : *respecting man*, mild, inoffensive, easy to be intreated, unmoved with provocation, forbearing and forgiving, resenting no injuries, actuated by no private revenge, in patience and peace possessing their souls ; yet not mean-spirited, cowardly, and tame, through fear of man ; but, whilst in their own cause gentle as the lamb, in the cause of God and truth bold as lions ; zealous to maintain the rights of others, while they recede from their own ; and steady patrons of the injured and the absent. They are blessed ; they are, like their Lord, happy in themselves, beloved of all who know the value of such a spirit, and dear in the sight of God. *They shall inherit the earth*, shall have as much of this present world as is for their good ; but above all, and what seems here chiefly intended, thus perseveringly following the meek and lowly Jesus, they shall have a part in that better *new earth* wherein dwelleth righteousness, and be counted inheritors among the saints in light.

#### The fourth beatitude.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness* —that holiness and love which the spirit of Jesus communicates : and for this the poor and helpless sinner and the genuine believer in their different degrees hunger more than for their daily bread ; inasmuch as the life and health of their souls are infinitely preferable to the life and health of their bodies. *These are blessed souls* ; for every such desire is in a measure the proof of our possessing the righteousness after which we pant ; and *they shall be filled* out of the fulness of Jesus, who has enough to supply all their wants, yea, to fill them with joy and peace in believing.

#### The fifth beatitude.

*Blessed are the merciful.* This is the most amiable character of God, and herein his people resemble him. (1.) Mercy is *their temper*, they have a heart which can be touched with human wretchedness ; and though they may not always have it in their power to relieve, they are ever tenderly compassionate towards the distresses of the miserable. (2.) Mercy is *their practice* ; so far as their power extends, they are ready to shew mercy : they take delight therein, and count this work its own reward. They are merciful to *men's souls* ; pitying and instructing the ignorant, warning the unruly, comforting the feeble mind, helping the weak, and labouring to snatch the wicked as brands from the burning. They are merciful to *men's bodies* ; relieving the necessities of the poor, the friendless, and the destitute ; they are eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, physicians to the sick, supports to the aged and infirm ; ready to assist with their advice, their money, or influence, according to the various distresses of those who apply to them : they are diligent to discover those objects of mo-

dest worth and neglected indigence that are ashamed or backward to apply for relief. They are merciful even to *the brute beasts* : not only their servants and labourers are never vexed with unreasonable burdens, but their very cattle share their clemency, and own the kind and tender master. This is blessedness. They who are thus like God in spirit, will taste something of divine felicity ; and, of all the joys beneath the sun, none will be found comparable with the exalted pleasure of doing good. And *they shall obtain mercy* : such merciful ones plead no merit : the more they are enabled to do, the less opinion they entertain of their deserts, as every advance in grace brings proportionably greater light, and therewith greater humility. They cast themselves therefore wholly on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and they shall find mercy of the Lord in the great day ; and more they need not wish for, since his mercy includes eternal life and glory.

#### The sixth beatitude.

*Blessed are the pure in heart* ; who by faith are cleansed from all hypocrisy, covetousness, pride, and sensuality ; jealous to keep themselves unspotted from the world ; maintaining undefiled religion ; in simplicity and godly sincerity walking with God. They are blessed in the present paths of pleasantness and peace in which they go, and *they shall see God* as the consummation of all felicity ; be with him where he is ; be like him as he is, and from the light of his countenance, and the constant effusions of his love, drink in blessedness unutterable and eternal.

#### The seventh beatitude.

*Blessed are the peace-makers* ; men of peace themselves, and desirous to cultivate the like disposition among others ; following it with all men as far as is consistent with truth and purity ; averse from all disputes and angry contentions ; softening the spirits of the exasperated ; and kindly interposing, though sometimes at the expence of much ill-will, to repair the breaches, and heal the divisions, which the fiery and self-willed spirits of others have occasioned : the first to forgive, the last to be offended ; and where others prepare themselves for battle, still ready, though injured, to seek reconciliation. Such men shall be *blessed* in their deed ; they shall be accounted faithful subjects of the Prince of Peace, and *be called the children of God*, who is the God of peace ; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

#### The eighth beatitude.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.* All who follow Christ must expect his cross ; and every godly man, as long as a child of wickedness is in the world, may suffer persecution of one kind or other : where power is with oppressors, there it will reach to fines, imprisonment, and even death itself ; where milder governments

give



not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen

of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter

2 Kings, 4. 33. If. 26. 20. Ch. 14. 23. & 26. 39—44.

give protection from grosser injuries, there the lower methods of reviling, calumny, falsehood, insult, ridicule, and vile misrepresentations, will be the lot of Christ's disciples. Various pretexts indeed are commonly used to give a specious colouring to this conduct in lands professing godliness, as if it was not righteousness that men persecuted, but what they are pleased to call enthusiasm, or to stamp with some other opprobrious name: but, whatever occasional offences may have been given, the ground and root of the malignity shown against the people of God is their open and bold profession of the doctrines of the gospel, and the practice of experimental godliness, which is equally reproof and offensive to the formal and profane: on which accounts, therefore, the saints of God must expect to follow Jesus, bearing his reproach. But, however they are regarded among men, they are pronounced blessed by the author of all blessing, and theirs *is the kingdom of heaven*. Nor need any now wonder at these things among us, when, among God's professing people of old, the prophets were so persecuted before us, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elijah, &c. and therefore we are commanded to rejoice and be exceedingly glad to be numbered among such worthies, and expect that great reward in glory which God hath promised to those who, by patient continuance in well doing, look with them glory, honour, and immortality.

3dly, Our Lord's observations in ver. 13—16. are directed to the disciples in general, and to the apostles and ministers of Christ in particular; and their character is set forth under two similitudes:

1. As the *salt of the earth*. Their lives and conversations must be exemplary: they must not only be free from taint themselves, that is, from the allowed practice of sin, but endeavour to preserve others from the putrefaction of it; seasoning the earth with the doctrines of the gospel, diffusing the favour of the knowledge of Christ in every place, and thus becoming blessings to mankind. But, should they depart from the truth, disgrace their character, degenerate into lukewarmness and indifference, or apostatize to erroneous principles and licentious practices, their state, if not utterly desperate, is seldom or never retrieved: though their profession may continue, their favour is lost, they become insipid and tasteless, and are doomed to be cast out and trodden under foot of men, as worthless and contemptible, expelled from the communion of the saints below, and everlastingly excluded from the assembly of the blessed above.

2. As the *light of the world*, to spread the bright truths of salvation among benighted mortals, and point out to them the path which leads to eternal day; especially to lead sinners to Christ, the light of life: and in so doing they would be distinguished as a city set on a hill, and needed peculiar circumspection while so many eyes would be fixed upon them. Every minister, every Christian, stands on an eminence; more is expected from them than

from others, and many watch for their halting: as candles are lighted not to be covered, but to be set on a candlestick, and give light to all in the house, so were they endued with gifts and graces to illuminate the church of Christ, and diffuse the gospel word around, neither through fear nor shame concealing ought of the whole counsel of God; and in their lives, as well as lips, must their light shine in every work of faith and labour of love which may be profitable to men's bodies or souls; that whilst others are stirred up to holy emulation thereby, abundant praise also may redound to God, who is then eminently glorified when his people bring forth much fruit.

4thly, After the above discourse addressed to the disciples in particular, our Lord more generally directs himself to the multitude.

1. He obviates the prejudices which he knew many would entertain, and confutes the objections that his enemies would make, as if he was about to abrogate the law, and introduce a new system; when in fact he only meant to rescue the oracles of God from the corrupt glosses which the false teachers had put upon them.

[1.] He is not come to destroy the law and the prophets, as some of them might think, but to fulfil them, —to fulfil the *moral law* by his own perfect obedience and most pure example; the *ceremonial*, by answering in his own person, and oblation of himself, all the types and figures; the *prophets*, by accomplishing all their predictions: and, so far from loosening the obligations to obedience, he came, in perfect correspondence with God's ministers before him, to enforce them, and to vindicate the everlasting rule of moral righteousness from the mistakes and adulterations of the Scribes and Pharisees, to explain its spirituality and extent, and from right principles to urge the practice of true holiness.

[2.] He asserts the perpetuity and eternal obligation of the moral law: while heaven and earth endure, not a tittle shall pass from it unaccomplished, nor the least of its commands ever be abolished. It is the transcript of God's holiness; he can require nothing less; the least failure is eternally mortal; and though the genuine believer is relieved by the infinite merit of his divine Substitute from the condemning power of the law, his duty still remains the same, and he is as much as ever bound to regard this as the one unerring law of obedience. Whoever, therefore, dares avowedly to transgress the least command, and teach others to do so, by his example or his preaching, as if it might be done with impunity, which was the case with many of the rabbis of that day, he shall be rejected of God as least esteemed and worthless, and have no part in the kingdom of heaven; while they who, by the purity of their doctrine and the exemplariness of their conduct, continue to enforce the necessity of obedience to every command, accounting none too trivial to be observed, shall be esteemed and honoured of God as

into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

\* See ver. 4.

faithful here, and exalted to eternal glory hereafter. *Note*; (1.) The least sin has eternal death for its wages. (2.) They who extenuate the evil of sin, and promise transgressors impunity, will be reckoned with as the most daring rebels against God's government.

2. He professes it his purpose to enforce a righteousness beyond that of their most admired characters the Scribes and Pharisees, who were thought even to go to works of supererogation; and yet, what perhaps they would hear with astonishment, he assures his hearers their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, or they must never hope to enter the kingdom of heaven. The most extensive pharisaical righteousness of doctrinal orthodoxy, scrupulous exactness in the forms of religion, abstinence from grosser vices, accompanied with whatever alms, or fastings, or prayers, comes infinitely short of the spirituality of God's law. That righteousness alone which is of God by faith, a faith exercising itself on the infinite merit and prevalent intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, and working by love its genuine fruit,—that heavenly principle alone enables the Christian to act from motives which a Pharisee never knew; it purifies the heart, engages the soul to an universal delight in the law of God after the inward man, and begets the desire of unreserved obedience thereunto. And then, through the unmerited grace of God, and through this faith in the blood, the merit, and intercession of our adorable Saviour, are our persons and services acceptable to God in Jesus Christ; whilst all the duties of the formal and self-righteous, when strained to the highest pitch, are only a greater abomination in the sight of God.

5thly, Our Lord gives a spiritual exposition of part of the moral law, and very different from that of their pharisaical teachers.

1. He begins with the sixth commandment. *Ye have heard*, out of the law read in the synagogue every sabbath-day, *that it was said by them of old time, by the ancients, the elders who expounded the law, or to the ancients their forefathers, thou shalt not kill*; and, confining the command merely to the act of murder, they taught, that only such as had been thus capitally criminal were liable to the sword of justice either of God or man, excluding all inferior deeds of the like tendency from being accounted breaches of the law. But Christ teaches them far otherwise: *I say unto you*, and he speaks as having authority, *that not only you are forbidden to murder yourselves, or any other person, directly or indirectly; but whosoever entertains rash and causeless anger, or harbours a malicious wish or design against any man, though it never be executed, is liable to God's judgment, and criminal at his bar, as a murderer in his heart.* If the evil within break forth into opprobrious or contemptuous language, such as, *Thou empty fellow!* it deserves the cognizance of the Sanhedrim; but if it proceeds yet farther, to bitter reviling and rash censures, to say, *Thou fool!* Thou vile reprobate! such a breach of the law shall be punished with hell-fire. This should (1.)

awaken in our minds a deep sense of our guilt and sin, and humble us before God in the review of our past transgressions: well may we cry, on the rehearsal of this law, *Lord, have mercy upon us.* (2.) It should make us more watchful over our hearts, to suppress the risings of anger on trivial provocations, the inadvertencies or mistakes of others, or our own groundless surmises; yea, though the provocation be great, and the cause of anger just, we must see that it be not excessive, vehement, hurtful, or abiding. Our lips should be under the like restraint, that nothing hasty, perverse, spiteful, contemptible, reproachful, insolent, abusive, or malignant, proceed out of our mouth. The right government of the tongue is the sure proof of grace in the heart.

2. He recommends the exercise of that Christian love and peace which is the fulfilling of the law; and if offences come, we should be ever ready to confess our faults, ask pardon, make restitution, and seek reconciliation; and this,

[1.] Because till then we can offer to God no acceptable service; for all our worship and duties without love are nothing worth. If therefore we have done an injury to any man, such as the breaches of the commandment above remarked, before we presume to offer our gifts at God's altar, our praises, prayers, or whatever religious services we propose, we must reflect wherein and how much we have offended, and seek immediate reconciliation; since hatred and uncharitableness would make our best works an abomination, and love is better than all burnt-offering. Should our brother continue inexorable, and refuse all the submissions that we were ready to make, we must not then be restrained from drawing near to God, and may humbly expect that forgiveness from him which we cannot obtain from man.

[2.] Because, till this is done, the wrath of God abideth on us. For as it would be highly prudent for the debtor to seek to accommodate matters with his creditor before a suit commences, lest he should be summoned before the civil magistrate, and, the proof being clear, he should be consigned to the officer and cast into prison, without the possibility of deliverance; much more should the guilty sinner solicitously desire reconciliation with God and man, lest, dying in hatred and uncharitableness, his iniquities should witness against him at God's bar, and he should perish everlastingly. God is every sinner's *adversary*: our eternity depends on being at peace with him; therefore we need be anxious about it: the moment of time which is hurrying by is the space allotted us to agree with him; therefore every delay is highly dangerous: if we die in unpardoned sin, we have nothing to expect but a fearful judgment, where we are sure to be cast; the officers of vengeance are ready to execute the sentence, and the prison of hell is prepared to receive the condemned soul, where in everlasting burnings the guilty must be for ever paying, yet be never able to discharge, the debt they owe to inexorable justice.

6thly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 5. 3, 6. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 18. 26—29.

6thly, The seventh commandment is expounded by the same infallible interpreter: and well may we say, in the view of the spirituality of the law, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.* Thy commandment delivered to the ancients at Mount Sinai said, *Thou shalt not commit adultery;* and the pharisaical expositors had confined the breach of it literally to this grossest act of lewdness, excluding all the lower degrees of impurity, in thought, word, or deed: but Christ gives a very different extent to the command, to confound their proud claims who dared to boast that they were *no adulterers,* Luke, xviii. 11.

1. Every unchaste desire in the heart is adultery in the sight of God. The eye, the hand, the feet, the tongue, which by amorous glances, wanton dalliance, or impure discourse, tend to kindle the unhallowed fire of lust, or blow it up into a flame, and every contrivance to gratify this impurity of heart, though it be never brought to effect, involve the conscience in the same horrid guilt.

2. We are commanded therefore to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, which would lead us to offend; not literally indeed to maim or mutilate our bodies, though that, if commanded, should be readily complied with, rather than commit sin; but figuratively it signifies, however near and dear to us the sin may be, by long habit become incorporated as it were with our very frame, and hard to part with as these most useful members of our bodies; yet must it be torn away and cast from us with abhorrence. The heart must be kept with all diligence; no lewd vain thoughts harboured, especially when alone, solitude being often a great temptation to impurity. The eye must be restrained from gazing on a tempting object, and kept as under a covenant from looking on a maid: yea, every object which would awaken evil desire must be shunned, lascivious representations on the stage, impure pictures, books of amours, lewd plays, &c. nor must we omit to mention curious, expensive and indecent drefs, which exposes the person with a design to catch the wandering eye, and at once declares the spirit of the temptress, whilst it is a net to ensnare unstable souls. The hand, the feet, which can convey the silent innuendo, must be restrained from every motion of evil, *since he that toucheth her shall not be innocent.* The tongue must be rather plucked out than utter corrupt communication, or be suffered, by discourse grossly impure, or more dangerously and wittily lascivious, in sly insinuations and double meanings, to breathe poison into the ears of the unwary. As the grand means to restrain these evils, every approach to them must be guarded by daily abstinence and self-denial, making no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

3. A powerful argument is used to enforce this. Raging appetite will not be conquered by any thing short of the terrors of the Lord. The damnation of hell is the wages of uncleanness, and they who burn with impure desires must lie down in everlasting burnings, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; and dearly

do men purchase carnal delights at this price of eternal misery. The sentence is repeated, because men are very unwilling to believe what sounds so terrible in their ears; but the decree is fixed and immutable: those who refuse to fear it now, must feel it for ever. Better therefore, far better, is it to suffer the present crucifixion of vile affections, than indulge them at the penalty of never-ending torments.

4. All divorce is unlawful, except in the case of adultery. The Jews indeed, for the hardness of their hearts, were permitted to put away their wives by a public instrument before witnesses; but this was contrary to the original institution of marriage, and therefore our Lord utterly condemns all separation, except in case of a breach of the matrimonial bond: and should the person divorced marry again, she would commit adultery, as well as he who should take her to wife, and the crimes of both would also lie at the door of him who put her away; for they who lead others into sin shall be chargeable with all the guilt they bring upon them.

7thly, The third commandment forbade perjury, and enjoined the performance of the vows which were made unto the Lord, or to men under the sanction of an oath in his name: and hereunto the Scribes restricted the commandment, accounting oaths in common allowable, if true; reckoning it no sin to swear by the creatures, and that such oaths laid them under no obligation to fulfil them: but Christ would give them a better exposition.

*I say unto you, swear not at all.* Not that every oath is unlawful, since in matters of controversy, before a judge, an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife; and on solemn occasions such appeals to God are high acts of religious worship, see 2 Cor. i. 23. but all rash swearing on trivial occasions, in common discourse, is forbidden, with all unnecessary multiplication of oaths; under which this land groans. God's sacred name must never be taken in the lips thoughtlessly, irreverently, wantonly; nor may we use any creature to swear by, neither heaven nor earth, nor the temple, nor our heads, our lives, our souls, much less the idols of heathenism, such as Jupiter, or the like, this being equally criminal as to swear by the name of God himself. *Therefore our communication must be, yea, yea, nay, nay,* simply affirming or denying, without oath or imprecation: *for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, or from the evil one* the devil, or from the fountain of evil in the corrupted heart. Where more than simple affirmation or denial is thought to be necessary, there is implied a suspicion of veracity, which every rash oath for confirmation will serve but to increase; for they who make no conscience of an oath, cannot be supposed to make conscience of a lie.

8thly, The law of retaliation, *Exod. xxi. 24.* which permitted the magistrate to execute a punishment of the same kind as the injury, or, as some suppose, to fix a mulct upon the offender equivalent to the harm done, had been grievously abused to extortion, and pleaded in vindication

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for need of before ye ask him.  
 your Father knoweth what things ye have 9 After this manner therefore pray ye:

Ver. 32. John, 16. 27. Neh. 9. 32. Pf. 139. 1-5. & 33. 9.

of private revenge. Christ therefore teaches his disciples of what spirit they should be. Magistracy is God's institution, and the punishment of mens' crimes righteous and just; but all private revenge is forbidden. It is true, indeed, that self-preservation, the care of our families, the honour of God, and the good of society, may often make the redress of injuries not only lawful but necessary; but in innumerable instances our duty is meekly and silently to bear and forbear.

1. If a man strike us on the right cheek, or otherwise injure our person, or treat us with indignity, we may not render evil for evil, and by a return of the blow inflame the quarrel, but put up with it, or, if it be needful, put the case into the hand of the civil magistrate: and though our patience may be counted pusillanimity, and our forbearing may expose us to fresh insults, as if in fact we turned the other cheek, yet it is infinitely better, for conscience-sake towards God, thus to suffer, than to maintain our character or gratify our revenge by a challenge or a fray, which must provoke his wrath, and end in our perdition.

2. In cases of injury to our property, whether by litigious, malicious, and false persecutions, or in private disputes, though our coat were taken from us, it were better for peace-sake to give our inner garment too, than fly to the law for redress: for, if the matter of injury be small, which we may sustain without hurting our families, it is not only most pious, but most prudent also, to sit down with the first loss, since the expences of the suit often exceed the value of what we may recover.

3. If we are compelled by force to accompany a person a mile, rather than struggle or contend, it is better to go two. And thus in all other cases of affronts and injuries the like rule holds. Hard tasks indeed for flesh and blood! but let it be remembered, *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*

4. We must not only revenge no injuries, but do every kindness in our power to our neighbour; ready to relieve the wants of every real object of charity which presents itself to us, according to our abilities; and freely lending, without interest, to the industrious but necessitous: a small sum to help such a one in his trade, may be of vast service to him without any real loss to ourselves. And in the manner also of exercising our bounty, we never should appear reluctant, frowning, or giving as if it was extorted from us, but be happy to have it in our power to relieve the wants of our poor petitioners.

5thly, The whole law being fulfilled in one word, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, this is here insisted upon; and who that neighbour is, declared.

The Jewish expositors had vilely corrupted this divine precept by the addition they had made to it, *Thou shalt hate thine enemy*. And, as they confined the word *neighbour* to those merely of their own religion and nation, they interpreted this as a command to hate all mankind beside, in direct opposition to the letter of God's law, Exod. xxiii.

4, 5. Deut. xxiii. 7. But Christ teaches us very differently.

1. He recommends universal love: *I say unto you, love your enemies*. We cannot place confidence or take complacency in them or their evil ways; but we must bear all good-will towards them, remark with satisfaction whatever is commendable in them, and sincerely desire their present and eternal happiness, returning their curses with blessings, shewing every act of kindness to their bodies and souls who express the bitterest enmity against us, and, if they will suffer us to do no more, at least praying for those who despitefully use and persecute us;—such being the treatment which the true disciples of Jesus may expect, and such the gracious returns that they are bound to make. And this is the distinguishing spirit of Christianity, and what nothing but the grace of Jesus can produce.

2. He enforces his command with these strong arguments:

[1.] In so doing we shall resemble our Father who is in heaven, and prove our adoption of him, who, in the distribution of his providential mercies, causes his sun to rise and his rain to fall indiscriminately upon the evil and the good. *Note*, (1.) Our most common though most unnoticed blessings are those for which we are most deeply indebted to God. (2.) No man's state is to be known by any outward gifts of Providence; the just and unjust share them in some sense alike. (3.) If God thus sets us the example, we must diligently copy it.

[2.] We must shew the distinguishing spirit of our profession, and adorn it. If we only loved them who love us, or paid civility and respect to our brethren alone, what thanks would be due, where the obligation was reciprocal, and where even publicans would rival us? We must do more than others, if we profess more; not confining our regards to our nearest friends or relations, to those of our own party or nation, but opening our hearts wide as the world, and doing good to all, even to the evil and unthankful.

[3.] Our eye must be fixed, not on the attainments of others, but on that perfection which is in our Father; and to be perfect like him, and to take up with nothing short of it, should be our holy ambition. And as this must be our study, labour, and prayer in general; so particularly in this love towards our enemies should we desire to resemble him, which is a temper truly divine and godlike.

#### CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. Take heed that ye do not your alms*] *Your righteousness*. Our translators have put *alms* in the text; but doubting, upon good grounds, whether that was the true reading, they have for *alms* put in the margin *righteousness*, that is to say, *justice*, as it stands in the Vulgate; a reading supported with great authority from manuscripts, and commentaries of ancient fathers upon the place. However, if this were a mere verbal criticism, it would less deserve to be insisted upon: but it seems much better, and more

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Luk. 11. 2. Pf. 8. 1. & 115. 3. If. 66. 1. If. 2. 3. Jer. 23. 5, 6. Dan. 2. 44. & 7. 14.

John, 12. 28. If. 6. 3. & 8. 13. Pf. 111. 9. & cxlv—cl. Pf. xciii—c. cxlv—cl.

Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. Pf. 103. 19, 27. Ch. 16. 28. Rev. 22. 20. Ch. 36. 42. Acts, 21. 14. Pf. 103. 19—21.

more agreeable to the sense of the Evangelist, that instead of *alms* we read *justice*; for the proper reward, not only of alms, but of every other virtue, will be forfeited, if a desire of worldly applause be our motive to the practice of them; and therefore this first verse seems to be a general caution against vain-glory in our good works, which are here summed up as usual in the comprehensive name of righteousness or justice: this general caution our Lord applies in the sequel to the three principal branches into which that justice is divided; namely, *first*, justice to our neighbour, by acts of kindness and beneficence; for merely not to hurt him, when we can do him good, is not doing him justice: *secondly*, justice to God by devotion; and *thirdly*, justice to ourselves by mortification, ver. 16., &c. which three branches of justice our Lord here treats of severally. With this view Beza, who was for restoring *δικαιοσύνη*, *justice*, into the Greek text, makes the same remark; as does also St. Austin, who found *justitia* in his copy. This verse therefore may be considered as a general introduction to what follows. The doctrine and precepts of the disciples,—the *righteousness* which they preached, was to excel the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees in the manner set forth in the preceding chapter. Our Lord goes on to speak of the righteousness which the Jewish teachers practised, or pretended to practise; shewing that his disciples ought to excel them in that respect also. The particulars which he mentions, though few, are of great importance; namely, alms-giving, prayer, fasting, heavenly-mindedness, walking with God, and cheerful resignation. The present chapter contains four parts; *first*, the right intention and manner in *giving alms*, ver. 1—4.; *secondly*, the right intention, manner, form, and pre-requisites of *prayer*, ver. 5—15.; *thirdly*, the right intention and manner of *fasting*, ver. 16—18.; *fourthly*, the necessity of a pure intention in all things, unmixed either with a desire of riches, or worldly care and fear of want, ver. 19—34. This first verse is a general caution against vain-glory in any of our good works. Our Saviour does not forbid us to do works of this kind publicly; for on some occasions that cannot be avoided; but to do them publicly, with a *view* and *design* to be *seen of men*, and to be applauded for them. See Heylin, Wetstein, Bengelius, and Olearius.

*Ver. 2. When thou doest thine alms*] *When you do good* *secretly*. Heylin. The term *ἰσχυροσύνῃ*, which we render *alms*, has a much larger signification, and imports all acts of kindness by which we can benefit others. In all these our Lord warns us against ostentation, and the desire of applause; and not only that we should not seek the praise of others upon such occasions, but also cautiously abstain from all vain-glorious reflections upon the good that we have done; which advice he couches in those emphatical words, *Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth*. The phrase of *sounding a trumpet before them*, is generally thought to be only a figurative expression, to represent

their doing it in a noisy ostentatious way, as it is certain that “to do a thing with the sound of the trumpet,” is sometimes used proverbially to express a public ostentation. However, it seems not improbable, that as the Jews were wont to assemble the people by the sound of a trumpet, (Joel ii. 15.) persons who affected the reputation of being extremely charitable, might *sound a trumpet* when they distributed their alms, on pretence, no doubt, of gathering the poor to receive them, while their real intention was to proclaim their own good works, and to receive *glory of men*. See Beza, and Eisner.

*Ver. 3. Let not thy left hand know*] This is a kind of proverbial expression, which may be explained to this effect: “Let no one, no, not even your most intimate acquaintance, know what you do; be ignorant of it ‘yourself, or forget it immediately as far as possible.’” It is said that the poor’s chest stood on the *right hand* as they entered the synagogues; to which circumstance some suppose the words to allude.

*Ver. 5. And when thou prayest*] Our Lord is here treating of private prayer; for which reason his rules must not be extended to public devotion. The Jews of old observed stated hours of prayer: the Scripture mentions three of them; *first*, the *third hour*, answering to our nine o’clock, when the morning sacrifice was offered: *secondly*, the *sixth hour*, answering to our twelve o’clock. At this hour we find Peter praying on the house-top, Acts, x. 9.; *thirdly*, the *ninth hour*, answering to our three o’clock in the afternoon; at which time the apostles Peter and John are said to have gone up to the temple, Acts, iii. 1. The three are mentioned together, Psalm lv. 17. See also Daniel, vi. 10, 13. At these hours, therefore, the hypocrites took care to be in some *public meeting* or other, (for so the original word *συναγωγῆς* may be understood,) perhaps in the market-place, or in some court of justice, or in a corner where two streets met, and where there was a concourse of passengers to behold their devotions; which they performed before all present, with a vanity extremely offensive to the great Being whom they pretended to worship. This was the affectation here blamed in the Jews as most abominable to God.

*Ver. 6. Enter into thy closet*] That is, “perform thy ‘private devotions without noise or shew; by which it ‘will appear, that thou art influenced by a true sense of ‘duty.’” The word *καπέριον*, *closet*, signifies any retired part of the house, any *secret* or *separate place*; and Mr. Blair piously conjectures, that Christ might use a word of such latitude, that none might omit secret prayer, for want of so convenient an apartment as they could wish to retire into. Duly to perform the great duty of private prayer, we must withdraw from the world not only our persons, but our thoughts too; we must shut out all worldly cares and considerations, as if we and God were alone in nature. Some of the fathers teach us, that our Lord here alludes not only to the *closet*, but to the *heart*: and indeed all duties,

unaccom-

11 ' Give us this day our daily bread.

12 ' And forgive us our debts, as we forgive

our debtors.

13 ' And lead us not into temptation, but

<sup>r</sup> Ch. 4. 4. Prov. 30. 8. Luke, 11. 3. Exod. 16. 21. 1 Tim. 5. 8. & 6. 8. Job, 23. 12. John. 6. 3. Gen. 43. 25—34. If. 58. 10, 11. <sup>s</sup> If. 43. 25. Pf. 130. 4, 8. Ch. 18. 21, 22. Col. 3. 13. <sup>t</sup> Ch. 26. 41. John, 17. 15. 1 Cor. 10. 13. 1 Peter, 5. 8. 2 Chr. 12. 7, 9. 2 Peter, 2. 9. Rev. 3. 12.

unaccompanied with integrity of heart, are utterly unavailing. "The heart," says St. Ambrose, "is a retiring-place, always private, always at hand, and ready to receive you:" indeed a mind long practised in piety can easily recollect itself in every place, and maintain devotion in the midst of a crowd. Thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet, and there enter into thyself by devout recollection; for the bodily retirement avails nothing, but inasmuch as it serves to promote the mental; which is a disposition essentially necessary to prayer, and sometimes difficult to beginners, by reason of the contrary habit which their minds have contracted, by living ever abroad, and being dissipated among sensible objects; but a sincere endeavour will soon be accompanied by greater aid from the grace of God, if we faithfully bear in mind the fundamental truth in which our Lord here instructs us; namely, that the Almighty God is with us in our secret retirement. *Pray to thy Father who is in secret*,—is there present with thee. God, we know, is in all places; but his spiritual nature lies beyond the reach of bodily senses. When, therefore, you are retired from the world, and have shut the door of your closet, and of your heart too, as close as possible by devout recollection, turn all your attention to God, present with you, and present in you, and humble yourselves before him with a full assurance of faith, of actual faith I mean, that you are in his presence; and believe me,—for this is a truth of the utmost consequence,—that as the faith of the diseased woman, who touched our Saviour's clothes, drew forth a miraculous power to heal her infirmity, so this faith, wherewith we approach God in and through Christ in prayer, will infallibly draw forth the Divine co-operation to our endeavours. He is a living God, and a gracious God through Christ, and his spirit will unite with ours to help our infirmities, and enable us to offer up such prayers as will find acceptance at the throne of grace. Such is the preparation or disposition with which we should address ourselves to God in prayer. The following words instruct us in what is farther requisite for the right performance of it.

*Ver. 7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions*] The original word *εαπτολογήσετε*, is derived from one *Baltus*, who was a great babbler (see Ovid's *Metamorph.* ii. ver. 688.); and signifying "to use a vain multiplicity and repetition of words." See Mintert, Beza, and Hammond. The word is very applicable to the devotions of the Heathens. See 1 Kings, xviii. 26. Acts xix. 34. The *vain repetition* which Christ here forbids his disciples to use in their prayers, is plainly such as proceeded from an opinion that they were to be heard for their much speaking, after the manner of those Heathens: this opinion implying a denial either of the power, or the knowledge, or goodness of him whom we worship, is highly injurious to him; and therefore repetitions in prayer flowing from it, are culpable; but repetitions proceeding from a deep sense of our wants, and which express a vehement desire of the divine grace,

Jesus by no means prohibits; for he himself made use of such repetitions in his agony, when he prayed three several times with exceeding vehemence; yet, as St. Matthew remarks, *using still the same words*: and indeed nothing is more beneficial, than to persevere as long as possible in the same act of desire, and to renew it again and again with fresh zeal and intenseness. This is what our Lord both taught and practised. But to repeat words without intending, or meaning them, is certainly a *vain repetition*; and therefore we must be extremely careful in our prayers to mean what we say, and to say only what we mean from the very bottom of our hearts. The *vain* and heedless *repetitions*, which we are here warned against, are a most dangerous, yet very common error, which has long been the reproach of Christendom, and is the principal cause why for many, even of those who still profess religion, is a disgrace to it: and how is it possible they should be otherwise, while they want the reality of all true religion, an inward devotion? See Heylin.

*Ver. 8. Be not ye therefore like unto them*] This argument would be forcible against all prayer in general, if prayer were considered only as a means of making our wants known to God; whereas it is no more than an act of obedience to our heavenly Father, who has *commanded* us to pray to him, chap. vii. 7. and made it a condition of his favours; an expression of our trust in him, and dependence on his goodness, whereby we acknowledge, that all the benefits we receive come from him, and that we must apply to him for the attainment of them. "These words," says Dr. Heylin, are highly instructive, and may serve "to give us a solid and practical knowledge of the true nature of prayer." The proper end of prayer is not to inform God of our wants; omniscient as he is, he cannot be informed: the only thing wanting is a fit disposition on our part to receive his grace; and the proper office of prayer is, through the merit of Christ and the grace of his Spirit, to produce such a disposition in us, as to render us proper subjects for pardoning and sanctifying grace to work in; or, in other words, to remove the obstacles which we ourselves put to his goodness. Now the principal obstacles are, worldly-mindedness and self-love; whereby our desires cleave to earthly goods and corrupt selfish interests: but in prayer we suspend these desires, our heart being through grace turned to God only; and by whatever means we attain such a holy posture of mind, they are the proper means of true devotion. As long as our minds are attentive to God only, by whatever sentiment that attention is maintained, so long we pray. When such attention flags, we must renew it by passing on to some other consideration proper to keep our heart attached to God through Christ, and open to receive his pardoning or sanctifying communications.

*Ver. 9. After this manner, therefore, pray ye*] The Lord Jesus Christ gives his disciples a form of prayer, as was usually done by the Jewish masters; John the Baptist had

deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 ¶ For, if ye forgive men their tref-

\* 1 Chr. 29. 11. 1 Tim. 6. 15. Eph. 1. 19. 1 Peter, 1. 5. Pf. 47. 2, 7. & 96. 7, 8. & 135. 6. 1 Tim. 1. 17. Eph. 3. 21. \* Ch. 18. 21—35. Mark, 11. 25, 26. Eph. 4. 32. Col. 3. 15. Prov. 21. 13. James, 2. 13.

taught his disciples to pray, Luke, xi. 1. It is to be observed, that this prayer is almost wholly taken out of the Jewish liturgies, and from them so well adapted by our Lord, as to contain all things which can be requested of God, with an acknowledgment of his divine Majesty, and of our dependence. The word *ye* here is emphatical; *thus pray YE*, in opposition to the heathen, who used vain repetitions in their prayers. He who best knew what we ought to pray for, and how we ought to pray, what matter of desire, what manner of address would most please himself, and would best become us, has here dictated to us a most perfect and universal form of prayer, comprehending all our real wants, expressing all our lawful desires; a complete directory, and full exercise of all our devotions. Yet it does not follow, that we are to use only the words of this prayer in our address to God; for in the *Acts* and *Epistles*, we find the Apostles praying in terms different from this form. But the meaning of these words, *thus, or after this manner pray ye*, is, that we are to frame our prayers according to this model, both with respect to matter, manner, and style; short, close, full. This prayer consists of three parts; the *preface*, the *petition*, and the *conclusion*. I. The preface,—*Our Father, which art in heaven*,—lays a general foundation for prayer; comprising what we must first know of God, before we can pray in confidence of being heard. It likewise points out to us that faith and humility, and love of God and man, with which we are to approach God in prayer. 1. If they be called *fathers*, who beget children, and bring them up, the Almighty God has the best right to that title from every creature, and particularly from men, being the *Father of their spirits* (Heb. xii. 9.), the maker of their bodies, and the continual preserver of both. Nor is this all; he is our *Father* in a yet higher sense, as he regenerates and restores his image upon our minds; so that, partaking of his nature, we become his children, and can with holy boldness name him by the title of that relation. In the former sense, God is the father of all his creatures; but in the latter, he is the *father* only of such as are regenerated by his grace. Of all the magnificent titles invented by philosophers or poets in honour of their gods, there is none which conveys so grand and lovely an idea, as this simple name of *father*. Being used by mankind in general, it marks directly the essential character of the true God; namely, that he is the first cause of all things, or the Author of their being; and at the same time conveys a strong idea of the tender love which he bears to his creatures, whom he nourishes with an affection, and protects with a watchfulness, infinitely superior to that of any earthly parent whatsoever. But the name *father*, besides teaching us that we owe our being to God, and pointing out his goodness and mercy in upholding us, expresses also his power to give us the things that we ask, none of which can be more difficult than creation. Further, we are taught to give the great God the title of *father*, that our sense of the tender relation in which he stands to us

through Jesus Christ may be confirmed; our faith in his power and goodness strengthened; our hope of obtaining what we ask in prayer cherished; and our desire of obeying and imitating him quickened; for even natural reason teaches, that it is disgraceful for children to degenerate from their parents, and that they cannot commit a greater crime, than to disobey the just commands of an indulgent father. 2. Again, we are directed to call him *our Father*, in the *plural number*, and that even in secret prayer; to put us in mind, that we are all *brethren*, the children of one common parent, and that we ought to love one another with *pure hearts fervently*; praying not for ourselves only, but for others; that God may *give them* likewise *daily bread*, the forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation. 3. The words, *which art in heaven*, do not confine God's presence to *heaven*, for he exists everywhere; but they contain a comprehensive, though short, description of the divine greatness. They express God's majesty, dominion, and power; and distinguish him from those whom we call our fathers on earth, and from false gods, who are not in heaven, the region of bliss and happiness; where God, who is essentially present through all the universe, gives more especial manifestations of his presence to such of his creatures as he has exalted to share with him in his eternal felicity.

II. 1. *Hallowed be thy name*] This is commonly esteemed the first of the *petitions* in the Lord's prayer. Wetstein, however, and several others, are of opinion that these words, as well as those in the next verse, are not to be considered as *petitions* so much as acts of adoration, and acknowledgments of the power and majesty of God; and accordingly they begin the *petitions* at the 11th verse. But I apprehend, says Dr. Heylin, in nearly these words, (and with him the greater part agree,) that this passage directly tends to our sanctification, and that we are as much personally concerned in this, as in the following petitions; for, in order to our sanctification, our notions and opinions in respect to all essential doctrines and experimental truths must first be rectified by the divine light, because our notions are in a great measure the rule of our actions; we are solicitous or indifferent about things, not according to their intrinsic merit, but according to the notions or opinions which we have conceived of them, as desirable, or of no moment; so that a change of heart and manners must ever begin in change of opinions,—in a knowledge of our fallen state, of our great Remedy, and the manner of applying it through faith. Again, before a man is truly penitent, his notions of worldly goods are lively and animated, as of things highly desirable; but his notion of God is a faint and insipid idea, as of somewhat remote, and which he cares not to be concerned with. The thoughts of wealth and glory and pleasure move his heart strongly; but the thought of God lies dormant in him, as a barren or disagreeable speculation. What we want, therefore, is a due and worthy notion of God; I mean a high

passes, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you

high and lively and affecting sense of him; such as may have its proper ascendant in our minds; such as may rule in our hearts, and make us behave towards him in a manner suitable to his dignity: and this I take to be the drift of these words, *hallowed be thy name*; for the *name* of God signifies, that idea or notion whereby we conceive him in our minds (see Ps. lxxvi. 1. Prov. xviii. 10.); and to *hallow* or *sanctify* a thing, signifies to give it that distinction and preference which religion confirms: for, as things excelling upon a worldly account are *honourable*, so things excelling upon a religious account are called *holy*; and therefore, in these words *hallowed be thy name*, we pray, that the conception or thought of God should be so exalted in us, that all our thoughts may fall down before it, and be brought in subjection to it; that the names of grandeur, and riches, and voluptuous joy, may sink beneath the name of the Lord our God; may fade, and lessen, and vanish in his presence. This is *hallowing the name of God*, and treating it with the reverence that it deserves: this is the end of all religion, and therefore first proposed in this divine prayer: the following petitions relate to the means of attaining it. Such is Dr. Heylin's interpretation. It may be proper, however, for the satisfaction of the reader, to give that which is more generally received. Now the *name of God* is generally understood as a Hebraism for God himself, his attributes and works; and to *sanctify a thing*, is to entertain the highest notion of it, as true and great and good; and by our words and actions to testify that belief. See 1 Pet. iii. 15. Isai. viii. 13. In this view, the meaning of the petition is, "May thy existence be universally believed; thy perfections loved and imitated; thy works admired, thy providence revered and confided in: may we and all men so think of the Divine Majesty, and of his attributes and works, and may we and they so express our veneration of God, that his glory may be manifested everywhere, to the utter destruction of the worship of idols and devils!" See Erasmus, Barrow, Macknight, &c.

Ver. 10. *Thy kingdom come*] 2. The *kingdom of God* being universal and everlasting (Ps. cxlv. 13), these words cannot be understood of it; but of the kingdom of the Messiah, which is also called *The kingdom of God*, ch. iii. 2. There are in the coming of this kingdom several steps to be observed:—The resurrection of Jesus Christ, his ascension, and the sending down of the Holy Ghost, were the beginnings of it. Acts, ii. 32. 36. The preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles extended it beyond the bounds of Judæa, especially when, after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter extirpation of the ceremonial law, the earthly kingdom of Judæa, over which God in a peculiar sense presided, entirely ceased, and the Gospel came to be preached over the known world. This kingdom has ever since enlarged its bounds, as the Gospel has been by degrees received in the world, and will continue to enlarge itself, till our adorable Redeemer has put all enemies under his feet. What we desire or pray for in this second petition is, the advancement and progress of the Gospel; obedience to

the faith or doctrine of Christ, and his appearance in glory. See 2 Tim. iv. 8. Rom. viii. 19, &c. Rev. xii. 17. 20. It may be paraphrased thus: "May thy kingdom of grace come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth; may all mankind, receiving thee, O Christ, for their king, and truly believing in thy name, be filled with righteousness and peace and joy; with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into thy kingdom of glory, there to reign with thee for ever and ever."

*Thy will be done in earth, &c.*] 3. In this third petition we pray not that *God may do his own will*, as Dr. Whitby observes, nor that the will of his providence may be done upon us; neither do we pray that we may become equal to the angels in perfection, or that God may compel us to do his will; but that, in consequence of the coming of his kingdom, or the establishment of the Gospel in the world, men may be enabled to imitate the angels, by giving such a sincere, universal, and constant obedience to the divine commands, as the present state of human nature will admit of. This is the most humble, as well as the most prudent wish, that it is possible for the creature to express; because it implies that the Supreme Being will do nothing but what is for the interest of his creatures, who simply and wholly depend upon him; and that he knows better than they what is for their real good. Dr. Heylin joins the two petitions of this verse together; because, says he, they have a mutual dependence, and may best serve to explain each other. The latter, wherein we pray that we may do the will of God on earth, as the angels do it in heaven, might seem a strange, or perhaps presumptuous, certainly an impossible request, had we not been first taught to say, *Thy kingdom come*. If the *kingdom of God comes*; that is to say, if God vouchsafes to govern us, he will subdue all our enemies under our feet; a *sceptre of justice is the sceptre of his kingd.m.* It will bring every thought into subjection; it will animate and govern our souls, as our souls do our bodies, and make us do his will on earth as the angels do it in heaven.

Ver. 11. *Give us this day our daily bread*] 4. The word *ἐπιούσιος*, rendered *daily* in our version, is nowhere else to be found; neither in the LXX, nor in any Greek author, nor in any place of the New Testament, except in this part of the Lord's Prayer. Commentators differ much in their interpretation of it. That in *Etymol. Magna*, seems as just as any: *Ἐπιούσιος*,—Ὁ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἡμῶν ἀρκούν: "that which is sufficient to our life;" and so Theophylact explains it: "What will strengthen us from day to day, for serving God with cheerfulness and vigour." *Bread*, according to the Hebrew idiom, signifies all the provisions of the table. See Gen. xviii. 5. and in the present petition it signifies *raiment* also, with convenient *habitation*, and every thing necessary to life. See Agur's Petition, Prov. xxx. 8. Since then we are not allowed to ask provision for rioting and luxury, but only for the necessaries of life, and that not for many years, but from day to day, the petition forbids anxious cares about futurity, and teaches us how moderate our desires of worldly things should be; and whereas



trespasses.

16 ¶ Moreover, when ye fast, be not as

the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear

y If. 58. 4, 5. 1 Kings, 23, 27. Luke, 18. 12, 14. with ch. 9. 14. Joel, 2. 12—17.

whereas not the poor only (whose industry all acknowledge must be favoured by the concurrence of Providence, to render it successful), but the rich also, are enjoined to pray for their bread day by day. This is on account of the great instability of human affairs, which renders the possession of wealth absolutely precarious; and because, without the divine blessing, even the abundance of the rich is not of itself sufficient to keep them alive, far less to make them happy. This petition contains a most excellent lesson, says Dr. Doddridge, to teach us, on the one hand, moderation in our desires; and, on the other, a humble dependence on divine Providence for the most necessary supplies, be our possessions or our abilities ever so great. But this petition seems to include something farther; and accordingly Erasmus, Heylin, and many others, understand it, after the Fathers, in a spiritual sense also. *Bread*, says Heylin, here signifies all things needful for our maintenance; the maintenance of the whole man, both body and soul; for each of these have their proper sustenance; to one belongs the *natural bread*, to the other the *spiritual*, and both are included in this petition: the natural bread means all things needful for the assistance of the body; the spiritual bread, the grace of Christ, which must also be our daily bread for the maintenance and growth of our souls in holiness. The petition, therefore, may be paraphrased: "Give us, O Father; for we claim nothing of right, but only of thy free mercy;—*this day*; for we take no solicitous thought for the morrow;—*our daily bread*; all things needful for our souls and bodies; not only the *meat that perisheth*, but thy grace; the food which *endureth to everlasting life*."

Ver. 12. *And forgive us our debts, &c.*] 5. We may observe, that this is the only petition in this prayer upon which our Lord enlarges, and indeed it is a petition of the greatest consequence, and the more to be attended to by us, as we ourselves ask that which is the greatest of all things from God, even the pardon of our sins, upon a condition voluntarily urged. It is hardly possible to imagine a more effectual expedient to promote the forgiveness of injuries, than this of making it a part of our daily prayer, to ask such pardon of God, as we give to our offending brother; for in this circumstance every malicious purpose against him would turn the *petition* into an *imprecation*, by which we should as it were bind down the wrath and vengeance of God upon ourselves. (See on ver. 14, 15.) The earth and the fulness thereof being the Lord's, he has a right to govern the world, and to support his government by punishing all who presume to transgress his laws. The suffering of punishment therefore is a debt which sinners owe to the divine justice. So that when we ask God in prayer to *forgive our debts*, we beg that he would, through the infinite merit of Christ, mercifully be pleased to remit the punishment of our sins, particularly the pains of hell; and that, laying aside his displeasure, he would graciously receive us into favour, and bless us with eternal life. In this petition, therefore, we confess our sins, and testify the

sense we have of our demerit, than which nothing can be more proper in our address to God. The reason is, humility and a sense of our own unworthiness, when we ask favours of God, whether spiritual or temporal, tend to make the goodness of God in bestowing them on us appear the greater; not to mention that these dispositions are absolutely necessary to make us capable of being pardoned. The expression used in this petition is very remarkable,—*forgive us, as we forgive*: we are allowed to ask from God only such forgiveness as we grant to others. In the mean time, when we beg forgiveness of God, like that which we grant to men, we must beware of setting our forgiveness on an equality with God's: the most perfect forgiveness which men are capable of exercising towards men falls infinitely short of the divine forgiveness necessary to repenting sinners. Besides, God himself has taken notice of the difference, Hosea, xi. 8, 9.: *because I am God, and not man, &c.* We only beg that the Divine forgiveness may resemble ours in its reality. See the note on ch. v. 44., Macknight, and Olearius.

Ver. 13. *And lead us not into temptation*] *And do not bring us into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.* Doddridge. *Abandon us not to temptation.* Campbell. This might be translated, "*And lead us not into temptation, but so as to deliver us from the evil*; either by removing the temptation itself "when it proves too hard for us, or by mitigating its "force, or by increasing our strength to resist it, as God "shall see most for his glory." The correction of the translation here proposed is built upon this argument,—that to pray for an absolute freedom from all solicitation or temptation to sin, is to seek a deliverance from the common lot of humanity; because trials and temptations are wisely appointed by God for the exercise and improvement of holiness and virtue in good men, and that others may be encouraged by the constancy and patience which they shew in affliction. Hence, instead of praying to be absolutely delivered from them, we are taught to *rejoice, when, by divine appointment, we fall into temptations or trials*. This petition teaches us to preserve a sense of our own inability to repel and overcome the solicitations of the world, and of the necessity of constant aid from above, both to regulate our passions, and to conquer the difficulties of a religious life. See Macknight. The petition, however, may be well understood agreeably to the common version of it,—*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us*; for, as God is the only Potentate, the sole Governor of the world, so that nothing can possibly fall out but by his allowance or permission, it is upon that account not unusual, in the style of Scripture, to impute all things to him. Thus he is said to have *sent Joseph into Egypt to preserve his life*, though in fact his brethren, out of envy, had sold him thither. See Gen. xlv. 5—8. Job, i. 21. And it is in this sense that God is said to *lead into temptation, or expose to temptation*; because all temptations come by his permission. The general intent, therefore, of these words, *lead us not, &c.* is, that, with just-distrust of ourselves, and a humble

unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, <sup>2</sup> anoint thine head and wash thy face ;

<sup>2</sup> Ruth, 3. 3. Eccl. 9. 8. 2 Sam. 14. 2.

sense of our weakness, we should deprecate such trials as may endanger our grace. But as some trials, that is, temptations, are necessary and inevitable, it is therefore added, *but deliver us from evil*. The Jews were wont to beg of God in their prayers, "That he would not deliver them into the hand of temptation;" whereby they did not desire that he would keep them from falling into temptation, but that he would not give them up to it, or suffer them to yield thereto. And indeed, to *enter into temptation*, ch. xxvi. 41. is to be overcome by it. After all, God never suffers us to be tempted above what we are able. See James, i. 13., compared with 1 Cor. x. 13. We may remark in conclusion of these petitions, and as a proof of the perfection of this prayer, that the principal desire of a Christian's heart being the glory of God, ver. 9, 10., and all that he wants for himself or his brethren being the *daily bread* of soul and body, or the support of life, animal and spiritual; pardon of sin, and deliverance from sin, and from the power of the devil, ver. 11—13., there is nothing beside for which a Christian can wish: therefore this prayer comprehends all his desires. Eternal life is the certain consequence, or rather the completion of holiness. See Beaufore and Lenfant, Heylin, &c.

*For thine is the kingdom, &c.*] III. These words contain the *doxology* or *conclusion* of the Lord's prayer. The Jews used it in their liturgies; and they derived that use most probably from 1 Chron. xxix. 11. Bishop Hopkins, Mr. Blair, and other excellent writers, have well observed, that it admirably suits and enforces every petition. This doxology may be paraphrased thus: "Because the *government of the universe* is thine for ever, and thou alone possessest the *power* of creating and upholding all things; and because the *glory* of infinite perfections remains eternally with thee; therefore all men ought to *hallow thy name*, submit themselves to thy government, and perform thy will: in a humble sense of their dependence should they seek from thee the supply of their wants, the pardon of their sins, and the kind protection of thy grace and providence." *For ever and ever* is, in the Greek, *eis tous aionas*, words which express the idea of a proper eternity, though often used for a finite duration, whether past or to come. They are always to be understood, both in the Hebrew and the Greek, according to the nature and circumstances of the things to which they are applied; and consequently in this place, where *kingdom, power, and glory* are ascribed to God *for ever*, they signify absolute *eternity*; eternity without beginning or end. The word *amen* is of Hebrew original, and frequently retained by the Evangelists. St. Luke has sometimes rendered it by a word signifying *yes*, and at other times *truly*. See Luke, ix. 27. When it is a sign of wishing, it then signifies *so be it*, as the LXX have rendered it; and when added to the conclusion of our prayers, it is intended to express the sincerity and earnestness with which we desire the blessing we ask, with some cheerfulness of hope as to the success of our petitions. See the note on Deut. xxvii.

15. It is observable that, though the doxology is threefold, as well as the petitions, and directed to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, distinctly, yet is the whole fully applicable to every person, and to the ever-blessed and undivided Trinity. See Macknight, Doddridge, and Heylin.

*Ver. 14, 15. For if ye forgive, &c.*] From what our Lord here says, we are not to imagine that the forgiving of injuries will entitle us to pardon: it only places us in a condition to receive it through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, all negative declarations being in their own nature absolute, he who does not forgive never shall be forgiven, as it is in the 15th verse. Behold then the necessity of forgiving all kinds of injuries established by the Lord Jesus Christ himself! in opposition to the foolish opinions of the men of this world, who, associating the idea of cowardice with the greatest and most generous act of the human mind, the forgiveness of injuries, have laboured to render it shameful and vile, to the utter disgrace of human reason and common sense. It is a strong remark of Archbishop Wake, upon that petition of the Lord's prayer whereof these verses are explicatory, that "if we do not forgive as we hope to be forgiven, we imprecate the wrath of God upon our own heads, when we use the Lord's prayer, and do in reality pray after this desperate manner: "Thou, O God, hast commanded me to forgive my brother his trespasses; thou hast declared that unless I do so, thou wilt not forgive me my sins. Well, let what will come, I am resolved to stand to the hazard of it. I will not forgive, nor be reconciled to my brother: do then with me as thou shalt see fit." Can the man of unforgiving temper see his sin and his danger in a stronger point of view?"

*Ver. 16. Moreover, when ye fast, &c.*] Our Lord goes on to apply the general advice, before given, to private fasting as well as to private prayer. The Greek word *αυστηρο*; properly denotes a *fretful and angry countenance*; but here it signifies a "face disfigured with mortification and fasting." The LXX have used the same word, Gen. xl. 7. to express a *sad countenance*. See also Prov. xv. 13. This word, as well as *ὑποκριται*, *hypocrites*, refers to the theatre, and to those actors and dissemblers there, who put on every countenance to serve their purpose. The word *αὐσανίζουσι*, rendered *they disfigure*, signifies *to cause to disappear, or vanish, or to destroy*; and is the same word which has been rendered, in the 19th and 20th verses, *corrupt*. These hypocritical actors wonderfully affected the fame of extraordinary holiness. Hence they assumed very austere countenances in their fasts; they put on the appearance and dress of mourners, and induced a kind of paleness, at least as much as they could, over their countenance. In short, *they made their natural face to disappear*, as much as possible; putting on an artificial one, as the players of old were wont to put on their masks. See Fortuita Sacra, p. 14. Our Saviour refers here more particularly to the private and voluntary fastings of the Pharisees: they

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

19 ¶ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth cor-

rupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

<sup>a</sup> See ver. 4. Acts, 9. 11. John, 1. 48. <sup>b</sup> Ps. 62. 10. Prov. 23. 4, 5. Ch. 19. 21. Luke, 12. 31. & 21. 34. 1 Tim. 6. 9, 17. Heb. 13. 5. <sup>c</sup> Luke, 12. 33. & 18. 22. 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19. Ch. 19. 21. Col. 3. 1-3.

they fasted on Mondays and Thursdays; but those who would be thought more devout than the rest, fasted besides on Tuesdays and Fridays, and abstained from all kind of food till sun-setting. There can be no doubt that our Saviour speaks here of private fasting only; because, when public sins and calamities are to be mourned for, it ought to be performed in the most public manner. Doddridge renders this, *When you keep a fast, be not like the hypocrites, putting on a dismal air; for they deform their countenances, that, &c.*

Ver. 17, 18. *Anoint thine head*] That is to say, "Affect nothing which is uncommon; and, rather than put on a sad countenance, which may shew to all around you that you fast, wash, on the contrary, your face, and anoint your head." Except in times of deep mourning, or public fasting, when they used dust and ashes, which must have sadly deformed the countenance, the Jews were accustomed to wash and rub themselves with oil, which was commonly perfumed, especially on festivals. See Ruth, iii. 3. 2 Sam. xiv. 2. Luke, vii. 37, 38. Such were our Lord's directions to his disciples with respect to fasting, from which it appears that he approved of the duty; and indeed the usefulness of it is sufficiently evident; for by abstinence from food, the body is mortified and subjected to the spirit, and the spirit itself is better fitted for the exercises of devotion: nevertheless, in religious fasting, regard must be had to men's constitutions; for it may happen to some that a total abstinence from food would, instead of fitting them for the exercises of piety, render them wholly incapable thereof; in which case no more than a due degree of abtemperance should be practised. See Macknight, Fortuita Sacra, p. 18. and Explication de Textes difficiles, &c.

Ver. 19-21. *Lay not up, &c.*] By taking a general review of what we have been hitherto taught in this divine sermon, we shall be led more distinctly to the meaning of the words now before us. After the beatitudes, our Saviour goes on to treat of justice, that is, duty in general. And first he shews the extent of it; I mean, how far its obligations reach. He begins with a general proposition, ch. v. 20. and this he illustrates and exemplifies in many instances, which fill up the remainder of that chapter. After thus shewing the extent of justice, he comes in the next place to rectify the motive to it; as in the first verse of this chapter: *Take heed that you do not your justice, that is, acts of justice, to be seen of men, &c.* And here again he gives particular instances in the three principal acts of that justice, namely, beneficence to mankind, devotion to God, and mortification which concerns ourselves; with a strict caution to shun all vain-glory in all

its forms and shapes. And as vanity is not the only wrong motive, and as the deeds of justice last mentioned are not our only occupation, but besides these we have each of us his secular employment, or worldly business to discharge; our Lord therefore goes on to regulate our whole course of action, by setting the heart right, and in a proper disposition for the performance of it. *Lay not up for yourselves, &c.* I should rather read, *Make not for yourselves, &c.* which the original imports, and the sense requires; because, whatever we place our happiness in, that we make our treasure; the treasure of the covetous is literal treasure; and that of the rest of the world consists of those things which they desire and count upon as a fund for enjoyment; for as *where our treasure is, there will our heart be also*; so where our heart is, there also is our treasure. As almost every animal has had its idolaters, so almost every kind of object has become a treasure to some or other of the sons of men. But as true religion is but one, so there is but one real treasure; one only that is worthy of our option, and will answer our expectation;—that which we provide for ourselves in heaven, when, pardoned through the blood of the covenant, and regenerated by the Spirit of God, in constant dependence upon divine grace, we secure in the experience and practice of all holiness and virtue, our everlasting interests there, as our Lord advises. In order the more fully to understand the words, *where moth and rust doth corrupt, &c.* we should remember that, in the Eastern countries, where the fashion of clothes did not alter as with us, the treasures of the rich consisted not only of gold and silver, but of costly habits and fine-wrought vessels of brass, and tin, and copper, liable to be destroyed in the manner here mentioned. See Job, xxvii. 16. James, v. 2, 3. Doddridge renders and paraphrases the 19th verse (understanding it singly as a caution against covetousness), "*Do not make it your great care to lay up for yourselves treasures here on earth, where so many accidents may deprive you of them; where the moth, for instance, may spoil your finest garments, and the devouring canker may consume your corn, or may corrupt the very metals you have hoarded; and where thieves may dig through the strongest walls which you have raised about them; and may steal them away; but,*" &c. Nothing certainly can be conceived more powerful to damp that keanness with which men pursue the things of this life, than the consideration of their emptiness, fragility, and uncertainty; or to kindle in them an ambition of obtaining the treasures in heaven, than the consideration of their being substantial, satisfying, durable, and subject to no accident whatever. See Heylin, Macknight, and Calmet.

21 <sup>d</sup> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 ¶ <sup>e</sup> The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if <sup>f</sup> thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore

the light that is in thee be darkness, <sup>g</sup> how great is that darkness!

24 ¶ <sup>h</sup> No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and <sup>i</sup> mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, <sup>k</sup> Take no

<sup>d</sup> Luke, 12. 34. Phil. 3. 20. 2 Cor. 4. 18. Col. 3. 1-4. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 11. 34-36. Rom. 12. 8. 1 Cor. 10. 31. <sup>f</sup> Mark, 7. 21. Ch. 20. 17. Prov. 23. 6. Deut. 15. 9. & 28. 54, 56. <sup>g</sup> If. 5. 20. Rom. 1. 21, 22, 28. 1 Cor. 1. 19-21. 2 Cor. 4. 4. <sup>h</sup> Luke. 16. 13. Ch. 4. 10. <sup>i</sup> Josh. 24. 19. James, 4. 4. 1 John, 2. 15, 16. <sup>j</sup> That is, riches, gains, and treasures, which are the idols of carnal hearts, set up in opposition to God. <sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. 55. 22. Luke, 12. 22. 1 Cor. 7. 32. 1 Peter, 5. 7. Phil. 4. 6. 1 Tim. 6. 8. <sup>l</sup> Gr. *Be not anxiously careful.* Ver. 31, 34.

*Ver. 22, 23. The light of the body is the eye—single—evil]* The eye is the lamp of the body;—clear or pure;—bad or vitiated. Heylin. Mr. Locke has observed, that the modes of thinking, as he speaks, that is to say, the several operations of the human mind, are in all languages expressed by figurative terms, which belong to sensible ideas in their primary signification. Now, if all languages used the same figures, this would bring no additional obscurity to our translations; but it is well known that the oriental tongues have, upon these subjects, quite a different set of metaphors from those in use among the Greeks and Romans, and consequently among us, who so generally follow their phraseology: many difficulties in Scripture are to be imputed to this cause; and to solve those difficulties we must have recourse to the context, and collect the meaning of this unusual dialect from the occasion upon which it is spoken. It was upon this account that we made the general review of the tenor of our Lord's discourse in the preceding note, and particularly of the context, which distinctly leads us to the meaning of the difficult passage now before us. *The eye is the lamp of the body:* body here signifies, as it sometimes does in our own language, the person, the man himself; and eye, in the Hebrew idiom, signifies, as we observed on ch. v. 29. the intention, which casts a light upon whatever it aims at; like a microscope, it magnifies its object, it illustrates it, and renders the minutest part of it conspicuous: for having made it its treasure, it treats it as such, and counts upon it as a fund for happiness; and although the object be void of real worth, yet the intention imputes to it all the advantages which a credulous desire and active fancy can suggest. Thus the intention is the force of the mind turned one way; and therefore our Lord compares it to a lamp, which, when directed to one particular object, greatly enlightens that, and makes other things visible only in proportion to their nearness. In like manner, whatever is the direct object of the intention receives from it a lustre, which shews it to the greatest advantage, and shews other things in a good or bad light, as they seem favourable or prejudicial to the execution of our design. Now, when this intention is right, our Lord calls it the single or simple eye, *απλοῦς*, and with good reason; for as only one straight line can pass between two given points, and as the truth upon every stated question is but one, while error and mistake are almost infinitely various; so there is, there can be, but one such right intention. What that is, our Lord had just before declared, when he directed us to

make for ourselves treasures in heaven, that we might be induced to collect and unite all our desires in that one thing necessary. He here calls the intention to do so *the single eye*; on the contrary, every other intention *an evil eye*; for every other deliberate purpose, which does not coincide with, or become subordinate to, the right intention, though we could suppose it innocent in itself, yet will prove an obstacle to that right intention, because the right intention cannot succeed but by a perfect renunciation of all other projects and designs; and therefore our Lord immediately subjoins, *no man can serve two masters.* See Heylin and Calmet. Several commentators have explained this as if our Lord intended here to urge the practice of liberality, as what would have a great influence on the whole of a man's character and conduct; and they suppose it illustrated by all those passages, where an *evil eye* signifies a grudging temper, and a *good eye* a bountiful disposition; and also by those texts in which *simplicity* is put for *liberality*. See Hammond, Whitby, Beaufobre and Lensant, &c. See the Reflections, where the passage is considered chiefly in this last point of view. See Doddridge, Olearius, and Mr. Law's *Serious Call*, ch. 2. for the former view of the passage.

*Ver. 24. No man can serve, &c.—mammon]* Mammon is a Syriac word for riches, which our Lord beautifully represents as a person whom the foily of men had deified. It is well known that the Greeks had a fictitious god of wealth; but I cannot find, says Dr. Doddridge, that he was ever worshipped in Syria under the name of *Mammon*. According to some, *mammon*, derived from *אמן*, *amen*, signifies whatever one is apt to confide in: and because men put their trust generally in external advantages, such as riches, authority, honour, power, &c. the word *mammon* is used to denote every thing of that kind, and particularly riches, by way of eminence.

*Ver. 25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought, &c.]* *Be not solicitous* [and so wherever it occurs]. *Is not the life more than food?* The Greek *μεριμᾶτε*, imports such anxiety as causes an intestine strife, by contrary reasonings with opposite hopes and fears. This is so strictly the sense of the original, that a word of the same derivation is used by our Lord, where he says, *a kingdom divided against itself, μερισθεῖσα, cannot stand*, ch. xii. 25. So that this precept only forbids that perplexity and distraction of thought which are inconsistent with the single right intention, and interrupts our resignation to the divine will. St. Luke, in the parallel place, has made use of the Greek word

thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 <sup>1</sup> Behold the fowls of the air: for they

sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 <sup>m</sup> Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his <sup>n</sup> stature?

<sup>1</sup> Job, 33. 41. Pf. 104. 27, 28. & 147. 9. Luke, 12. 21. <sup>m</sup> Luke, 12. 25, 26. Pf. 75. 6. Eccl. 9. 11. <sup>n</sup> Or age. John, 9. 21, 23.

word *μεταπορέω*, ch. xii. 29. which signifies to have a wavering and doubtful mind, disquieted and tossed about with mistrust and fear. See Mintert on the word. In this view there is no need to say, with Archbishop Tillotson, Dr. Clarke, and some others, that our Lord only addresses this to his Apostles, who were to cast themselves on an extraordinary Providence, without any ways concerning themselves for their support. Mr. Blair has well proved the contrary at large, in his appendix to his fourth Sermon, vol. i. p. 55, &c. and it is easy to observe, that the arguments urged by our Lord contain nothing peculiar to their case, but are built on considerations applicable to all Christians. Compare Philip. iv. 6. and 1 Peter, v. 7. as also Luke, xxii. 35, 36. and Acts, xx. 34. whence it appears, that the Apostles themselves were not entirely to neglect a prudent care for their own subsistence, in dependence on miraculous provisions. Our Saviour, attentive to his main argument, proceeds in these verses to shew, that all the reasons by which worldly-mindedness is usually justified or palliated are entirely overthrown, by considering the power, perfection, and extent of the PROVIDENCE of God. This grand subject he handles in a manner suitable to its dignity, by proposing a few simple and obvious instances, wherein the provision which God has made for the least and weakest of his creatures shines forth illustriously, and forces on the mind the strongest conviction of that wise fatherly care, which our gracious God takes of all the works of his hands. From what they were at that instant beholding, *the birds of the air, the lilies, the grass of the field*, he led even the most illiterate of his hearers to form a more elevated and extensive notion of the divine government than the philosophers attained to; who, though they allowed in the general that the world was ruled by God, had but confused conceptions of his providence, which many of them denied to respect every individual creature and action. Our Divine Prophet taught, that the great Father Almighty has every single being in his hand, and that all things are absolutely subjected to his will. This notion of Providence affords a solid ground, with constant dependence also on divine grace, for supporting that rational trust in God, which is one of the highest and best acts of the human mind, and furnishes us at all times with one of the strongest motives to holiness and virtue.

Far be it from me to widen the narrow ways prescribed in the Gospel! but to make them narrower than the literal sense imports, will render them quite unpassable. It is the glorious privilege even of men engaged in business and the tumult of the world (as the best Christians sometimes are), to be delivered from all entanglements of mind in respect to their secular interests, and from all anxiety and disquietude about future events, even where their reputation, or

their fortune, or perhaps both, are at stake. This privilege every Christian is bound to look for, and may expect from the almighty grace of God; but it is to be obtained by the means alone of faith and habitual devotion. On the contrary, to say absolutely, *Take no thought*, is a misrepresentation of our Lord's doctrine: all his intention here was, to teach the Christian graces and virtues in the most radical manner, by extirpating the remotest tendency to the contrary vices. As under the sixth commandment, which prohibits *murder*, he forbids an *angry word* or *malicious thought*; so here, to preserve us from *worldly-mindedness*, he forbids all painfully solicitous care even for the necessaries of life; and he enforces his prohibition with such cogent arguments, as must convince all who piously attend to them. *Is not the life more than food, and the body than clothing?* "He who hath given us the greater, will he deny us the less? He who gave us our being, will he refuse what is necessary for the support of it? It is as absurd as ungrateful to distrust a benefactor, whose goodness we have already so largely experienced, and who takes upon himself the care to provide for us. Consider the birds of the air; they sow not, &c.—are ye not of greater value than they? Are ye not the children of God? And when ye see him make so plentiful a provision for his inferior creatures, can you suspect that he will leave you, his children, destitute of necessary subsistence?" See more on ver. 34. and the note on Pf. xciv. 19.

[Ver. 27. Which of you, by taking thought, &c.] *Who of you, by his solicitude, can prolong his life one hour?* A version strictly literal would be, *can add any length to his age*; for the Greek word *αἰω* signifies both *age* and *stature*, and is to be rendered by either, as the occasion requires. Our translators have rendered it by *age*, John, ix. 21, 23; and Heb. xi. 11. The Greek word *ἄνωγος* indeed commonly means a *cubit*; but it is not unfrequent to transfer the measures of *space* to express those of *time*, as Pf. xxxix. 5. *Thou hast made my days as it were a span long.* Dr. Hammond upon the place shews, that *cubit* has been used in the same manner. Thus far we have seen what senses the terms are capable of: what their proper sense is here we must gather from the context. At ver. 25. our Lord dissuades from *anxiety* about *food* and *clothing*; *food* for the life (*ψυχή*) in the original, that is, *soul*, or *animal life*), and *clothing* for the *body*. He then treats of these separately. The words under consideration conclude what he said concerning the maintenance of life, to which *stature* is not applicable, but *age*. What he adds concerning the body begins at the next verse. Besides, he was speaking to adult persons, who probably had no solicitude about their *stature*, and certainly had no imagination that such solicitude could make them grow *a foot and a half taller*; but a

care

28 And ° why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin :  
29 And yet I say unto you, that even

° Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, ° which to-day is, and to-morrow

° Ver. 25, 31, 34. Luke, 12. 27. Pf. 4. 6. ° 1 Kings, iv. ix. x. 2 Chr. i. viii. ix. ° Pf. 129. 6. & 103. 4. Is. 40. 6, 7. 1 Peter, 1. 24.

care for the maintenance of life is the common care of all men, and apt to run into excess, where it is not moderated by religion. See Luke, xii. 25. and Heylin.

Ver. 28, 29. *They toil not, neither do they spin*] The expression *ὄ κούρα, they toil not*, denotes rural labour, and therefore is beautifully used in a discourse of *clothing*, the materials of which are produced by agriculture. As the Eastern princes were often clothed in *white robes* (and they were generally accounted a magnificent apparel, compare Esth. viii. 15. Dan. vii. 9.), Calmet properly refers this dress of Solomon to the *whiteness of the lilies*; and, following him, Dr. Doddridge paraphrases the passage very well thus: “*Even the magnificent Solomon, in all his royal glory, when sitting on his throne of ivory and gold*” (1 Kings, x. 18.), *was not arrayed in garments of so pure a white, and of such curious workmanship, as one of these lilies presents to your view.*” Mr. Ray thinks that the original word *κρίνα* signifies *tulips of various colours, or a purple kind of lily*. See his “*Wisdom of God in Creation*,” p. 107. In which view the passage might be paraphrased, “*Solomon himself, in all his magnificence, was but poorly arrayed in comparison of the flowers of the field, whose beautiful forms, lively colours, and fragrant smell, far exceed the most perfect productions of art.*”

Ver. 30. *If God so clothe—oven, &c*] The original word *ἀμφένυσσις*, which we render *clothe*, Dr. Doddridge well observes, expresses properly the putting on a complete dress, which surrounds the body on all sides, and is used with peculiar beauty for that elegant yet strong external membrane, which, like the skin in the human body, at once adorns the tender structure of the vegetable, and likewise guards it from the injuries of the weather. Every microscope with which a flower is viewed, affords a lively comment on this text. Dr. Doddridge and others render the original word *ἀμφένυσσις* by *still*, instead of *oven*; but the author of the *Observations* strongly opposes this interpretation, and informs us, that myrtle, rosemary, and other plants, with withered stalks of herbs and flowers, are made use of in Barbary and other parts of the East, to *heat their ovens* as well as bagnios; which, says he, gives us a clear comment on the present passage. The *grass of the field* here apparently is to be understood to include the lilies of which our Lord had been speaking, consequently herbs in general. Critics have remarked this large sense of the Greek word *κρίνος*: nor can it with any shew of reason be pretended that our Lord is speaking of *the morrow* in the rigid sense of the word, but of a *little time after*. “*Behold, then, says our Lord, these lilies and fine flowers of the field! yet beautiful and magnificent as they appear one day, they are in a manner the next thrown into the oven: their dried stalks are, with the dried stalks of other plants, employed in heating the ovens of the villages around us; and will not God much more clothe you,*

“*who are my disciples?*” His sentiment here plainly is, that if God covers with so much glory things of no farther value than to serve the meanest uses, will he not then take care of his servants, who are so precious in his eyes, and designed for such important services in the world? Consequently he cannot be supposed as speaking of precious flowers, *distilled* either for medicinal purposes, or to make rich perfumes, but of those of which men make no higher use than they do of cow-dung and stubble. See *Observations*, p. 142. and the note on 1 Sam. ii. 8. and Lam. iv. 5. Our Saviour adds, *O ye of little faith!* which is the first place where *faith* occurs in the New Testament. This was a term in the Jewish as well as the Christian Theology. The root is *aman, nutritiv, he nourished*; from which comes *Amen, veritas, truth*; and *Emunah, fides, faith*; as it were “*the reception of truth, for the nurture of the soul.*” So we say in English, *nurture* for good instruction. Nor is this a fanciful application, but most consonant to the whole tenor of Scripture style in both Testaments, where the experimental and practical truths of religion are continually expressed by the various species of nourishment, as well *meat* as *drink*, in all the different forms they are used for bodily sustenance. Maimonides, in his explanation of the word *achal, comedit, to eat up*, shews, “*that it is most frequently applied to express the reception of wisdom and doctrine, and universally all information of the mind, whereby it [the mind] is maintained for growth to the perfection of its nature, as the body is maintained by the food proper for its nourishment.*” Thus Isaiah, lv. 1. &c., inviting men to “*attend to his doctrine, says, Come ye, buy and eat,*” &c. And after quoting two passages from the *Proverbs*, where the same word is used, he says, “*Wherever eating and drinking are spoken of in that book, wisdom or the law of God is always to be understood as the mental food.*” And hence it may be inferred that the Hebrew term for *faith* (according to the derivation before mentioned) may denote the proper disposition given to man by the grace of God for receiving and digesting the great truths of religion. Buxtorff in his *Talmud*, that is to say, *Lexicon*, explains *emunah, faith, by religion*; and indeed *faith* frequently includes *piety, or godliness*. Thus the Jews understood the word in our Saviour’s time; and in this sense doubtless he used it, when he reproached them with *neglecting faith*, which he names a *weightier matter* of their own law, ch. xxiii. 23. and the phrase that he used, *O ye of little faith!* was then common among the Jews, as is evident from many passages of the *Talmud*. To conclude; the term *mammon*, that is, *riches*, has, as we have observed on ver. 24. the same derivation with the original word for *faith*, or *amen*, and for the same reason, namely, because men are so apt to *confide* in riches, as a true and stable fund on which to build their happiness. When the Divine Being holds that

place

is cast into the oven, *shall be* not much more clothed you, O ye 'of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gen-

<sup>1</sup> If. 50. 10. Ch. 14. 31. Mark, 9. 24. <sup>2</sup> Ch. 5. 46, 47. Pf. 4. 6. & 17. 14. Phil. 3. 19. <sup>3</sup> Luke, 12. 30. Phil. 4. 19. 1 Peter, 5. 7. Ver. 8. <sup>4</sup> Luke, 12. 31. John, 6. 27. 1 Kings, 3. 11—13. Pf. 34. 9, 10. & 37. 8, 19, 25, 29. Mark, 10. 30. 1 Tim. 4. 7, 8. Luke, 10. 42. 1 Cor. 3. 22. Rom. 8. 31, 32. <sup>5</sup> Exod. 16. 18—20. Ver. 11, 25. Prov. 16. 3. 1 Tim. 4. 8. <sup>6</sup> Gr. *anxious thought*. Ver. 25, 27, 28, 31.

place in our minds which worldly wealth has in the minds of covetous men, then indeed we have faith in him. See Dr. Heylin, p. 132. who, in some following dissertations, finely and fully illustrates this definition. But we shall also give other definitions and views of *faith* in the course of our Commentary.

Ver. 32. *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek*] It was the general character of the heathens, that they neither prayed to their gods, nor laboured themselves for any other blessings than the temporal ones here mentioned; as all their prayers and hymns to their deities abundantly prove, and as we learn in particular from the 10th satire of Juvenal; and this because they were in a great measure ignorant of God's providence and goodness, had erred fundamentally in their notions of religion, and had no certain hope of a future state. See Ephes. ii. 2. We may observe that there is a noble antithesis in this verse. Christ sets God's knowledge of our wants in opposition to the anxiety of the heathens about having them supplied; to intimate that the one is much more effectual for that purpose than the other. See 1 Kings, xviii. 27. Macknight and Wetstein.

Ver. 33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, &c.*] That is, true religion; the *advantages* of the kingdom of God; *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. the *treasures* mentioned in ver. 20. Compare 1 Kings, iii. 11, 12. *And his righteousness*, that is to say, the image of God and all the fruits thereof, springing from the infinite merit of Christ, the fountain of all righteousness, as illustrated by the Lord Jesus Christ, and not as understood by the Pharisees. See ch. v. 6. Dr. Sykes, here, by *righteousness* understands the Messiah; the *righteous branch*, who was to rule in righteousness, and in whose days the righteous were to flourish. See Sykes on Christianity, p. 35. But the former interpretation seems most agreeable to the context. The meaning of the original word *προσθησεται* is, *shall be added over and above*; than which expression nothing could have been more proper; for these temporal blessings are by no means essential to the stipulations of the covenant of grace, but are entirely to be referred to the divine good pleasure, to add or withhold as God shall see fit. The goods of this world ought not to be looked upon by Christians as true and essential advantages. They should make a good use of them, if God thinks proper to bless them therewith, 1 Tim. iv. 8. but if not, their duty is, to be satisfied with their own portion, whatever it is, being possessed of spiritual goods, and hoping for those that are eternal. Heb. xi. 10, 13, 16, 17.

tiles seek :) for 'your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 "Take therefore no 'thought for the

Ver. 34. *Take therefore no thought, &c.*] "Since the extent and efficacy of Divine Providence are so great, and since you are the objects of its peculiar care, you need not vex yourselves about futurity;" for the *morrow* denotes future time in general. *The morrow*, continues our Lord, *shall take thought for the things of itself*; or rather, according to the Hebrew idiom, *shall make you take thought for the things of itself*; namely, in a proper time, it being sufficient that you provide the necessaries of life for yourselves as they are wanted: "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*." Every time has abundant necessary troubles of its own; so that it is foolish to increase them by anticipating those which are to come, especially as by that anticipation it is not in your power to prevent any future evils." Such is our Saviour's doctrine with respect to Providence; and upon this subject it may be proper to remark, that though God can produce by an immediate act whatever he accomplishes by the intervention of second causes: for instance, can make heat without the sun, can communicate fruitfulness to the earth without heat, can furnish food to men without the fruitfulness of the earth, nay, can sustain life without food; yet he does all things by a series or concatenation of causes, in each of which there is as much wisdom and power displayed, as would have appeared had the end been effected by an immediate act. This plan is the most gracious that possibly could be; for the manifestations of the divine perfections are greatly multiplied thereby, and a Providence formed in such a manner, as to be not only the subject of human contemplation, but a grand foundation of our trust in God, and a powerful incitement by which we are engaged to seek his favour, who thus, by a variety of means, makes himself known as the chief good in every part of the universe. Covetousness, therefore, and worldly-mindedness, with all the other vices which derive their strength, whether from an absolute disbelief of the perfections of God, or from wrong notions of them, are by this constitution of things as effectually guarded against as the nature of moral government will admit; but the whole of which would be utterly unavailable for the salvation of fallen man, were the Holy Spirit of God not to convince, convert, and sanctify the soul.

A fear of wanting necessaries is the most specious pretence for *covetousness*; and it is in order to repress the remotest tendencies to that base disposition, that our Lord is thus copious and emphatical in assuring us of the superintending care of Providence. But let no perverse spirit mistake his declarations here as a dispensation from industry: he never meant to abrogate that sentence passed upon

morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

our whole race, *in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.* Daily labour is imposed on mankind, and is included in the *daily cross* which he has commanded us to take up. If we do not take up that cross, and punctually discharge our duty in that state of life to which God has called us, we have no reason to expect his fatherly protection. We must never forget that a trust in God, and a diligence in our calling, are connected like faith and obedience, which are so far from interfering, that they are in their own nature inseparable. Duty is very extensive, consisting of many parts, which must be performed at once, yet cannot be spoken at once, but must be detailed in separate precepts. True morality consists not merely in *action*, but also in the  *motive* which animates it. Our course of *action* is taught elsewhere; and our worldly calling, which is to us the order of Providence, prescribes the daily work we have to do. The doctrine now under consideration relates to the proper  *motive* of our actions, directing our view towards the great end to which they all ought to be ultimately referred. Our *actions* are upon earth; but the *right motive* is in heaven, where only faith can penetrate; and therefore our Lord, expostulating with his disciples upon their want of sensibility to that  *motive*, subjoins, at ver. 30, *O ye of little faith!* See Macknight and Heylin.

*Inferences.*—A show of piety is all mere pretence and mockery, and does not deserve to be called religion, much less can it be evangelical and acceptable to God, unless the heart be in it with governing aims, not at our own reputation and worldly interests, but at his glory. In every thing our requests should be made known to God, as a father, according to his direction and will; not with vain repetitions, as if we were to be heard for much speaking, but with earnest addresses, under a sense of duty, and of his being able and ready to answer us. And how much need have we to look inwards and upwards, that our hearts may be right with God under the influence of his spirit; that our principles, motives, and views may be sincere and spiritual in our fastings, prayers, alms-deeds, and all religious duties and services, as being always under his eye; and that we may be approved of him, and accepted in his sight through Jesus Christ, however we may stand in the opinion of men! Alas, what a poor reward is the vanishing breath of popular fame, compared with the love and favour of God, and the honour which comes from him! And yet this is all the advantage that hypocrites will get by their religion. What is all this pitiful, perishing, and uncertain world, compared with the great, solemn, and eternal realities of the heavenly inheritance! And yet, how fond are we naturally apt to be of things here below; how eager in our contrivances and labours, hopes and fears, wishes and cares about them; and how indolent and unmoved about the things of God and glory! But that which commands our hearts is the treasure that we choose! A little of earthly things is really enough to answer the wants of animal nature: how moderate then should we be in our appetites, desires, and cares about food and raiment,

and the good things of this life! how contented with such a share of them as God orders us! And how satisfactorily may his children trust in him, that they shall never want any thing which he knows is best for them! He that takes care of birds and flowers will never neglect those who are so much higher in his account. It is sinful and heathenish to distrust him, and all our carking care about the body is unprofitable and vain. But we must have spiritual and heavenly blessings in abundance, to satisfy the longings of an immortal soul. Here then is a loud call to be earnest and early in our inquiries and pursuits; and here is room enough for growing desires, cares and pains in God's way, to amass together as much as possible of these sure and incorruptible treasures; and he who can be contented with but little of these, is like to have none at all. Oh! with what superior impression should Christ, and the righteousness and blessings of his kingdom of grace and glory, command the believer's faith and hope, love and joy!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having before rescued the law from the false expositions of the Pharisees, our Lord here shews the true religion of the heart, as expressed in the three great duties of alms, prayer, and fasting, in which these deluded teachers gloried, but erred exceedingly in the performance of them.

1. Our Lord cautions us against all ostentatious show in bestowing our alms, *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them:* hypocrisy is a subtle sin, and, where we are least apprehensive of danger, is ever ready to insinuate itself; yet the fear of being wrong must not keep us from doing right. Alms-giving is every Christian's bounden duty; and though not to be trusted to for our acceptance before God, nor done to engage the applause of men, must nevertheless, according to our ability, be practised for God's glory, and the assistance of our brethren: and God, who is not unrighteous, will remember and reward *the works of faith and labours of love.*

2. He describes the methods which the hypocrites used to proclaim their own goodness, and solicit the estimation of others. *They sound a trumpet,* either literally to gather the poor to their doors, or they gave their alms in the most public manner, on purpose that they might be seen and admired.

3. They had the reward which they sought, and all they had to expect; the ignorant blessed their liberality, and praised their charity. *Note;* The hypocrite's portion is all in hand, and he has nothing to hope for hereafter.

4. Christ gives direction concerning the proper way of doing our alms. *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth,* the expression is proverbial, and intimates the secrecy that we should use; never designedly letting others know our alms-deeds, nor desirous that they should be acquainted with them. And with regard to ourselves, we should forget them, and never dwell upon them even in our thoughts, to flatter our own vain-glory and self-conceit.

5. Such



CHAP. VII.

*Christ, ending his sermon on the mount, reproveth rash judgment, forbiddeth to cast holy things to dogs, exhorteth to prayer, to enter in at the strait gate, to beware of false prophets, not to be hearers only but doers of the word; like houses built on a rock, and not on the sand.*

[Anno Domini 30.]

**J**UDGE not, that ye be not judged.  
 2<sup>b</sup> For with what judgment ye judge, ye

<sup>a</sup> Luke, 6. 37. If. 65. 5. Rom. 2. 1. & 14. 3, 4, 10, 13. 1 Cor. 4. 3—5. James, 4. 11, 12. & 2. 17. & 3. 1. Gal. 6. 1, 2. 25, 26. & 41. 2. Mark, 4. 24. Luke, 6. 38. 2 Cor. 9. 6. James, 2. 15. Gen. 4. 7. Obad. 15. Eph. 6. 8. 2 Thess. 1. 6. <sup>b</sup> Judges, 1. 7. Pf. 18. Luke, 6. 41. Lam. 3. 40. 2 Cor. 13. 5. <sup>c</sup> Luke, 6. 41. & 18. 11. \* Lesser sin. † Greater sin.

shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3<sup>c</sup> And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4<sup>d</sup> Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the \* mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a † beam is in thine own eye?

5. Such good deeds as these flowing from faith, which worketh by love, shall not fail of their reward, secret as they are. He that seeth in secret will record them; and when we have forgotten them, and would be ashamed to hear them mentioned, he will remember and recompense them openly, before men and angels, at the resurrection of the just.

2dly, Prayer next comes to be considered. It were an open declaration of impiety, irreligion, and atheism, to live without some acknowledgment of God's goodness, and profession of dependence on his care: at least, none who bear the name of Christian can be supposed to live without prayer, any more than the body can live without breath. We have two grand directions concerning this most necessary duty.

1. That it be not performed hypocritically, *to be seen of men*. The Pharisees chose the synagogues and the corners of the streets for the places of their devotions, that men's eyes might be upon them: *standing up*, that they might be more conspicuous; and *loving the work*, merely for the sake of the reward that they proposed to themselves; which they received,—and a miserable reward it was,—to be applauded of poor mortals like themselves, when they were abhorred of the great and holy God. Our Lord teaches his disciples to pray in a different manner; public places are unfit for private prayer. We must retire, therefore, from the observation of men as much as may be; not only to avoid ostentation, but in order to be alone with God, removed from all interruption that would distract our thoughts; and out of the hearing of others, that we may freely speak before our Father who is in secret; to whom alone it should be our desire to approve ourselves; comparatively indifferent what men may think or say of us, if he regard us with paternal love; and expecting from him the answer of our petitions, which he promises to bestow. For he *who seeth in secret*, though invisible to us, is yet present with us, and acquainted with our inmost soul, and will reward us openly; answering our requests in present blessings, owning us at the great day of his appearing and glory, and bestowing the promised eternal reward, a reward not indeed of debt, but of grace.

2. That we use not *vain repetitions*, as the heathens do, who think that they shall be heard for their *much speaking*; not that repetitions or *much speaking* in prayer are con-

demned; seeing that the same petitions may be often reiterated, and speak thus the deepest sensibility of our wants, and the greatest importunity of desire, Matt. xxvi. 44. Dan. ix. 18, 19. as also when our wants are many and great on particular occasions, and our spirit at liberty, we are never restrained from pouring out all our requests into the bosom of our compassionate God and Father; Luke, vi. 12. The practice censured is, (1.) *The vain babblings* of those who pray by rote, like the papists, as they tell their beads, repeating so many Ave-Marias, or Pater-Nosters; and constantly, without life or spirituality, going over the same dull round of words, like a packhorse with his bells, pleased with the tinkling of his own unmeaning music. (2.) *The much speaking*, which arises from an affectation of prolixity, especially in social prayer, where, instead of speaking to God, men love to hear the sound of their own voices, and want others to admire their gifts, their fluency, their fervency and zeal, making a vast parade of words, adoration, thanksgiving, requests, intercessions, &c. like Baal's priests, from morning unto noon, crying, O Baal, hear us: such lip-labour is not only lost labour, but worse, an abomination unto the Lord, and to be avoided by all his spiritual worshippers. For our Father, who is in heaven, *knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him*, therefore does not want to be particularly informed, as if he were ignorant; nor is to be prevailed upon merely by our cries. But, as our Father, he expects to be called upon, and is ever ready to hear and answer us; omniscient, he knows our necessities; and all-sufficient, he will relieve them, even when we through our blindness know not what to ask, or through our ignorance ask amiss; yea, sometimes cannot ask at all, overwhelmed with distress, and speaking only in tears and groans, which cannot be uttered, Rom, viii. 26, 27.

3dly, Having condemned the prayers of formality and pride, our Lord suggests both matter and words for our use.

The prayer recorded in this chapter may be considered both as a form and as a directory. It is concise yet comprehensive, containing our chief wants in a few words; not that we are always bound to the use of it; but being in frequent use, we need be well acquainted with its meaning, that, when we repeat it, *we may pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also*.

We have,

P

1. The

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

1. The preface: *Our Father which art in heaven.* The great object of prayer is God alone; the encouraging motives to approach him are, that he is *our Father*, our reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus, from whose paternal heart we may expect the tenderest compassions and most gracious attention; and as he is *in heaven*, adored by saints and angels, who knows our necessities better than we can express them, and hath all power to supply them abundantly above all that we can ask or think; so that we may come to him in faith, nothing doubting. As *our common Father* also, we are taught the spirit of love and charity which should breathe in all our prayers, and profess ourselves hereby a part of those many brethren who, through Christ Jesus, are with us pressing towards heaven; and for whom, as they for us, we are mutual advocates.

2. The petitions. They are six in number; the first three more immediately relate to God's glory, the last to our own wants.

[1.] *Hallowed be thy name.* The *name* of God comprehends his being, perfections, and all the manifestations that he has made of himself in his works and word. That it may be *hallowed*, or *sanctified*, signifies our ascription of praise to him, according to his excellent greatness; and our desire that he may be ever more and more exalted; that we ourselves, and all others, may believe in him, love him, fear and serve him as we ought to do, and in our lips and lives shew forth his glory; and that since all good is from him, all may be ascribed to him.

[2.] *Thy kingdom come.* The kingdom of the Messiah seems principally here intended, which was now ready to appear; and being once set up in the world, we are required to pray for its enlargement and final consummation. As a *kingdom of grace*, we beg it may be erected in our own hearts more and more, till every thought be brought into the obedience of Christ; that it may diffuse its benign influence far and wide, and the light of the gospel-word and the power of the gospel-grace cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; that God may thus complete his glorious church, and hasten that eternal *kingdom of glory*, when all his faithful saints collected round his throne shall, to eternity, adore him, enjoy his favour, and be made for ever happy in his service.

[3.] *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* God is glorified, and his kingdom comes, when his will is made ours, his preceptive will obeyed, his providential will acquiesced in: thus we pray, that, without dispute, we may receive the revelation which he has given us, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him as our king, and approve ourselves obedient subjects to his government in all things; never murmuring against his commands as severe, or his prohibitions as grievous, but counting his will to be always holy, just, and good. We pray for resignation to all his afflictive dispensations, contentment in every station, submission under every burthen, and a heart to bless him, not only when he gives, but when he takes away: in short, that we may be as the clay in the hands of the potter, to

be, act, and suffer, according to the good pleasure of his will; and this cheerfully, universally, continually, as the spirits of just men made perfect, and the spotless angels, fulfil his will in heaven. *Note*; (1.) It is a mockery of God to pray that his will may be done, and daily live in allowed opposition to it. (2.) None may hope to serve God in heaven, who have not on earth made his glory their end, his word their rule, his will their delight.

[4.] *Give us this day our daily bread*; either for our souls, the bread of life, that we may be strengthened in the inner man, and increase with the increase of God; or for our bodies, the food which is convenient for us; not delicacies, but necessaries; not such as pampered appetite craves, but what used with temperance and sobriety may best fit us for the work of our station and God's service. We ask *our own bread*, not what we have a right to, for all is God's gift, but what is honestly come by, neither the bread of idleness nor deceit; we are taught to ask *daily* for it, as acknowledging our dependence upon God for all we have and enjoy; and for *this day only*, not excluding a provident care, but as mindful of our jeopardy every hour, as dead to carking solicitude and perplexing suggestions about futurity, and content to trust him for the morrow, in the use of the same means which we employ to-day. And this we beg for others as well as ourselves, that they and we may praise God together, who filleth our hearts with food and gladness. Thus all repining, envy, and discontent, will be excluded; content with our allotted portion we shall wish for nothing more.

[5.] *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* Our debts are our sins: having failed in the debt of duty we become liable to the debt of punishment. These sins are innumerable, great, and aggravated; and we have nothing to pay, unable to make the least satisfaction for them to divine justice; and if God deal with us according to our deserts, we are undone for ever. Therefore we cry, *Forgive* which intimates the deep and humble sense that we have of our insolvent state, and our hope in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for pardon. However numberless great, and aggravated our sins may be, they are not beyond the Blood of atonement, and God's boundless grace: he can pardon even beyond all that we can ask. A plea also is put into our mouths, not as meritorious, but as an argument founded on God's promise, and an encouragement to our own souls to hope in his mercy, *as we forgive our debtors*; for if we do so, how much more shall the Father of mercies forgive us? Whilst, on the other hand we must not dare to hope or pray for pardon, if we can retain allowed malice against one creature upon earth, and do not *from the heart* forgive our brother his trespasses. Though the offences or injuries done us may have been ever so great, we are called upon to pardon them fully freely, without reserve or upbraiding: and how reasonable the injunction, when none can ever have offended us, and we have provoked God; since he therefore for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, so ought we to forgive one another. To offer up this petition with rancour, resentment, or ill-will

6 ¶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Prov. 9. 7, 8. & 23. 9. Phil. 3. 2. Ch. 10. 11, 14. & 15. 26. Acts, 13. 45—47. Heb. 10. 29. & 2. 3.

abiding on the heart, would be to imprecate a curse upon our souls, instead of obtaining a blessing.

[6.] *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;* conscious of our own weakness, we beg to be kept from the power of temptation, or to be supported under our trials that we may not fall: not that God can be tempted with evil, or tempteth any man; but if he withhold his grace, our own corrupted hearts naturally rush into the snare, and our adversary the devil is ever going about seeking whom he may devour: from his power, the power of that wicked one, the author of all evil, we pray to be delivered, so that, if assaulted, we may not be overcome by him; and from all the evil with which we are compassed on every side, from the evil world with all its snares, from evil men with all their wiles or violence; from our own deceitful hearts; from the evil of sin and punishment, in time and in eternity.

3. The doxology, and conclusion. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.* Which may be considered as a solemn ascription of praise to God; as an act of faith in his power and grace; and a plea to enforce our petitions, in which God's own glory is so greatly concerned. All praise and honour are in the highest to be ascribed to him, whilst, after all, we must own that he is far exalted above all blessing and praise. His power is able to supply all our wants; we may therefore confidently trust him: since his is the kingdom, we may expect protection, and his own glory engages him to grant the requests which his word and Spirit teach us to ask. We may therefore well add our warm Amen, earnest that our requests may be answered, and God therein glorified, in faith resting assured that it will be so, and therefore rising from our knees rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

4thly, Having given directions for alms-giving and prayer, our Lord proceeds to fasting; a needful, though much-neglected duty. This flesh needs the curb of constant mortification, and our sins call for such humiliation. We are,

1. Cautioned against the hypocritical show of the Pharisees. They made a vast parade of mortification, outwardly disfiguring their faces, and putting on an affected pained countenance; pretending that deep contrition of soul which they never felt, that men might admire the austerity of their lives, and reverence them for their extraordinary sanctity; and so far they had their reward. They were highly esteemed among men; but how poor a compensation this, when, for their hypocrisy, they were an abomination in the sight of God. *Note;* Many who have yielded the cravings of the body have fallen victims to the pride of their heart.

2. We are directed how to fast. As the humiliation is before God, we must studiously avoid all external show; appear in dress and countenance as on other days; alike deaf to men's applause or censures; desiring only God's acceptance and regard in Christ Jesus, which in this way

we are sure to find; and our Father, who seeth in secret, will reward us openly.

5thly, No sin is so besetting and dangerous to the professors of religion as worldly-mindedness; and where it prevails, there is no surer proof of the hypocrisy of the heart. Against this, therefore, our Lord especially warns his disciples.

1. He cautions them against laying up *their treasures upon earth*. Nothing under the sun should be regarded by us as our portion; nor ought we, with increasing eagerness, to be still grasping at more, and continually adding to our stores; we must neither take up our rest in these things, nor depend upon them as a substantial and abiding good; for a thousand accidents may deprive us of all. The moth may corrupt our garments; blasting, mildew, or vermin, destroy our corn, and thieves rob us of that gold and silver which we treasured up with so much care. It were folly, therefore, to count these our treasures.

2. He tells us how we may secure a better and a more enduring substance. *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven:* in the way of God's grace seek to secure the riches of his glory; especially by a right employment of this world's wealth, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; send your wealth before you in works of charity, and then you will find it again with abundant interest laid up in that sure place, where it will be exposed neither to corruption nor violence.

3. He enforces his advice by that weighty argument, that *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*; if it be on earth, our minds will be earthly, sensual; if in heaven, our hearts will be drawn up to high and heavenly things; for as the needle follows the magnet, so do our affections pursue what we count our treasure: where this is, thither are our desires drawn out; our hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are all influenced hereby. When God is made our portion, then on him will our souls be fixed.

4. According to a man's spirit and temper, so will his conduct be. *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, which was a common and well-known phrase for a liberal temper, then thy whole body will be full of light,* the actions will all correspond with the principle, and the whole conversation will abound with good to the glory of God; *but if thine eye be evil, if a sordid temper govern thee, thy whole body will be full of darkness,* all the faculties will be enslaved by it; the whole conduct influenced by it, to use mean, avaricious, and base ways to gratify such a spirit. *If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* If covetousness extinguish every generous and noble sentiment in the soul, what a train of vile and unbecoming deeds will follow, whilst every consideration is absorbed in that one of gain, greedily sought by any means, lawful or unlawful; and the consequence must needs be, that such a one will sink into eternal darkness and misery. By the eye we may also understand

7 ¶ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you :

8 For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Gen. 37. 26—28. Ps. 10. 17. & 34. 15. & 118. 5. & 145. 19. Prov. 15. 29. Jer. 29. 12. 13. Is. 50. 19. & 58. 9. & 65. 24. Ch. 21. 22. Mark, 11. 24. Luke, 11. 9—13. & 18. 1—8. John, 14. 13, 14. & 15. 7. & 16. 23, 24. James, 1. 5, 6. & 5. 16. 1 John, 3. 22. & 5. 14. Dan. 2. 23. Prov. 1. 17. Ps. 50. 15. & 94. 15.

the *practical judgment* ; according as that is endued with just discernment, or is erroneous and corrupt, so will the corresponding practice be good or evil ; and this particularly will appear in the preference given to heavenly or earthly treasures. See the Critical Notes, where this passage is considered in another point of view, which is here omitted to prevent tautology.

5. We must make our choice which world we will have, and which master we will serve, the commands of both being incompatible. There is no dividing the heart, God will have all or none ; but the hypocrite wants to secure both worlds together, and to serve God just so far as confits with his interest and convenience ; *but no man can serve two masters*, whose commands are contradictory ; and never were two masters more opposite than *God and mammon*. God demands the heart, enjoins contentment, honesty, love, charity, deadness to this world ; and bids his servants forego their ease, their gain, their honour, their esteem among men, to seek in the first place his kingdom and righteousness. *Mammon* commends the glittering stores of this vain world ; bids his servants eat, drink, and be merry ; pursue their worldly interests, honours, and esteem ; mind chiefly themselves ; live *for themselves*, spend *on themselves* ; and by every means secure wealth, as the principal thing, and man's chief good. Thus opposite are these matters ; the service of the one must be attended with abhorrence of the other ; we are called upon to make our choice, and let us remember that eternity depends upon it.

6thly, Many think themselves far removed from covetousness, whose hearts, notwithstanding, are overcharged with the cares of this life ; and, though not sordidly avaricious, evidently shew their affections more set on things upon the earth, than the things in heaven. We have, therefore,

1. An admonition against all inordinate anxiety about a worldly provision. *Take no thought*, &c. There is a thoughtfulness and care needful and commendable, Prov. xxvii. 23. Our families cannot be otherwise provided for, nor the duties of our station discharged. But the caution here given is levelled against tormenting solicitude, and unbelieving distrust of God's providence, which is as dishonourable to him, as distressing to ourselves. Our life is in his hands, and while we are employing the appointed means in dependence upon his blessing, we must with satisfaction cast our care upon him, to give us sickness or health, comforts or crosses, want or abundance, as he pleases ; and when we do so, we have his promise to assure us that we shall have just that which is good for us.

2. Christ enforces his admonition by several considerations, which if we seriously thought upon would ever furnish us with abundant arguments to silence all disquieting carefulness.

[1.] If God gives the greater blessings, will he withhold the less ? *Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?* If God hath freely given us the former without our thought or care, and hitherto hath preserved them amidst innumerable dangers, can it be supposed that he will suffer us to perish for want of food or raiment ?

[2.] *Behold the fowls of the air*, numerous and voracious as they are ; without any care of theirs, by the Divine Providence, a daily provision is made for them, *though they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns*. And if God thus provides for them, *are ye not much better than they ?* more excellent in nature, and therefore much more the objects of his care : can the *birds of heaven* be famished, when the *fowls of heaven* are fed ?

[3.] Unprofitable, as well as unnecessary, are all our anxious cares. *Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature ?* How vain and foolish then to disquiet ourselves about other things equally out of our power ! We are called upon here to make a virtue of necessity, and submit quietly to the determinations of Providence.

[4.] To silence our carefulness about raiment, Christ points to the flowers which were probably near him, and made the application more beautifully striking, *Consider the lilies of the field*, which grow without care or culture, without toil or labour ; yet even *Solomon* on his throne, adorned with the richest robes, *in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these*. *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which is so worthless, fading, and transitory, which to-day is in such beauty, and to-morrow is cast into the oven to burn, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?* Note ; (1.) All our anxiety about worldly things arises from unbelief. (2.) It is the height of folly and vanity to be proud of fine clothes, when every flower of the field must far outshine us. (3.) Every object around us, if our minds be rightly disposed, will afford us arguments for faith, and quiet dependence on God's care.

[5.] Such anxiety is heathenish, and utterly unbecoming those who have the light of revelation. Gentiles indeed, who have no knowledge of a particular providence, may be concerned after these things, and imagine they must get them merely by their own care and labour ; but it is a shame for Christians, who are better taught, not to shew the excellence of their principles by the nobler practice of deadness to the world and confidence in God.

[6.] *Our heavenly Father knoweth we have need of all these things*, and therefore we may confidently expect the supply of every want. He hath a father's bowels to feel for us ; we may have a sure interest in him ; he knows our wants ; and, be they ever so many or great, he can abundantly relieve them. His care for us makes our anxious carefulness for ourselves needless.

3. Christ directs us to the proper object of our cares : *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. Religion

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

gion is our great business: to be a living member of Christ's church is infinitely more our concern than how our bodies shall be fed; and *his righteousness*,—his righteous obedience unto the death of the cross, is the sole meritorious cause of our acceptance with God, and of every blessing that we can receive in time or in eternity: and we possessing an interest in this Divine Redeemer, internal purity must be sought with diligence, in the use of every means of grace, and in the *first* place; yea, we must count all dung and loss, compared with the great concerns of our souls and the eternal world, which should in a measure swallow up all other considerations. Indeed the trifles of time will sit light upon those who have the glories of eternity in view. Besides, this is the way to secure a supply of all the rest of our wants; for he who is able abundantly to supply them is pleased to assure us, that then *all these things shall be added unto us*; they shall be thrown in as *ever and above* all the spiritual blessings. Oh that we were but wise to know our true interests! we should find by experience that nothing was ever lost by faith unfeigned, and diligent caring for the soul.

4. As the conclusion of the matter, we are, without solicitude about futurity, to cast our care upon God, who will care for us. *Take no thought for the morrow*; which does not forbid prudent foresight, or enjoin an absolute disregard about our business or our families, but all perplexing anxiety, all disquieting fears about what may never happen, or, if it do, may give us no such trouble as we apprehend; and all unbelieving distrust of God. Our business is, to mind present duty, and leave events to God: *To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself*: it is folly to be disquieted about what may never come to pass. Who knows whether to-morrow belongs to time or to eternity? And if it return, he who supplied our wants to-day, will supply our wants to-morrow. *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*: we need not anticipate our troubles, or torment ourselves with imaginary ills; each day has sufficient, without borrowing to-morrow's burthen to increase the load; and which not all our previous cares and fears will make the lighter. It is God's curse on the wicked world, that they are self-tormentors; while they who live by faith may always rejoice in hope.

CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 1, 2. Judge not, &c.*] Our Saviour, having condemned worldly-mindedness in the general, proceeds to forbid all rash and unfavourable judgments, whether of the characters of others in general, or of their actions in particular. See Luke, vi. 37. Though he does not level his discourse against the Pharisees in this chapter as in the two foregoing, he seems evidently to glance upon them in this and other expressions which he uses in it. That they were very culpable on this head appears from Luke, xviii. 9-14. xvi. 14, 15. and John, vii. 47-49.; compare Isai. lv. 5. Indeed their unjust censures of Christ are the strongest instances of it that can be conceived. God proposes and recommends his mercy to our imitation; he

commands us in this, in *mercy*, to be *perfect as himself*; but *judgment* is his reserved prerogative, and they shall feel the weight of it who rashly invade its office. *To judge* is an act of sovereignty; it is an exercise of such authority as is indeed very considerable, if we were really possessed of it. Pride, among its other usurpations, arrogates to itself this province; it raises us above our brethren in an imaginary tribunal, whence we affect to distribute praise or blame in the sentence that we pass on them, and which is commonly to their disadvantage, because the firstborn of *pride* is malice: he who loves himself more than he ought must love others less than he ought; and the same principle which makes us overvalue ourselves makes us undervalue our neighbours; for, as our notions of excellence are by comparison, we cannot ascribe it so immoderately to ourselves, but upon a supposed defect of it in others. Their abasement seems to set us higher, and we erect trophies to ourselves upon their ruins; and this is the reason why we err so much oftener to the prejudice than to the advantage of our neighbour. Mere ignorance has an equal chance either way: what is thrown in the dark, and at random, might as probably hit above as below the mark; the reason why we are so often under it, is the malice of our hearts, which makes us delight to find faults in others, as excuses for our own faults, or as foils to our virtues. The expression, *with what measure ye mete, &c.* is proverbial, and was much in use among the Jews. The words are certainly most awful. God and man will favour the candid and benevolent: but they must expect judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy. See Heylin, Chemnitz, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 3. And why beholdest thou?* Τί ἐβλεπεις. "Why dost thou observe, or take notice of?" For the original *ἐβλεπεις* here signifies not only to be acquainted with other people's faults, but to *pry into them*, with a design to censure and reprove them. *Eye* here, as in ch. v. 29. and vi. 22. signifies the *intention*, which is the usual subject of rash censures; because *actions* are self-evident, and not so liable to misconstruction, as the *intention* wherewith they are performed. This latter is not apparent, and therefore leaves room for that rash judgment which our Lord had just before prohibited. The word which we render *mete* signifies a *splinter* or *siver* of wood; in Latin *festuca*, whence the English *feſcue* (see Johnson's Dictionary). This, and the *beam* as its opposite, were proverbially used by the Jews to denote small infirmities and gross faults; each of which proportionably obstruct the moral discernment. See Stockius on the word *δοκός*, Heylin, and Horace, Sat. iii. lib. i. ver. 26.

*Ver. 4. Let me pull out the mote, &c.*] *Held still, and I will take the mote out of thine eye.* This seems to be the exact meaning of the words *Ἀφες ἐκείλω* in the original, which, translated thus literally, elegantly intimates how ready men are to *shrink* from reproof. The simile here used implies, that it is as absurd for a bad man to set up for a reprover of others, as it would be for one who is almost blind himself to pretend to perform operations on

other

11 If ye then, being <sup>e</sup>evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, <sup>h</sup>how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

12 <sup>i</sup>Therefore, all things whatsoever ye

<sup>e</sup> Gen. 6. 5. & 8. 21. Eph. 2. 1, 2. Titus, 3. 3. Ch. 15. 19. Jer. 17. 9. <sup>h</sup> Luke, 11. 13, & 18. 7, 8. Pf. 103. 13. If. 49. 15. & 63. 7. Hoesa, 11. 8. Heb. 12. 10. John, 3. 16. <sup>i</sup> John, 3. 1. Rom. 8. 32—39. Exod. 34. 6, 7. Pf. 65. 3. Jer. 3. 4, 19. & 20. 12, 17. Ezek. 33. 33. <sup>i</sup> Luke, 6. 31. Ch. 22. 39, 40. Rom. 13. 8—10. Gal. 5. 14, 22, 23. Titus, 3. 2. <sup>i</sup> Tim. 1. 5. Col. 3. 8—15. Eph. 4. 25—32. James, 2. 8. with Gen. 4. 7. Obad. 15. Eph. 6. 8.

other men's eyes. *How wilt thou say*, means, "How wilt thou have the confidence to say?" See Doddridge, and Keasfobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 5. Thou hypocrite*] As by the eye we judge of things relating to the body, so by the understanding we judge of things pertaining to the soul. You may therefore lay this down as fixed and certain, that the more grace and holiness you yourself possess, the better will you be able to judge of your brother's faults; and the better qualified, both in point of skill and authority, to reclaim him through the grace of God. Your judgment of his character and actions will be so much the more charitable, and for that reason so much the more just. Your rebuke will be so much the more mild, prudent, and winning, and your authority to press the necessity of regeneration and reformation upon him so much the more weighty. It is hypocrisy to pretend a zeal for others, if we have not first had it for ourselves. True zeal is uniform, and, in dependence on divine grace, begins within to remove the beam from our own eye; which is its proper and peculiar work, and a necessary qualification for reforming others. Yet even when it is so qualified, it must still proceed with a prudent caution, as our Lord instructs us in the next verse.

*Ver. 6. Give not that which is holy, &c.*] *Left these trample,—and these turn again and tear you.* There is a similar maxim to this in the Talmudical writings: "Do not cast pearls before swine:" to which is added, by way of explanation, "Do not offer wisdom to one who knows not the price of it." This was one reason why our Saviour taught in parables. Compare Acts, xiii. 45, 46.

*Ver. 7. Ask, &c.*] There is often a latent connection in the discourses of our Lord, which obviates difficulties and answers doubts that may arise from what has been said; as here, when he had taught how they who take upon them to instruct others ought to be qualified, and had cautioned them who were so qualified not to prostitute the precious truths of religion to such as were not in a condition to profit by them;—a doubt might justly arise in their minds, how they should be able to discern who were proper or not proper subjects of admonition; and to answer this, he subjoins what immediately follows: *Ask, and it shall be given you.* When the case is dubious, and the monitor himself so far purified by grace as to have no beam in his own eye, there will be no danger of enthusiasm, if, after lifting up his heart to the Father of lights, he in simplicity does what he believes to be the will of God. See Heylin. But, though this be the immediate connection of the words, they may be understood in a more general sense, as referring to all mankind; teaching us, that God always grants our requests, provided we ask in faith, and pray for what is agreeable to his will. See

<sup>i</sup> John, v. 14. and compare John, ix. 31. See Calmet.

*Ver. 9. Or what man, &c.*] *Is there any man among you? Blackwall. And indeed what one man is there among you?* Doddridge; who observes upon this verse, "Young preachers I hope will remark, how much life and force it adds to these discourses of our Lord, that they are directed so closely through the whole of them, as an immediate address to his hearers; and are not loose and general harangues in the manner of those *essays* which have of late grown so fashionable in pulpits. If any are become too polite to learn true oratory from Christ, I wish they would at least learn it from Demosthenes, who, I doubt not, would have admired the elegance of this sermon."

*Ver. 11. If ye then, being evil*] The words *Τὸ εἶ ἐσθε, ἃ ἔχετε ἐξ ὑμῶν*, which of you, in the 9th verse, are well explained by this: "If," says our Lord, "you, imperfect and evil as you are, and some of you perhaps tenacious, froward, and unkind, readily give good gifts to your children when they cry for them; how much rather will the great God, who is perfect in goodness, and unbounded in loving-kindness, bestow blessings on his children, who endeavour to resemble him in his perfections, and for that end ask the assistance of his Holy Spirit?" for by *good things* are meant the true goods, Luke, xi. 13. the gifts of the Holy Ghost; whatever in general is proper and necessary for them, and will prove to them a real good.

*Ver. 12. Therefore, all things, &c.*] The *ὅτι, Therefore*, is by no means a mere expletive in this passage, for there is a force in the connection beyond what has been generally observed. Because our Saviour was referring his hearers, observes Macknight, to what passed within themselves, he took occasion to engraft upon those feelings one of the noblest, plainest pieces of morality, which Doddridge thus connects with the preceding verses: "Being animated, *therefore*, by his goodness, study to express your gratitude for it, by your integrity and kindness to your fellow-creatures; and take it as a most sacred rule, *All things, &c.* Treat men in every instance just as you would think it reasonable to be treated by them, if you were in their *circumstances*, and they in *yours*; for this is in effect the summary and abstract of all the humane and social virtues recommended in the moral precepts of *the law and the prophets*, and it was one of the greatest ends of both to bring men to this humane [divine] and equitable temper: I say one of the greatest, that this may be reconciled with our Lord's declaring the *Love of God* to be the *first and great commandment*, ch. xxiii. 37, 38. And it is indeed a most absurd and fatal error to imagine, that the regulation of social life is the only end of religion." We may just observe, that this pre-

"cept,

would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

13 ¶ <sup>k</sup> Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 \* Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and <sup>m</sup> few there be that find it.

15 ¶ <sup>n</sup> Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 <sup>o</sup> Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 <sup>p</sup> Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

<sup>k</sup> Ch. 18. 3, 4. Luke, 13. 24. Rev. 21. 27. John, 3. 3, 5, & 10. 9. & 14. 6. Luke, 13. 3, 5. Ezek. 33. 11. 2 Cor. 5. 17. If. 55. 7. <sup>l</sup> Prov. 7. 26. <sup>m</sup> 1 John. 5. 19. Rev. 13. 3, 8. Gen. 6. 12. Acts, 14. 16. \* Or *bow*. <sup>n</sup> Deut. 4. 34. Pl. 147. 19, 20. Ch. 20. 16. & 22. 14. Luke, 11. 32. & 13. 24. <sup>o</sup> Deut. 13. 3. Jer. 23. 16. Micah, 3. 5. Zech. 13. 4. Ch. 23. 14. & 24. 4, 5, 11, 21. 2 Cor. 11. 15. 2 Tim. 3. 3. Rom. 16. 17, 18. 2 Peter, 2. 1. 1 John, 4. 1. Acts, 20. 29, 30. Col. 2. 8. Eph. 5. 6. <sup>p</sup> Luke, 6. 43, 44. Ver. 20—23. Ch. 12. 33—35. & 3. 10. 1 John, 4. 1—3. 2 Peter, 2. 1, 2. Jude, 1—20. 2 Tim. 3. 1—9. 2 Cor. 11. 13, 15. <sup>q</sup> Ch. 3. 10. Luke, 3. 9. Acts, 5. 38. Rev. 2. 16. John, 15. 2. 6. Heb. 6. 8. 1 Tim. 1. 20. Ezek. xv. 16. 33. 14. 2 Theff. 1. 8, 9. If. 3. 11.

cept, which includes in it the rules of equity, justice, and even of charity, was familiar to the Jews, and one of their maxims. See Tobit, iv. 15. And a similar precept has been delivered by several heathen writers; many quotations from whom the reader will find by referring to Grotius and Wetstein on the place. Thus far proceeds the *doctrinal* part of the sermon: the exhortation to practice it begins at the next verse. See Bengelius. The reader will find in Bishop Atterbury and Dr. Evans's Discourses the sense, reasonableness, and use of this golden law illustrated in a manner which deserves the most attentive perusal.

Ver. 13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate] That is, *strive to enter*. See Luke, xiii. 24. By the figurative expressions used in these verses, our blessed Saviour gives us to understand how easy it is to enter into destruction, and how hard it is for proud man to come to him for salvation through the infinite merit of his blood and by the power of his almighty grace: intimating at the same time, that the generality of mankind tread in the wide paths of error, and follow their passions; while few, comparatively, find out truth, and adhere thereto, in opposition to all the obstacles and discouragements that they meet with in their way. See Prov. xiv. 12, 13. The reflections of Erasmus upon the *strait gate* are lively. How strait, says he, is the gate, how narrow the way, that leadeth to life! In the way nothing is to be found which flatters the flesh, but many things opposite; poverty frequently, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity, sobriety. And as for the *gate*, it receives none who are swollen with the glory of this life, none that are elated and lengthened out with pride; none who are defended with luxury. It does not admit those whose spirits are laden with the fardels of riches, nor those that drag along with them in affection the other implements of the world. None can pass through it but naked men, who are stripped of all worldly lusts, and sealed with the image of God. In order to reconcile what is here advanced with those passages which assert Christ's yoke to

be easy, and the *ways of wisdom* to be *ways of pleasantness*, &c. some think it necessary to suppose, that this text refers entirely to the case of persecution; and that the strait gate is a violent death, which lay at the end of the narrow way, and concluded the injuries and calamities which persecutors would bring upon Christians. See Hallet's Discourses, vol. iii. p. 24, &c. But nothing is more certain than that Christ requires from all his disciples, in all ages and places, a life of mortification and self-denial; which, though it is mingled with and introductory to pleasures abundantly sufficient to counterbalance it, yet to corrupt nature is difficult. See Doddridge; and Whitby, Grotius, and Wetstein, for many parallel passages from heathen writers.

Ver. 15. Beware of false prophets] The connection here is remarkable, says Dr. Heylin. One characteristic of *false prophets*, that is, *false preachers*, is, that they widen the narrow way. It is their *prophesying*, their teaching the broad way, rather than their walking in it themselves, which is here chiefly spoken of. All those are false prophets who preach any other way than that which our Lord has marked out. *A wolf in sheep's clothing* is grown into a proverb, for a minister or pastor who makes a great profession of religion, yet cannot dissemble so well as not to be discovered by attentive observation; which was just the character of the Pharisees in our Saviour's days. See ch. xxiii. 23—28. Luke, xi. 39—42.

Ver. 16—20. Ye shall know them by their fruits] That is, by the evil tendency of their doctrines, as well as by the immorality of their lives. Compare 1 John, iv. 1. 1 Cor. xiii. 3. What follows seems to be a kind of proverb, and there occur in heathen authors many similar sayings. Several commentators are of opinion, that the *fruits* here referred to are rather the nature and tendency of the doctrine, than the actions of the false teacher's lives; but I rather think that our Lord here spoke of actions, which are often called *fruits*. Compare ch. iii. 8. xxi. 43. John, xv. 2, 5. Col. i. 6. and see 2 Tim. iii. 5, 9. It will be objected,

21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 ¶ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken

him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the flood came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the flood came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

28 ¶ And it came to pass, when Jesus had

<sup>9</sup> Rom. 2. 13. James, 1. 22. Jer. 7. 4. Hosca, 8. 2. Luke, 6. 46—49. & 13. 25. Ch. 5. 19. John, 13. 17. & 15. 14. Pf. xv. & 24. 3, 4. <sup>10</sup> Ch. 12. 27. & 25. 11. Luke, 13. 25, 26. Num. 24. 4. John, 11. 51. 1 Cor. 13. 2. <sup>11</sup> Luke, 13. 27. Ch. 25. 12, 41. Pf. 6. 8. & 1. 6. & 119. 115. & 5. 5. Hab. 1. 13. with Gal. 4. 9. 2 Tim. 2. 19. <sup>12</sup> Pf. xv. & 24. 3—6. Rom. 2. 13. James, 1. 22. John, 13. 17. & 15. 14. Ch. 12. 50. Luke, 11. 28. 1 John, 3. 7. Rev. 22. 14. <sup>13</sup> Acts, 14. 22. John, 16. 33. Col. 1. 24. 2 Tim. 3. 12. <sup>14</sup> Pf. 34. 19. & 125. 1, 2. Ch. 16. 15. 2 Tim. 2. 10. 1 Peter, 1. 5, 23. Jude, 1. 1 Cor. 3. 11. <sup>15</sup> Ch. 13. 18—22. & 11. 20—21. Job, 8. 13. Luke, 12. 47, 48. Heb. 10. 26—31. & 5. 4—8. 2 Peter, 2. 10—22. Ch. 12. 43—45. & 21. 33—44. <sup>16</sup> Ch. 13. 54. & 21. 23. Mark, 1. 22. & 11. 28. Luke, 4. 34. & 7. 16. & 20. 2. John, 7. 40. 1f. 43. 17. & 50. 4. Pf. 45. 2.

objected, that bad men may teach good doctrines, and the world have been known to do it in some instances. But to this I answer, that our Lord does not exhort his disciples to reject whatever such men taught; but only to be upon their guard against them, that they might not credit any thing merely on their authority.

Ver. 21. *Not every one that saith, &c.*] That is, “Among those who acknowledge me for the Messiah, none but such as do the will of God shall be admitted into his kingdom:” not a bare profession of religion, but a conscientious performance of the duties of it, as the fruits of living faith in him, will stand the test in the great day of account. Here the *kingdom of heaven* must signify that of glory above. Compare ch. viii. 11. Luke, xiii. 28. and Olearius on the text.

Ver. 22. *In that day*] That is, the day of judgment so called by way of eminence. Instead of *devils*, Dr. Heylin reads *demons*; for as an evil spirit is called by two different names in the original, namely *δαίμων*, where it is spoken of as the tempter or accuser of mankind, and *δαιμων*, where bodily possessions are spoken of, it would be proper to render the first by *devil*, and the second by *demon*. There certainly is a material difference, though we can give no satisfactory account of it. *Have we not prophesied*, in this place, means *preached*; and indeed they are often synonymous terms in the New Testament. Bad men, on some occasions, have, in the wisdom of Providence, been commissioned by God to signify his pleasure, and have been furnished with powers to prove their commission; witness Judas Iscariot, who was admitted into the college of apostles by our Lord himself. Prophesying and preaching, ejection of devils, and other miracles are mentioned, to shew that no gift, endowment, or accomplishment whatsoever, without faith and holiness, will avail with God;—a caution very proper at all times, and particularly in those days, when the gifts of the Spirit were to be bestowed in

such plenty on those who made profession of Christianity. See Macknight and Calmet.

Ver. 23. *I never knew you*] *To know* frequently signifies in Scripture, to *acknowledge* or *approve*. The meaning is, “Though I called you to be my servants, and you professed yourselves such, I never knew you to be such, nor approved of you. I knew indeed that ye were the slaves of other masters,—mammon, your own belly, and ambition; therefore, as your lives have been contrary both to my precepts and your own profession, I will have nothing to do with you.” There is an incomparable dignity in this whole passage. The poor despised Jesus not only calls God his Father, but speaks as the eternal Judge, before whom men should plead and beg for their lives, dreading banishment from him as their final destruction. See Doddridge and Chemnitz.

Ver. 24—27. *Therefore, &c.*] The meaning of these verses is, that whoever expects to enter into the kingdom of glory, when his religion amounts to only a mere outward profession of the Gospel, will see all his ill-grounded hopes vanish, and come to nothing, when he appears before the judgment-seat of that God who will judge all men according to their works.

Ver. 28. *Astonished at his doctrine*] Or, *his manner of teaching*. See Mark, i. 27. *for he taught them* (ver. 29.) *as one having authority*. This authority plainly appeared in these words, *but I say unto you, &c.* and in ver. 22, 23. *Have we not prophesied in thy name, &c.* from which it is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a teacher only of God's will, but a law-giver, and invested with a much greater authority than any of the prophets that went before him—and not as the scribes. The Vulgate and Syriac versions add, *and the Pharisees*, whose lectures, for the most part were absolutely trifling, being drawn from tradition, and from the comments of other doctors, which these ignorant and corrupt teachers substituted in the place of scriptural reason.



ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine :

29 For he taught them <sup>as one</sup> having authority, and not as the scribes.

\* If. 50. 4. Deut. 15. 18. Ch. 28. 18. John, 7. 46. Eccl. 8. 4.

reason, and truth. If we may judge of the teaching of the scribes in Christ's days, by the Jewish Talmuds, or even by their Mishna, nothing could be more generally contemptible ; and their frigid and insipid comments and lessons could no more be compared with those strains of divine eloquence with which our Lord's discourses abounded, than a glow-worm can be compared to the sun. Beza has observed that *Ἦν διδάσκων, he taught them*, or rather, *he was teaching them*, refers to the continued course and general character of his teaching ; of which this divine sermon is a noble specimen. Most of the things contained in it were delivered by our Lord oftener than once ; for they were of such importance, as to admit of a frequent repetition. Therefore, says Macknight, in agreement with Doddridge (see on ch. v. 1.), the sermon which St. Luke has related, although the same with this in the matter of it, may very well have been different in point of time. The commentators, indeed, are generally of another opinion ; swayed, I suppose, by the similarity of the discourses, and of the incidents attending them. Farther, although throughout the Gospels we meet with almost all the precepts contained in this sermon, we are not to infer hence, that there was no such discourse ever pronounced by Christ, but that it is a collection made by St. Matthew, of the doctrines and precepts which he taught in the course of his ministry, as some learned men have affirmed. The reflection wherewith the Evangelist concludes his account of this sermon seems evidently to prove that the whole was delivered at once. *It came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, &c.* that is to say, had ended this discourse to the people, &c. See Chemnitz and Hammond.

*Inferences.*—All our religion should begin at home ; and, instead of being uncharitably severe in censuring others, we should be carefully looking into our own hearts and ways, observing and condemning all that is amiss in ourselves, and labouring by divine grace to reform it. Without this, what will all our pretended zeal, professions of Christ's name, gospel privileges, prayers, and either preaching or hearing of the word, come to ? And what a dreadful disappointment will many formalists in religion meet with at the last day ! Our corrupt hearts must be changed by renewing grace, before we can be truly holy in our lives ; and our principles must be right before our practices can be so. The best way, therefore, of knowing persons and doctrines is by their fruits, according as they are agreeable to the word of God or not.—How should we dread the thoughts of following the multitude to do evil, lest we follow them into hell ; or of building our hopes of happiness on insecure grounds, lest they fail us, to our final destruction ! And how earnest should we be in our applications to a throne of grace, that we may go along with the happy few to everlasting life, or may be wise unto salvation ! Blessed be God for the high assurances we have, that the humble, importunate prayer of faith shall not be in vain ; that our heavenly Father will, in the

riches of his mercy, hear and answer us, and freely bestow the best of blessings upon us ; and that by a faith which is productive of real holiness, we shall rest on a sure foundation, weather every storm, and get safe to glory. . But, oh ! how concerned should we be, not only to hear and admire the doctrines of Christ, but to be savingly acquainted with them !

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The proud and self-righteous are ever most censorious.

1. Our Lord forbids all rash judgment, unreasonable jealousies, evil surmising, and rigid censures. *Judge not*, uncharitably, unmercifully, under a spirit of revenge or prejudice ; decide not concerning a man's spiritual state from some single act or circumstance, nor pretend to know his heart, much less to determine concerning his everlasting state : to his own master he standeth or falleth. This precept does not forbid the judgment of the civil magistrate, nor our forming conclusions of others' state as well as our own, agreeably to the word of God ; for, though our own judgment may be fallible, his must be according to truth.

The prohibition is enforced by a weighty reason : *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Our charity and mercifulness to others will be the means of securing the like favourable judgment to ourselves ; whilst a spirit of censoriousness will provoke the resentment and ill-will of others, and be returned generally in as liberal abuse : besides, what is infinitely more to be feared, God will give judgment without mercy to those who shewed no mercy, and with rigour of severest justice will call those to his bar who dare usurp his throne, and sit as self-authorized judges of their brethren.

2. He gives us some rules about reproof ; not forbidding the kind jealousy of love, but condemning the magisterial rebukes of self-sufficient pride. Before we look at the faults of others, we should well consider if there be not greater in ourselves. For how unreasonable and unjust would it be with malignant eye to mark, aggravate, and with severity condemn, the infirmities and follies of others, the mote which is in their eye ; while we extenuate, excuse, or justify, what is far more culpable, the beam which is in our own ? or with what face of hardened effrontery can we dare set up for reformers of them, while greater evils, unredressed, lie at our own door ? This is the grossest hypocrisy, and such pretended zeal against sin but a greater abomination in God's sight, who trieth the heart. Before we presume to correct others, we should therefore reform the evils in ourselves ; lest they should retort, Physician, heal thyself ; and our admonition, though just in itself, be rejected with contempt.

3. Christ forbids not only uncharitable censures and magisterial rebukes, but imprudent and unseasonable reproofs. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.* Where men discover their profaneness and impiety ; professedly infidel, or avowed enemies to the

truths

## C H A P. VIII.

*Christ cleanseth the leper, healeth the centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, and many others diseased; sheweth how he is to be followed: stilleth the tempest on the sea, driveth the devils out of two men possessed, and suffereth them to go into the swine.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**W**HEN he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 1. 40. Luke, 5. 12. Lev. 13. 46. Num. 5. 2, 3. 2 Kings, 5. 27. <sup>b</sup> Mark, 9. 24. Ch. 6. 30. & 14. 31. <sup>c</sup> Mark, 1. 41, 42. Luke, 5. 13. Exod. 15. 26. Ch. 11. 4, 5. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 9. 30. & 12. 16. & 16. 22. & 17. 9. with Ch. 12. 13—19. 11. 42. 2. John, 5. 41. & 7. 18. & 8. 50—  
<sup>e</sup> Lev. xiii. xiv. Mark, 1. 43, 44. Luke, 5. 14. <sup>f</sup> 2 Kings, 5. 7, 8. Ch. 5. 17. Mark, 6. 11. John, 10. 37.

truths of God; who despise instruction, and are but more exasperated by admonition; there it would be folly, and abuse of things sacred, to persist in rebuking them; and we can only expect insult and harm to ourselves, without any profit to them, or glory to God: but, while prudence is enjoined, we must take care not to make our caution an excuse for our cowardice; not to think men swine till we have found them so; nor be afraid of any consequences when duty calls us, even in the face of persecutors, to bear a faithful testimony to the truths of God.

2dly, Prayer is the means appointed of God to obtain of him the supply of every want, spiritual and temporal; and therefore,

1. The command given is; *Ask, seek, knock*; implying the fervour, diligence, constancy, and importunity, which must be used, if we would obtain the relief of our necessities; and a deep and humbling sense of our wants, and faith in God's promises, will engage us so to do; without which there can be no availing prayer.

2. A gracious promise is annexed. They who thus pray shall surely succeed: God will hear and answer them according to their various wants. Every petitioner, without respect of persons, who thus in faith draws near to God, receives an answer of peace, finds acceptance and favour with him, has the door of mercy opened, and is welcome to enter, and freely take out of God's fulness whatever blessing he needs. *Note*; They who refuse or neglect to ask, deserve to want. The prayerless soul will be left inexcusable.

3. As an engagement to pray with assurance of being heard, our Lord enforces his command by an argument drawn from the compassions of our earthly parents. Evil as we are by nature, scarce one can be found so unnatural as to be deaf to the cries of his own flesh and blood, much less inhumanly to give his children things noxious, instead of the food that they want. If then, in such corrupted creatures as we are, such compassions and regard are found towards our offspring, much more will the Father of mercies graciously hear and grant the petitions of his dear children who wait upon him: his love, his power, are infinitely greater than ours, and therefore they shall want no manner of thing that is good. Their own requests, perhaps, may be sometimes improper, unnecessary, unreasonable; and these prayers he will best answer by kind

2 <sup>a</sup> And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, <sup>b</sup> if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

3 <sup>c</sup> And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

4 And Jesus saith unto him, <sup>d</sup> See thou tell no man; but go thy way, <sup>e</sup> shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, <sup>f</sup> for a testimony unto them.

denials; whilst all that his wisdom and goodness see fit shall be given them, in such manner and measure as shall be most for their benefit and his own glory.

3dly, We have,

1. The conclusion and sum of the foregoing commands; the golden rule, universally applicable in all cases,—To do unto our neighbours as, according to reason and religion, we might expect they should do for us, if our situations were reversed:—to do them no injury; to give them every assistance in our power; to deal with them in uprightness and integrity, without making the least advantage of their ignorance or necessities: and this doctrine both the law and the prophets inculcate; and in this the commands of both, respecting our duty towards our neighbour, are summed up. The rule is short, and easy to be remembered; but how wide and difficult the practice!

2. Christ urges us to all diligence in securing eternal life, and points out the only way thereto: Strive to *enter in at the strait gate*. The gate is Christ, his infinite merit and intercession: it is *strait*; as it admits none of the trappings of pride and self-righteousness, and calls us to part from all our most beloved sins, to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ. And as this will require much labour, prayer, and self-denial, Christ urges the necessity of striving to enter in.

[1.] Because of the ruin and danger which attend the ways of sin, in which the multitude walk unconcerned; *for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction*. There no restraint withholds the unbridled appetite; there pleasure, riches, honour, spread their lure; there all may find the gratification of their darling passion, or are engaged so to hope by that wily tempter, who welcomes all with fairest promises of joy and happiness; and many there be which go in thereto, naturally disposed to follow the bent of their fallen minds, and walking every one in his own way. To swim therefore against the stream of besetting temptations, and the tide of custom too, is difficult: but let us remember that the end of these things is destruction; that these paths lead down to hell; that, whether they be those of carelessness and neglect about the soul, open immorality, or self-righteous hypocrisy, all tend to eternal misery, and meet in the place of torment.

[2.] *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which*

5 ¶ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a <sup>b</sup>centurion, beseeching him,

6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

<sup>a</sup> Luke, 7. 1—10. Gen. 49. 10. Jf. 11. 10. & 60. 3, 8. <sup>b</sup> A captain of an hundred soldiers. Ch. 27. 51. Acts, x. He sent to Christ first by the Jews, and then by his friends. Luke, vii. <sup>1</sup> Job, 31, 13. Rom. 12. 15, 16. Col. 4. 1.

which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. There we must stoop low, our pride be mortified, all self-dependence be renounced; there the restraints of God's law hedge up the way, and leave us the narrow path of holiness only to walk in; there our very nature must be changed, our inveterate evil habits subdued, our corruptions mortified; there we must expect to meet with many trials, afflictions, and temptations; there every inch must be won with perpetual war against sin, earth, and hell; and every step must be taken with watchful care, since dangers and snares are at the right hand and at the left:—no wonder then *there be few that find it*, comparatively few at least. When therefore the difficulties are so great, the diligence should be proportionable; and if there be but few, comparatively, saved, we should strive to be of that number; and the issue will repay our pains: *eternal life will infinitely more than compensate for all the struggles of the way.*

4thly, False Christs and false prophets would shortly arise; and false teachers were already abundantly numerous. Against these the Lord therefore cautions his disciples, and sets down marks whereby they may be distinguished.

1. Our Lord describes them as wolves in sheep's clothing; such as the Pharisees and Scribes were, who, with exterior marks of sanctity, and austerity in their manners and garb, were inwardly full of enmity against the doctrines of grace and true holiness, and in their spirit hypocritical, proud, and covetous. And probably our Lord has respect to the false apostles, the judaizing teachers, and all who should ever afterwards appear in his church, preaching the abominable doctrines of man's self-sufficiency, justification by works, and the like; *grievous wolves*, Acts, xx. 29. whom gain, not godliness, Rom. xvi. 18. has drawn into the ministry. Beware of them.

2. He lays down the rule by which we must prove all who pretend a mission from him: *Ye shall know them by their fruits*, just as easily as a tree is known. They who are evil can no more preach the truth, and live it too, than a thorn can bear grapes. And, on the other hand, where the soul is right with God, there the fruits of truth and holiness are necessarily produced. Two ways the prophet may be known;

[1.] By his life. Is his conduct exemplary; self-denying, humble, meek, zealous? Does the love of God and of men's souls appear to influence and actuate him in all his works and ways? At least, in the general temper of his mind, and tendency of his conversation, is this manifested? These are good fruits of a good tree. But is he worldly-minded, proud, sensual, indolent, more willing to fleece than to feed the flock? rigid in exacting the wages, but unwilling to be employed in the work, of the ministry? encouraging, instead of reproofing sinners, by his example; conforming to the ways of a wicked world,

instead of being transformed in the spirit of his mind? These are evident proofs of the falsehood of such a prophet's pretensions.

[2.] By his doctrine; which seems chiefly intended here: for a false prophet may with the veil of hypocrisy cover his iniquities so as to appear righteous unto men. But are his doctrines according to truth, and drawn from the sacred fountain? does he preach the dignity or the desperate wickedness of man by nature? does he declare the damnable nature of sin, the utter guilt of every man by nature and practice, and the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness; or encourage the false hopes of sinners by smooth prophecies, and soften the harsh terms of hell and damnation, that he may not offend the ear with such inharmonious sounds? does he exalt the divine Redeemer, his person, his offices, or slightly pass over these glorious subjects, for dry ethics, and lectures on morality? does he enforce religion as an experimental thing, as the work of God's Spirit in the heart, purifying the inner man? or does he dwell on mere external forms and duties; as silent about divine agency as if he knew not whether there were any Holy Ghost? Does he offend sinners by the freedom of his rebukes, and the formal and self-righteous by his scrutinizing detection of their hypocrisy? or does he study to please men, and, like the false prophets of old, secure the good word of the deluded and misguided world? By these and the like fruits shall they be known. *Try therefore the spirits, whether they be of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world;* 1 John, iv. i.

3. He declares the terrible end of these wolves in sheep's clothing. As the barren tree is only fit fuel for the flames, so are these marked for ruin; the axe of death shall shortly be laid to their root, and ruin eternal be their portion. Beware therefore of false prophets; lest, deluded by them, you partake of their plagues.

5thly, We have the conclusion of this awakening discourse, and the deep impression it made on the hearers.

1. Our Lord shews that no profession of religion, destitute of the power of godliness, will stand a man in any stead at a judgment-day.

[1.] It is not saying, but doing, that must prove our genuine religion. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, in boasting profession and noisy devotion, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, be enrolled as living members of his church, or be admitted inheritors of his glory; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, who truly believes on him whom God hath sent, takes him for his Lord and Master, not merely in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth; obedient to his commands, following him in righteousness and true holiness, desirous to do his will on earth as he hopes shortly to do his will in heaven. Reader, is this character thine?*

[2.] Many in the day of Christ will appear to have concluded

7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 32. 10. Luke, 15. 19, 27. Ch. 15. 27.

deluded themselves with false hopes, whose pleas will then be fearfully silenced. *Many will say to me in that great day of judgment, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? Many of those who may have filled the highest stations of the church on earth, have been to appearance the most zealous preachers, or public professors in it, yet proved no better than Balaam or Caiaphas: yea, and in thy name have cast out devils, as Judas, and many others, no doubt; and in thy name done many wonderful works? even working the most astonishing miracles: and yet Christ declares, Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me; all ye that work iniquity.* Notwithstanding all your pleas, your hearts have been false and faithless, and your professions utterly unsound; and therefore your portion must be, to depart accursed with the devil and his angels. Learn hence these awful truths: (1.) That a man may be a minister of the gospel, yea, distinguished with gifts and successful in his labours, and yet be finally cast away; may be the instrument of saving others, and perish himself; may cast out devils from the hearts of others, and harbour them in his own. (2.) Names may pass upon men, but God searcheth the heart. There are secret sins to be found in many under the cloak of most glaring profession; and they shall receive greater damnation. (3.) In the day of judgment, terrible will be the disappointment of those, who all their lives long were working, as they thought, for life, were esteemed as patterns of piety, and cried up as the excellent of the earth, and yet will be found not only to have deceived others, but to have deluded themselves, falling from the height of self-righteous hopes into the depths of endless despair, and from the gates of heaven driven into the belly of hell. Let every man prove well his own work, and judge himself, that he may be found sincere and without offence at the day of Christ.

2. He enforces the truths that he had delivered, by an apposite parable of a wise and foolish builder, describing the different foundations they laid, and the different issue of their labours.

[1.] The wise builder, his labours, and success, are described. (1.) His character is given; *He heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them.* Herein is seen the mind that hath wisdom: he receives the truth in the love of it, obeys the precepts, is influenced by the Gospel as a living principle of action, and seeks conformity in heart and life to his divine Lord and Master. (2.) *He builds upon a rock, on Jesus Christ, the only sure and safe foundation, depending on his infinite merit, powerful intercession, and free, rich, and unmerited grace alone for pardon and acceptance; and under the teachings of his word and spirit, and the supports of his grace, the glorious superstructure rises of righteousness and true holiness.* As he builds for eternity, he is zealous in labouring to make his calling and election sure; and in every good word and work seeks to approve himself to the great Master. (3.) He who thus faithfully and perseveringly builds upon and rests upon this rock, stands against every storm. He may expect, and will meet

with many a severe blast: the rain of temptation within, the overflowings of ungodliness without, the wind of persecution, all may unite their fury against him, to move him from his steadfastness, to shake his confidence in Christ, to discourage or seduce him from the good ways of the Lord; but, resting on this rock, and cleaving to this Saviour, the faithful soul shall stand: he shall stand in the day of evil; in the hour of death he shall be supported; his work shall stand the fiery trial; and in the day of judgment he shall be approved and rewarded by the Lord of life and glory.

[2.] The foolish builder, and his sad end, are set forth for our warning. (1.) His character is, that *he heareth these sayings of Christ, and doeth them not.* He makes profession of religion, and attends upon the ordinances, but goes no farther; the doctrines of the gospel have no deep effect upon his heart, nor an universal and abiding influence on his conduct. (2.) He builds upon the sand, leaving Christ to rest upon something in himself, and looking for acceptance, in whole or in part, on account of some external things wherein he differs from others, whether moral duties, alms, honesty, and the like, or on the form of godliness, baptism, prayers, frequenting the house and table of the Lord, &c. Or if he has a speculative knowledge of the truth, and knows the vanity of these things, he rests on that knowledge, without any experimental possession of the blessings of the gospel; and then it profiteth him nothing: or if his notions are yet more spiritualized, he makes his inward feelings, or supposed gifts and graces, his confidence, depending upon what he calls *the Christ within*, which is but a more refined self-righteousness, and a more subtle delusion: and therefore, when the time of trial comes, his house will fall, and crush him under its ruins. If persecution arises for the word's sake, such are quickly offended; in times of affliction and trouble, their hopes cannot support and comfort them; and in death they utterly fail; at least, if the hypocrite's hopes stand out to the last, they die with him; destruction and despair from that moment seize him; and too late he discovers the fatal mistake, when it is irremediable, and his eternal state is determined.

3. Great was the impression made by this discourse of our Lord on his audience: they were as men thunder-struck; astonished with the uncommon power, weight, and energy which attended his preaching. They admired the dignity with which he spoke, addressing them in his own name as one invested with authority: and his sentiments were new, as well as weighty; utterly unlike the flat and spiritless comments of the scribes, who servilely adhered to the traditions and decisions of their rabbis. And yet, alas! the impression soon wore off from many, from the most of them. So easy, so common, is it to hear with admiration the eloquent or powerful preachers of the Gospel, to feel a transient glow, and notwithstanding to continue in ignorance and unbelief, under the power of sin, and perish everlastingly.

CHAP.

under my roof: 'but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For \*I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this

\* Pf. 107. 20. John, 6. 63. Pf. 33. 9. Ecl. 8. 4. \* If I, a servant, have such power over men, what power must God-man have over diseases!

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 2. *And, behold, there came a leper*] It has been generally thought, that this is the leper whose cure is recorded, Mark, i. 40. Luke, v. 12. and consequently that the sermon in Luke is not the same with that in the preceding chapter. But the cures, says Macknight, are different: that was performed in a city, this in the fields. Having cleansed the leper here mentioned, *Jesus entered into Capernaum*, and cured the centurion's servant; whereas, the other leper having published the miracle, Jesus did not choose, at least in the day-time, to go into the town; but remained without in desert places to shun the crowd. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that there are some things similar in the two cures: for instance, both the lepers say to Christ, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*; but it was so natural to address their desires to the Son of God in this form, by which also they express their belief in his power, that it is rather matter of wonder we do not find it more frequently made use of. Farther, there is the same command given to the lepers to *go shew themselves to the priest*; but this command must have been repeated not twice, but twenty times, on supposition that Jesus cleansed lepers so often. Accordingly we find him repeating it to the ten lepers, whom he cleansed at one time in Samaria; Luke, xvii. 14. As for the circumstance of his bidding the cured person tell no man what had happened, it occurs almost in every miracle performed by Christ during the two first years of his ministry; the reasons for which see in the note on ver. 4.

The immediate cure of the leprosy was only in the power of God: the leper, therefore, by this application to Christ, immediately confesses his divine authority; but more fully to enter into this subject, the reader should refer to our notes on Levit. xiii. and on 2 Kings, v. 6, 7.

Ver. 3. *And Jesus put forth his hand, &c.*] Dr. Doddridge supposes that our Saviour took this leper aside from the multitude, without which he thinks there could have been no room for the charge of secrecy which Jesus gave. This circumstance certainly happened in another cure. See Mark, viii. 23. Christ had taught with authority, ch. vii. 29. which he immediately confirms by wonderful actions. The priest, after a long trial, pronounced whether a man was cured of his leprosy or not; but Christ healed him with a word. St. Matthew could not have related the matter in more proper terms. This is that sublimity which Longinus so much admires in Moses. See his treatise on the Sublime, sect. 9.

Ver. 4. *See thou tell no man*] Jesus commanded the leper without all delay to haste to Jerusalem, lest, if the report of his cure should arrive before him, the priests, through envy, might refuse to pronounce him cleansed; for it was the province of the priests to judge of and to determine concerning the leprosy. *For a testimony unto them*, means to the Jews, and particularly to the priests and Pharisees, who withstood the doctrine of Christ. The sense of the

passage is, "that the sacrifice offered by the leper may be a proof of the reality of this miracle, and consequently of my divine mission." These words may also be rendered, *that it may be a testimony against them*: compare Mark, vi. 11. Luke, ix. 5. The plain meaning seems to be, "Go without delay, and shew yourself, cleansed as you are, to the priest, and present the sacrifices which the law requires for your purification, that we may convince them of the reality of the cure, and yet not give them any occasion of calumny." But though our Saviour here might enjoin secrecy on the leper only till he had shewn himself to the priest; yet he commanded many others to tell none of the miracles he had wrought upon them. It was not in our Lord's plan to be universally received as the Messiah during his abode upon earth in the flesh. Those who had even then sufficient evidence proposed to them of our Lord's divine mission, and notwithstanding rejected it, were utterly inexcusable; but who those were, He alone in most instances could determine, who judges the heart. He was indeed to fulfil all the prophetic characters of the Messiah, that, when the time appointed for his erecting his kingdom arrived, the foundation on which it was to rest might want nothing of the strength and solidity which was necessary to support so great a fabric as the faith of the world. But all those prophetic characters of the Messiah, Jesus fulfilled, and appropriated to himself, when in his own lifetime on the earth he proved his divine mission; and by miracles communicated to a competent number of disciples every thing necessary in order to their propagating it through the world; and in the conclusion, by his sufferings and death, not only confirmed his doctrine, but made atonement for the sins of men. The wisdom of his plan was therefore worthy of its author.

Ver. 5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum*] St. Luke has related this part of the evangelical history more at large than St. Matthew. The whole may be thus connected: Jesus, having finished his sermon on the mount, as soon as he came down thence, to shew that his words and doctrines pertained both to the Jews and Gentiles, performed two miracles; the one for a Jew a leper who came to him, the other for a Gentile, a centurion or Roman commander of a hundred soldiers, who was stationed at Capernaum. A servant of this centurion, whose virtue and honesty, obedience and industry, made him very valuable [*τιμιος*] in the eyes of his master, lay at home sick of the palsy, in the most grievous stage of the disease, *δυνας βασιλευσενος*. The centurion, hearing of Jesus (whose fame began now to be spread abroad, and to which his miraculous cure performed at a distance on the son of a nobleman in this same city must have greatly contributed, see John, iv. 43—53.), but not thinking himself worthy to come unto him, engaged, as St. Luke informs us, the elders of the Jews in his cause, and sent them to intercede with this blessed Person, of whom he had conceived such high notions, on behalf of his afflicted servant. They performed

man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doeth it.  
Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, 10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled,

Ch. 9. 2. & 15. 28. with John, 3. 4, 10. Ch. 11. 21.

formed their office punctually; for they came and besought our Lord instantly and earnestly, and strengthened their importunity by informing him, that the centurion was worthy for whom he should do this; for he loveth our nation, say they, and, as a proof of it, hath built us a synagogue. Jesus, ever ready to do good, made them no reply, but immediately went with them. The centurion, hearing that he was coming, moved by the most remarkable humility, and judging his house unworthy the presence of so divine a guest, immediately dismissed his friends, to desire the Master not to give himself so great trouble, as to come to the house of one, who judged himself so far from being worthy of this great condescension, that he thought himself not even worthy to come to Jesus; his humble request was, that he would deign to speak the word only, since he was assured that would be sufficient for the recovery of his servant. But humility never yet prevented Christ's approach; and therefore he proceeded on towards the centurion's house; coming near to which, the centurion himself, as St. Matthew here informs us, hastened out to meet him; and thus the sacred historians are easily reconciled, and the history recorded here and in St. Luke appears to be one and the same. However, as Macknight and some others suppose the histories to be different, that I may do justice to the subject, I will subjoin their arguments at the end of the 13th verse.

Ver. 6. *My servant*] ὁ παῖς μου. In Luke he is called δοῦλος: whence the writers hinted-at at the end of the last note would draw an argument in proof of the difference of these histories; for as παῖς sometimes signifies son, they would infer, that this centurion came for the cure of his son; that in Luke for the cure of his servant. This argument, however, is by no means conclusive; for it is plain, from several other passages both in sacred and profane writers, that παῖς in the Greek, as well as puer in the Latin, is frequently used for servant.

*Grievously tormented*] *Grievously afflicted*. The Greek word is not confined, especially in the Hellenistic idiom, to the signification of *tormented*, but often denotes simply (as has been observed by Grotius and Hammond) *afflicted* or *distressed*. Palsies are not attended with torment.

Ver. 8, 9. *Lord, I am not worthy, &c.*] The centurion with great humility answers our Lord, that he means he should not take the trouble of going to his house, as he was a Gentile; but only that he would be so good as to command his servant's cure, though at a distance; for he knew his power equal to that effect; diseases and even devils of all kinds being as much subject to Christ's commands, as his soldiers were to him. He knew that he himself was only an inferior officer; for the Roman centurions were subject to the command of their respective tribunes, as our captains are to that of their colonels. "I am only an inferior officer," says he, "and yet what I command is done even in my absence; how much more what thou commandest, who art Lord of all!" Some of the heathens formed very grand ideas of the divine power:

thus Cicero says, *Nil est quod Deus efficere non posset, e quidem sine labore ullo. Ut enim hominum membra nulli contentione mente ipsa ac voluntate moveantur, sic numine Deorum omnia regi, moveri, mutarique possent.* See Nat. Deor. lib. 3. "There is nothing which God cannot effect, and that without any labour; for as the members of men are moved without any difficulty by the mere act of their will, so can the Deity direct and govern all things." But the excellency and the peculiarity of the centurion's faith consisted in his applying this sublime idea to Jesus, who by outward appearance was only a Man. His faith seems to have taken rise, as was above hinted, from the miraculous cure performed some time before on a nobleman's son at Capernaum; for as the centurion dwelt there, he might know that at the time of the cure Jesus was not in Capernaum, but at Cana, at the distance of a day's journey from the sick, when he performed it; but this faith could have been only speculative and inefficacious, if the centurion had not already yielded to and experienced a measure of the power of divine grace.

Ver. 10. *He marvelled*] Our Lord's conduct on this occasion by no means implies that he was ignorant before either of the centurion's faith, or of the grounds on which it was built; he knew all fully, before the man spake one word; but he was struck with admiration at the noble notion which this heathen Roman captain had conceived of his power; the passion of admiration being excited by the greatest and most beautiful of any object, as well as by its novelty: Jesus expressed his admiration of the centurion's faith in the praises which he bestowed upon it to the *who followed*, as he was passing along the streets of Capernaum, with a view to make it the more conspicuous; for he declared publicly, that he had not met with, among the Jews themselves, any one who possessed such just, sublimated conceptions of the power by which he acted notwithstanding they were, as a nation, the chosen people of God, and enjoyed the benefit of a divine revelation directing them to believe on him. See Macknight, an Beaufobre and Lenfant. It is very remarkable, says Dr. Heylin, that throughout the whole Gospel Jesus never said to wonder at any thing but faith; which wonder in Christ is to be interpreted as a high expression of esteem. See ch. xv. 28. Now things difficult, rare, and extraordinary in their kind, are the proper objects of admiration but it may be said, Is not faith the gift of God? and God's bounty so penurious, and his gifts so rare, that I himself, who has the distribution of them, our Lord mean, should wonder to find a mind greatly enriched by them? To this we answer, that most indubitably faith is the gift of God, and that a man might as soon create himself a new sense, as produce a true and lively faith by his own natural abilities: and it was not the gift, but man persevering acceptance of that gift, which was the subject of Christ's admiration. To pass over what was peculiar to the case of this centurion,—whereof we are not competent judges, as Christ alone discerned his inmost sentiment

and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11 And I say unto you, <sup>n</sup> That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven :

12 <sup>o</sup> But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, <sup>p</sup> Go thy way; and, as thou hast believed, <sup>so</sup> be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

<sup>n</sup> Gen. 22. 17. & 49. 10. & 28. 14. If. 2. 2, 7. & 11. 10. & 42. 6. & 43. 6. & 49. 6, 12. & 25. 6. & liv. 14. Zech. 2. 11. & 8. 23, 27. Mal. 1. 11. Ch. 12. 31. Luke, 3. 29. Acts, x—xix. Eph. 3. 6, 8. <sup>o</sup> Ch. 3. 10, 11: & 13. 42, 50. & 21. 43. & 22. 7, 13. & 24. 51. & 25. 50. & 23. 38, 39. Rom. 11. 12, 15. Luke, 13. 28—30. <sup>p</sup> Mark, 9. 23. John, 4. 50. Ch. 15. 28.

—and to bring this matter home to ourselves, we may, upon due reflection, be convinced that divine faith in general, when it is actually received and embraced in the heart of a Christian, produces these such strange and wondrous effects, as cannot but raise our esteem and admiration : for faith is a divine light, by which conscience will presently read us our duty, and urge such mortifying consequences, mixed with the most consolatory, that it is no wonder men shut their eyes against it, when it first begins to glimmer upon their minds. But this matter cannot be more emphatically represented than in the following words of the judicious Dr Barrow : “ The first step,” says he, “ into the Christian state, is a sight and sense of our own weakness, baseness, and misery: We must discern and feel that our mind is very blind, our reason feeble, our will impotent and prone to evil; that our life is void of merit, and polluted with guilt; that our condition is deplorably sad and wretched; that of ourselves we are insufficient to think or do any good, in order to our recovery: whence we are obliged to fore compunction of spirit for our deeds and our case; to humble confession of our sins and miseries; to earnest supplication for mercy and grace; to heal and rescue us from our sad estate. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner! *What shall I do to be saved? Wretched man that I am!* &c. are the ejaculations of a soul teeming with faith.” It is then, if the sinner will simply and believingly lay hold on Christ, that the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. Rom. v. 5.

Ver. 11, 12. And I say unto you] From this exalted pitch of faith found in a heathen, Jesus took occasion to declare the merciful purpose which God entertained towards the Gentiles, nameiy, that he would accept their faith as readily as the faith of the Jews, and seat them with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in heaven; while the children of the kingdom, that is to say, the members of the visible church under the Mosaic dispensation, who come short of living faith, should be shut out for ever. Though the phrase *from the east and from the west* is most probably proverbial, to express *from all parts of the earth* (see Luke, xii. 29.), yet it is remarkable, that the Gospel spread much more to the east and west of Judaea, than to the north and south of it. The words *ἀναλίσθησονται μετὰ Ἀβραάμ*, shall sit, or lie down with Abraham, whereby our Lord expresses the future happiness of the faithful Gentiles, signify properly, “ to sit down at table with Abraham,” &c. This is agreeable to the phraseology of Scripture, which represented the rewards of the righteous under the idea of a

sumptuous entertainment; and though the joys of heaven be all of a spiritual kind, this metaphor needs not be thought strange; since, as Le Clerc observes, we can neither speak ourselves, nor understand others speaking, of our state in the life to come, unless phrases taken from the affairs of this life be made use of. Besides, the metaphor is not peculiar to the inspired writings. The Greeks represented divine pleasure under the notion of a feast. Empedocles, speaking of the felicity of virtuous men after death, says, “ They live cheerfully at tables with the other immortals, free from the pains to which other men are subjected.” Our Lord, by representing the Gentiles as lying down at the feast of heaven on the same couch with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the founders of the Jewish nation, has disgraced the pride of the Israelites, who disdained to eat with Gentiles, though many of them, in point of morality, were far better than they. There is a great emphasis in the original of the 12th verse, where the punishment of those rejected from the kingdom is described. They shall not only be cast out,—that were very bad,—but they shall be cast out into darkness;—what can be worse? Behold, they shall be cast out into τὸ σκότος τὸ ἕξωτερον, the very outer darkness: and how is this augmented by the next words, there shall be weeping, &c. The Greek word κλαυθμῶς signifies also the cries and howlings which sometimes accompany weeping; and the gnashing of teeth which is added here completes the description of rage and despair. See ch. xiii. 42, 50. Acts, vii. 54. It has been justly observed by many commentators, that this phrase of outer darkness, which is often used after comparing the kingdom of heaven to a banquet, contains a beautiful allusion to the lustre of those illuminated rooms in which such feasts were generally celebrated, as opposed to that darkness which surrounded those who by night were turned out; but it also sometimes goes yet farther, when the persons excluded are supposed to be thrown into a dark dungeon. Compare ch. xxii. 13. xxv. 30. and Jude, ver. 13. and see Doddridge, Macknight, and Calmet.

Ver. 13. Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way] This most evidently proves that the centurion was come out of his house, as we have observed on ver. 5. There is in these words of our Saviour a strong insinuation, that the centurion had conceived no higher an idea of his divine power than was just; As thou hast believed, so, &c. After these words many manuscripts read, And the centurion, returning to his house, found that his servant, &c. See Wetstein. This miracle, says Macknight, is generally supposed to have been the same with that related, Luke, vii. 1, &c. yet

14 ¶ And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

\* Mark, i. 29. Luke, 4. 38. 1 Cor. 9. 5. † Exod. 15. 26. Pl. 107. 20. \* Ch. 9. 6. John, 5. 8, 9. Acts, 3. 7, 8.

yet they seem to have been different. For, 1. According to St. Matthew, it was the centurion's *son* (παῖς) who was sick; whereas, according to Luke, it was his *servant* (δούλος). It is true, Luke once uses the Greek word *παῖς*, which signifies a *son*; a circumstance which has led many to confound the two miracles: yet there is little in it, as we are directed to explain that word by the name δούλος, *servant*, which he uses no less than three times. On the other hand, we are under no necessity to translate the original word *παῖς* in Matthew by *servant*, but upon the supposition that the miracles are the same. 2. Matthew's centurion came in person, being to ask a favour for his *son*; whereas Luke's centurion, considering with himself that he was to petition Jesus in behalf of a *slave*, first prevailed with the elders of the town to present his petition: afterwards, on second thoughts, he deputed some intimate friends to hinder Jesus from coming. The maxim indeed of the civilians, that he who causes another to do any thing may be said to do it himself, is thought by many a sufficient reconciliation of this difference. But it is not so; for though the law establishes that maxim, to render the execution of justice effectual, it cannot well be allowed in history; the perfection of which lieth in the exactness of the narration. And therefore, seeing Matthew has expressly affirmed that the *centurion came beseeching Jesus*; that Jesus said to him, *I will come*, &c. that the centurion answered, *I am not worthy*, &c. and that Jesus said unto the centurion, *Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee*: to interpret these things as said to a man's friends, would be extremely harsh, and contrary to all the rules of history. 3. There is not the smallest hint given in Matthew, that the centurion of whom he speaks was a proselyte. On the contrary, there is an insinuation that he was not, in the opposition that is stated between his faith and the faith of the Israelites; and in the declaration which our Lord was pleased to make on this occasion; viz. that many should come from the east and west, that is, from all countries, and sit down in the kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom, who looked on themselves as having the only natural right to it, should be excluded for ever. Whereas the centurion of whom St. Luke speaks was a lover of the Jewish nation, and had built them a synagogue, perhaps in Italy, or some other heathen country; and so was, in all probability, a proselyte of righteousness; for which cause the principal people of the town cheerfully undertook to solicit Jesus in his behalf. On the other hand, there are three similar circumstances attending these miracles, which have made the bulk of readers confound them. 1. They were both performed in the town of Capernaum, after Jesus had preached sermons which in substance are pretty much the same. To this I reply, that these sermons were different; the one in Matthew having been preached on a mountain; whereas that in Luke was delivered on a plain, Luke, vi. 17. 2. Both the centurions dwelt in Capernaum. But this might easily happen;

as in the space of twelve or fourteen months different companies of Roman soldiers in Herod's pay, with their officers, may have been stationed there: or there may have been two centurions in Capernaum at the same time, whose soldiers might be quartered in the town and the neighbouring villages. 3. Both centurions made the same speech to Jesus, the one in person, the other by his friends. *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come*, &c. But this circumstance may be accounted for in the following manner: As the faith of the first centurion, who was a heathen took its rise from the extraordinary cure which Jesus had performed on the nobleman's son, the address of the second might take its rise from the success of the first; which could not miss of being well known both in the town and country. Much encouraged, therefore, by that instance of Christ's goodness, the second centurion might expect something on behalf of his slave, especially as he was himself not a heathen by religion, but a proselyte to Moses, and a lover of the Jews, and had built them a synagogue: besides, he had engaged the elders of the city to present his petition. However, when the elders were gone, recollecting his brother centurion's speech, that had been so favourably received, he bethought himself of sending some friends, with the same speech improved by this farther circumstance of humility, that he did not think himself worthy so much as to come into Christ's presence. See Luke, vii. 6, 7. This being an eminent instance of faith and humility, Jesus would not let it pass without due approbation. He honoured it with the same high encomium which he had passed on the like faith and humility in the other centurion: only, as this was not a heathen by religion, he did not, as formerly, set his faith and the reward of it in opposition to the faith of the Jews. This opposition he stated afterwards, when one asked him, *Are there few to be saved?* Luke, xiii. 28. To conclude: that two centurions should have had one his son, and the other his slave, cured in Capernaum, with like circumstances, is no more improbable, than that the temple should have been twice purged, the multitude twice fed, and the fishes twice caught by miracle, and with the same circumstances.

*Ver. 14. And when Jesus was come*] After this, Jesus going into Peter's house, saw there his wife's mother lying sick of a fever. This was the house into which Jesus was used to retire at Capernaum. See Mark, i. 21. and Luke, iv. 31. Peter was of Bethsaida, which was at a little distance from Capernaum; John, i. 44. This event happened after the cure wrought upon the demoniac in the synagogue, spoken of by St. Mark and St. Luke in the passages above quoted.

*Ver. 15. And he touched her hand*] Her cure was effected in an instant, and not slowly, like the cures produced in the course of nature, or by medicine; for though the length and violence of her distemper had brought her into a weak and languid state, her full strength returned all at once, inasmuch that, rising up immediately, she prepared a sup-



16 ¶ When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

18 ¶ Now when Jesus saw <sup>x</sup> great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19 <sup>y</sup> And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whither-

soever thou goest.

20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; <sup>z</sup> but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, <sup>a</sup> suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22 But Jesus said unto him, <sup>b</sup> Follow me, and let the <sup>c</sup> dead bury their dead.

23 ¶ <sup>d</sup> And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

24 <sup>e</sup> And, behold, there arose a great tem-

<sup>1</sup> Mek. 1. 25. 32-34. Luke, 4. 40, 41. Pf. 107. 20. Acts, 10. 38. Ch. 4. 23, 24. & 11. 5. Gen. 3. 15. Exod. 15. 26. <sup>2</sup> If. 53. 4. <sup>3</sup> Peter, 1. 2. John, 1. 29. <sup>4</sup> Mark, 1. 33, 38. If. 42. 2. John, 5. 41. & 7. 18. & 8. 50. Ch. 14. 2. & 15. 39. Gen. 49. 10. <sup>5</sup> Luke, 9. 57-60. <sup>6</sup> 11. 20-22. John, 6. 26. 1 Tim. 6. 5. <sup>7</sup> Pf. 22. 6. & 40. 17. & 69. 29. & 109. 22. <sup>8</sup> Luke, 9. 59. Hag. 1. 2. Lev. 21. 11, 12. Num. 6. 6, 7. with 1 Kings, 19. 20. Ch. 4. 22. & 19. 29. <sup>9</sup> Luke, 9. 60. 2 Tim. 4. 2. 1 Cor. 15. 10. <sup>10</sup> Luke, 15. 32. Eph. 2. 1. 1 Tim. 5. 6. Lev. 11. 10-12. Num. 6. 6, 7. <sup>11</sup> Mark, 4. 36-41. Luke, 8. 22-25. <sup>12</sup> Mark, 4. 37. Luke, 8. 22, 23. If. 54. 11.

per for them, and served them while at meat, *διὰ τὴν αἰσχύνην*: shewing that *he* was restored to perfect health. Some commentators read *αὐτῷ*, to him, after many manuscripts.

Ver. 16. *When the even was come*] St. Mark adds, *At even, when the sun was set*; because it was the sabbath, the people did not come with their sick to Jesus; but as soon as the holy rest was ended, that is to say, at sun-setting, they brought them in great numbers to him, fully persuaded that he would heal them.

Ver. 17. *That it might be fulfilled, &c.*] This prophecy of Isaiah relates properly to the sins of men, whereof *diseases* are the emblem and the consequence; for which reason the original Hebrew words rendered here *our infirmities* have been by the LXX, and by St. Peter, 1 Eph. ch. ii. 24. translated *our sins*. Grotius has observed that the original word *ἠπάρατον* signifies, "to carry a heavy load," Rom. xv. 1. Gal. vi. 2. and so expresses well the indefatigable labours of Christ, spending the evening in healing, probably with many intermingled discourses, after he had employed the day in preaching.

Ver. 18-20. *Now when Jesus saw, &c.*] *Now Jesus, perceiving the crowd about him, gave orders to depart, &c.* Though our Saviour had retired into the wilderness after the cure of the leper, mentioned Luke, v. 12. the people, excited by the fame of that miracle, came to him from every quarter; wherefore, that he might effectually avoid them, he resolved to go to the other side of the lake, and commanded his disciples to accompany him. Upon this, a scribe, who happened to be present, offered to follow him, ver. 19. but Jesus, knowing that he had nothing in view but the pleasures and profits of the supposed kingdom, would not accept of his service; telling him, that he was quite mistaken if he proposed to better his worldly circumstances by attending him. The phrase *Son of man* is found in Dan. vii. 13. where the universal dominion to which the Messiah, in quality of the Son of man, was to be raised, is described. It is the appellation which the Lord Jesus Christ commonly gives himself; and as he was

called so by none but himself, it is plain that he chose the title out of humility, as having some relation to his mean and humble appearance in this world. *Son of man*, in the prophets Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, does not so much denote the human nature, as the frailty and weakness of man; and in this sense undoubtedly the expression is used, Pf. viii. 4. and cxlvi. 3. The Lord Jesus Christ takes care indeed to lay a stress upon it, when he would make his power and authority known. See ch. ix. 6. xii. 8. &c. but he certainly made use of it for this end, that he might rectify the mistaken notions which they had formed of the nature of his kingdom, and to give them to understand that the way he was to enter into glory was through sufferings and the cross. See Beaufobre and Lenfant. Instead of *lay his head*, ver. 20. we may read, *rest his head*.

*To depart unto the other side*] Let it be remarked, once for all, that *passing* or *crossing* this lake or sea does not always denote sailing from the east side to the west, or inversely; though the river Jordan, both above and below the lake, ran southwards. The lake was of such a form, that, without any impropriety, it might be said to be crossed in other directions, even by those who kept on the same side of the Jordan.

Ver. 21, 22. *And another—said, &c.*] The answer of this disciple supposes that our Saviour had ordered him to follow him. See Luke, ix. 59. It is uncertain whether this disciple's father was just dead, or whether, as being very old, his son desired leave to stay with him till his death. Christ's answer seems to take it for granted that he was already dead. *Let the dead bury their dead*: "Let those who are themselves spiritually dead perform the rites of funeral; yea, let the dead remain unburied, rather than disobey my word, when I give thee so great a commission."

Ver. 23. *And when he was entered*] *And when he went aboard the vessel.*

Ver. 24. *A great tempest*] The original phrase *Σεισμὸς μέγας*, properly signifies a mighty agitation; probably it was something of a hurricane. Jesus, possibly fatigued with

pest in the sea, inſomuch that the ſhip was covered with the waves: but he was aſleep.

25 And his diſciples came to *him*, and awoke him, ſaying, <sup>e</sup> Lord, ſave us; we periſh.

26 And he ſaith unto them, <sup>h</sup> Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he

aroſe, and <sup>i</sup> rebuked the winds and the ſea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, ſaying, <sup>k</sup> What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the ſea obey him!

28 ¶ <sup>l</sup> And when he was come to the other ſide, into the country of the Gergeſenes, there

<sup>f</sup> 1 Sam. 23. 26. John, 21. 14, 15. Pf. 44. 22, 23. <sup>g</sup> 2 Chr. 14. 11. & 20. 12. Pf. 6. 7, 4. & 69. 1, 2, 12, 14. <sup>h</sup> Ch. 6. 30. & 14. 3. Mark, 5. 26. If. 41. 10—16. & 43. 1, 2. Phil. 4. 6. <sup>i</sup> Peter, 5. 7. <sup>j</sup> If. 50. 2. Pf. 104. 7. & 65. 7. & 102. 13—19. Nahum, 1. 4. See ver. 27. <sup>k</sup> Luke, 8. 25. Pf. 89. 9. & 65. 7. & 107. 29. <sup>l</sup> Mark, 5. 1—20. Luke, 8. 26—40. Ch. 18. 11—13. Acts, 10. 38. If. 63. 1.

the labours of the day (which had been a very buſy one), was aſleep in the ſtern of the veſſel for the reſreſhment of his weary body, as well as for the trial of their faith.

*Ver. 27. The men marvelled, ſaying, &c.]* This reflection, as well as the extreme fear of the diſciples in the time of their danger, may ſeem unaccountable, conſidering how many and what miracles they had been witneſſes to; but both may be explained in ſome measure by the following remark; that hitherto his miracles were generally upon diſeaſed perſons, and that he had given as yet no proofs of his dominion over the elements, the *wind* and the *water*, which, it ſeems, were thought leſs ſubject to human power than diſtempers: or if this does not account for the reflection which the diſciples made on ſeeing the preſent inſtance of Chriſt's power, it may be attributed to the fear and conſuſion they were in, occaſioned by the greatneſs of their jeopardy, from which they were but juſt delivered. See more concerning this miracle on Mark, iv. 37—41.

*Ver. 28. And when he was come to the other ſide]* The ſtorm being hushed, they came to land. St. Matthew ſays, in the country of *Girgasa*, or of the *Gergeſenes*; St. Mark and Luke, in the country of *Gadara*; but the Evangelists do not differ here; if, as it is probable, the one gives us the general name of the country, the other the denomination of a particular ſpot only; though indeed there is no neceſſity for this ſuppoſition, as many manuſcripts and verſions of great authority read *Gadarenes* here, in agreement with St. Mark and St. Luke. Joſephus ſays, *Gadara* was the metropolis of *Peræa*, and that it was ſixty furlongs from *Tiberias*. *Gadara* therefore is rightly placed oppoſite to *Tiberias*, at the ſouth end of the ſea. Farther; ſpeaking of the country of *Gadara*, he ſays, it bounded *Galilee* to the eaſt. See Luke, viii. 26. *Gadara*, therefore, muſt have been ſituated on the eaſt ſide of the lake, about eight miles from *Tiberias*, in ſuch a manner, that part of its territory was contiguous to the *Lower Galilee*, but ſeparated from it by the *Jordan*; and part of it was oppoſite thereto, with a lake between. The city was one of thoſe called *Decapolis*, and, according to Joſephus, was ſituated in *Cælo-Syria*, in the poſſeſſion of the tribe of *Manaſſeh*. When *Pompey* ſubdued *Judæa*, he rebuilt *Gadara*, and joined it to the province of *Syria*: *Auguſtus* afterwards gave it to *Herod*; but, upon *Herod's* death, he annexed it again to *Syria*. By theſe means the town came to be inhabited partly by *Syrians*. *Gadara* being thus inhabited by a mixture of people, it is no wonder that

there were *ſwine* in its territory: for, though the Jews did not eat the fleſh of theſe animals, they might breed them for their heathen neighbours; or the herd might be the property of the latter.

When Jeſus and his diſciples landed at this place, *two men poſſeſſed with devils* came towards them from the tombs. Mark and Luke ſpeak only of one demoniac; but in ſeveral inſtances the ſacred hiſtorians mention but one perſon, though more were concerned in the matter related. St. Auſtin thinks that one of the demoniacs was more remarkable than the other, perhaps for his birth, or parts, or intereſt in the country; and that his cure made more noiſe, and for that reaſon was mentioned by Mark and Luke, while they omitted the cure of the other. St. Luke's account, as it ſtands in our tranſlation, ſeems in one particular, at firſt ſight, to claſh with St. Matthew and St. Mark; for he ſays, ch. viii. 27., *there met him out of the city a certain man*; but there is no inconfiſtency between the Evangelists; for St. Luke's words are *αὐτὸν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως*, which properly ſignifies *a man of the city*, one who had formerly been an inhabitant, though now he dwelt among the tombs. See the phraſe in John, i. 45. in the original. Accordingly St. Luke tells us, that he did not abide in any houſe, but in the tombs; whither *Grotius* ſuppoſes that the demon choſe to drive the men whom they poſſeſſed, to confirm ſome ſuperſtitious notions of the Jews relating to the power of evil ſpirits over the dead. The heathens had undoubtedly ſuch notions; but *Eiſner's* opinion ſeems moſt probable, that the demoniac choſe the caves of this burying-ground as a kind of ſhelter; and he has ſhewn, that poor tormented creatures in extremity ſometimes did the like. It ſhould be remembered, that the ſepulchres of the Jews were, very wiſely, always at ſome diſtance from their cities, in lonely and deſert places. Hence St. Luke ſays of the demoniac, ch. viii. 29. *that he was driven of the devil into the wilderneſs*. Doubtleſs thoſe malevolent ſpirits love ſuch tokens of death and deſtruction.

It ſhould be obſerved farther, that no compaſſion to theſe unhappy men, nor endeavours for their own ſecurity, had been wanting in the people of the place: for they had frequently endeavoured to confine them; but *no man could bind them, no not with chains*; becauſe, though they had been frequently ſo bound, the chains had been plucked aſunder by them, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame them. See Mark, v. 4. Being therefore at liberty, they ſhunned the ſociety of men, wandering day and night amid the melancholy receptacles of the dead, formidable

met him, <sup>a</sup> two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

30 And there was a good way off from them <sup>a</sup> an herd of many swine feeding.

31 <sup>p</sup> So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32 And he said unto them, <sup>q</sup> Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

33 And they that kept them fled, and

<sup>a</sup> One of them especially. Mark, v. Luke, 8. 27. <sup>b</sup> Luke, 8. 28. Mark, 5. 7, 8. 2 Cor. 6. 14. 2 Peter, 2. 4. Jude, 6. Mark, 1. 24, 25; Acts, 16. 17, 18. <sup>c</sup> Mark, 5. 11. Lev. 11. 7. Deut. 14. 8. 1f. 65. 4. & 66. 3. <sup>d</sup> Rev. 12. 12. & 20. 1, 2. Job, 1. 11. & 2. 5. Phil. 2. 10. <sup>e</sup> 1 Kings, 22. 22. Job, 1. 12. & 2. 6. Rev. 20. 7. <sup>f</sup> Mark, 5. 14—16. Luke, 8. 34—36.

formidable to all who passed by, and a great nuisance to the country. Concerning the nature of these demoniacs, see the note on the 33d verse.

Ver. 29. *What have we to do with thee?*] This is a Hebrew phrase, signifying "What right, rule, or authority dost thou claim over us? What concern hast thou with us?" See Judg. xi. 12. 2 Sam. xvi. 10. 1 Kings, xvii. 18. 2 Kings, iii. 13. ix. 19. Septuagint. There is in the next words, *art thou come to torment us*, &c. such a reference to the final sentence which Christ is to pass upon these rebel spirits in the judgment of the great day, to which they are reserved (Jude, ver. 6.), as could not have been dictated by lunacy; and it is much to be questioned whether the persons speaking, or any of the hearers, but Christ himself, understood the sense and propriety of them. See 2 Peter, ii. 4.

Ver. 30—32. *And there was a good way off—many swine, &c.*] Instead of a good way off, Dr. Doddridge reads at a considerable distance,—at some distance;—and by comparing Mark v. 11. and Luke viii. 32. it will be found, that this is the true meaning of the word *μακρὰν*. St. Mark says, that there were about two thousand in the herd of swine; which will not seem strange, if it be considered that the number of the inhabitants of that country were Gentiles. The devils, no doubt, requested permission to enter into the herd of swine, with a view to prevent any good effects which the miracle might have had on the Gadarenes, and to render Christ odious to them: Their design could not be hid from Jesus: nevertheless he granted their request, making it subservient to his own gracious purposes. He permitted the devils to enter into the swine, not only to show the reality of the possession (which was thus undeniably proved; for nothing but such a possession could have forced so large a herd down a precipice into the water), but that we might understand how great the power of evil spirits is, and how terrible the effects of their malice would be, if they were not restrained: for no sooner was the permission granted, than the keepers who were with the swine, and the disciples who were at a distance, beheld, to their great astonishment, the whole herd running furiously down the mountain, and leaping from the tops of the rocks into the sea; while the possessed furious madmen immediately became meek and composed, having recovered the intire exercise of their reason. Jesus also might permit the devils thus to fall on the herd, as a punishment to the Gadarenes for keeping swine, which were a snare to the Jews; and to make trial of their disposition, whether they

would become more affected with the loss of their cattle, than with the recovery of the men, and with the doctrine of the kingdom. Whatever were the reasons, it is certain, that though he might rightfully have used all men's properties as he pleased; yet this, and the withering of the barren fig-tree, are the only instances wherein man suffered the least damage by any thing that our Lord ever did. But certainly, neither the owners of the herd, nor of the fig-tree, could justly complain of their loss, since the good of mankind, not in that period or corner only, but in every succeeding age, through all countries, has been so highly promoted at such a trifling expence to them. No miracles are more suspicious than pretended dispossessions, as there is so much room for collusion in them; but it was self-evident that the herd of swine could not be confederates in any fraud. Their death, therefore, in this instructive and convincing circumstance, was ten thousand times a greater blessing to mankind, than if they had been slain for food, as was intended. We may observe farther, that the devils, by making this request to Jesus, acknowledged that it was not in the power even of a legion of them to do any mischief to so contemptible a creature as a swine, without Christ's permission; far less could they destroy the man in whom they lodged. See Doddridge, Mac-knight, and Bishop Pearce's vindication of the miracles of Jesus.

Ver. 33, 34. *And they that kept them fled*] The miracle, issuing thus in the destruction of the swine, was immediately reported in the town and country by the affrighted keepers, who, as they fled, had fallen in, it seems, with Jesus and his company, and learned from them the cause of what had happened. The intelligence threw the Gadarenes into the utmost consternation; for when they came and saw the men who had been possessed sitting gravely in their right mind, and decently clothed (the disciples having charitably supplied them with such upper garments as they could spare), they perceived how great Christ's power was, and were exceedingly afraid, having trespassed in the matter of the swine, which was an unclean food: or, if the herd belonged to the Syrian inhabitants of the town, they might know the law, and consequently, taking the destruction of their cattle as a rebuke, they could not but dread farther punishment from this prophet of the Jews, who was come to vindicate the neglected institutions of Moses. Wherefore, this instance of his power terrifying them, they with one accord foolishly besought

went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed

of the devils.

34 And, behold, the whole city came out

befought him, in the most earnest manner, to depart out of their country. It seems they were altogether ignorant of his goodness, notwithstanding he had given them a striking proof of it in the recovery of the demoniacs. As Jesus was intirely free from ostentation, he never forced his company on any people, nor wrought miracles of healing without being asked, lest it should have been imagined that he had chosen objects within his power. The madmen indeed, whose cure is here related, and persons in similar circumstances, were excepted, for a reason too obvious to be mentioned. In all his actions our Lord preferred a becoming dignity, tempered with great modesty. The request of the Gadarenes, therefore, being a sufficient reason for his withdrawing from such a stupid people, he entered into his vessel, and returned to the country whence he had come; leaving to them a valuable pledge of his love, and to us a noble pattern of perseverance in well-doing, even when our kindnesses are contemned, or it may be requited with injuries; for notwithstanding the men from whom the devils had been expelled, intreated him to take them along with him (See Mark v. 18.), fearing perhaps that their tormentors might return after he was gone, he ordered them to stay behind, as a standing monument both of his power and goodness; very proper to induce the Gadarenes to believe, when they found the miracle real, and that Jesus could restrain the devils, as well when absent as present. And this was the reason that, in the instance before us, Jesus acted contrary to his usual practice; ordering the men to go and publish the miracle among all their relations and acquaintance. See Luke viii. 39. Besides, there were many heathens in Gadara and the neighbourhood, upon whom the publication of his miracles would not have the ill effect it was apt to have on the Jews: or he might give this order, because he did not intend to return soon into that part of the country.

*Inferences.*—The remarkable miracle just under consideration is an invincible evidence that the demoniacs mentioned in the New Testament were not, as some have supposed, only lunatics, or epileptics, but persons really possessed by unclean spirits. The personal actions of those spirits, and their entrance into the swine, abundantly prove it, were there no other proofs. But the scriptures throughout, as well as heathen writers, join in the testimony; and indeed the present miracle seems in a great measure designed to confute any such erroneous opinions, and to convince us of the reality of spiritual agency. The learned bishop of Rochester, in his excellent vindication of the miracles of Jesus, part ii. p. 28. observes, “In the instance of this miracle before us, we find that the devils *“speak out of the possessed persons; they were sent out of them, and they entered into the herd of swine.* Personal actions as well as speeches are ascribed to them, which can never be ascribed to mere phrensy and madness; for had there been nothing more than madness, when it ceased in the men, it would have had then no influence on the swine: whereas that which went out of

“the one and entered into the other, must have had a distinct being and existence of its own. This, therefore, is the true gospel-notion of demoniacs: they were not madmen only, but they were possessed by unclean spirits; and if Jesus came from God, much more if he be *over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5.* he could not have been unacquainted with the immaterial world; and therefore no one can reasonably refuse to believe the account which he has given us of the operations of evil spirits upon human bodies. Had no authors but the sacred ones made mention of the demoniacs of those days, yet the scripture testimony would have been sufficient; but there are unquestionable authors, who agree in this point, and speak of possessed persons as no uncommon sight in their days. Josephus says, that Solomon had from God the art of casting devils out of men, and healing them; and that he composed charms for assuaging the disease, and left behind him forms of adjuration, by which the devils were so effectually cast out as never to return again. And he adds, that this way of healing was practised among his countrymen even down to his own days. Whether the Jews had so effectual a method of dispossessing men as Josephus thought, yet thus much appears plainly from his testimony, that there were persons possessed with devils in his days and long before: nay, he tells us in the same place, that he saw one dispossessed in the presence of the Emperor Vespasian and his family: and to prevent our mistaking this calamity for madness, or any other common and natural distemper, he explains what he means by being *possessed with devils*, when he says, giving us his ideas of those spirits, that what were called so, were the spirits of wicked men, which entered into living persons, and occasioned the death of such of them as met with no help. Plutarch and Lucian mention demoniacs, as well known in their days; and Philostratus, in his life of Apollonius, among the miraculous cures which he ascribes to him, has a particular account of a young man, who had an unclean spirit, which made him wander from home, and led him into the desolate parts of the country, amid deep valleys and precipices. Where the reader may observe, that the same circumstances are said to have attended this young man, as attended the madmen in this miracle before us: and whatever was the truth of the fact reported by Philostratus, yet it shews both his opinion, that there were demoniacs at that time, and that the effects of such possession were commonly the same as the Evangelists represent them.”

Why these demoniacs were so frequent at or about the time of our Saviour's coming, and perhaps more especially in and about the place of his ministry, though we may not be able to see all the reasons, yet it appears probable that, as the great end of his incarnation was to *destroy the works of the devil*, therefore the wise Disposer of all events might permit that apostate spirit to exert himself, and to display his tyranny in an unusual manner, that Christ's triumph

over

to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they  
brought him that he would depart out of

• Luke, 8. 37. Mark, 5. 17. 1 Kings, 17. 18. Deut. 5. 25. Luke, 5. 8. Gen. 25. 34. Acts, 16. 39. with ver. 29.

over him might be more signal and manifest. Why such demoniacs were suffered at all, these reasons are offered: 1. To confirm us in our belief of the reality of the agency of good and bad spirits, which, surely, none who believe the gospel can doubt or deny; and to convince us of the divine power of Christ, whose words the evil spirits hear and obey with terrible confusion. 2. To exercise the patience and increase the reward of those, who are at any time tried by these and the like temptations of Satan, as in the case of Job. 3. To convince unbelievers what blackness of darkness, what horrors and punishments, remain for those who shall be wholly given up to the power of these evil spirits. If they drive men into the tombs and deserts, cause them to howl in miserable lamentation, days and nights, to cut and mangle themselves with the rocks and stones; if here upon earth they cause men to fall down into the fire and water, to foam at the mouth, and gnash with the teeth; what will they do when they get miserable and condemned souls into their whole and entire possession! 4. A fourth reason alleged for these corporeal possessions is, that they were suffered, in order to shew us what the devil does with the soul spiritually possessed and enslaved by him and sin: for, as Satan, when he possesses the body, makes one blind, another deaf, another dumb, and another void of all sense; so, in whatever souls he reigns through sin, he deprives them of all spiritual senses, and renders them blind, and deaf, and dumb, to whatever concerns their great, their eternal welfare:—a consideration, which should incline all such to hasten to Christ, if they would escape those everlasting flames prepared for the devil and his angels. See the *Inferences* at the end of the next chapter: nor can I help referring my reader, desirous of improving the scripture history, to the *Contemplations* of the excellent bishop Hall, which will afford him at once the truest pleasure, and the greatest profit.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Struck with the power of his word, the multitude who had heard Christ preach followed him when he came down from the mount; and lo! a fresh occasion offers to raise their admiration, and confirm their faith in him as a teacher sent from God; for they who follow on to know the Lord, shall see fresh manifestations of his power, grace, and glory, every step they advance. We have,

1. A miserable leper's address to our Lord. The leprosy was esteemed by the Jews a disease immediately sent from God, incurable by human art, (2 Kings, v. 7.) so defiling, as to exclude the unhappy object not only from the sanctuary, but, for the most part, from human converse and society; a lively figure of the fallen sinner, covered with guilt, full of corruption, excluded from God's presence, cut off from the communion of the Saints, incurable by any human means, himself unclean, and communicating defilement to all around him. Yet, deplorable as the case appears, blessed be God, it is not desperate;

there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there. *Behold, there came a leper* who had himself perhaps heard our Lord preach, or drawn by the fame of his wondrous works, and worshipped him; either with deepest respect as a prophet, or endued with the knowledge of his divine character, and paying him due adoration; saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* He doubted not his power and all-sufficiency, and therefore cast himself on his mercy for a cure: And herein he is the emblem of the awakened sinner, brought to a sight of his native misery. (1.) He casts himself down at the feet of Jesus in prayer, laying his guilty and polluted soul before him. (2.) He looks up to him as able to save to the uttermost; nor dares distrust that the infinite merit of his precious blood can justify the most guilty, and his grace renew the vilest heart: but often he hesitates in the view of his own unworthiness, and fears whether the Lord will have respect to one so utterly unworthy. (3.) However, as he sees no hope any where else, he presents his desperate case, assured that he must perish, unless the Lord hath respect unto him. But none ever yet perished at the feet of Jesus: for,

2. *Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean: and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Such power accompanied his word and touch, as instantly effected the cure. And with like words of grace does Jesus speak to every poor sinner who applies to him. His answer is ever, *I will:* as ready as able to pardon and save the miserable and the desperate who come to him: *be thou clean;* thy guilt is cancelled, thy soul is delivered from the bondage of corruption; my blood, my grace, are sufficient for thee, and freely extend to thee: and by faith his word is realized to the soul; the scales drop off, guilt no more terrifies the conscience, nor has corruption any longer dominion over the heart.

3. Our Lord charges him not to divulge the means of his cure, but to go immediately to the priests, obtain their acknowledgement of his being healed, and offer the sacrifices prescribed. And this he did for the man's sake, lest out of envy the priests should refuse to pronounce him clean; and that his offering might be a testimony of the fact to all, when it should be more publicly known how the cure was wrought; as well as to cut off occasion from those who desired to represent our Lord as a breaker of Moses's laws, and thereby to prejudice the people against him. *Note;* every soul cleansed by grace will not fail to offer the grateful sacrifice not only of his lips, but of his heart, to God; and will seek to approve himself, to his Redeemer's glory, a living testimony of his power and grace.

2dly, Capernaum was the place where our Lord had fixed his abode, and whither he returned after his journey through Galilee. We have there,

1. The application made to him by a Roman centurion, the captain of a troop consisting of a hundred men. *A soldier,* from whom religion is least expected; but there are some faithful in all professions: *a man of rank,* few of whom

## C H A P. IX.

*Christ cureth one sick of the palsy; calleth Matthew from the receipt of custom; eateth with publicans and sinners; defendeth his disciples for not fasting; cureth the bloody issue, raiseth from death Jairus's daughter, giveth sight to two blind men, healeth a dumb man possessed of a devil, and hath compassion on the multitude.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**A**ND he entered into a ship, and <sup>a</sup> passed over, and came into his <sup>b</sup> own city.

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 7. 6. Ps. 81. 11, 17. Rev. 22. 11. Ezek. 3. 27. Dan. 12. 10. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 2. 23. Luke, 2. 39, 51. & 4. 16—29. or rather ch. 4. 13. <sup>c</sup> Mark, 2. 21—22. Luke, 5. 18—19. <sup>d</sup> Ps. 32. 1, 2. H. 46. 1, 2. & 45. 25. & 44. 22. Rom. 5. 11. Eph. 1. 7. Col. 1. 14. Luke, 7. 4. Lam. 3. 39. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 5. 21. Mark, 2. 7. Job, 14. 4. H. 43. 25. & 44. 28. Mic. 7. 18. <sup>f</sup> Ps. 139. 2. Ch. 12. 15, 25. & 16. 7, 8. Mark, 8. 16, 17. Luke, 6. 8. & 9. 47. & 11. 17. John, 2. 21, 25. & 6. 61, 64. & 13. 11. & 16. 19, 30. & 18. 4. & 21. 17. Heb. 4. 12, 13. Rev. 2. 23.

whom were numbered among the followers of Jesus: a Gentile too, and for a Gentile; for Christ came a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel. After sending messengers to beg the help of Jesus (Luke, vii. 3.), he came himself, a humble supplicant on the behalf of his sick servant, afflicted with the palsy, and grievously tormented, commending his miserable case to the compassions of Jesus. And herein he shewed (1.) His high respect for the Lord Jesus, and his dependence upon him. (2.) His great humanity towards his sick servant; not turning him out of doors because unable to work, but tenderly taking care of him, and seeking every means for his relief: a noble example; and which should also be an encouragement to servants to discharge their station with fidelity and honesty, as this will naturally endear them to their masters.

2. The answer that Christ gave to his request: *I will come and heal him*, though a poor servant, diseased, a Gentile also. Jesus is no respecter of persons; and his ministers herein must resemble him, ready on the first application to visit the meanest of their flock.

3. The deep humility and distinguished faith expressed by the centurion. *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof*; so lowly were the thoughts that he entertained of himself, so high his estimation of the dignity of the Redeemer. A gracious soul ever acknowledges himself thus less than the least of all God's mercies: nor does he think Christ's bodily presence necessary; so full was his confidence in the power of Jesus, that he is assured a single word will be sufficient to effect the cure, the most inveterate disease being intirely under the command of Jesus, and coming and going at his bidding: for if he, who was but an inferior officer, met with such ready obedience from his soldiers and servants, much more would a word from him, who had no superior, be obeyed. Learn hence, (1.) The character of a good servant; he obeys his master without answering again or hesitating. (2.) The duty of every Christian; to be obedient in all things, to do what Jesus pleases to command, and cheerfully to suffer what he ordains.

4. The high approbation of the centurion expressed by our Lord on this occasion. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled*; not that he was surpris'd as with an unexpected thing; but he expressed himself as admiring what was so

2 <sup>c</sup> And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, <sup>d</sup> be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, <sup>e</sup> This man blasphemeth.

4 And Jesus <sup>f</sup> knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

excellent and uncommon, that it might be more remarked by others; saying to his followers, *Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*; none of that generation had given such proofs of faith as this Gentile. Note; The attainments of those who have enjoyed less means than others, will condemn the unprofitableness, and rise up in judgment against the slothfulness and carelessness of such as, blessed with every advantage for their souls, have abused or neglected them.

5. Hence Christ takes occasion to foretel the calling of the Gentiles, and rejection of the Jews for their unbelief. Though the Jews, partial to their nation, could not bear the thoughts that the heathen should share in the common salvation, our Lord assures them, that from all lands multitudes should be gathered unto him, and admitted to the same privileges, and have a place in the same kingdom as the most distinguished patriarchs: while, to their greater astonishment, they who boasted themselves as, exclusive of all others, the children of the kingdom, will, so far from having any part or lot in it, *be cast out into outer darkness*, as guests excluded from the bridal feast, and thrust out, *where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; the expressive signs of most poignant anguish, which will especially be the case with damned souls in the place of torment. Note; (1.) We shall see many in the kingdom of heaven, whom we least expected to find there; and many cast out, of whom we had the most confident expectations. (2.) It will profit a man nothing at the day of judgment to have been a professed member of Christ's kingdom, and a nominal child of God, if he be not possessed of the spirit of adoption, and have not approved his fidelity as a loyal subject.

6. The servant is cured. *Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee*. With a double grace the favour is conferred; his faith is approved, while his request is granted; for instantly the cure was wrought; *his servant was healed in the self-same hour*. He that said, let there be light, and there was light, need but say, and *it is done*, in every other case. What confidence then should we repose in this Almighty Saviour, and never in our deepest afflictions distrust his power or love!

3dly, The great physician is continually manifesting his healing power: We have;

1. Another

5 For whether is easier, to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, *Arise, and walk*?

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power<sup>s</sup> on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,)

<sup>s</sup> Luke, 7. 48. with John, 17. 2. Acts, 5. 31. & 7. 60.

1. Another cure wrought by him on Peter's wife's mother, who lay ill of a fever in Peter's house. He was married, we find, in opposition to the popish celibacy. His care of his aged relations bespoke his gracious spirit. Jesus, who will never fail to repay the entertainment given him in our houses, or in our hearts, by a touch rebuked the disorder, and instantly every symptom vanished, and her strength was perfectly restored; so that she was able to wait upon him and the guests, as an evidence of her cure, and a testimony of her gratitude. *Note*; They whom Christ heals, are bound to employ the strength and health that he gives in his blessed service.

2. At even, it being a sabbath day (See Mark i. 21.), and their days being reckoned from one sun-setting to the other, the people thronged the door with their sick, and those possessed of devils, Satan being at that time permitted to exercise uncommon dominion over men's bodies, that the power of Jesus might more eminently appear. But whatever the diseases were, or however strong the possession of these unclean spirits, one word of Jesus effectually drove them out, and healed every disease.

3. The fulfilment of the scripture herein is observed; for the prophesy, Isaiah liii. 4. not only includes Christ's suffering the punishment due to our sins, 1 Peter ii. 24. but also his sympathizing tenderness towards us under the diseases which are the fruits of sin, and his gracious power exerted to deliver us from them.

4thly, Great multitudes being some time after (See Mark iv. 35.) collected together, more from curiosity or secular views, it is to be feared, than desirous of his divine instructions, our Lord commanded his disciples to remove to the other side of the lake, to avoid the crowd, to enjoy some needful retirement; to prove their obedience, or to spread the gospel in other places, whither those who were hearty in his cause would follow him. Hereupon we are informed of a conversation which passed with two persons who seemed desirous to join him.

1. One of them was a scribe, who seemed to express great forwardness, zeal, and resolution to follow Christ wherever he went; but his warmth soon cooled, when he understood that he must expect none of those worldly advantages with which he flattered himself from being an apostle of Jesus; since, instead of earthly grandeur and the conveniences of life, the Messiah, the son of man, was more destitute even than the birds or foxes, and had not a place of his own to repose his weary head, or refresh himself with the sleep that he now wanted after his toils. *Note*; Many are willing to follow Christ if they can get by him, who quickly cool in their ardour, when their worldly interest, character, or ease, must be denied for his sake.

2.) The poverty of the Lord Jesus, and his wants, should teach us in every state therewith to be content.

2. Another man who had professed himself a disciple, and might be perhaps an appointed evangelist, wanted at this time to be excused from attending his Master. His

plea was plausible: his father was either aged and sick, and he desired to stay with him till he should have discharged the last offices to him; or rather he was now dead, and he wished to attend his father's corpse to the grave before he went with Jesus; but Christ will not admit the excuse; he must leave all, and come; there were enough dead in trespasses and sins, who might take care of the corpse and the funeral, whilst a more urgent and nobler employment called for his service, even to follow Jesus and preach the gospel. *Note*; (1.) Worldly engagements, even about necessary things in our families, are apt to prove a great hindrance to our following Christ, if we do not watch unto prayer. (2.) They who want an excuse for declining duty will easily find it. (3.) There are times when God's service may demand our attendance, and engage us to leave father, mother, house, and all; and he is not worthy of Christ who can set any thing in competition with him.

5thly, Christ having issued his orders to cross the lake, his chosen disciples immediately obeyed and launched forth; for no dangers or difficulties will deter those from following Jesus, who know the blessedness of his service. Since their master was with them, they considered themselves, no doubt, as perfectly safe; but for the trial of their faith, and the manifestation of his glory, we find them plunged into the greatest danger and distress.

1. No sooner were they got to sea, than a violent hurricane overtook them. The waves like mountains rolled, broke over them with dreadful roar; and their boat, filled almost with water, was ready instantly to founder in the deep: while Jesus, as if unconcerned and unacquainted with the danger, wearied with his labours, sweetly slept. *Note*; (1.) They who follow Christ will meet with many a storm. (2.) Christ often appears to disregard his people when their dangers seem most imminent. (3.) The temptations permitted to overtake the faithful are designed not to harm them, but to exercise, strengthen, and brighten their graces.

2. With deep distress the affrighted disciples ran to their Lord, and with their cries awoke him, saying, *Lord, save us; we perish*; their case was desperate if he did not immediately interpose. *Note*; (1.) Awakened consciences feel their perilous condition, and see their inevitable destruction without divine grace and help. (2.) Prayer will be then fervent and importunate, when the deep-sensibility of danger raises the cry. (3.) They who come to Jesus, must exercise faith in his sufficiency to save, though utterly despairing of help in themselves. (4.) Even doubts and fears will sometimes mingle with the prayer of faith; but if they do, it is an evidence that we live far beneath our privileges.

3. Jesus with calmness and majestic dignity arises, rebukes their fears; then bids the storm be still; and suddenly the foaming billows subside, the winds are hushed, the troubled waters now are smooth, and not a breath of air dimples the polished surface. *Note*; (1.) In the stormy seasons

<sup>h</sup> Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

<sup>h</sup> Mark, 2. 11, 12. Luke, 5. 24, 25. & 13. 11—13. John, 5. 8—10.

seasons of temptation, many a fear distresses sincere souls. (2.) Those may have true faith, who have comparatively but little faith. (3.) The weakness of our faith and the prevalence of our fears deserve rebuke, as they reflect dishonour upon the faithfulness, power, and grace of Jesus: *Why are ye fearful?* (4.) Though the storm of temptation be never so violent, the sinner that cleaves to Jesus shall not perish. (5.) Where the distress of the soul has been peculiarly deep, and the trials uncommonly severe, there usually the strongest consolations and the most delightful sensations follow, of joy and peace in believing.

4. The effect produced by the miracle was the astonishment of the mariners or disciples who were in the ship, or of both. Never was such an amazing change known before; and this naturally leads them to express their admiration of this wonderful Person, whom even winds and waves obeyed. *Note;* They who have experienced the power of a Saviour's grace, in circumstances where every prospect seemed covered with darkness and despair, cannot but wonder and adore.

othly, Continued miracles of mercy mark every step of the divine Redeemer.

The country of the Gergesenes bordered on the side of the lake which they had crossed; and they were no sooner arrived, than a fresh occasion offers to display the power and grace of Jesus.

1. Two miserable objects met him, *possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs*, the place where they took up their residence; driven thither by the wicked spirits who actuated them, to make their abode the more dreary and dismal; or to confirm the notion of spirits haunting these melancholy places; or by solitude to increase their ferocity, and render them more mischievous; for they were *exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass that way* for fear of them. *Note;* When anger, malice, and revenge dwell in the bosom, there Satan's power reigns, and men then turn worse than savages to their kind.

2. The devils address the Lord, as trembling at his presence, and fearful of being dispossessed. *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* They well knew his power and Godhead, and their hopeless state: he did not come to be a Saviour unto them, but their destroyer; and all their desire is, that he would let them alone, at least in the heathen world, if he drove them from Judæa, and not come thither to torment them before the time. Torment eternal they expected; they were persuaded that he would be their terrible judge, and they ask only a momentary respite before the last and dreadful day, when their misery will be complete. *Note;* (1.) The devils believe and tremble. (2.) They who say to Jesus and his servants, *What have we to do with thee?* depart from us; and reject the counsel of God against their own souls, must perish with fiends of darkness.

3. Being unable to keep possession of the bodies of men, they desire to enter into a herd of swine which fed

there; for even over these they could have no power without divine permission; and this they besought, either from their innate pleasure in mischief, or rather from a crafty design to make Christ an unwelcome guest in that country; and Jesus, from whom none of their wiles could be hid, permitted it; perhaps because these swine belonged to the Jews, who kept them for food in defiance of God's laws, or for covetousness, to make merchandise of them; and he would thus punish their owners: or he designed hereby to manifest his own divine power, to prove the reality of the miracle, and confound the Sadducean doctrine, which denied the existence of spirits good or evil: or he was moved by other reasons known to his infinite wisdom. No sooner had these fiends obtained their request, than they flew as to their prey, and all the herd of swine madly rushed down a precipice into the sea, and were choaked to the great terror of those that kept them, who fled, and filled the city and country with the report. And so grievous were they at their loss, and affrighted with the apprehensions of greater judgments, that, instead of adoring him for the miracle that he had wrought on the two possessed persons, or welcoming him to their country, they besought him to depart, like many other worldlings, who love their swine better than their souls. We may observe (1.) The restraint laid upon these spirits of wickedness: they cannot touch a swine without permission; and however malignant and fierce the devil is, Jesus holds his chains, and in all his temptations of the faithful soul which cleaves to its Saviour, faith, Hitherto mayest thou go, and no farther. (2.) Where Satan rules in the children of disobedience, he fails not to drive them into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which necessarily drown both body and soul in perdition. (3.) By nothing does the god of the world hold firmer possession of men's hearts against Christ, than by suggesting the losses and crosses to which his service may expose them, and bewitching them with the love of gain in preference to the love of God,

#### CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 1—7. And he entered into a ship* And returning in a vessel, he crossed the lake, and came to his own city [of Capernaum, where he had dwelt after his leaving Nazareth] *ver. 2. where they brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed, and Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, Have confidence, my son! your sins are forgiven.* *Heylin.* See the miracle more circumstantially described in Mark, ii. 1—12. Luke, v. In St. Luke's miracle, there is a very remarkable circumstance premised, namely, that some Pharisees and doctors of the law, who came out of every town of Galilee and Judæa, and from Jerusalem, were sitting by him, when he was teaching,—and the power of the Lord was present to heal them, that is to say, those his auditors, of their spiritual maladies; and then it immediately follows, *and behold, brought on a bed, or couch, one sick of a palsy;* and because there was then no other access to Christ, by reason of the crowd which encompassed him, they let down the paralytic through



8 'But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

9 ¶ And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him,

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 5. 26. Mark, 2. 12. Luke, 7. 16. Acts, 3. 11, 12. Ps. 103. 1-4. <sup>2</sup> Mark, 2. 14-23. Luke, 5. 27-39. <sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 6. 11. 1 Tim. 1. 13. Ch. 4. 18-22.

through the tiles upon his couch, into the midst before Jesus (see the note on Mark, ii. 4.), who, full as he was of the divine sanative power, and accordingly considering the object so presented to him, not only with regard to his bodily disease, but more especially with regard to his spiritual infirmity, by the prevalent power of sin, which incapacitated his mind for holy dispositions, as the palsy did his body for the natural functions; Christ, I say, considering this, applied, in the first place, to what was most important, and released him from the guilt and power of sin, saying, "Have confidence, my son! your sins are forgiven;" or, as it may be rendered, *your sins are dismissed*. Physicians, both ancient and modern, tell us, that palsies are sometimes occasioned by intemperance; therefore, if this paralytic brought his disease upon himself, the propriety of the terms in which the cure was pronounced will still more fully appear,—*your sins are forgiven*: only it must be observed, that when Jesus forgives, he at once forgives every sin, the least as well as the greatest. The reader need not be told, that *son* is a title of condescension and tenderness, as *father* was a correspondent title of respect.

The Scribes who were present, being disappointed in their curiosity (for they expected to see an outward bodily cure), and startled to hear our Lord express himself in such unusual terms, took offence, and in their hearts condemned him of blasphemy, for assuming to himself an authority to forgive sin; ver. 3. Christ, to whom the secrets of all hearts are open, knew their thoughts: as he is the Almighty Word, which maketh all things by speaking them, so with him to say and to do is the same thing; which he plainly signifies here by his manner of expressing himself, *Which is easiest, to say, &c.* ver. 5. that is, "Which is easiest to be performed, to forgive him his sins, or to deliver him from his disease?" Our Lord, as we before observed, seeing through the diseased object presented to him, and considering as well the spiritual as the bodily disorders which oppressed him, first applied a remedy where the want was greatest, and pardoned his sins, and at the same time delivered him from the power of them; but this was an invisible operation, and, although of a much higher nature than any bodily cure, yet was it no object of sense, and consequently not discernible by the spectators, some of whom were so far from believing Christ's power to forgive sins, that they were scandalized at him for assuming it. He therefore, to instruct them and us in a matter of so great importance, reasoned in the following manner: "Which is easiest, think ye,—to deliver a mind from the guilt and power of sin (for the original word is applicable to both), or a body from disease? To cure the body is certainly the easiest work; for it requires another kind of power to reach the guilt of the mind, to operate upon it, to rectify its vicious inclinations, to form it anew, and repair the disorders induced by sin. This I

have effected in the paralytic here present. I have forgiven,—or, as the original may be rendered, *dismissed his sins*; I have healed his distempered soul: but as this divine operation is internal, and consequently not discernible to you that are spectators, I will add a second miracle, which though in all respects of an inferior nature, yet has the advantage of being visible, and therefore is a proper proof of what I assert. Judge of my power to heal souls by the cures I work upon bodies: and, that all may know the authority I have to forgive and dismiss sins, and cure the depravations of the mind, I say unto thee, O paralytic, arise, take up thy couch, and return to thine own home." The sick person did so, and the multitude were all amazed, and glorified God. We may extend the same way of reasoning to all the miraculous cures recorded in the Gospel, and infer from all and every one of them the divine power of our Saviour to renew and reform the souls of men. See Heylin, and the Inferences drawn from this chapter.

*Ver. 8. But when the multitude saw it*] The people were struck with a high degree of surprise, mixed with admiration. What was to the Scribes an occasion of blasphemy, proved to them an incitement to praise and bless; they glorified God, who had given such power to men; power not only to heal diseases, but to forgive sins; for they could not but acknowledge the authority of Christ's declaration, *thy sins are forgiven*, when their eyes shewed them the efficacy of his command, *arise and walk*. Even the Pharisees could not help being confounded at this miracle; for it was performed by one whom they had but a few moments before pronounced a *blasphemer*. Besides, they were incapable of finding the least fault with the miracle, although, no doubt, they examined it with a scrupulous exactness. It is strange, therefore, that they did not forthwith lay aside their enmity against Jesus. Probably in this, as in other instances, they resisted the dictates of their own minds; or they might overlook the miracle, and continue to find fault with the expression uttered when it was performed; for with respect to good, their minds seem to have been in the same enervated and dead condition, which the body of the paralytic had been in before his cure; only the misery of their state was greater than his; the palsy of the soul being an evil infinitely more deplorable than the palsy of the body. See Macknight. We may just observe, that Cocceius is of opinion, that *men* in this verse refers to the men cured by Jesus, who had given such power to men; that is to say, of receiving remission of sins, and bodily health: but the interpretation referring it to Christ, as a prophet, seems preferable. See Bishop Smallbrooke's Vindication of the Miracles, vol. 2. p. 248.

*Ver. 9. As Jesus passed—thence, he saw a man, &c.*] St. Luke, in the parallel place, calls St. Matthew a *publican*, which was a very odious name among the Jews, as the

<sup>m</sup> Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10 ¶ And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many <sup>n</sup> publicans and <sup>o</sup> sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, <sup>p</sup> Why eateth your Master

with publicans and sinners?

12 But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, <sup>q</sup> They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, <sup>r</sup> I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, <sup>s</sup> but sinners to repentance.

<sup>m</sup> Gal. 1. 16. 1 Kings, 19. 19—27. <sup>n</sup> See Ch. 5. 46, 47. <sup>o</sup> Notorious sinners. Gen. 13. 13. Num. 16. 38. John, 9. 37. 1 Tim. 1. 9, 13, 15, 16. <sup>p</sup> Luke, 15. 1, 2. & 19. 7. Ch. 11. 19. & 23. 23. Gen. 41. 32. Pl. 101. 5. Dan. 1. 5. John, 4. 9. Acta, 10. 28. 1 Cor. 5. 11. 2 John, 10. If. 65. 5. <sup>q</sup> Luke, 5. 31, 32. Mark, 2. 17. Luke, 18. 11—17. Ch. 18. 12. Luke, xv. 1 Tim. 2. 13—16. If. 1. 18. & 55. 7. Rom. 7. 8—24. <sup>r</sup> Hosea, 6. 6. Ch. 12. 7. 1 Sam. 15. 22. Prov. 21. 3. 27. Eccl. 5. 1. If. 1. 11—15. Micah, 6. 6—8. <sup>s</sup> 1 Tim. 1. 13, 15, 16. Luke, 19. 10. Ch. 18. 21—23. Luke, xv. Eph. 2. 1—3. If. 1. 18. & 55. 7. & 45. 22. Rom. 5. 6—27. 1 Cor. 6. 11.

employment was attended with so much corruption and temptation, that there were but few honest men supposed to be engaged in it. They were generally persons of so infamous and vile a character, that *publicans and sinners* are often joined together as synonymous terms. See on ch. v. 46. ix. 11. xi. 19. The original word *Τελωνιον* properly signifies the *custom-house*; some have rendered it *tollbooth*; which, say Beaufobre and Lenfant, was a place near the lake and harbour; there were toll-booths on the great roads, as also on the lakes and rivers. The other Evangelists call St. Matthew by the more honourable name of *Levi*. Porphyry and Julian have blamed St. Matthew for following one of whom he had so little knowledge, thus *rashly*, as they are pleased to call it. But as it is evident that this publican lived in Capernaum, or near it, he must have often heard our Lord preach; for it was the town where he ordinarily resided; and probably he might have been witness to a number of Christ's miracles: wherefore the opposers of our religion must forgive us if we affirm, that there was neither rashness nor imprudence in the readiness which Matthew shewed to follow Jesus. He might have been his disciple long before this, and only waited for permission to attend him. But farther; why may we not suppose that a divine and supernatural influence attended this call of our Lord? which, considering all its circumstances, may well be acknowledged as great a miracle as any of those which we have before reviewed. Dr. Doddridge makes the following pleasing and pious remarks upon the event. "Let us view, with humble wonder and pleasure, this farther instance of the *condescension* and *grace* of the Redeemer, in the call of Matthew: his *condescension*, in calling to so near an attendance, and so intimate a friendship, a man who was a publican, infamous as that employment was; and his *grace*, which could immediately inspire this publican with so firm a resolution of quitting all the profits of that employment; that he might reduce himself to circumstances of life as precarious as those of his divine Master. Many, no doubt, censured him as a rash enthusiast and a lunatic, rather than as a sober convert; but he is even now reaping the abundant reward: his loss is gain, and his contempt glory." See on ch. x. 2, &c.

Ver. 10. *And it came to pass*] Matthew, thinking himself highly honoured by the call of Jesus, made an entertainment for his Master, who did not refuse to partake of

it: at the same time he invited as many of his brother publicans as he could, hoping that Christ's conversation might bring them to repentance. In this feast, therefore, St. Matthew shewed both gratitude and charity; gratitude to Christ, who had reclaimed him; charity to his acquaintance, in labouring to bring about their conversion. It has been commonly thought that Matthew made this entertainment on the very day that Christ called him to attend upon him. The early harmonies of Tatian and Ammonius very justly separated them (see Chemnitz, Harm. cap. 23.). And to the many convincing arguments which Mr. Jones, in his *Vindication of Matthew*, p. 129, &c. has brought to prove that they ought to be separated; we may add, that it seems very evident they were *not both* on the *same day*, from the following obvious consideration. So many things happened *before* the calling of Matthew, that the day must be far advanced, and there could not have been time to prepare a *great feast*, and invite a number of guests: on which account it is certain that the *feast* was *after* the day of his calling; perhaps *some months* after, when he had made up his accounts, and regularly passed his business into other hands; which certainly, from a principle of justice as well as prudence, he would take care to do.

Ver. 11—13. *And when the Pharisees saw it*] See on ver. 9. Instead of *wholes*, we may read *well*. The Pharisees did not indeed direct their discourse to Jesus; but having spoken so loud as to let all the guests hear their censure, he could not avoid meekly putting them in mind, that it is sick people only who have need of a physician; to insinuate, that since the Pharisees thought themselves righteous persons, they had no need of his company: whereas the publicans, whom they called *sinners*, being sick, had the best title to it; and that as nobody ever blamed a physician for going into the company of the patients whose cure he had undertaken, so they could not blame him for conversing with *sinners*, since he did it to reclaim and convert them. "Murmur not, therefore, ye Scribes and Pharisees, that I eat and converse with publicans and sinners. My business is with such; and the end of my coming into the world was the salvation of these. I converse not with them to lull them in fatal security amid their vices, or to contract any taint from the contagion of their impurities; but as the physician visits the chamber of the sick, and is occupied amid the couches of the languishing and the distressed; so do I, as the

great

14 ¶ Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not?'

15 And Jesus said unto them, Can "the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will

come, when the bridegroom \* shall be taken from them, and then shall they' fast.

16 " No man putteth a piece of \* new cloth unto an old garment: for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

<sup>1</sup> Mark, 2. 18—22. Luke, 5. 33—39. & 18. 12. Ch. 6. 16. & 11. 19. Prov. 20. 6. <sup>2</sup> John, 3. 29. <sup>3</sup> Cor. 11. 2. Rev. 21. 2. & 19. 7—9. <sup>4</sup> Ch. xxvi.—xxviii. Mark, 16. 19. Luke, 24. 51. John, 14. 19. & 16. 5, 7, 28. Acts, 1. 9, 10. & 5. 21. <sup>5</sup> Acts, 1. 14. & 10. 30. & 13. 1—3. & 14. 23. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 7. 5. Zech. 12. 10—14. <sup>7</sup> Mark, 2. 21, 22. Luke, 5. 36—39. with Ch. 6. 30. & 8. 25. & 14. 31. & 16. 8. Luke, 24. 49. Gen. 33. 14. <sup>8</sup> Il. 40. 12. John, 26. 12. <sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 2. Heb. 5. 13. Pl. 103. 13, 14. <sup>10</sup> Or *new, or unworn cloth.*

" great physician of the soul, seek out the sick and diseased in mind, and offer health and salvation to the children of men,—suffering under a malady the most mortal and inveterate, the malady of sin: and what physician, in cases of distress and danger, stands upon the niceties of form, or the exactness of punctilio? Why then do you marvel and murmur, that I, in the like extremities, act in the like manner?" It is to be noted, that this is a proverbial expression, *they that be whole, &c.* which has been known to some heathen philosophers, who have made use of it in return to similar reproaches: *Supervacuum inter sanos medicus*, says Quintilian. When Antisthenes was asked why he conversed with wicked men, his answer was, *Kai oi iktēoi meta tōn yōsōuntōn eisi*, "Physicians are conversant with the sick." Our Saviour moreover desired his adversaries seriously to consider the meaning of what God had declared by the prophet Hosea, ch. vi. 6. *I will have mercy rather than sacrifice.* "Where the one or the other must be omitted, let mercy, by all means,—let the work of compassion, beneficence, and love, be preferred to sacrifice; to instituted forms, and merely external ordinances; which, though necessary in themselves, and highly useful as ordained of God, and as means to an important end, must yet never destroy that end, but give place and preference to it; for of all things mercy, acts of genuine benevolence, are most pleasing to the God of love; and of all acts, as being the most important and beneficent, the salvation of lost sinners from destruction and death: and this is the great work for which I came into the world; this is the great end I have to accomplish: *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*; the repentance of righteous persons is not the object of my attention (for there are none such by nature), but the conversion of sinners." *I come not to cure those who are whole, but those that are sick.* Thus our Lord clearly proved a capital doctrine of true religion, which the teachers of those times, notwithstanding they boasted of their knowledge, seem to have lost the very idea of; namely, that ceremonial institutions should always give place to works of charity. See the note on ch. xii. 7. Wetstein and Macknight.

*Ver. 14—17. Then came to him the disciples of John] Dr. Campbell translates the 16th and 17th verses thus: Nobody mendeth an old garment with undressed cloth; else the patch itself teareth the garment, and maketh a greater rent. Neither do people put new wine into old leathern bottles; otherwise the bottles burst; and thus both the wine is spilt, and the*

*bottles are rendered useless. But they put, &c.* *Αἶμος* is properly a vessel for holding liquor. Such vessels were commonly then, and in some countries are still, of leather, which were not so easily distended when old, and were consequently more ready to burst by the fermentation of the liquor. As this does not hold in regard to the bottles used by us, I thought it better, says the Doctor, in translating, to add a word denoting the materials of which their vessels were made. Mr. Wesley adds the same word in his translation of the New Testament.

In the law we find only one fast-day enjoined, namely, the tenth of the seventh month, on which the national atonement was made. But the Jews, of their own accord, observed many other days of fasting. See Isai. lviii. 3. In our Lord's time, days of this kind were more frequent than ever; especially among the Pharisees, who, according to the practice of their sect, fasted probably twice a week. See Luke, xviii. 12. And therefore, as Jesus did not pretend to teach his disciples a more lax kind of discipline than John and the Pharisees, the disciples of John were surprised to find them overlooking so essential a duty. As John the Baptist preached repentance, he not only lived upon coarse diet, but also fasted often, and trained up his disciples thereto. Compare ch. xi. 18. Luke, v. 33. and the note on ch. vi. 16. The expression, *Thy disciples fast not*, may signify, "Do not fast often," or, "are not used to fast." To this our Saviour replies, *Can the children of the bridechamber mourn? &c.* "Would it not be improper for the guests at a wedding to fast and weep while the marriage solemnity continues? It would be equally improper for my disciples to enter on a course of severe and strict abstinence at the time that I, the spiritual bridegroom, am personally present with them." The *children of the bridechamber* is a Hebrew phrase, to denote "The friends of the bridegroom," who were wont to provide whatever was proper and necessary during the marriage festival. See John, iii. 29. As John had described our Saviour under the name of *bridegroom*, so he represents himself here under that idea: and some have supposed that there is in this similitude which our Saviour uses, a reference to the book of Canticles, as is not improbable. The proper meaning of the original words *ἐταίρους ἀγάθου*, by which *new cloth* is expressed, is, "cloth which hath not passed through the fuller's hands," and which is consequently much harsher than what has been often washed and worn; and therefore, yielding less than that, will tear away the edges to which it is sewed; and thus it

17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

18 ¶ While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: <sup>b</sup> but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

19 And <sup>c</sup> Jesus arose, and followed him, and *so did* his disciples.

20 ¶ And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an <sup>d</sup> issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and <sup>e</sup> touched the hem of his garment:

21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23 ¶ And when Jesus came into the ruler's

house, and saw the <sup>f</sup> minstrels and the people making a noise,

24 He said unto them, <sup>g</sup> Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

25 But when the people <sup>h</sup> were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand; and the maid arose.

26 And <sup>i</sup> the <sup>k</sup> fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

27 ¶ And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, <sup>l</sup> crying, and saying, *Thou* son of David, have mercy on us.

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, <sup>m</sup> Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, <sup>n</sup> According to your faith be it unto you.

30 <sup>o</sup> And their eyes were opened; and Jesus <sup>p</sup> straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*.

31 But they, when they were departed,

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 5. 22—43. Luke, 8. 41—56. & 13. 14. Acts, 13. 15. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 8. 15. John, 4. 47, 49. Mark, 6. 5, 6. John, 11. 21, 25. & 5. 25. <sup>c</sup> With John, 4. 50. & 11. 6, 7. Ch. 8. 13. & 15. 28. <sup>d</sup> Lev. 15. 19—33. & 18. 19. & 20. 18. Num. 5. 2. <sup>e</sup> Mark, 5. 27—34. Luke, 8. 43—48. Exod. 15. 26. Pf. 147. 3. Mal. 4. 2. 2 Kings, 13. 21. Ch. 14. 36. John, 14. 12. Acts, 5. 15. & 19. 12. Rom. 4. 19, 20. <sup>f</sup> Ver. 2. If. 40. 1, 2. 2 Chr. 20. 20. Acts, 14. 9. Ver. 29. Ch. 8. 13. Mark, 9. 23. & 10. 52. Luke, 7. 47—50. & 17. 19. & 18. 42. & 8. 48. <sup>g</sup> Chr. 35. 25. Jer. 9. 17. Acts, 9. 39. <sup>h</sup> Acts, 20. 10. John, 11. 4. Her death is but like a short sleep. <sup>i</sup> Ch. 7. 6. 2 Kings, 17. 19. 2 Kings, 4. 33. Acts, 9. 40. <sup>j</sup> Or *this fame*. <sup>k</sup> Ch. 4. 24. If. 52. 13. Mark, 1. 45. John, 3. 30. <sup>l</sup> Ch. 7. 11. Rom. 8. 15, 26. James, 5. 16. Ch. 12. 23. & 1. 1. John, 7. 31. Rom. 1. 3. & 9. 5. Rev. 22. 16. <sup>m</sup> Ch. 13. 58. Ver. 22, 29. John, 11. 26. Mark, 9. 23, 24. & 11. 23. Ch. 17. 20. & 21. 22. Acts, 11. 9. <sup>n</sup> Ch. 2. 12. Ver. 22. Ch. 15. 28. Luke, 7. 50. <sup>o</sup> Pf. 146. 8. If. 35. 5. & 42. 7, 18. Ch. 20. 34. John, 9. 7. 26. <sup>p</sup> Ch. 8. 4. & 12. 16. & 17. 9. Luke, 5. 14. Mark, 7. 36. & 5. 43. & 1. 44.

is a just representation of persons who have not yet been trained up and instructed. The similitude of *new wine* put into *old leathern bottles* is analogous to the former. See the note on Pf. cxix. 83. and those on Luke v. 36—39.

Ver. 18. *While he spake*] As St. Mark has given us the history of these two extraordinary miracles so much more circumstantially than St. Matthew, we shall postpone our observations upon them till we come to Mark v. 22. See also Luke, viii. 41. Dr. Campbell renders the verse, *While he was speaking, a ruler came, and, prostrating himself, said, my daughter is by this time dead; but come, and lay thy hand upon her, and she will revive.*

Ver. 21. *If, &c.*] *If I can, &c. I shall be cured.* The original *ὡς ἂν σωθῶμαι*, is, literally, *I shall be saved*; Dr. Doddridge renders it, *I shall be recovered*; and he observes that there are many other places in which the word is used in the same sense; as certainly it may with great propriety be applied to a *rescue* from any imminent danger, or pressing calamity, especially in an extraordinary way. The same word is used in the next verse. Compare Mark v. 23,

&c. Luke, viii. 36. xvii. 19. xviii. 42. John, xi. 12. and Acts, iv. 9. in the original.

Ver. 23. *The minstrels*] *The musicians or pipers, Heylin; the players on the flute, Beaufovre and Lenfant.* It was the custom among the Jews to have musical instruments at funerals, whereon mournful tunes were played. See Jer. xlvi. 5, 36. Some learned authors observe, that the *trumpet* was used at the funerals of grown or old persons, and the *flute* at those of children; such as was the daughter of Jairus, who was but twelve years old. Concerning the usual lamentations at funerals, see the note on Jer. ix. 17. the introductory one to the book of Lamentations, and *Explication des Textes Difficiles*, p. 531.

Ver. 27. *Thou son of David, &c.*] *Son of David* was one of the names then ascribed by the Jews to the Messiah. See ch. xii. 23.

Ver. 28. *Believe ye that I am able, &c.*] See the note on Mark ix. 23. where the reasons of proposing this question before the cure, and of conferring the cure in this form or expression, are assigned.

spread abroad his fame in all that country.

32 ¶ As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and

healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 ¶ But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few:

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

1 Luke, 11. 15, 15. Ch. 12. 22, 23. Exod. 4. 11. If. 35. 6. with Ch. 8. 27. & 15. 30, 31. Ch. 12. 24. Mark, 3. 22. Luke, 11. 15. Eccl. 4. 4. Mark, 6. 6. Luke, 13. 22. & 4. 43, 44. Ch. 4. 23, 24. & 11. 5. Mark, 6. 34. Luke, 10. 31. Or were tired, and lay down. John, 6. 7 Num. 27. 17. 1 Kings, 22. 17. Jer. 50. 6. Ezek. 24. 6. Amos, 8. 12. Mark, 6. 34. Ch. 10. 6. Zech. 10. 2. & 11. 4. Luke, 10. 2. John, 4. 35. Zech. 10. 2. & 11. 4, 7, 11. Acts, 16. 9, 10. & 18. 10. Luke, 6. 12, 13. Acts, 20. 28. & 13. 2. & 16. 6, 7. & ii.—xix. Jer. 3. 15. 1 Theb. 3. 1. Ch. 10. 1. Eph. 4. 11. or Acts, 15. 2. & 20. 28.

Ver. 30. *Straitly charged*] *Strictly*. Campbell.

Ver. 32, 33. *A dumb man, &c.*] *A dumb demoniac*. Campbell. From the circumstance of the demoniac's being dumb, Erasmus conjectures, that he was also deprived of the use of his reason: if so, being insensible of his own misery, he had as little inclination as ability to apply for a cure. He could not even make his misery known by signs, and therefore needed to be brought to the Saviour by others; but being cured, he spoke both rationally and fluently, to the astonishment of all who heard him; infomuch that they extolled the author of the miracle above all the prophets that had ever appeared: "It was never so seen even in Israel itself, said they,—though it be a people among whom God hath wrought such unparalleled wonders." This reflection was perfectly just; for no one of the prophets whom we read of in the Old Testament appears to have wrought so many beneficial miracles in his whole life as our Lord did in this one afternoon; when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, healed the woman who had a bloody issue, restored two blind men to their sight, cured a dumb demoniac, &c. &c. See on ch. xv. 29—31. and, respecting the calumnies of the Pharisees in the next verse, ch. xii. 24.

Ver. 36. *Because they fainted*] The original ἐκλελυμένοι, denotes here a kind of faintness; the weakness which is caused by hunger and weariness. See ch. xv. 32. Heb. xii. 3. There are notwithstanding several Greek manuscripts which read, as does also the Vulgate, *wearry, fatigued*. These multitudes came not only from the several parts of Galilee, but also from Judæa and Idumea, from beyond Jordan, and the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Eifner seems to have proved beyond dispute, that the original word ἐκλελυμένοι, rendered *scattered abroad*, signifies properly "exposed to every invading danger," as sheep are when thrown up and abandoned by the shepherd. Dr. Heylin reads, with the margin of our bible, *were tired and laid down*. As the people were utterly neglected by their Scribes and Pharisees, the appointed public teachers, who ought to have instructed them, the indefatigable zeal with which our Lord now spread the knowledge of divine things,

was most seasonable and acceptable. The teachers just now mentioned were blind, perverse, lazy guides, who every day discovered more and more their ignorance and wickedness. They either neglected the office of teaching altogether, or they filled the people's minds with high notions of ritual observances and traditions, to the utter disparagement of moral duties, which in a manner they trampled under foot; so that instead of serving God, they served their own glory, their gain, and their belly; wherefore, any appearance of religion which they had, was wholly feigned and hypocritical, infomuch that they rather did hurt by it, than were of real service to the interests of holiness and virtue. Besides, the common people, being distracted by the disagreeing factions of the Pharisees and Sadducees, knew not what to choose or refuse; their case therefore called loudly for the compassion of Jesus, which indeed was never wanting to them at any time; for he always cherished the tenderest affections towards his countrymen: but it flowed particularly on this occasion, when he considered that they were in great distress for want of spiritual food. See the next chapter, ver. 6. Eifner, Wolfius, and Macknight. It may be proper just to observe, that the 10th chapter should begin at the 35th verse; for the connection is absolutely and entirely broken by the present division.

Ver. 37. *The harvest truly is plenteous*] The multitude that followed Jesus, and expressed so earnest a desire of receiving his instruction, gave him an occasion of making this reflection. He compares Judæa and the neighbouring countries to fields covered with ripe corn, where nothing was wanting but reapers. See John, iv. 35. and Beaufovre and Lenfant.

Ver. 38. *That he will send forth*] The original word ἐκβάλει plainly imports some degree of force. Dr. Doddridge therefore very properly translates and paraphrases the passage thus: *Therefore let me urge you to make your importunate supplications to the great Lord and Master of the harvest, that he would, by the secret and powerful energy of the Spirit on men's hearts, conquer their natural disinclination to this excellent work; and so*  
" thrust

## CHAP. X.

*Christ sendeth out his twelve apostles, enabling them to do miracles; giveth them their charge, teacheth them, comforteth them against persecutions, and promiseth a blessing to those that receive them.*

[Anno Domini 30.]

**A**ND when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power

\* *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 3. 13—19. & 6. 7. Luke, 6. 13—16. & 9. 1. Rev. 21. 12. with Exod. 1. 2—4. Ch. 19. 28. <sup>b</sup> Or *over*. <sup>c</sup> Acts, 16. 18. & 10. 38. <sup>d</sup> Prov. 16. 7. <sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. 12. 28. John, 1. 40—42. Ch. 4. 18—22. & 17. 1. & 26. 37. Mark, 13. 3. & 10. 35. Acts, 1. 13. & ii—xii. 1st and 2d Pet. 28, 2d, and 3d John. John, i—xxi. Rev. i—xxii.

“ thrust forth a sufficient number of active and indefatigable labourers into his harvest, by whom it may be successfully carried on, to his own greater glory, and the edification and salvation of souls.” Whoever considers the immense difficulties and oppositions which every minister of Christ’s kingdom was sure to encounter in those early days of it, will see the necessity of some unusual impulse on the mind to lead any to undertake it. See on ver. 9. Ministers may learn of their Redeemer, who is represented in so amiable a light here before them, tenderly to pity those who are faint and exposed to danger, and are as sheep having no shepherd. The extreme necessities of his churches in many places are but too apparent. It is our duty earnestly to pray to God that he would behold them with compassion; that he would graciously provide for their instruction, and would thrust forth such labourers among them, as may be faithful and diligent in their work, and prove the happy instruments of gathering in fruits to everlasting life. See Doddridge and Chemnitz.

*Inferences.*—The first and most obvious use intended by the miraculous cures which our Lord performed, was, to convince men of the truth of his doctrine; and that they might have sure ground to reason as Nicodemus did, when he said to him, “ Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.” The first effect, therefore, which his miracles ought to have with us, should be, to make us cordially embrace his doctrines, experience their power through divine grace, and exert our utmost endeavours to put them in practice. Those who apply themselves to this with the greatest fidelity and earnestness, will sooner or later meet such difficulties, or perhaps real obstacles in their religious course, as will convince them that mere instruction is not sufficient; that besides advice, they must have constant assistance from above; and that the same divine power which was exerted to convince them of the truth of his doctrine, and to bring them into the liberty of the children of God, must concur to enable them to practise it, and grow in grace and the divine life. Here then a second lesson is to be learned from the miraculous cures wrought by Christ; for those great instances of his goodness and power will raise the languishing hopes of his tried and tempted servants. And as every man naturally transfers the notions that he is full of to the objects that come in his way, and our minds are ever quick at applying things to what we have most at heart; so when they reflect upon his bounty to the diseased of every kind, that

addressed themselves, or were brought to him in Palestine they too through grace will hope for some share in his favours, and accordingly address themselves to him as the great Physician of Souls. This is a general consideration applicable to every miraculous cure which he performed. See on ch. vii. 7.

When we read with what success the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers, and in short the diseased of every kind, addressed themselves to him, so that no patient ever came to him in vain; but all distempers, though of the most malignant nature, though most obstinate, and of many years’ continuance, though such as had baffled all other remedies, were infallibly cured by him;—when, say, we read these instances of his Almighty power and goodness, our own spiritual infirmities should occur to our thoughts.

Have you nothing to ask of this divine Physician? Do you not with a sigh, and as it were some sort of envy, think how fortunate they were, who had such easy access to him in Palestine? And does not their success raise some hope in your breast? In reason it ought to do so; for spiritual maladies are his proper province; and it is in the cure of these that his goodness principally delights to exert itself.

I say, that to be a healer of bodily distempers was a foreign character, which our Lord assumed only to make way for what is his genuine office, even to heal souls. For he wrought the outward cures only to convince us of his divine power, because such cures were visible to all: they were, as he said himself to John’s disciples, such things as they could hear and see; they were such gross palpable proofs, as suited all capacities; whereas the operations of his Spirit are invisible, and are no ground of faith to any but those who experience them, or are awakened to a sense of their want of them. In condescension, therefore, he gave those outward demonstrations of Omnipotence restoring senses, limbs, and life itself; but these temporal favours may be accounted as very trivial, even as crumbs that fall from his table, in comparison of what he then did, and still actually does, in the souls of those who apply to him with the proper disposition, even in simple humble faith. He cures the spiritual blindness and insensibility to divine truth: he takes away hydropic avarice, paralytic laziness, the leprous pruriency of soul desires, and even evil lust and passion. To cure these is his profession and character: it is the work for which he came into the world, as the name of Jesus testifies; and so the angel, who appointed that name, did at the same time explain it.

3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Matthew the publican; James the son of Thaddeus;

<sup>4</sup> John, 1. 43—51. & 6. 5—7. & 14. 5—9. & 20. 24—29. & 21. 2. Ch. 9. 9, 10. & i—xxviii. <sup>5</sup> Acts, 1. 13. & 15. 13—22. & 27. 28. Gal. 1. 19. 11. 9. James, i—7. Ch. 27. 56. Or Judas. Acts, 1. 13. John, 14. 22. Jude. Luke, 6. 16.

*Thou shalt call his name Jesus, that is to say, Saviour, for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Nor let us imagine that he is less powerful, now that he sitteth at the right hand of God, than he was formerly, when, in the days of his flesh, he sojourned in Judæa. The fulness of the Godhead does actually reside in him for our use; I say, the fulness of the Godhead; that is, Deity in its plenitude of power does actually reside in the person of Christ for our use: and he is ready, he is ever desirous to communicate it; so that there is nothing wanting but capacities on our part to receive it. What those are, we mention in the following particulars:

First, Whosoever would be cured of any spiritual malady must go to Christ.

It is a wretched mistake of ordinary Christians, so called, that they consider Christ as *inaccessible* since his ascension, and conceive of him only as highly exalted, and remote at an unmeasurable distance from us: but this comes from not effectually believing, or, what amounts to the same thing, not considering the SUPREME DIVINITY of our Saviour.

The divine nature of Christ has been treated of late as a speculative question to dispute about: but it is really one of the most practical, as well as one of the most important parts of our religion. For by this he is ever *everywhere* present: Christ, I say, by his divine nature, is omnipresent: he is therefore present with us; he is present within our minds; and we ought not to search after him as far distant from us. So St. Paul to the Romans: *Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to say, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is to say, to bring up Christ from the dead;) for Christ is nigh thee, even in thy heart.*

Secondly, When by devotion we are thus introduced into the presence of Christ, we must declare our wants to him, we must humbly expose our miseries before him, with earnest prayer for deliverance. For this there is no need of studied speeches: let us only imitate some of those distressed persons whose history we read in the Gospel,—the paralytic for instance, whose double cure has been already mentioned. Though great efforts, and even violence, had been used to introduce him to Jesus, for the roof of the house had been opened, and he was let down through the tiling, yet, when he was presented before the Lord, all the difficulty was over; his circumstances spoke for him sufficiently, they needed no interpreter: prostrate on his bed he turned his eyes to our Lord, and our Lord beheld him with compassion. He saw his misery, his helplessness, and that he had no hopes but in the mercy of his Saviour. This sufficed to obtain his mercy. All his maladies were cured; his sins, the source of all, were forgiven; and he was restored to all that is valuable, health and favour with God. We too shall find the same success, if to the dispositions before recommended we add,

In the third place, *faith*, that is to say, a worthy opinion

of Christ. This is apparently necessary; for, to distrust his power or his goodness is an injurious thought, which renders us unworthy of his favour. And it is remarkable, that he insists upon faith, more than any other qualification, in the persons who apply to him for relief.

To teach us this (besides the apparent reasonableness of the thing), our Lord, in working his miraculous bodily cures, which, as I said, are emblems of his divine operations on souls, frequently required a public declaration of such devout confidence in his goodness and power, before he exerted them for the relief of those who implored his assistance. So, when two blind men had followed him home, with cries soliciting his mercy, he said unto them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And straightway their eyes were opened.*

We have another very edifying instance of the efficacy of faith in disposing us for supernatural graces, in the man who besought our Lord for his son, who had been distracted from his infancy by the possession of a malignant spirit, that had often endangered his life. *If thou canst do any thing (said the father, after representing the deplorable condition of his child), have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.* Jesus accepted his humble faith, and ratified it in the cure of his son.

Many other instances of the same kind are recorded in the Gospel for our instruction and encouragement, that we sink not into despair upon the sad experiment of our weakness and misery; but that we should approach with holy confidence to the throne of grace, secure in the goodness of our Lord, and careful not to distrust him.

And lest we should fondly imagine that the supernatural assistance which Christ communicates to believers, was confined to the days of his flesh; even after his resurrection he declared to his disciples, as a fundamental principle of his religion, *That all power was given to him in heaven and in earth.* All Christians so called acknowledge his *power in heaven*: but many forget it upon earth; they forget to have recourse to it for their justification and sanctification, which are the works in which he principally delights to exercise it. He therefore ordered his apostles to publish it through the world; and at the same time that they instructed men to obey his commands, lest the persons instructed should be discouraged by the seeming difficulty of his sublime precepts, they were to deliver down, as an article of faith, to all his true disciples, *That he would be with them always, even unto the end of the world: that he—be who hath all power in heaven and in earth,—he would be with them unto the end of the world.*

Fourthly, and lastly, That the cure may be perfected, which we seek and expect from this divine physician; we must

4 Simon <sup>a</sup> the Canaanite, and <sup>b</sup> Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

5 ¶ These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, <sup>c</sup> Go not into the

<sup>a</sup> Or Zelotes. Acts, i. 13. Luke, 6. 15. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 26. 14—16, 25, 47—50. & 27. 3—5. John, 13. 26—29. Acts, i. 16—19. John, 6. 7. <sup>c</sup> Acts, 16. 6, 7. 2 Kings, 17. 24—41. Ezra, iv. v. John, 4. 20. Acts, viii.

must, as becomes every reasonable patient, and the nature of the case requires, give ourselves up to his management, resign ourselves wholly to his care, and endure his operations, though painful to our corrupt nature. We must drink of the cup which he presents to us, even if it be the cup of suffering. Fear it not, when his hand administers it. He has tried the utmost force of it, and drank it to the dregs himself: but, tenderly compassionate as he is, and conscious of our weakness, he will administer it to us in such due proportions, and with such sweet infusion of heavenly peace and consolation, or other spiritual support, that it will prove the cup of health, the cup of salvation.

REFLECTIONS—1st, Jesus will not abide where he is an unwelcome guest; but woe to those who bid him to depart, for nothing but wrath and misery are left behind him! Leaving the country of the Gergesenes, he returned to Capernaum, the usual place of his residence, where we find him curing a poor paralytic; for his work was ever to be doing good.

1. His friends brought him to Jesus, unable himself to stand or walk: they had compassion for their brother, and counted no pains too great to obtain his cure, and they were persuaded the Lord both could and would relieve him from his misery. *Note*; those of our dear friends and relatives, who are themselves benumbed in spirit as with the palsy, and cannot come to Christ, we must carry in the arms of prayer and love, and spread their case before him: perhaps in so doing we may save a soul from death.

2. Christ kindly received them: *seeing their faith*, either of those who brought him, or of the sick man also, and to revive the heart of the poor afflicted patient, more distressed probably by his sins than his sufferings, Jesus saith, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.* *Note*; (1.) Sin is the bitterest of all our burdens; the sting of sickness and of death itself is taken out when our iniquity is pardoned. (2.) They who come to Christ are called upon to be of good cheer; no poor beggar ever went from his door with a denial. (3.) God sometimes severely afflicts his dearest children; they must not question their adoption because of their sufferings; but should rather conclude, that God then dealth with them as sons. Hebrews, xii. 5, &c.

3. The Scribes, who were the doctors of the law, and expounded it to the people, highly offended with what Jesus had said, though they did not speak their sentiments, yet in their hearts regarded him as a blasphemer, for presuming by his own authority to forgive sins, which is the prerogative of God alone, and contains a strong argument for his Divinity; in which light these men evidently regarded his declaration. *Note*; many among us are like these Scribes; though they will not say it is blasphemy in Jesus to pardon our sins, they are ready to brand these as

blasphemers, who say they have the pardon that Jesus pronounces.

4. To give them a proof of his Divinity, and confute their vain imaginations, Jesus lets them know he perceives their thoughts. *Wherefore think you evil in your hearts censuring him as a blasphemer; For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and walk?* He that by his own power could effect the one, evidently proves that he had a right to pronounce the other. *Note*; our hearts are naked and open before the Lord; and he observes and is displeased at every evil thought which rises or lodges there.

5. He demonstrates the power that he had to forgive sins by removing that disease which was the punishment of sin, and bids the paralytic *arise* before them all; and as a proof of his health and strength being perfectly restored *to take up that bed*, on which as a cripple he lay, and *go unto his house.* And lo! to the astonishment of the multitude, who glorified God for so great a miracle, and to the confusion of these murmurers, the man instantly arose, took up his bed, and departed, cured of every infirmity. *Note*; (1.) Though we have no strength of ourselves to help ourselves; yet when Jesus speaks to the paralytic soul, power accompanies his word, and enables us for that which he commands. (2.) The mercies shewn to others demand our praises; and for every good gift bestowed on the sons of men, God is to be glorified.

2dly, The publicans were those who farmed or collected the customs imposed by the Romans, and were not only therefore odious to the Jews, who abhorred this manner of servitude, but were also for the most part men of infamous conduct, who enriched themselves by exacting being sure of having the Roman government on their side. Hence publicans and sinners are so often used to include the most guilty and abandoned characters; yet such as these Jesus came to save, and out of them was pleased to choose one of his most eminent disciples, an apostle and evangelist, the penman of this gospel. We have,

1. His call. His name is Matthew, *the gift of God*, which some suppose was given him by our Lord on some occasion, when before he was known by that of Levi; the other evangelists call him; though it was common for the same person to have two names. He was sitting at the receipt of custom, in the office where it was to be paid. One word, however, effectually wrought upon this publican's heart: Jesus said, *Follow me; and immediately he arose and followed him.* Power accompanied the word of Jesus, and Matthew left all, and devoted himself intirely to the service of his new Lord and master. No doubt but he immediately, or very soon afterwards, tasted that the Lord is gracious, experiencing a large measure of conversion and grace.

2. Having tasted the grace of Jesus himself, he is so gracious that his brethren by profession should be acquainted with him also; and for this purpose made a feast for



way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not :

6<sup>k</sup> But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

<sup>k</sup> Ch. 15. 24. & 9. 36. Acts, 3. 16. & 13. 46. Rom. 9. 4, 5. 11. 53. 6. Jer. 50. 16, 17. Ezek. 34. 6, 16. 1 Peter, 2. 25. Pl. 119. 1, 76.

and his disciples, to which many publicans and sinners were invited : nor did the Lord disdain their company, but gladly sat down with them. *Note*; (1.) They who have truly experienced the Redeemer's grace, from that moment begin to labour, that all who are near and dear to them may partake of their blessing. (2.) Where the heart is open to Christ, there all who are his disciples will be welcome for his sake.

3. The Pharisees with malignant eye marked the condescensions of Jesus, and wanted to cast a reflection upon his character, and prejudice his disciples against him. *Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?* These proud and self-righteous creatures thought it infamous to be seen in such company, and would insinuate, that our Lord was like the men with whom he had sat down to meat. *Note*; (1.) The self-righteous formalists are ever the most rigid censurers of the conduct of others. (2.) The noblest acts of charity are liable to the basest misrepresentations.

4. Christ vindicates himself from their insinuations. He overheard their whispers; or his disciples, weak themselves, carried the question to him, that they might be furnished with an answer; for to him in all our difficulties we must have recourse; and he gives them an abundant vindication of his conduct. *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.* He came into the world as the great physician of sin-sick souls; sinners are his unhappy patients, who groan under their spiritual maladies, incurable but for his healing grace: and those who feel their miseries and fly to him, he is ever ready to relieve; but the wilfully ignorant, and the self-righteous who know nothing of their deep corruption, guilt, and sinfulness, and conceit themselves whole; these, as they experience no want of him, and will not come to him that they may have life, are left to perish in their blindness and their pride. *But go ye, says he, and learn what that meaneth, Hosea, vi. 6. I will have mercy and not sacrifice;* that is, in a comparative sense, acts of kindness and charity to men's bodies or souls are much more acceptable to God than all the formalities of ritual devotion; and therefore Christ intimates, that his conversing with sinners for their good was, according to the word of truth, far more pleasing to God, than their scrupulous adherence to the tradition of the elders. *For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;* this being the very end of his mission, he was fully justified in receiving them into his company, that he might acquaint them with his salvation. Had man been naturally righteous, he never had needed a Redeemer; and those formalists who fancy that they are such, have nothing to do with him who came only to seek and save that which is lost. The Saviour's errand is to sinners, the vilest of sinners, to invite them to return to God, with promises of pardon purchased by his blood, and to call them in virtue thereof to repent and turn from all their abominations. And to this a sense of his love engages the penitent, and for this his grace enables them; while they who vainly conceit

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that they are righteous, needing no repentance, are left to perish in their own deceivings.

3dly, Our Lord was ever beset by insidious foes, yet his wisdom enabled him to confute and confound all their malicious designs. We have,

1. The question addressed to Jesus by some of John's disciples. *Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?* and herein they would insinuate, that they were not so strict and holy in their religious profession as they ought to be. It appears from Luke, v. 33. that they were set on by the Pharisees, who joined them; for designing and wicked men study how to set good men at variance, and are happy if they can suggest any cause of discord between them. They seem to take a pride in proclaiming the frequency of their own fasts, and to look down upon the disciples of Jesus as far their inferiors in this respect; and this leaven of self-complacency effectually destroyed what otherwise might be laudable in their practice. *Note*; they who boast of their own good works, evidently shew that their religion is vain.

2. Christ vindicates his disciples by an appeal to themselves. *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?* On such seasons of festivity fasting would be unseasonable. Christ was this heavenly bridegroom, as John had called him, John, iii. 29. he came now openly to espouse his church, even all faithful believers. His disciples were the children of the bride-chamber, who, while their Lord was with them, could not but rejoice; but the time would come, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, and then shall they fast; besides, at present they were young disciples, and therefore to be inured by degrees to harder services. As improper would it be to lay upon them at present these austerities, as to put a piece of new cloth on an old garment, which would soon make a worse hole than that which it covered; or new wine, which ferments most, into old bottles, which, being made of leather or skins, would by long use grow weak, and be liable to burst; but new wine must be put into new bottles, and then both are preserved. There must be a proper consideration had of the persons and their measure of grace; children and babes in Christ must not be set upon the services which require peculiar intenseness of mind, or the severest acts of self-denial, but gently led, as Jacob's cattle, Genesis, xxxiii. 13. lest by being over-driven they should be destroyed.

4thly, While Jesus was vindicating the conduct of his disciples from the cavils of those who found fault with them, an agreeable avocation calls him from this unpleasing work of disputation.

1. A ruler of the synagogue, a man of rank and importance, applies to Jesus on the behalf of his daughter, who was either now in the very agony of death, as the other evangelists seem to intimate, or by this time, as the father concludes, actually dead. He therefore with deepest humility begs him to come to his house, and lay his hand upon her, persuaded that Jesus could easily restore her,

desperate

7 And as ye go, <sup>1</sup> preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received,

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. & 11. 5. Luke, 9. 2. & 10. 9. Acts, 3. 6. & 8. 18, 20. & 20. 33—35.

desperate as the case appeared. Though few, very few, in his station respected Christ, he was one of those. *Note;* The breaches in our family should drive us to the Lord; if not to restore the dead to life, at least to sanctify the providence as a means of quickening our own souls.

2. Christ immediately complies with his request; for he is more willing to give, than we to ask, and none seek him in vain; and his disciples followed him, desirous to behold a fresh instance of the divine power of their Lord.

3. In the way, he heals a poor woman afflicted with a disease of long standing, which weakened her in body, rendered her ceremonially unclean, and impoverished her in seeking a cure, without obtaining any relief, from the physicians. As her disorder was of such a nature that she might be ashamed to mention it, and by the law should have kept her from mingling in society with others, she came behind our Lord, and touched the hem of his garment, persuaded that there was such a plenitude of healing virtue in Jesus, that if she but touched his garment she should certainly be cured. Nor was she disappointed of her hope; she immediately felt herself perfectly well, but must not steal off unnoticed. Though others observed her not, Jesus knew what was done, and, for his own glory and her comfort, addressed her with kind encouragement, saying, *Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.* *Note;* (1.) The poor sinner who comes to Christ, ashamed, confounded, and distressed, shall be sent from him rejoicing. (2.) Those who honour Christ by believing in his name, he will honour, approving and rewarding their faith.

4. He is pleased to raise from the dead the ruler's daughter. At his arrival he found the house filled with mourners and minstrels, as was usual on those occasions, with melancholy notes of woe exciting greater grief and wailing; but he bade them cease their lamentations, and leave the room, since they would find the damsel not, as they supposed, dead and past hope, but as one asleep, whom he would soon awake; though they assured him she was dead, and, supposing the case desperate, treated what he said with utter contempt. But he quickly convinced them of their folly and wickedness herein; for, having ordered them to be put out of the house or room, as unworthy to be spectators of his miracles who thus derided him, in the presence of the father and mother, and three of his disciples, he went in, took her by the hand, and at his word she instantly arose, alive and well as if she had indeed awaked from a refreshing sleep. *Note;* (1.) Death is but a longer night, and sleep its lesser mysteries. They who die in the Lord, are said to sleep in Jesus; for, though dead to us, they live to him, and only wait for the resurrection-morn to wake up to eternal life and day, when sleep and death shall be no more. (2.) When our dear relatives go before us to their bed of dust, though nature cannot but feel the pangs of parting, believers sorrow not as those who have no hope. If their friends fall asleep in

Christ, they may wake up together shortly, never to part again. (3.) Many scoff at Christ's words, and, because they cannot comprehend them, brand them as foolishness, though they will be found the true sayings of God. (4.) He that by a touch, a word, raised the dead body, does thus by his word and spirit raise the souls of the penitent from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.

5. The fame of this amazing miracle soon spread throughout that land, the certainty of the fact being put beyond doubt by the multitude of those who had been fully convinced of the damsel's death.

5thly, Miracle upon miracle confirmed our Lord's divine mission, and left those inexcusable, who, in the face of such evidence, rejected him.

1. We find him, immediately after raising Jairus's daughter, giving sight to two blind men.

[1.] They followed him with importunate cries, hearing of his fame, and hoping for a cure. He who gave life to the dead could surely give sight to the blind. Their address shewed their persuasion, that Jesus was the true Messiah, the promised Son of David; and all their prayers centered in one point, *have mercy on us.* All that the sinner needs is comprehended in this one word, and all he can hope for or ask, is of free unmerited grace. Being in the same distress, they joined their mutual supplications; fellow-sufferers should be joint petitioners: and, though their request was not, as usual, immediately granted, they did not desist; but with persevering earnestness followed him through the street, and then into the house. If the Lord Jesus for a while seem to disregard our prayers, it must not be interpreted a denial of our requests, but as designed to quicken our importunity, and to make the mercy sought more valued by us. We shall assuredly succeed, if we faint not.

[2.] In answer to the question of our Lord, they make a noble confession of their faith. Jesus asked them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* to open your eyes, and by my own divine power to cure your blindness? *They said unto him, Yea, Lord; we are fully persuaded of it.* *Note;* (1.) In all our trials, the full and fixed persuasion of Christ's power to save us out of them, must be as an anchor to our souls amid the storm. (2.) Christ requires open profession of our faith, that we may give him the glory due unto his name.

[3.] Hereupon he grants their request. *He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you: and their eyes were opened.* He knew their sincerity, and he designed to express his approbation of their faith in conferring the cure. Whoever still comes to him with their wants, will find the same language from Jesus; *according to our faith* the blessings of the Gospel become possessed by us. Whatever we want, faith may ever draw it out of his fulness; and whenever we fail of strength or comfort, we may be assured it is owing to our unbelief.

[4.] He strictly charges them to conceal the miracle that he

freely give.

9<sup>m</sup> Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor

brass, in your purses ;

10 Nor scrip for *your* journey ; neither two

<sup>m</sup> Mark, 6. 8. Luke, 9. 3, 4. & 22. 35. Trust God for your maintenance.

he had wrought for them. Either he shunned all appearance of seeking popular applause, or he knew that the more his fame spread, the more his enemies would be exasperated ; or perhaps he did it to prevent the Jews or his own disciples, too much disposed to expect in their Messiah a temporal prince, from crowding around him, or attempting, by insurrections, to set him on the throne of Israel.

[5.] They, notwithstanding, *spread abroad his fame* ; so full of gratitude, they could not conceal the favour ; and though their disobedience was not commendable, their motive no doubt pleaded their excuse. Well-meant zeal, though sometimes imprudently exerted, should not meet a harsh censure.

2. He cures a dumb man possessed of a devil. His friends brought him to Jesus as a truly pitiable object, just as the blind men, who were healed, went out ; for Christ's door was open to all the miserable, and he was never weary in doing good. The favour is no sooner asked than granted ; the devil is dispossessed, and the dumb man speaks as freely as ever. *Note* ; They who live in the neglect of prayer and praise and godly conversation are under the possession of this spirit of dumbness ; but when the heart yields to the grace of Jesus, the tongue of the dumb will instantly sing, speaking his praises, and telling what great things God hath done for his soul.

3. These miracles had a very different effect on the spectators. *The multitudes marvelled*, and owned, to the glory of Jesus, that never had such miracles been seen before in Israel ; so many, so immediate, and performed with such divine authority. But the malignant Pharisees, determined to find fault, though unable to deny the facts, imputed these miracles to diabolical agency, as if Christ was in league with the devil. They who are bent against conviction will always have something to object ; and the more they are pressed with the evidence of the truth, the more enraged, inveterate, and blasphemous, is their abuse.

6thly, Christ did not long fix his abode at one place. We have an account,

1. Of his journeys, preaching, and cures, through all the cities and villages of Galilee. He taught, publicly in the synagogues, the doctrines of the Gospel, and the nature, blessings, and privileges of that kingdom which he came to erect ; and, in confirmation of his mission, in every place performed the most miraculous cures on the bodies of all the diseased who applied to him, as his word was designed to heal the greater maladies of their souls.

2. Of the compassion that he expressed towards the multitudes who followed him. It grieved him to see the darkness, ignorance, and carelessness which everywhere appeared ; they *fainted*, perishing through want of knowledge ; instead of the bread of life and truth, fed with the miserable husks of pharisaical traditions, and misled in the most essential truths of God's word, through the adulterations with which their scribes had corrupted it ; and they

were scattered abroad as *sheep having no shepherd*, exposed to the great destroyer of souls, and destitute of every faithful guide to bring them to the fold of God : they who should have directed them aright contributed to increase their errors, or by total negligence abandoned them to ruin. Our Lord, therefore, stirs up his disciples to pray, that since the harvest is so plentiful, and multitudes of immortal souls are willing to hear the good word of God, and so few to labour for their conversion, to gather them into God's church,—the great Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers qualified for their work, and bless them with success. *Note* ; (1.) They who know the value of their own souls, cannot but feel with Jesus the tenderest compassion for those who live in ignorance, error, and sin, and pity them the more because they appear so insensible, and to have no pity on themselves. (2.) The neglect of ministers is an awful judgment upon the people, and must be attended with aggravated guilt and ruin on their own souls. (3.) When multitudes appear attentive, and willing to hear the Gospel, it is a grief to see them deprived of the means, and a double obligation is laid on the few faithful to exert themselves. (4.) The grievous neglect of men's souls, which we observe, should excite our fervent prayers to God, that he would revive his work in the midst of the years, and send forth faithful shepherds to feed and guide his flock. (5.) Christ must appoint his own servants ; he is the Lord of the harvest ; none can call or qualify for the office but himself ; and whom he sends, he is able and willing to support and bless ; their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. They who see no gracious fruits of their ministry, may justly conclude that the Lord of the harvest never sent them. (6.) All Christ's servants are *labourers* ; they are no loiterers who are of his appointing. Diligence, fidelity, and zeal, mark their ministrations.

CHAP. X.

*Ver. 1. And when he had called unto him*] The distinction of the sacred writings into chapters and verses, which is a modern invention to facilitate references, has with that advantage many inconveniencies, because it often breaks that thread of discourse, which is the proper clue to lead us into the meaning of what follows. It will be seen how reasonable this reflection is, if we look back to the 36th verse, &c. of the preceding chapter, where we read that Jesus, *beholding the multitudes* (in their spiritual capacities, which were ever the principal object of his regard), *had compassion on them, because they were tired and lay down, as sheep that had no shepherd* ; Then saith he, &c. After this, as he himself was ever foremost, on all proper occasions, to do what he commanded others, he passed the following night in prayer ; see Luke, vi. 12, 13. : and the next morning chose *twelve* from among his disciples, whom he constituted *apostles* ; persons sent, that is to say, *special messengers*, and sent them forth with a peculiar commission, as *shepherds*, to raise and guide those dejected forlorn *sheep*, who had moved his compassion ; and as *labourers*, to be

coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

11 ° And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and

° Luke, 10. 7. 1 Tim. 5. 18. Lev. 19. 13. Deut. 24. 14, 15. 1 Cor. 9. 4—14. 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18. Gal. 6. 6. ° Luke, 10. 8. 1 Cor. 14. 33, 40. Eph. 5. 15. Lodge with persons of credit.

employed in the harvest which was now mature, and fit for the threshing-floor. The language is figurative, and there is an absolute necessity that it should be so; because the mental dispositions here spoken of have no proper names in human language, which consists only of terms, that in their first signification all belong to the objects of sense. The language is therefore figurative; and even different figures are here made use of to express the same object; which also cannot sometimes be avoided: for every similitude is defective, and can shew but a part. Therefore, where one similitude falls short, another may aptly supply its deficiency, and represent, by new images, the whole of what was intended. Thus, in the passage now under consideration, the same mental disposition is expressed by two metaphors, both highly instructive, yet in different respects, for each gives a different lesson. The first shews what kind of persons are rightly disposed to be admitted into that last and peculiar dispensation, which is called *the kingdom of heaven*; and the second intimates to those who are to be admitted, what kind of treatment they are to expect there. See Heylin, the note on ver. 6., and on ch. iii. 7. It appears from the present verse, that Jesus had already chosen from among his disciples those whom he afterwards honoured with the name of Apostles. Compare Mark, iii. 14. Luke, vi. 13. It is probable that he chose twelve, in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel (see ch. xix. 28. Luke, xxii. 30. Rev. 21. 12, 14. and compare Exod. xxiv. 4. Deut. i. 23. Josh. 4. 2, 3.); and therefore care was taken, on the death of Judas, to choose another to make up the number; which seems to have been a mark of respect paid to the Jews, previous to the grand offer of the Gospel to them: whereas, when they had generally rejected it, Paul was added to the Apostles, without any regard to the particular number of twelve.

*Ver. 2. Now the names, &c.*] In the catalogue of the apostles, *Simon* and *Andrew*, the sons of *Jonah*, are named first; not because they were greater in dignity than their brethren of the apostolical college, but because they had become Christ's disciples before them. With respect to *Andrew*, this is plain from John, i. 40, 41.; and as for *Peter*, he may have been the second disciple, notwithstanding it was another person who accompanied *Andrew* when he first conversed with Jesus. That person is supposed to have been *John*, the son of *Zebedee*, and the author of the Gospel, because he is spoken of in the manner in which *John* usually speaks of himself. But whoever he was, *Peter* may have been a disciple before him, because it by no means follows from *Andrew's* being convinced, that his companion was convinced also. The foundation of his faith may have been laid at that meeting, though he did not acknowledge Christ's mission till afterwards. Now, as some one of his disciples was to have the first place in the catalogue, the earliness of *Peter's* faith might be a reason for conferring that honour on him. But he takes place even of his brother *Andrew*, who was con-

verted before him, perhaps because propriety called for it, he being, as is generally believed, his eldest brother. In like manner, *James* the son of *Zebedee*, being elder than *John* his brother, is mentioned before him, though it is probable he was the younger disciple. In the catalogue of apostles, *Simon*, the brother of *Andrew*, is distinguished from the other *Simon* by the surname of *Peter*, which had been conferred on him when he first became acquainted with Jesus at *Jordan*. The reason of the name, however was not assigned till long after that, viz. when *Simon* declared his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, Matth. xvi. 17, 18. for it was then that Jesus told him he was called *Cephas*, and *Peter* (which by interpretation is a *rock*), on account of the fortitude wherewith he was to preach the gospel. *Simon* and *Andrew* were originally fishermen, and inhabitants of *Bethsaida*, a town situated on the north shore of the lake of *Gennesareth*; but after *Peter* was married, he and his brother settled in *Capernaum*, perhaps because his wife lived there. Before they became acquainted with Christ, they were disciples of the Baptist, who pointed him out to them as the Messiah. *Andrew* has left no writings, for which reason we are at a loss to judge of his literary endowments; but *Peter* was the author of the two epistles which bear his name.

*James* and *John*, the sons of *Zebedee*, were also fishermen; they dwelt in *Capernaum*, and seem to have been in rather better circumstances than *Peter* and *Andrew*; for the Gospel speaks of their having hired servants to assist them in their business. *John* is thought to have been the youngest of all the apostles; yet he was old enough to have been a follower of *John the Baptist* before he came to Christ. On this, or on some other occasion, *James* and *John*, the sons of *Zebedee*, obtained the surname of *Boanerges*, that is to say, *the sons of thunder*; perhaps because of the natural vehemency and impetuosity of their tempers. Accordingly their spirit shewed itself in the desire they expressed to have the Samaritans destroyed by fire from heaven, because they refused to lodge Jesus in his way to Jerusalem. It appeared also in their ambition to become the great officers of state in their Master's kingdom, which they supposed would be a secular one. Beside *John's* writings shew that he was a man of a very affectionate turn of mind. This affectionate turn of his mind gave him a singular fitness for friendship, in which he was not only peculiarly amiable, but peculiarly privileged, as rendered him the object of Christ's peculiar love; a love which will do him honour to the end of the world. As for *James*, his being put to death by *Herod* is a proof that his zeal was uncommon, and that it moved him to be eminently active and bold in the work of the Gospel. Had it been otherwise, he would not have become the object either of *Herod's* jealousy or of his resentment. Some indeed are of opinion, that the epithet *sons of thunder* was not expressive of the dispositions of the two brothers, but of the force and success with which they should preach

there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when ye come into an house,

<sup>p</sup> salute it.

13 <sup>q</sup> And if the house be worthy, let your

<sup>p</sup> Luke, 10. 5. <sup>1</sup> Peter, 3. 8. <sup>q</sup> Acts, 13. 46. Pf. 35. 13. If. 55. 11. <sup>2</sup> Cor. 2. 16. Pray for, and preach the Gospel to, them.

the Gospel: yet if that had been the reason of the surname, it was equally applicable to all the apostles. *Philip* is said to have been a native of Bethsaida, the town of Peter and Andrew. He was originally a disciple of the Baptist, but he left him, to follow Jesus, as soon as he became acquainted with him at Jordan. John, i. 44. *Bartholomew* is supposed to have been the disciple called *Nathanael*, whose conversion is related, John, i. 45, &c. The Ancients tell us he was a native of Cana, and was skilled in the law. *Matthew* was a rich publican of Capernaum: he was otherwise named Levi, and left his gainful employment for the sake of Christ. He wrote the Gospel to which his name is prefixed, and was the son of one Alpheus, of whom we know nothing but the name. There is nothing said of *Thomas* before his conversion: however, it is conjectured that, like the rest, he was of mean extraction; and because he is mentioned among those who went a fishing, John, xxi. 2, 3. it is supposed that he was a fisherman by occupation. He obtained the surname of *Didymus*, probably because he was a twin, and made himself remarkable by continuing longer than his brethren to doubt of Christ's resurrection. In the college of Apostles, besides James the son of Zebedee and brother of John, Judas Iscariot who betrayed his master, and Simon surnamed Peter, we find James surnamed *the Less*, or *Younger* (see Mark, xv. 40.), to distinguish him from the other James, the son of Zebedee, who was elder than he: and Judas surnamed *Thaddeus* (Mark, iii. 18.) and *Lebbeus*, the brother of James the Less, and Simon surnamed *Zelotes*. James the Less, Judas Thaddeus, and Simon Zelotes, were brothers, and sons of one Alpheus or Cleophas, who was likewise a disciple, being one of the two to whom our Lord appeared on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection. They were called Christ's brethren (Matth. xiii. 55.), that is, his cousins; in which sense the word is used, Lev. x. 4. It seems their mother Mary was sister to Mary our Lord's mother; for it was no unusual thing among the Jews to have more children than one of a family called by the same name. The three apostles, therefore, who go by the name of our Lord's brethren, were really his cousins-german: James the Less and Judas Thaddeus wrote the epistles which bear their names. This James was a person of great authority among the apostles; for in the council which met at Jerusalem to decide the dispute about the necessity of circumcision, we find him, as president of the meeting, summing up the debate, and wording the decree. Simon, the cousin of our Lord, is called by Matthew and Mark *the Canaanite*; but from the above account of his relations it is plain, that the epithet does not express his descent, otherwise his brothers James and Judas ought to have been termed *Canaanites* likewise. Luke calls him *Simon Zelotes*, which seems to be the Greek translation of the Hebrew appellation given him by Matthew and Mark. From זקן [*kana*] *zelotyphus fuit*,—he was jealous,—comes the Chaldaic word זקן [*kenen*] *zelotes*,—a zealot. See

Buxtorff on the word. Put the Greek termination to this Chaldaic word, and it becomes *κανανίτης*, the *Canaanite*: wherefore the appellation of *Canaanite*, given to Simon here and in Mark, and the epithet *Zelotes* which he bears in Luke, are as perfectly the same as *Cephas* and *Petros*, *Tabitha* and *Dorcas*. The Zealots were a particular sect or section among the Jews, who in later times, under colour of zeal for God, committed all the disorders imaginable. They pretended to imitate the zeal which Phinehas, Elijah, and the Maccabees expressed, in their manner of punishing offenders; but they acted from blindness, or from worse principles, without regard either to the laws of God, or to the dictates of reason. Some are of opinion, that Simon the Apostle had formerly been one of this pestilent faction; but, as there is no mention made of it till a little before the destruction of Jerusalem (Joseph. Bell. lib. iv. c. 3), we may rather suppose that the surname of *Zelotes* was given him on account of his uncommon zeal in matters of true piety and religion. *Judas the traitor* was the son of one Simon: he had the surname of *Iscariot* given him, to distinguish him from Judas Thaddeus, our Lord's cousin. The literal meaning of *Iscariot* is, a man of *Cariot* or *Kerioth*, which was a town in the tribe of Judah. Josh. xv. 25. In all probability, therefore, this surname denotes the place of the traitor's nativity. Some pretend, that among the Jews no person was surnamed by the place of his birth, but such as were illustrious on account of their station; and so would have us believe, that Judas was a person of some distinction. They think his being entrusted with the bag, or common stock purse, preferably to all the rest, is a confirmation of this; but as the other apostles were men of mean condition, these arguments are too trivial to prove that Judas was distinguished from them in that particular.

Thus were the foundations of the church laid in twelve illiterate Galileans, who, being at first utterly ignorant of the nature and end of their office, and destitute of the qualifications necessary to discharge the duties of it, integrity excepted, were the most unlikely persons in the world to confound the wisdom of the wise, to baffle the power of the mighty, to overturn the many false religions which then flourished everywhere under the protection of civil government, and, in a word, to reform the universally-corrupted manners of mankind. Had human prudence been to make choice of instruments for so grand an undertaking, doubtless such as were remarkable for deep science, strong reasoning, and prevailing eloquence; would have been pitched upon; and these endowments probably would have been set off with the external advantages of wealth and power. But, lo! the wisdom of God, infinitely superior to that of men, acted quite differently in this matter: for the treasure of the Gospel was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of its power might in all countries be seen to be of God. Accordingly, the religion which these Galileans taught through the world, without

having,

peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 'And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of

† Luke, 9. 5. & 10. 10, 11. Acts, 13. 51. & 18. 6. & 20. 26. Mark, 6. 11. Nch. 5. 13.

having at all applied themselves to letters, exhibited a far juster notion of things than the Grecian or Roman philosophers were able to attain, though their lives were spent in contemplation and study. Hence, by its own intrinsic splendour, as well as by the external glory of the miracles which accompanied it, this religion shewed itself to be altogether of divine original. Besides, it was attended with a success answerable to its dignity and truth. It was received everywhere with the highest applause, as something which mankind had hitherto been seeking in vain; while the maxims and precepts of the philosophers never spread themselves much farther than their particular schools. It was therefore with the highest wisdom that the foundations of the church were thus laid in the labours of a few weak illiterate fishermen: for with irresistible evidence it demonstrated that the immense fabric was at first raised, and is still sustained, not by the arm of flesh, but purely by the hand of Almighty God. See Macknight.

*Ver. 5. Go not into the way, &c.]* It may seem strange that our Lord neither preached himself to the Gentiles in general, nor allowed his disciples to preach among them, during his own lifetime; especially when it is evident that he came into the world on purpose to destroy the polytheism of the heathens, their idol mediators, and their idolatrous worship, and to establish the knowledge of the true and triune God, and of the only Mediator between God and man, and of the right method of attaining his favour: but our wonder will cease, when the reason of his conduct is understood. As the Jews were the only people in the world who believed in the one true God, before his messengers attempted to preach him to the heathens, it was fit that they should prove their mission, to the conviction of the Jews; instruct them more fully in the fundamental doctrines of religion, and correct what errors had crept into their faith. Besides, Christianity was to be propagated through the world, not only by the force of its own intrinsic excellence, and by the miracles wherewith it was accomplished, but it was to make its way also by the evidence which it derived from the Jewish prophecies, and by the light thrown upon it, considered as the perfection of that grand scheme which was begun in the first ages, and carried on under various dispensations from time to time, till it obtained a more complete and lasting form under the Jewish economy. It was highly expedient, therefore, that a competent number of Jews should be converted to Christianity, who might publish it to the rest of the world, with all the evidence which was proper to be offered: but if, on account of the former revelation made to the Jews, it was absolutely fit that the new revelation should be preached by them to the rest of the world, it was necessary that the Gospel, at the first, should be confined to them; because, had it been preached to the Gentiles, that circumstance alone would have made the Jews reject it universally. It is well known how high the

prejudices of the Apostles themselves ran on this head, even after they had received the gifts of the Spirit; being excessively offended with Peter, one of their number, who, by a vision from heaven, had with difficulty been prevailed upon to preach to Cornelius the centurion. Nay, they were hardly brought to believe that God intended to bestow the Gospel on the Gentiles, when they saw them receive the greatest of its privileges themselves, even the gifts of the Spirit; and though after this they preached to the Gentiles, yet, wherever they came, their custom was to begin at the Jews, if there were any in the place, that all offence might be prevented; and, on the Jews rejecting the Gospel, they turned to the Gentiles. Acts, xiii. 46. Thus, as the Apostle tells us, Rom. xv. 8. *Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promise made unto the fathers, namely, concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles might glorify God on account of his mercy; the mercy of the Gospel Dispensation, which they enjoyed by their conversion to Christianity.* Had Jesus Christ been a minister of the uncircumcision, that is to say, had he preached the Gospel to all the Gentiles, the Jews would have rejected it; so that the proselytes, and such as held the faith of the proselytes, which many of the best sort of Gentiles seem to have done, would not have become Christ's disciples with such ease and readiness. The reason was, the evidence of the Gospel being greatly weakened by the universal unbelief of the Jews, the converts among the Gentiles would have been few in comparison, and, by that means, the promises made to the fathers, that in Christ all nations should be blessed, would not have been confirmed, or at least not so fully accomplished as it is by the scheme which Providence has actually chosen. See Macknight. When our Saviour says, *Enter not into any city of the Samaritans*, he means, "Enter not with a design to preach." It is true, in the beginning of his ministry, our Lord himself preached to the Samaritans with great success, John, iv. 41. 42. and therefore, had he sent his apostles among them, numbers in all probability would have become members of the Christian dispensation; but the inveterate enmity which the Jews bore to the Samaritans, made the conversion of the latter to Christianity improper at this time, for the reasons mentioned above.

*Ver. 6. But go rather to the lost sheep, &c.]* See what has been said concerning the metaphors of *sheep* and *harvest* in the note on ver. 1. With respect to the first, it should be remembered, that in the note on ch. iii. 7. it was observed, that men, as animals, have each of them a peculiar resemblance to some particular species of other animals which we exemplified in the term *lamb, sheep, wolves, dog*, &c. We now farther add, that those appellations are upon no account to be taken for indelible characters; but those to whom they are applicable at any given time, may in the future course of life, through the converting and sanctifying grace of God, be enabled so far to contr

that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, ' It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha

\* Ezek. 16. 48, 51. Mark, 6. 11. Luke, 10. 12—15. Ch. 11. 20—24. John, 15. 22—24. Heb. 6. 4—8, 10, 26—31.

their wrong propensities by a steady practice of the contrary graces and virtues, as to afford to the church and to the world a quite opposite character. To effect this is the proper work of grace, producing repentance in the soul, and then genuine conversion, including a *change of mental disposition*, whereby the crafty, rapacious, mischievous, stubborn, or other savage temper, may be transmuted into that simplicity, meekness, harmlessness, and ductility, which constitute the character of sheep, or, what is an infinitely more honourable title, members of Christ's mystical body. When our Lord is said to behold the multitudes, *tired, lying down, and without a shepherd*;—when, in consequence of this view, he directs his apostles to go in quest of them, he calls them *the lost sheep*; not that they had gone astray from their shepherd, for they wanted one; but *lost* here imports, that they were quite at a loss how to proceed, and actually perishing for want of a guide. Such were the persons who had moved the compassion of our Lord, and for whose sake he had sent forth his apostles to publish the *glad tidings of his kingdom*, with assurances that divine power was at hand to take them under his immediate regency. And as that kingdom was mental, and therefore not obvious to sense, the apostles were at the same time sent to give visible proofs of its reality, by *healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons*. These miraculous testimonies were to those who were, by the grace of repentance, rightly disposed, a sure ground of faith in Christ; and, when concurring with the attractions of still superior degrees of grace, would induce them in simple faith to resign themselves, with an implicit submission, to the conduct of his Spirit, the fulness of which dwelt without measure in the incarnate Jesus, and was communicated in the power of converting grace to those whose repentant hearts were prepared to receive it.

*Ver. 7. Preach, saying, &c.*] The original word is *κηρυσσεν*, which is derived from *κηρυξ* a herald, and signifies "proclaim, with that ardour and zeal which becomes my heralds." Probably they were to make this proclamation with a loud voice, as they passed through the streets of the towns which they visited, as Jonah declared his message to Nineveh. See Jonah, iii. 4. and Doddridge.

*Ver. 8. Raise the dead*] In several copies this clause is wanting; for which reason, and because the disciples did not raise any person from the dead whom we read of, till after Christ's ascension, Dr. Mill takes it for an interpolation. But his opinion is ill-founded; as it is certain that this, with several other articles in the apostles' first commission, have a direct relation to the period comprehended under that more extensive commission which they received after their Master's resurrection. See ver. 18, 21, 23. Whitby and Wettstein. That the direction at the end of this verse, *Freely, or gratis ye have received, freely give*, relates to the miraculous cures which the apostles were empowered to perform, and not to the stated offices

of the apostolical function, is evident from Luke x. 7. where our Lord, in giving a like commission to the Seventy, bids them eat and drink what was set before them, because *the labourer was worthy of his hire*; nay, in this very charge, no sooner did he order the apostles to give freely, than he forbade them to *provide gold, &c. because the workman is worthy of his meat*; [*deserves his maintenance*; Heylin;] plainly intimating, that while they were preaching, they had a right to maintenance from those who enjoyed the benefit of their labours, and should, in the course of divine providence, be supplied with all things necessary. Accordingly, we find the apostles receiving such maintenance, and insisting upon it as their due, 1 Cor. ix. 4, 5, 14. Galat. vi. 6. See Macknight.

*Ver. 9. Braws in your purses*] The Greek word *κηρυσσεν*, which signifies to *possess*, signifies also to *get*, to *furnish oneself with*; which is the meaning of it here. The stress seems to lie on this word: they might use what they had already, but they might not delay at all to provide any thing more, nor take any thought about it. Nor indeed were they to take any thing with them, more than was strictly necessary; lest it should retard them, and because they were to learn hereby to trust God in all future exigencies. *In your purses*, in the Greek is *ζώνας*, girdles. The Eastern girdles being doubled, and sewed along the edges, were more convenient for carrying a quantity of money than purses, because money, being distributed round the body in the fobs of the girdle, the weight of it was not so much felt. By *money*, therefore, *in their girdles*, is to be understood a considerable sum. See Calmet, Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Shaw's Travels, p. 227.

*Ver. 10. Nor scrip for your journey*] The *scrip*, *πίρα*, was a sort of *large bag*, in which shepherds, and those who journeyed, carried their provisions. See on Luke x. 34. Thus the bag into which David put the *smooth stones*, wherewith he smote Goliath, is called both a *scrip* and a *shepherd's bag*. In the account in which St. Mark gives the repetition of these instructions, immediately before the disciples took their journey, he says, they were permitted to be *shod with sandals*, ch. vi. 9. The *sandal* was a piece of strong leather, or wood, fastened to the sole of the foot with strings, which they tied round the foot and ankle; but the *shoe* was a kind of short boot, that covered the foot and a part of the leg, and was a more delicate piece of dress than the sandals. See Calmet on the word *sandals*, and Lightfoot. St. Mark says, ch. vi. 8. that they were allowed to take a staff; which Calmet observes may be reconciled with St. Matthew, by attending to the ambiguity of the Hebrew word *שֵׁבֶט* *shabet*, answering to the Greek word *ῥαβδος*: for, as the Hebrew signifies any sort of *rod*, whether club, staff, sceptre, or pole, he thinks *the staff*, which, according to St. Matthew, the disciples were prohibited to use, may have been a *pole* for carrying a burden on; an accoutrement which was useless, as they were not allowed to carry any provisions with them, nor any

in the day of judgment, than for that city.  
16 ¶ Behold, I send you forth as sheep in

the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and \* harmless as doves.

\* Luke, 10. 3. Ver. 23. Luke, 12. 4—12. & 21. 16—19. Rom. 16. 19. Col. 4. 5. Eph. 5. 15, 16. Ezek. 2. 6. Jer. 1. 18. Phil. 2. 15. 1 Cor. 14. 20. Acts, 20. 28, 29. Ch. 23. 34. & 24. 9. \* Or simple.

any spare clothes; whereas the *staff*, which by St. Mark's account he permitted them to take, was a *walking-staff*, very proper for those who were to perform a journey with expedition. Heinsius labours to prove, that *εἰ μὴ*, the exceptive particle in Mark, may signify *no not*; and so would have the clause *εἰ μὴ ἔχετε ῥαβδον*, translated *no, not a single staff*. But the more probable solution of the difficulty seems to be, that such of the apostles as had staves in their hands might take them: as for those who were walking without them, they were not to provide them; for as the providence of God was to supply them with all necessaries, to have made the least preparation for their journey would have implied a disbelief of their Master's promise.

Ver. 11. *Inquire who in it is worthy*] Anciently they had no houses of entertainment for the accommodation of travellers, but only houses for lodging them, called in modern language *caravanferas*, into which travellers brought their own provisions and accommodated themselves in the best manner they could; but it was common for persons of humane dispositions, such as our Lord here calls *ἀξιοι*, *worthy persons*, to entertain strangers according to their ability. See Judg. xix. 15, 21.

Ver. 12, 13. *When ye come, &c.*] The Vulgate, and many manuscripts, add to the end of the 12th verse,—*saying, Peace be to this house*; words which we find in the parallel place, Luke x. 5. and which serve to explain the verse following; for they shew that this salutation was no formal compliment in the mouths of the apostles, but efficacious to minds rightly disposed. A calm and composed spirit is necessary for hearing the word of God profitably. See Heylin.

Ver. 14. *Whoever shall not receive you*] In Scripture, to *receive one* signifies to allow him the benefit of our company, to converse familiarly with him, and to do him good offices. See Luke, xv. 2. It signifies also to entertain one hospitably, being applied twice to Rahab's entertaining the spies, Heb. xi. 31. James, ii. 25. The Jews thought there was something of so peculiar a holiness in the land of Israel, that when they came home from any heathen country, they stopped at its borders, and wiped the dust of it from their shoes, that the sacred inheritance might not be polluted with it: nor would they permit herbs to be brought to them from their neighbours, lest they should bring any of the dust of their land upon them. So that the action here enjoined to the apostles of shaking off the dust was a lively intimation, that when the Jews had rejected the Gospel they were no longer to be regarded as the people of God, but were on a level with heathens and idolaters. See Fleming's *Christology*, vol. ii. p. 160. Doddridge, and Calmet.

Ver. 16. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep, &c.*] Considering the nature of the tidings which the apostles were now sent out to publish, namely, that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*; the number and variety of miraculous cures which they

were enabled to perform in confirmation of their doctrine, and the greatness of the benefits that they were empowered to confer upon the families who should entertain them kindly, it is reasonable to think that they were flattering themselves with the hopes of great honour and acceptance wherever they came. In the mean time, the event was by no means to answer their expectation; they were everywhere to be despised, persecuted, delivered up into the hands of public justice, and punished as evil-doers. Our Lord, therefore, in the most fair and generous manner forewarned them of these things; made them large promises of the divine aid, and gave them directions with respect to their conduct in every circumstance. *Behold, I send you forth, &c.* "I send you forth weak and defenceless amongst a cruel and wicked people." *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* "On the one hand, be so prudent as not to irritate them unnecessarily by your behaviour or mode of speaking, ch. vii. 6.; and on the other, let not your prudence degenerate into craft, lest it lead you to betray the truth, or to encourage men in their evil practices. Join prudence and harmlessness together; rendering yourselves remarkable for integrity amid the greatest temptations, and for meekness under the greatest provocation." The word rendered *harmless*, *ἀκίρτοι*, properly signifies *pure and unmixed*, or unwilling to do any harm. See Stockius. The *simplicity* recommended here, includes meekness and sincerity; and it is with these virtuous qualities that the Lord Jesus Christ tempers what might be pernicious in the *serpents*, whose prudence is commonly accompanied with a mischievous disposition. See Gen. iii. 1. Our blessed Saviour has given remarkable instances of the prudence that he requires here in his disciples. Compare ch. xxii. 21, &c. Bishop Warburton observes, that the character of the Christian mission is denoted in these words, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep*; and the condition of an unbelieving world in the following,—*I send you in the midst of wolves*. Though the faith was to be propagated only by the mild measures of persuasion, yet even this would provoke the wolfish disposition of the power of darkness to put in all the iniquitous contrivances of fraud and violence for its oppression. Their provident Master, therefore, delivered them a rule for the integrity and prudence of their own conduct; *Be ye wise, &c.*—a direction equally respecting their private and their public characters, whereby the first might correspond with the dignity of their office, and the other with the objects of their care. So that, as men, the *human virtues*, as missionaries the *social*, are recommended to their practice, and both under the familiar images of the *serpent's wisdom*, and the *dove's innocence*. What the *human virtues* are, the illusion in the figurative expression will discover; what the *social*, must be determined by the occasion of the precept, *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*; a direction conveyed in two proverbial sayings, whose import the disciples perfectly understood.



17 \* But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in the synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 \* But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

\* John, 2. 24. Acts, 2. 40. Ch. 24. 9. Mark, 13. 9—11. Luke, 12. 11. & 21. 12, 13. Acts, iv.—viii. xii. xvi.—xxvi. & 25. 23. 1 Tim. 4. 16, 17. Pl. 1. 1—6. Phil. 1. 23. \* Mark, 13. 11. Luke, 12. 11, 12. & 21. 14, 15. Acts, iv. v. vii. xvi. xxii.—xxvi. Pl. 46. 1—5. Exod. 4. 12, 15. 2 Sam. 23. 2. Jer. 1. 7. 2 Tim. 4. 17.

The first alludes to a vulgar supposition of the ancient world, which gave credit to certain artists, who pretended to the power of rendering serpents innoxious by the force of charms and incantations. The men who traded in this imposture, in order to hide their frequent miscarriages, made the people believe that some of these serpents had gotten a trick as good as their own, which was, to *shut their ears* to their enchantments. Hence the proverb of *the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely*; by which moralists would infer the wisdom and safety of abstaining from unlawful pleasures. The second, of being *harmless as doves*, alludes to as ancient and as fanciful an error of the naturalists, that the dove is without a gall. The whole of this monition, therefore, to the disciples in their private character implies, that they should learn to abstain from all unlawful and intemperate pleasures, and to suppress in themselves all the sentiments of rage, envy, and revenge; the *serpent's wisdom* being directed against the concupiscible passions, as the *dove's innocence* is against the irascible; and both together make one good precept for the subjection [through the power of Almighty Grace] of our brutal nature to the rational, in which consists the exercise of the human virtues. Could any thing be more *harmless* than this method of propagating religion? Could any thing be more *holy* than the manners of its propagators? What regard to the rights of men, to the laws of society, was enjoined to the officers of the Gospel! What neglect of the interests of flesh and blood was required of the receivers of it! Truth was the lasting foundation on which Jesus erected his church, and holiness and virtue the living principles which were to actuate its members. Indeed, the purity of his intentions, and the rectitude of his measures, are so evident from the evangelic history of his life and death, that the most stubborn infidel is ready to clear him of fraudulent imposture, and to centre all his suspicions in a well-meaning *enthusiasm*. This is the last miserable refuge of obstinate impiety.

where they keep their courts. See Beaufobre and Lenfant's introduction. *And ye shall be brought before governors, &c.* These things did not happen while the apostles were on their first mission, but after Christ's ascension. See Acts, iv. 6, 7, &c. v. 40. xii. 2, 3, &c. &c.—*For a testimony against them and the Gentiles*, "All these things are ordered to befall you, that your integrity may appear, and that the truth of the Gospel may be demonstrated." Had the apostles never come before the supreme powers, nor defended their cause in the presence of kings and governors, it might have been said, that because Christianity could not bear a strict examination from able judges, it was preached to none but men of vulgar understandings, who were not capable of detecting it: but when persons of the highest distinction for birth, fortune, capacity, and learning, had the Gospel laid before them, in the defences which the apostles and first preachers of it were obliged to make at the public tribunals of every country, its standing such a tribunal was certainly a great confirmation of its truth. Wherefore, as Jesus here foretold, the bringing of his apostles *before kings* became a testimony of their integrity, and of the truth of the Gospel, and consequently an undeniable proof of the guilt of both Jews and Gentiles who neglected it. See Macknight, Clarke, and the histories of the first ages of the church.

*Ver. 19, 20. But when they deliver you up, take no thought! Be not solicitous.* This direction was repeated on several occasions afterwards; see particularly Mark, xiii. 11. Luke, xii. 11. The apostles, being illiterate men, and wholly unacquainted with the laws of the different countries whither they were to go, as well as with the forms of their courts, their Master foresaw that they might be in great perplexity when they appeared as criminals before persons of the first distinction. He foresaw likewise, that this circumstance would occur to themselves, and render them anxious to meditate beforehand by what apology they might best defend so noble a cause. More than once, therefore, he expressly forbade them to be in the least *solicitous* about the defences they were to make, or so much as to premeditate any part of them; promising to afford them, on all occasions, the aid of their Father's Spirit, who would inspire them to speak in a manner becoming the cause which they were to defend. Nothing surely could have been more suitable than the promise which our Lord here makes them; nor can one conceive any admonitions and declarations farther from the language of imposture and enthusiasm, than those before us in the present chapter.

*Ver. 17, 18. But beware of men!* "Though I order you to be meek and patient under injuries, I do not mean that you should not be on your guard, and, as far as is consistent with conscience and duty, avoid them: no, the more circumspect you are, the better; for, after all, you will meet with many indignities, and often be in danger of death, even from the hand of public justice." *They will deliver you up to the Sanhedrim, or consistories, and scourge you in their synagogues.* Scourging is a sort of discipline which has long since been used in the synagogues,

21 <sup>1</sup> And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 <sup>2</sup> And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: <sup>3</sup> but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23 <sup>b</sup> But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not <sup>\*</sup> have gone over

the cities of Israel, till the Son of man <sup>c</sup> be come.

24 <sup>d</sup> The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. <sup>e</sup> If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

26 <sup>f</sup> Fear them not therefore: <sup>g</sup> for there is

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 34, 35. Luke, 21. 16. & 12. 51. Micah, 7. 5, 6. with Deut. 13. 6—10. Zech. 13. 3. <sup>2</sup> Luke, 21. 17. John, 15. 18. Rom. 8. 7, 8. Jer. 37. 9. <sup>3</sup> Mark, 13. 13. Ch. 24. 13. Dan. 12. 12, 13. Gal. 6. 9. Rev. 2. 7, 10, 17. & 3. 21. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 2. 13. & 4. 12. & 12. 15. Luke, 4. 30. Acts, 8. 1. & 9. 25. & 14. 6. & 17. 1, 10. <sup>c</sup> Or *end*, or *finish*. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 16. 28. Acts, ii. & 7. 26. In the powerful descent of the Holy Ghost. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 6. 40. John, 13. 16. & 15. 20. <sup>f</sup> 2 Sam. 11. 11. <sup>g</sup> Ch. 9. 34. & 12. 24. Mark, 3. 22. Luke, 11. 15. John, 7. 20. & 8. 48, 52. & 10. 20. & 15. 20. <sup>h</sup> Prov. 29. 25. Jer. 1. 8, 17. Dan. 3. 16. Acts, 4. 19. 1 Peter, 3. 14. <sup>i</sup> Mark, 4. 22. Luke, 8. 17. & 12. 2. Mark, 16. 15. Ch. 28. 19, 20. & 24. 14. & 26. 13. Acts, 1. 8. & ii—xix. Rom. 10. 18. & 16. 26. Col. 1. 6, 23—28. Eph. 3. 8. with Job, 12. 22. 1f. 52. 15.

*Ver. 21. And the brother shall deliver up, &c.]* "Such is the nature of the men among whom ye are going, and such the obstinacy with which they will oppose the Gospel, that, were it their brother, their father, or their son who preached it, they would make no scruple of being active in putting these nearest relations to death. You may therefore expect the hottest persecution; but as you are to have great assistances, you need not be dismayed." See the next note.

*Ver. 22. Ye shall be hated of all men]* They who believed the testimony of the apostles, as multitudes did, could not but ardently love them, as their fathers in Christ. See Gal. iv. 15. This, therefore, is plainly one of those many scriptures, in which the universal term *all* is to be taken with great restrictions. Compare John, xii. 32. Phil. ii. 21. There is a peculiar emphasis in the words *for my name's sake* in this place. The apostles and first Christians set themselves in opposition both to the Jewish and Pagan religions, declaring the nullity of the former, and urging the renunciation of the latter in all its forms, as matter of indispensable necessity. On the most tremendous penalties, they required every man, without exception, to believe in Christ, and to submit implicitly to his authority; a demand most galling to the pride of their princes, priests, and philosophers. Moreover, having a lively sense of the importance of the things which they preached, they urged them not in a cold and indifferent manner, but with the utmost fervency. Need it be matter of wonder then, that in every country such a furious storm of persecution arose against them, and the religion which they taught, and that they were treated as the filth and off-scourings of the earth? Our Saviour adds, *But he that endureth, &c.*; he who perseveres, who bears constantly, and with invincible patience, these persecutions. The original word *ὑπομένειν* denotes both *patience* and *constancy*. Jesus gave this encouragement to his disciples likewise, when he spoke to them of the sufferings that they were to meet with about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. See ch. xxiv. 13. We may therefore believe that he had those sufferings also now in view.

*Ver. 23. But when they persecute you, &c.]* "Let not the

persecutions that you are to meet with, in any period of your ministry, discourage you: but when you are fore-pressed in any one city, flee to another, where you will meet with an asylum: *for I assure you*, in spite of all opposition, your labours shall be attended with such success, *that you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come*;" that is to say, according to the general interpretation, "before he comes to execute vengeance upon the Jews, by the destruction of their devoted city." The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is often called *the coming of the son of man*. See ch. xxiv. 27, 37, 39, 44. Luke, xviii. 8. Macknight differs from this interpretation, and gives the following: "Before ye have carried the glad tidings of the Gospel to the several cities of Israel, my kingdom shall be established in many places; so that in the midst of the hottest persecution, you may always expect to find some who will befriend you." See Olearius, and Whitby.

*Ver. 24, 25. The disciple is not above his master, &c.]* "That you may bear all with a becoming fortitude, consider that they have calumniated, traduced, and persecuted me your Master; for which cause you, my disciples, cannot think it hard if they calumniate and persecute you." This is a proverbial expression, which our Lord applies on different occasions. Here, and John xv. 20. it relates to the persecutions that his disciples were to undergo. It is applied to another subject, John xiii. 16. Luke, vi. 40. Concerning Beelzebub, see the note on 2 Kings, i. 2.

*Ver. 26. Fear them not therefore, &c.]* The meaning of this verse is, that the disciples ought not to conceal the truth which had been committed to them, notwithstanding all the contradictions that they might meet with in the course of their ministry; because the design of the Lord Jesus Christ was, that the gospel which he revealed to them in private, and which was a mystery to all the rest of mankind, should by them be published all over the world. Our blessed Saviour applies here a proverbial saying to the Gospel; see Mark iv. 22. Luke viii. 17. xii. 2. *There is nothing covered, &c.* This is a general rule, which may admit of several exceptions. Our Lord applies it to differ-

nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the house-tops.

28 <sup>a</sup> And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 <sup>1</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a \* farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the

ground without your Father.

30 <sup>k</sup> But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 <sup>1</sup> Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

32 <sup>m</sup> Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33 <sup>n</sup> But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>a</sup> Luke, 12. 4. If. 8. 12, 13. & 51. 7, 8, 12. Jer. 1. 8, 17. Ezek. 3. 9. 14. 7, 9. <sup>k</sup> Or three farthings. <sup>1</sup> Sam. 14. 45. <sup>2</sup> Sam. 14. 11. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 6. 26. <sup>1</sup> Cor. 9. 9. <sup>1</sup> Peter, 3. 14. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 6. 26. Heb. 1. 3. Pl. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 1. 52. Acts, 27. 14. Luke, 21. 18. <sup>1</sup> Peter, 5. 7. Phil. 4. 6. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 6. 26. <sup>1</sup> Cor. 9. 9. Pl. 8. 5. If. 43. 1—3. & 41. 10—16. <sup>m</sup> Luke, 12. 8. Rom. 10. 9, 10. Pl. 119. 46. Acts, 4. 19. Rev. 3. 5. <sup>1</sup> Sam. 2. 32. <sup>n</sup> Mark, 8. 38. Luke, 9. 26. & 12. 9. <sup>1</sup> John, 2. 23. <sup>2</sup> Tim. 2. 12.

rent subjects. Here he gives his disciples to understand, that it was his design that they should openly and courageously reveal to the world those truths, which the time and circumstances did not then permit him to disclose everywhere.

Ver. 27. *What I tell you in darkness*] That is, in private. *In the light*, means in public. In the next words our Lord alludes to a custom among the Jews, whose teachers were accustomed to have their interpreters, who received the dictates of their masters whispered in the ear, and then publicly proposed them to all. The last words, *that preach ye upon the house-tops*, refers to another custom of making things public, by proclaiming them on the flat roofs of the houses in the East. The *Mollabs* among the Turks at this day proclaim on the top of their mosques, that "God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet," as a signal for the people to come to public prayers. See on ch. xxiv. 17. and Wynne's new translation.

Ver. 28. *And fear not them, &c.*] This was a saying familiar to the Jews. See Wisd. xvi. 13—15. and compare Isaiah li. 7, 8. Our Saviour most wisely cautions his disciples against the fear of man, since they were going to encounter all the powers of the world and of darkness, by promoting the gospel of purity, and of true holiness. Dr. Doddridge observes very well, that these words contain a certain argument, to prove the existence of the soul in a separate state, and its perception of that existence, else the soul would be as properly killed as the body; and accordingly he paraphrases the words, "*Fear not them who can only kill the mortal body, but cannot kill or hurt the immaterial soul, which will still survive in all its vigour, while its tabernacle lies in ruins.*" Our Saviour, instead of the word *ἀποκτείναι*, to kill, makes use of the word *ἀπολέσαι*, to destroy, in the second clause, which carries with it the signification also of tormenting. See Grotius. What an awful verse is this before us! How fit is it that this eternal and almighty God should be the object of our humble fear, and that in comparison with him we should fear nothing else! All the terrors, and all the flatteries of the world, are disarmed by this:—an idea which in every state of life should engage us to be faithful to God; so shall we be most truly faithful to ourselves.

Ver. 29—31. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? &c.*] Our Saviour here goes on to encourage his disciples, from the important consideration of God's particular providence. "You should consider that your enemies cannot touch even your bodies without your Father's permission; for the meanest of his creatures are under the protection of his providence; inasmuch that nothing befalleth them without his direction or permission." The Greek word *ἀσπαρλιον*, rendered a farthing, denotes a very small piece of money, about the value of which Commentators are not agreed. *Fall on the ground* is a Hebrew phrase signifying to perish. See Josh. xxiii. 14. 2 Kings, x. 10. and compare Luke xxi. 18. with Acts xxvii. 34. The next verse is a proverbial expression, which gives a very noble and lively representation of the care God takes of the righteous. See 1 Sam. xiv. 45. 2 Sam. xiv. 11. 1 Kings, i. 51, 52. *Than many sparrows*, ver. 31, means, "than all the sparrows in the world:" the word *many* is sometimes put for a great many, or for all. See Dan. xii. 2. and compare Rom. v. 12, 15. These verses contain a full proof of the universality of the divine providence; but the singular interpositions of it in favour of good men may, with still additional force, be argued from the prayers and promises offered in Scripture with regard to particular events, and the promises of temporal blessings made to those who fear and serve God. Nor are we much concerned to determine how far any of these are miraculous, and how far the result of general laws, settled in an exact congruity to the temper and conduct of every individual affected by it, which an omniscient God foresaw, and for which his perfect schemes might easily provide, by methods to us unsearchable. It is plain that Homer thought divine Providence interested itself in the lives of brute animals. See Iliad, lib. xv. ver. 274. and we have a remarkable instance in the book of Jonah of God's care for all his creatures, small and great; for he urges his compassion to brute creatures as one of the reasons why he would not destroy Nineveh. See Jonah iv. 11. Grotius, and Doddridge.

Ver. 32, 33. *Whosoever shall confess me,—will I confess, &c.*] *Acknowledge, &c.* To confess, here signifies publicly to acknowledge Jesus Christ for the promised Messiah, and

34 \* Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 <sup>p</sup> For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

36 And a man's foes shall be they of his

own household.

37 <sup>q</sup> He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 <sup>r</sup> And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

\* Luke, 12. 49—53. John, 7. 40, 41. Acts, 13. 44, 45. & 28. 24. <sup>p</sup> See ver. 21. Micah, 7. 5, 6. Jer. 9. 4. Luke, 12. 53. Pf. 41. 9. & 55. 13, 14. John, 13. 18. & 16. 33. & 15. 18—25. Acts, 14. 22. & 20. 23. 2 Tim. 3. 12. <sup>q</sup> Luke, 14. 26. John, 21. 15. Ch. 19. 29. Pf. 73. 25. Phil. 3. 7—9. Deut. 33. 9. <sup>r</sup> Ch. 16. 24, 25. Mark, 8. 34, 35. Luke, 9. 23, 24. & 17. 33. John, 12. 25. Mark, 10. 29, 30. Luke, 18. 29, 30. Ch. 19. 29. Acts, 20. 23, 24. & 21. 13.

the Son of God. This confession extends to the receiving of his whole doctrines, and even the least of his commands. To deny Jesus Christ is, not to acknowledge, or to *disown* him; to renounce his doctrine, or be ashamed of the profession of it. There is an unspeakable majesty in this member of our Lord's discourse: though in the lowest state of humanity, he declared, that his *confessing us* before God is the greatest happiness, and his *denying us* the greatest misery, that can befall us.

Ver. 34—36. *Think not that I am come, &c.*] Because the prophets have spoken glorious things of the peace and happiness which shall flourish under the Messiah, whom they have named, for that reason, *the prince of peace*; you may imagine that I am come to put the world into that happy state immediately: but this is far from being the case; for though the nature of my government be such as might produce abundant felicity, inasmuch as my religion breathes nothing but love, men will not lay aside their animosity, nor will they exercise a mutual friendship among themselves, as soon as the Gospel is preached to them. No; such is their weakness and wickedness, that they will make the Gospel itself an occasion of such bitter dissensions, that it will seem as if I came on purpose to sow the seeds of discord among the children of men." These bad consequences, however, are not to be considered as peculiar to Christianity; and therefore must not be imputed to it, but to the wickedness of men. The Deists indeed boldly affirm, that the diversity of opinions and worships, which prevailed among the heathens, never produced either bloodshed or disorder, nor disturbed the peace of mankind. But their assertion is false. It is true, we are not so well acquainted with the religious disputes of the heathens, as we are with our own: not because no such disputes were ever known, but because the historians of those times did not think them worthy of being transmitted to posterity. Some flagrant instances, however, are accidentally preserved, by which we may judge of the rest. Socrates, one of the best of the heathens, and the wisest and most learned of all the Greeks, was put to death by the Athenians, for teaching the unity of God, and the spirituality of the worship due to him. Aristotle the philosopher was also impeached for his opinions, and obliged to fly from Athens, lest he should have incurred the fate of Socrates. Antiochus Epiphanes raised a most violent and bloody persecution against the Jews, in their own country, on account of religion, in which many thousands perished, for refusing to submit to the idolatrous worship which he had set up in the temple at Jerusalem.

The emperor Claudius banished the Jews from Italy for their religion, pretending that they were seditious. The religious quarrels of the Egyptians, the fury with which they profecuted them, and the disturbances that they occasioned, are well known. And, to name no more, was there ever any persecution raised by Christians, either against one another, or against infidels, more bloody, cruel, and extensive, than the ten persecutions carried on by the Roman emperors, at the instigation of the philosophers? It is to no purpose to reply, that these were persecutions of men, who set themselves to overturn the established religions of the countries where they lived: for while those men attacked them with the force of argument only, they ought to have been repelled by no other weapon; and if they could not be thus quelled, their adversaries, instead of persecuting them, ought to have yielded to truth. While the accounts of those persecutions stand on record, it must not be a little assurance which is able to bear the Deists out in affirming, that the ancient heathen religions never inspired their votaries with a spirit of persecution. Yet it will not reflect any dishonour on Christianity, though it should be allowed to have occasioned more disturbances than any other religion. On the contrary, it is rather a proof of its superior excellency; for if Christianity animates the persons who believe it with greater zeal for truth, it is because it approves itself better worth the contending for. Its evidence was clearer, and its tendencies better than those of any false religion, and therefore no wonder that men have espoused its interests more heartily. See Macknight, and Bishop Hoadley's sermons on the text.

Ver. 37. *He that loveth father or mother, &c.*] See Deut. xxxiii. 9. to which our Saviour manifestly alludes. "He who preferreth the friendship of his nearest relations, though the sweetest of all earthly satisfactions, to my religion; renouncing it, that he may enjoy their goodwill; is not worthy of being my disciple; does not deserve to be called a Christian." Our Lord told them this with peculiar propriety, after having declared that their bitterest foes should be the members of their own families. Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Macknight. See also the *Reflections* for a farther improvement of the subject.

Ver. 38. *He that taketh not his cross.*] This alludes to the custom of criminals carrying the cross to which they were to be fastened; and was a strong intimation, that he should himself be crucified; and that none could be a sincere Christian without a willingness to bear even that shameful and cruel death for his sake, if he was called to it. He

follows

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: find it.  
 and he that loseth his life for my sake shall 40 ¶ He that receiveth you receiveth me,

• Ch. 13. 5. Luke, 10. 16. 2 Cor. 5. 20. John, 13. 20. & 5. 23. & 12. 49. & 14. 21, 24. 1 Theff. 5. 12.

*follows Christ, says Grotius, who leads his life, as much as possible, in conformity to Christ's life and precepts.*

*Ver. 39. He that findeth his life, &c.] He who makes shipwreck of faith and a good conscience to save his life, shall lose that which is really so,—his everlasting happiness; whereas he who maintains his integrity with the loss of life, and all its enjoyments, shall find what is infinitely better,—a blessed immortality." See ch. xvi. 24. There is in this sentence a kind of figure, whereby the same word is used in different senses, in such a manner as to convey the sentiment with greater energy to the attentive. "He who, by making a sacrifice of his duty, preserves temporal life, shall lose eternal life; and contrariwise." The like trope or figure our Lord employs in that expression, ch. viii. 22. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the spiritually dead bury the naturally dead. See also ch. xiii. 12. In the present instance, the figure has a beauty in the original, which we cannot give in a version. See Campbell.*

*Ver. 40—42. He that receiveth, &c.] "As you shall be rewarded for perseverance in my faith, ver. 39. so in proportion shall they who entertain you for my sake. "He who receiveth you, &c. that is to say, sheweth you kindness,—sheweth me kindness, and for the same reason sheweth my Father kindness, who hath sent me; and shall be rewarded accordingly." By a prophet is meant a minister of God in general. The word δεξομαι, rendered receive, plainly signifies here to entertain in a hospitable way, as it does likewise, Heb. xi. 31. James, ii. 25, &c. Nor can the gradation in the following words be understood without such an interpretation. Our Lord styles those persons little ones, ver. 42. who were recommendable neither for their learning nor dignity; plain and well-meaning men, who, though they were illiterate, were of a teachable disposition, and entertained a great love of truth, and enjoyed the love of God in their hearts. See ch. xi. 5, 25. xviii. 6. Mark ix. 42. Luke xvii. 2. By disciple in this verse is not to be understood one of the twelve apostles; for Jesus, observing here a gradation, descends from a prophet to a righteous man, that is to say, one who is eminent in holiness, a righteous man in the way of eminence; and from a righteous man to a disciple, that is to say, any genuine believer. See ch. v. 1. xviii. 6. We may first observe here, that what renders good works acceptable in the sight of God, and procures them a recompence from him through the blood of the covenant, is, their being done out of regard for him. By the rewards here promised, Le Clerc understands the happiness of heaven, nearly in these words: "He that sheweth kindness to a prophet on account of his mission and doctrine, or to a righteous man on account of his righteousness, especially if by so doing he exposes himself to persecution, shall be highly rewarded: nay, he who does any good office whatever to the meanest of my disciples, though it should be but the small service of handing a cup of cold water to them, shall not go*

"unrewarded." Other commentators think it improper to interpret these promises of the rewards of the life to come, because the offices to which they are annexed may possibly be performed by very bad men, who on some occasions honour and cherish the servants of Christ, as Herod did at one time John the Baptist. But Le Clerc has endeavoured to obviate this, by adding the circumstance of men's suffering persecution for such good offices; yet he adds it without warrant from the text. Besides, the promise thus understood would not have animated the disciples so powerfully in the discharge of their duty, under the difficulties that they were to meet with. Perhaps, therefore, it is more reasonable to understand these rewards actively of the temporal blessings which the Apostles, as prophets and righteous men, were empowered to confer on the families who shewed them hospitality. As prophets they could heal the sick in those families, and raise the dead: as righteous men, they could assist them in the management of their affairs, by giving them prudent advice in difficult cases; or they might keep them back from sin by their religious conversation and example: and in both capacities might draw down many blessings on them by their prayers (see ver. 13.). "You are to meet," said Christ, "with great opposition; but I will engage men to befriend you: for all who do you any kindness shall, even in this life, be so rewarded by your miracles and prayers, that they shall be confirmed in their goodwill to you; and others, observing how God has blessed them, shall be excited to imitate their kindness." Calvin thinks this text teaches, that the rewards of the good offices here mentioned will bear a proportion to the dignity of the person in the church of God, who receives them. But whatever sense we put upon the passage, the declaration and promise here made, joined with ver. 14, 15., where our Lord threatens to punish those who should reject his messengers, were excellently calculated to comfort them under the prospect of the bad reception which he told them they were to meet with, while employed in preaching the Gospel. See Macknight. Dr. Campbell, instead of *in the name of*, reads *because*,—*because he is a prophet*,—*because he is a righteous man*,—*because he is my disciple*.

*Inferences.*—How gloriously confirmed is the Gospel of Christ by the various signs and wonders which were wrought by those who first preached it! This Gospel is to be published to all, and it will not be in vain, but be savingly received by many. What an encouragement is this to those that preach, and those who hear it! and how careful should we be to give it due entertainment! If we reject it, it is to our own perdition, which will be more terrible than what the worst of heathens will suffer who never heard it: but if we embrace it, and perseveringly cleave to it, it will be to our salvation and eternal glory. Though the ministers of this Gospel are not to seek great things in this world for or by their ministrations; yet  
 their

and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 20. 7. <sup>1</sup> Kings, 17. 15, 23. & 18. 4. <sup>2</sup> Kings, 4. 8, 16, 17, 37. James, 5. 16.

their great Lord and Master has made it the duty, and will incline the hearts, of his believing people to provide for them: and as it is their exceeding joy to be owned and honoured by him, and made his instruments of gathering-in lost souls; so the least Christian affection or kindness shewn to any of his faithful servants or disciples, because they are such, shall be graciously accepted; and he will own it, as if it were done personally unto himself. Ah! what are the dearest friends and comforts of life, if put in the least competition with Christ! and why should any reproaches or troubles that we may meet with for his sake be a discouragement to us, since he has undergone them before us, will take care of us in the way, and, if faithful, publicly own and recommend us to his Father at the end! Needlessly to expose ourselves to sufferings is unwarrantable and imprudent: but to neglect any known duty, or commit any known sin to avoid them, is in its degree a kind of apostacy; it is fearing men, who cannot kill our immortal spirits together with our mortal bodies, nor affect our truest interests; it is fearing them more than the great God, who will dreadfully resent it, and can destroy both soul and body for ever in hell. But whatever we are called to lose or suffer for Christ and his cause, we shall never lose by him, while with faith and patience, with meekness and holy courage, we commit ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously, and has all our affairs under his eye and government: for he that endures to the end shall be saved.

**REFLECTIONS**—1st, Those whom our Lord intended to be his ministers and ambassadors, he had before called to be his attendants, that they might learn from his divine instructions the truths that they must preach to others, and imitate his bright example which they beheld. None can possibly be fit for the ministry, or be called of God to take that office upon them, who have not first been taught of Christ by communion with him, and acquaintance with his word, the blessed truths which they are to declare to others, and been furnished with gifts as well as graces for that arduous employment. It is the scandal of any church, and must be the ruin of the people's souls, when such are sent forth as ministers who are themselves ignorant, careless, and unacquainted with the glorious truths of God, and merely take up the ministry as a maintenance; and they who send them shall share their guilt.

1. Christ called them unto him in private, from the rest of the disciples, and, with their commission to preach his Gospel, invested them with authority over the unclean spirits and diseases of every kind, that by their miracles they might confirm their mission. *Note;* (1.) A particular call is needful for the ministry, besides the general one to be Christ's disciple; and we must see this clear before we presume to run. (2.) The great design of the gospel-ministry is, to oppose and destroy Satan's power over the hearts of men. Though bodily possessions may be less frequent, his empire over men's souls

is still mighty; and nothing but the power of the Gospel can effectually cast out the unclean spirit from the fallen heart. (3.) In the grace of Jesus there is a cure for every sickness; none of our spiritual maladies are so inveterate, but there is in his word medicine which can heal the disease.

2. The number and names of the apostles are recorded. They were twelve in number, according to the tribes of Israel, to whom they were sent. They are mentioned in pairs, being sent forth by two and two, as mutual helps to each other; and some of them were brethren in blood, as well as apostleship; and happy it is where relations are thus by grace doubly united. Peter is placed first, not as invested with superior power over his fellow-labourers, but as among those who were first called, and appeared ever most zealous in the cause. Matthew, the writer of this Gospel, humbly sets Thomas before himself, though the other Evangelists place him after Matthew; and he adds his former occupation, *the publican*, as a foil to set off the distinguished grace of Jesus to him, and to keep him lowly in his own eyes, remembering whence he was taken. Simon, another of the same name with Peter, is distinguished from him by being called the *Canaanite*, either from his city Cana of Galilee, or, as the name signifies, he was of the *Zealots*, Luke vi. 15. a sect among the Jews, who in imitation of Phinehas, out of pretended zeal for God's glory, executed vengeance on offenders, without any process before the magistrates. Judas the traitor is the last. The purest societies will have some such among them; he is called *Iscaiot*, concerning which name there are many conjectures; the most probable seems to be, that it was given him from the place of his nativity, and to distinguish him from the other Judas or Jude, the brother of James. See the Critical Notes.

2dly, Christ, having given the apostles their commission, directs them how to discharge it aright.

1. Their ministry must be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel alone, and therefore they are forbidden to visit any city of the Gentiles or Samaritans. The Mosaic dispensation had not yet ceased: it was needful, therefore, according to the divine plan, that the Gospel should first be preached to the Jews; that the faithful among them might enjoy all the high privileges of the new dispensation, and the rest be left inexcusable in their infidelity.

2. The subject of their preaching must be the same which John at first, and Jesus himself, had inculcated; *that the kingdom of heaven was at hand*; and therefore they were to urge all men to repent and turn to God, as became the true members of the Messiah's kingdom. *Note;* (1.) Truth is uniform. Novel doctrines carry their own confutation along with them. (2.) The nearness of Christ's coming in his kingdom should quicken our diligence to prepare to meet him.

3. They are directed to work miracles in confirmation of their mission, and to engage the reader's attention to their

reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man  
in the name of a righteous man shall receive

a righteous man's reward.

42 " And whosoever shall give to drink

" Mark, 9. 41. 2 Cor. 9. 6. Ch. 18. 5, 6. & 25. 34—40. Heb. 6. 10. If. 21. 14.

their doctrine: in the name of Jesus they shall be enabled to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise even the dead, and cast out devils from the possessed; evidences these of divine power, which none who were not wilfully obstinate could withstand; and for these acts of benevolence they must neither desire nor receive the least reward, shewing their disinterested zeal and charity, and giving as freely as they had received. *Note*; Nothing more evidently characterises the faithful ministers of Christ, than their disinterested labours, not seeking gain for themselves, but the good of mankind.

4. They need not be at all solicitous about a provision in their journey; nor should they take either money in their purse, or meat in their scrip, or change of garments, or any other than the clothes they had on, the sandals on their feet, and the staff in their hands: he who employed them in their work, will take care that they shall not want. Though they may not desire to enrich themselves by their labours, they justly deserved their maintenance. *Note*; Though the ministers of the gospel must not seek filthy lucre, they have a right to a subsistence; and they who preach the gospel shall live by the gospel.

5. As they were going into places where they were utterly unknown, their first inquiry must be who *was worthy* in the place (not of the gospel or the grace of God; but who was most noted for hospitality, and the entertainment of strangers), and abide in their house during their stay, if they found a welcome. In which case, entering with kindest wishes of every blessing, they should salute the master and his household; and if they received a courteous and hearty entertainment, then the blessings they wished for should descend upon that house: but if their salute was returned with coldness or incivility, then their good wishes should not be lost; but, instead of descending on that family, should return with blessings upon their own souls. But woe to that house or city that should, by their unkind behaviour, compel them to depart! they are commanded to shake off the dust of their feet against them, either as testifying their abhorrence of their wickedness in thrusting the gospel from them, or as a testimony against them in the day of judgment; at which awful season even Sodom and Gomorrah would not meet with so heavy a doom, as these who rejected the counsel of God against their own souls. *Note*; (1.) Religion is never a plea for rudeness or moroseness; to be courteous is a gospel duty. (2.) No good wishes are ever in vain; the prayers offered for the evil and unthankful will bring a blessing to us, if they procure none for them. (3.) Nothing is lost by being employed in God's service, and the support of the gospel; no money laid out in any way will bring richer returns than this. (4.) They who reject God's ministers, reject him, whose ambassadors they are; so he will interpret it, and avenge their quarrel. (5.) When any place or people slight the gospel, justly does God take it from them. (6.) There is a day of judgment at hand, when among the various degrees of punishment which will be inflicted on

sinners, none will endure so heavy vengeance as those against whom the dust of a slighted and rejected gospel shall rise up for a testimony.

3dly, As they were now beginning the work of their ministry, our Lord informs them of the troubles and persecutions to which they would be hereafter exposed in the exercise of their office; that when they came, they might not think some strange thing had happened to them as they might otherwise do, if they were buoyed up with the hopes of a temporal kingdom. And that they may not be at a loss in these seasons of trial, they have gracious encouragements to support them, and directions for their conduct in such emergencies.

1. They must expect to meet with many difficulties and much suffering. They were harmless and defenceless as sheep, and were going forth into a world where they would be worried by wicked men, fierce and savage as wolves: for Christ's name's sake, and for their fidelity to him, they would be *hated*; the natural heart being full of enmity against God and his image, and this being at the root of all persecution, with whatever specious pretences the wicked seek to cloak their animosity. They would be *arrested* as criminals, and brought to the bar; the arm of justice which should be stretched forth to protect the innocent, having in all ages, through false misrepresentations and partial judges, been made the means of the most cruel oppressions of God's people. They would be exposed to *suffer in their persons, even unto death*; so far will the inveterate malice of their enemies go: not content with scourging them, and putting them to shame, they will persecute some even unto blood, and with all the ignominy of a public execution take away their lives. To give a pretext for such cruelties, they will be *branded with every opprobrious name*, and *their characters be blackened*, as if they were very fiends of hell; this being the practice of persecutors in every age, to misrepresent the people of God, and dress them up in the most odious colours, the more easily to destroy them. So far, therefore, from that outward peace and prosperity which the Jews fancied would attend the Messiah's kingdom, they must look for the sword of persecution, and a state of constant variance and warfare with the world which lieth in wickedness. That gospel of peace, which in itself breathes such charity and good-will to men, through the perverseness of the natural heart, would give occasion to the most implacable feuds; difference of religion being the ground of the most cruel persecutions. Now these things they are warned of, that they may count the cost, and, knowing the consequences, their choice may be deliberate and fixed. These trials also would be the more severe, considering the persons from whom they would come,—from *men*, even those of their own nation; from the very persons to whom they preached, and for whose souls they laboured,—*from all men*, men of all ranks and degrees, and from the world in general which lieth in wickedness; few of whom would receive their testimony, and the rest would not be only hard-

dened,

unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

dened, but exasperated against them,—from the great men, the kings and governors of the earth, who would employ their power in oppressing and opposing them; for the gospel seldom meets with friends among the great,—yea, from those who made a show of religion; even in the synagogues they would find the most inveterate foes, who would even count God honoured in the punishment that they inflicted on them, and place their bitterest malice to the account of zeal for his glory: and such persecutors on principle are the worst of persecutors. And finally, what would be of all others the most irksome to be borne, from their nearest and dearest relations the most unnatural enmity may be expected. The nearest ties of blood shall be dissolved; even brothers shall lose all fraternal affection, and parents themselves turn unnatural to their own offspring, and children forget all duty and regard. Even daughters shall rise up against their mothers, and the daughter-in-law, who before lived peaceably with her mother-in-law, will now entertain the deadliest animosity, inflamed with blind zeal and bigotry, as if from the moment their dearest relations embraced the gospel of Jesus, no affection or respect was henceforward due to them, no measures to be kept with them; but that with implacable enmity they must be persecuted, accused, or murdered: so that a man's bitterest foes shall be those of his own household: and this has been grievously verified by the experience of past ages; and more or less, as our good conversation in Christ exhibits the strongest contrast to the ways of a world which lieth in wickedness, will be the case till the universal reign of Christ be established.

2. Christ gives them counsel and encouragement how to bear up under these heavy trials. His counsel is,

(1.) *Be wise as serpents.* When we have crafty enemies to deal with, we are bound to use every prudent means for our own preservation, and, as far as may be, to counteract their mischievous designs, and not unnecessarily expose ourselves to danger: notwithstanding which, in the clear way of duty, we should be bold as lions.

(2.) *Be harmless as doves;* give no needless provocation; shew no rancour or ill-will in return for any injuries; manifest that genuine simplicity and harmlessness of conduct, which may cut off occasion from those who desire occasion; and then the subtlety of the serpent is laudable, when thus joined with the innocence of the dove.

(3.) *Beware of men.* Be cautious whom you trust, and with whom you are connected. In this false and wicked world, we must not hastily believe every word, or be open to every plausible professor: prudent reserve often keeps us from fruitless repentance.

(4.) *When they persecute you in one city, flee into another.* In cases where life is in danger, or virulent opposition prevents all opportunity of exercising our ministry, then to fly is duty, provided no unlawful means are used to escape; and that we follow the leadings of Providence, not deserting our post through fear, but maintaining our zeal and integrity unshaken.

(5.) *Fear not them who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul;* this mortal life is the utmost to which their

rage can extend: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. The soul is the valuable part of man, the body is but dust; and however great the terror of the persecutors may be, the terrors of the Lord are greater; the everlasting burnings of hell, the wrath of the eternal God, and the sufferings both of soul and body in torment, without measure and without end, must be remembered as an antidote against the fear of man, when he comes armed with every instrument of torture, racks, gibbets, fire, or sword. How much better is it bravely to endure a momentary pang, and in an instant be gone beyond all the malice of persecutors, than by base compliance provoke God, from whose hands none can deliver us, and whose wrath will be for ever wrath to come!

(6.) *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light.* Let nothing intimidate you from a bold and open profession and ministration of the gospel; and what ye hear in the ear, of my secrets communicated to you as your friend or master (it being the custom of the Jewish doctors to whisper in their disciples' ears), that preach ye upon the housetops; which being low and flat-roofed, a person might be heard in the streets from them distinctly; and this intimates, that in the most public places of concourse, the must deliver their message without fear or shame. Christ's gospel seeks no covert, nor must his ministers conceal from their hearers any thing of the whole counsel of God.

4thly, The encouragement proposed to them, boldly to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, is as great as the dangers which they had to grapple with were intimidating.

1. *Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over, finished, the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.* Before they could finish their testimony, they would see the kingdom of heaven, which they preached, come upon the earth; when, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them, they should be endued with greater powers, and see the most wonderful effects of their ministry; the prospect which should quicken them in their present labours.

2. They need not be under any concern about what to say when brought before their superiors, and accused by their enemies; for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak; being under a divine guidance they should never be at a loss, but should be enabled to vindicate the truth with the most powerful arguments, and deliver themselves with the greatest propriety, to the afflictment of their adversaries; endued with wisdom a power more than human, which the most subtle of their foes shall not be able either to gainsay or resist; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in, or by you: and when on emergencies we are suddenly called forth to speak for Christ, if his glory be our first aim, we shall still in our measure and degree find the faith, teaching and strength, and may comfortably trust him for assistance.

3. Their very sufferings should tend to propagate the gospel that they preached, and be for a testimony against



CHAP. XI.

*John sendeth his disciples to Christ. Christ's testimony concerning John. The opinion of the people both concerning John and Christ. Christ upbraided the unthankfulness and impenitence of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum: and, praising his Father's wisdom in revealing the gospel to the simple, he calleth to him such as feel the burden of their sins.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve

disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

2 ¶<sup>b</sup> Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

<sup>a</sup> If. 61. 1. 7. John, 8. 29. Acts, 10. 38. If. 48. 17. & 54. 13. & 61. 1—3. & 42. 1—4. <sup>b</sup> Luke, 7. 18—30. & 7. 19. Ch. 14. 3. & 4. 12. John, 3. 23—26. & 1. 26—26. <sup>c</sup> Gen. 3. 15. & 22. 17. & 29. 10. Deut. 18. 15—18. If. 35. 4. Dan. 9. 24—26. Mal. 3. 1—3. <sup>d</sup> If. 35. 5, 6. & 29. 18. & 42. 7. & 61. 1—3. Pl. 146. 8. with Ch. 10. 8. John, 2. 23. & 5. 36. & 10. 25, 37, 38. & 14. 11. If. 66. 2. Zeph. 3. 12. Zech. 11. 7. June, 2. 5.

and Gentiles, before whose tribunal, when brought as criminals, they would have a more public opportunity of bearing witness to the glorious truths of God; and if they sealed them with their blood, as martyrs, this would be a stronger confirmation of the truth of their mission, and leave those who rejected their testimony inexcusable.

4. *He that endureth to the end shall be saved.* These light afflictions are but for a moment; their end is near, death at the worst shall put a period to them; a little patience and perseverance will make them more than conquerors; and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory will infinitely overpay all the sufferings of this present time.

5. They could never be treated worse than their Master had been before them. Whatever persecution or reproach they might endure, He, who was so greatly their superior, had suffered, or would suffer, the same. They had called him *Beelzebub*, a devil, the prince of the devils, and treated him with every imaginable ignominy; and this contradiction of sinners he patiently endured. Having therefore so glorious an example before them, they might well be content to bear his reproach, and count it their honour to be made like their Lord and Master. Who of us should start at shame, insult, or suffering, when we look to Jesus, and see what he endured?

6. *There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.* However their enemies might seek to suppress the word of truth, it should blaze forth in spite of all opposition; and their characters, though backed by the most malignant calumnies, should quickly be vindicated, their innocence proved, their integrity demonstrated either in this world, or at farthest, if faithful, at that great day, when every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is; and they be declared righteous, and exalted to glory in the sight of men and angels. Little need we then regard the revilings of men, when our judgment is with our God, and he shall soon bring forth our righteousness at the light.

7. They shall be under the peculiar care of Providence, and therefore might comfortably and confidently trust, and not be afraid. If a sparrow falls not to the ground, poor and worthless as it is, without the cognizance, and only according to the appointing, permissive, or suffering will of God, whose Providence extends to the very least and lowest

creatures that he has made; nay, if the very hairs of their head are numbered, and not one of them can fall unknown, or unnoticed; how little need they fear death or danger! their enemies, however inveterate, can have no power over them, except it be given them or permitted from above; and they may be assured the least evil cannot reach them without the divine sufferance. They are of more value than many sparrows; and therefore, not only as men, but as disciples dear to Jesus, may expect his peculiar care and protection. *Note;* True faith in God's providence will silence all our fears, and shew them as fruitless as they are sinful; since the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

8. According as they are faithful, they will be owned or rejected by Jesus, at the great day of his appearing and glory. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.* Whatever reproach or danger a bold, open, and constant profession of Jesus may expose us to, it will redound to our distinguishing honour in the day of Christ, when the great Judge and Lord of all shall testify his approbation of our conduct before men and angels, and present us before the throne of God, as proved and found faithful; and then shall all such be advanced to glory, honour, and immortality. *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven:* whoever, through coward fear or shame, starts back in the day of trial, and hides or denies his profession before men, he shall be disowned by me in the great day, rejected with abhorrence, and exposed to everlasting shame and contempt for such base apostacy. Every motive, therefore, of fear or hope urges us to be faithful.

9. Whatever their losses may be for Christ, they shall be abundantly gainers in the end. It is true, they may be called upon to part with every thing near and dear to them, and must love the Lord Jesus and his service above all besides, ready to sacrifice every thing for him when it stands in competition with his glory. Neither father, mother, son, nor daughter, must rival him in our hearts; nay, our very lives must not be dear unto us, when for his sake called to lay them down. Whatever crosses the Lord Jesus calls us to endure, whatever commands he is pleased to lay upon us, we are not worthy of a name among his disciples, unless we cheerfully take it up, and obediently follow

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

follow him: and indeed in so doing, we most effectually consult our own advantage and safety. For he that findeth his life, preserveth it at the expence of some base compliance or unfaithful conduct, shall lose it; all the comforts of it shall be embittered to him here, and he shall perish eternally; so that in the issue he shall see his folly great as his sin: while he that loses his life for my sake, ready to lay it down when called for, rather than take one step out of the path of duty, he shall find it at the resurrection of the just, with most ample compensation for all his losses, in the eternal blessedness of body and soul with God in glory.

Lastly, Though they would find many enemies, they would meet also with faithful friends; whom, for their kindness to his disciples, he would abundantly reward: he would regard every instance of respect and affection shewn to them, as done to himself; and God the Father will assuredly repay it. Whoever therefore should receive their word, or the word of those who should succeed them, and shew their kindness to their persons as the ministers and prophets of the Lord, he shall receive a prophet's reward, blessed by his labours, and, if faithful, sharing with him in the promise of eternal happiness. And in like manner, he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, loving and kind to him, not for any worldly, personal, or private considerations, but purely on account of him whose image he bears, he shall receive a righteous man's reward, rewarded in this life, and, if he embrace and cleave to the gospel, partaking with him that life and glory which is the gift of God in Jesus Christ, the reward, not of debt, but of grace. Nay, the very least and most inconsiderable favours shewn to the very meanest disciple, if but a cup of cold water, shall be remembered and recompensed. Considerations these, admirably suited to comfort them under all their trials and afflictions, and embolden them with fidelity to persevere. And we are alike interested in these things, and should be comforted and encouraged under all our troubles for the gospel's sake, with the same reviving expectations. See the Annotations.

#### CHAP. XI.

Ver. 1. Had made an end of commanding] Had finished his instructions to, &c. Heylin. In their cities—means “in the other cities of the Jews;” for the pronoun is often put without having a noun going before, to which it refers. Compare Luke, iv. 15. v. 17.: or else, by the cities here mentioned, we may understand those cities of Galilee, of which the apostles were; see Acts, ii. 7. The attentive reader will observe, that the chapters are again here very ill divided, as this verse should certainly close the last chapter. See Bengelius's Greek Testament, the divisions whereof are the most judicious that I have met with.

Ver. 2. Now when John had heard, &c.] Beaufobre and Lenfant, with some others, think, that John was so discouraged by his own long imprisonment, that he began himself to doubt whether Jesus was himself the Messiah; and agreeably to this he supposes, that when our Lord says, happy is he that is not offended in me, he meant it as a

caution to John that he should be upon his guard against so dangerous a temptation. But, considering what clear evidence John had before received by a miraculous sign from heaven, and what express and repeated testimonies he himself had borne to Jesus, I cannot imagine this to have been possible; especially as he fore-saw and foretold that he must himself quickly be laid aside. John, iii. 30. But his disciples might very probably be offended at this circumstance, as well as at the freedom of Christ's conversation, so different from the austerity used among them; and, therefore, he might think it necessary to put them in the way of farther satisfaction; not to say that John might have been uneasy at the reserve which Christ maintained, and that he might imagine it agreeable to the good design of his own office thus to urge a more express declaration. This appears an easy and natural solution of the difficulty arising from this event. Some writers, however, and those of distinction, are of different sentiments. Mr. Bell, in his treatise on the divine mission of John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Christ, part iii. sect. 8. has shewn, that this remarkable message, viewed in every light, supplies us with one of the most satisfactory circumstantial proofs of the integrity and divine character of the Lord Jesus, and of the truth of the Baptist's mission, which the gospel affords: and whether we can point out the particular motives which actually induced the true Elias to send his disciples with such a message to the true Messiah, or not, is an inquiry of no real importance at all, however it might gratify our curiosity to be able to solve the question; since in the mean time it appears abundantly plain, that no such message could on any account have been sent from John to Jesus, had they in reality been no better than impostors. See the note on ver. 4. The reader will find more on this subject in Jortin's Discourses, p. 106. Bishop Atterbury's, vol. iii. p. 35. and Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon. 117.

Ver. 3. Art thou he that should come] It seems that by their speaking of the Messiah in the phrase he that cometh, or he that is coming, (ὁ ερχόμενος,) the pious Jews in the most lively manner expressed their confident expectation of him, and their eager longing for his appearance, as the greatest, most welcome, and most desirable person that ever did or should come into the world. See Mark, xi. 9, 10. and compare Daniel, vii. 13, &c. Bishop Pearson justly observes, that this, among many other arguments, proves that the notion of two Messiahs, the one suffering the other triumphant, is a vain dream of the modern Jews, altogether unknown to the ancients. See Charlier's Defence, p. 7. and Pearson on the Creed, p. 183.

Ver. 4. Go, and shew John, &c.] This answer is a clear reference to a signal prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah; and therefore it is manifest that Jesus referred the inquirers for conviction at once to the evidence of prophecies and miracles. The finger of God is manifest in the whole occurrence. It could not be by chance that John sent his disciples to propose this important question to our Lord, at the very time when he was enabled to give the fullest satisfaction to it, and to confirm in so

6 And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

7 ¶ And as they departed; Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John,

• If 8. 14, 15. Rom. 9. 32, 33. 1 Peter, 2. 7, 8. 1 Cor. 1. 23. & 2. 14. Luke, 2. 34. John, 6. 60, 66. Ch. 13. 57. & 21. 44. & 24. 10. & 26. 31.

markable a manner the testimony of the Baptist. It could not be by chance, that inquiry was made after his divine character, at that critical period when he was displaying the strongest marks of it; in the same hour when he was engaged in *curing many of their infirmities and fevers, and of evil spirits, and in giving sight to those who had been born blind,* (See Luke, vii. 22.) We see then the propriety of this inquiry, without deducing it from any supposed doubts or discontents in the mind of the Baptist himself, or even any incredulity in his disciples. John had frequently declared our Lord to be the Messiah, which was indeed the grand purpose of his own mission. But without his doubting, or his disciples disbelieving this testimony, they must all alike have been sensible that this testimony could not have its full force, till it should be confirmed by the event, and till our Lord should prove himself to be what John asserted him to be. The prophets had described the Messiah: John had pointed out our Saviour to the world, as the person by them described. His testimony, therefore, must have been overthrown, had it not afterwards appeared that *all things which John spake of this man were true.* Hence it was natural, nay, it was necessary, that he should send his disciples to our Lord, that they might see the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah, and the testimony of their Master verified in him. And when the business of his own mission was accomplished, when his doctrine and his testimony of our Lord's divine character had made the due impressions upon the people; when the report of the mighty works of Christ had reached him in person, and he perceived that our Saviour began to display that divine power which the prophets had ascribed to the Messiah; he then saw that it was the season pointed out to him by Providence for sending his disciples to make this inquiry. See Rotheram on the Origin of Faith.

*Ver. 5. The blind receive their sight*] Nothing can be more apposite, natural, and convincing, than such an answer as this; which took its rise from what Christ was then doing, and rested on the most apparent testimony of God himself, in astonishing miracles, to which they knew their master made no pretences: (See John, x. 41.) miracles of so beneficent a nature, that no austerities of a retired life were by any means comparable to them; and miracles receiving an additional lustre, from their being foretold by a prophet many ages before; even by Isaiah the prophet, by whom the Baptist was so particularly described, that as he *himself* had frequently referred to him (Matthew, iii. 3. Luke, iii. 4—6. John, i. 23.), so his disciples must, no doubt, have made themselves peculiarly familiar with his writings. These and many other particulars are set in the most beautiful light by the masterly hand of Bishop Atterbury, in his Posthumous Sermons, vol. i. p. 41—50. Archbishop Tillotson also has largely shewn the correspondence between the prophecies and events here referred to. See his 117th sermon, and Dr. Thomas Jackson's Works, vol. ii. p. 470. The last cir-

cumstance mentioned in this verse, *The poor, &c.* distinguished the Messiah from all the heathen philosophers and priests; for whereas they concealed the mysteries or depths of their doctrines from the poor and those who were not initiated, he opened his to every one, without distinction; to the poor as well as the rich, to the unlearned as well as the learned. It distinguished him likewise from the prophets who went before him, they being chiefly sent to monarchs; whereas Christ discovered the treasures of life to the illiterate. It distinguished him from the Scribes and doctors of the Jews, who taught none but the rich, and charged very highly for their instruction, despising and neglecting the poor, who were styled the *off-scouring of the earth*, and holding it as a maxim, that the spirit rested upon the rich only. It might have convinced the Jews, that their ideas of the Messiah were false: they looked upon the Messiah as a temporal prince, who should subdue the world to his yoke: but he placed his glory in subduing sin, and in overcoming iniquity. It might have served to convince the Jews that he was disinterested: instead of paying his court to the great, he applied himself to the distressed; and instead of engaging the priests and Scribes for his disciples, he preached to the lower people, and chose twelve illiterate and poor men to be the propagators of his doctrine. To speak the lame to walk, to command the lame to walk, to restore the deaf to hearing by a single word, and to call the dead to life, were such miracles as plainly shewed him to be the Messiah. But these cures were only the cures of bodily diseases: his office was likewise to include in it the cure of our mental distempers; and therefore our blessed Lord adds, as the heightening and distinguishing criterion of his character, that *he preached the gospel to the poor.* Others put a different sense upon the clause *Πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται*, translating it actively, *the poor preach the gospel*, as if Jesus intended to insinuate, that the Baptist had no reason to be displeased with the election of twelve illiterate fishermen to preach the gospel, while he, whose gifts were far superior to theirs, was suffered to lie useless in prison,—because this also was one of the characters of the Messiah's reign, mentioned by Isaiah. According to this interpretation, our Lord's meaning was, “Go, and tell your master, that the miracles which you have seen me perform, are the very miracles which Isaiah long ago predicted that the Messiah should perform; and that the persons I have chosen to assist me in preaching the gospel, are such as the same prophet had pointed out for that work.” See Macknight and Sherlock.

*Ver. 6. Blessed is he whosoever, &c.*] See the note on chap. v. 29. It was foretold of the Messiah, that the world should be *offended at him*, Isaiah, viii. 14. liii. 1—3. This is intimated in the present words; wherein our Saviour hints, that notwithstanding the great works which he did among them, which testified of him that he came from God; notwithstanding the predictions of the prophets concerning the Messiah were so clearly and punctually accom-

What went ye 'out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A

prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is *he*, of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them

<sup>f</sup> Luke, 3. 7. & 7. 24—26. Ch. 3. 5. & 14. 5. & 21. 26. Luke, 1. 76. Mark, 1. 2. Luke, 7. 27.

John, 5. 35. with Eph. 4. 14. \* Mal. 3. 1. & 4. 5. If. 40. 3. Ch. 3. 3.

accomplished in him; notwithstanding all this, they would take offence at his doctrine: but even this,—that they *rejected* him, and would not own him for the Messiah, was another sign and evidence that he was the true Messiah foretold by the prophets; for, among other things, this was expressly predicted concerning him, that *he should be despised and rejected of men*. See Archbishop Tillotson.

*Ver. 7, 8. What went ye out, &c.*] These, and the following questions, are in the style of the Hebrews; and according to the idiom of their language, imply a strong negation. The reader by recurring to the book of Job will meet many passages to confirm this observation; so that, according to this interpretation, the meaning is, "When ye went into the wilderness to John, with what design did you go?—Not to see the reeds waving on the banks of Jordan;—nor because he made a magnificent appearance, &c." They went not to see a reed shaken with the wind; that is to say, no trifling, mean, wavering, or inconstant object, but one employed on a message of great importance; steady, upright, and consistent in his testimony. In this question the courage and constancy of the Baptist are applauded. By *soft raiment*, ver. 8. is meant such as is made of *silk*; which was so scarce and valuable in those early ages, that it was sold for its weight in gold. It was not to gaze at the splendid appearance of such as frequent the courts of princes, that they went into the wilderness to hear and contemplate the message of a man, plain indeed in his appearance, but who by the austerity of his life, sanctity of his manners, and diligence in performing the commission which he had received from above, drew the regard of the whole people. In this question, the austere mortified life of the Baptist is praised, and the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom insinuated. His forerunner did not resemble any of the officers who attended the courts of earthly princes; and consequently he himself was in no respect like an earthly prince. See Heylin, Grotius, and Macknight.

*Ver. 10. This is he, of whom it is written*] See the note on Mal. iii. 1. Dr. Hammond observes, that what is here *before thy face*, is in Malachi *before my face*, or *before me*. Hence it appears, that Christ, here referred to by the word *thy*, is there the same with God; or, yet farther, that the *face* of God, signifying often his *coming* or *presence*; and the *sending before his face*, the sending a harbinger or forerunner in a journey (Luke, ix. 52.). This coming of Christ into the world, is the coming of God himself; this presence of his on the earth, the presence of God himself; and so the *παρυκτιον*, or *covering of the ark*, noting the presence of God, appears to have been meant as a type of Christ, Rom. iii. 25.

*Ver. 11. Among them that are born of women*] "As he is, with regard to his moral and religious character, one of the best men, so he has some peculiar honours superior to any prophet of former generations: Nevertheless, there is a sense in which he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, not only in its final glories, but even here on earth, is greater than he. For my ministers, and people in general, shall receive superior supplies of the spirit, and know many important truths relating to my Gospel, which have not been revealed to John himself." By the *least in the kingdom of heaven*, is not meant the same as chap. v. 19. What is expressed by *least*, μικρότερος, might have been rendered *less*; that is to say, in appearance more abject; yet, by being a member of the kingdom of heaven, he has thereby an advantage over John, whose commission was superseded by our Saviour's ministry; for John himself says, *he must increase, but I must decrease*. The kingdom of heaven was declared to be at hand, when the first messenger came preaching in the wilderness; and after the descent of the holy spirit upon the apostles, the information of the inspired Christian must have exceeded his who was to discern the great person of whom he was to bear record, by the descent and residence of the spirit of God upon him. The ministry of John was preparatory to that of Jesus. It was to lead our feet into the way of peace; to proclaim the kingdom of heaven; and therefore he, who was inferior in other respects to John, must have advanced beyond him, and so have been greater than he, if a member of the kingdom of heaven. But this may perhaps be set in a stronger light: our Lord honoured the Baptist with a magnificent title of one that was *more than a prophet* (ver. 9.) for four reasons; 1. He was the subject of ancient prophecies, and had long been expected by the people of God under the idea of *Elias*, a name given him by Malachi, because he was to possess the spirit and power of Elias; 2. His conception and birth had been accompanied by miracles; 3. When the season of his incarnation came, he was favoured with a clearer revelation of the Messiah, than had been enjoyed by many of the prophets under the law; 4. By his sermons he prepared the Jews for receiving the gospel, and consequently began a more excellent dispensation. But though the Baptist excelled all the preceding prophets, the *least* inspired person in the kingdom of heaven, the least apostle or minister of the gospel, *was greater than he*; because by coming to attend on Jesus, they were much better acquainted with his character, disposition, and doctrine, than the Baptist who had seen him only transiently: wherefore the Apostles greatly excelled the Baptist. Further, the

that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 3. 11. & 13. 17. Luke, 1. 15. & 3. 16. John, 1. 15, 27. & 5. 35. <sup>b</sup> Or is gotten by force, and they that thrust men. Ch. 3. 3, 5. Luke, 1. 16, 17, 26. & 7. 29. & 16. 16. Mal. 4. 4, 5. <sup>c</sup> Mal. 4. 5. Luke, 1. 17. John, 1. 23. Ch. 17. 10—13. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 13. 9, 43.

violence, and the violent take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. 3. 8. & 1. 9. Col. 1. 26, 27. Rom. 16. 25, 26. 2 Tim. 1. 10. <sup>f</sup> Eph. 3. 8. & 1. 9. Col. 1. 26, 27. Rom. 16. 25, 26. 2 Tim. 1. 10. <sup>g</sup> Eph. 3. 8. & 1. 9. Col. 1. 26, 27. Rom. 16. 25, 26. 2 Tim. 1. 10. <sup>h</sup> Eph. 3. 8. & 1. 9. Col. 1. 26, 27. Rom. 16. 25, 26. 2 Tim. 1. 10.

employed, not in making preparation for, but in erecting the Messiah's kingdom. Hence they were greater than the Baptist in respect to the dignity of their office: moreover, having gifts bestowed on them to fit them for that office, far superior to his, they were greater in respect of their illumination; they had the spirit so dwelling in them, that on all due occasions they could declare the will of God infallibly, being as it were living oracles. To conclude, as they had been likewise the subject of ancient oracles, Acts, ii. 16., &c. they had been long expected by the people of God. See Macknight and Sharpe's second Argument. Greater, says Wetstein, is the dignity of a companion of Christ, than of an harbinger; as much as John excelled the prophets, so much do the disciples of Christ excel John. The time of the prophets was the night; in the time of John the morning began to appear; the disciples of Christ were illuminated with the brightest rays of the sun. See Olearius's 33d and following Observations.

Ver. 12, 13. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*] *It violently invaded.* Dr. Heylin reads it, *The kingdom of heaven is entered by force, and they who strive with all their might take it, as by violence.* The kingdom of heaven was indeed the inheritance both of Jews and Gentiles; but the Jews esteemed all those who knew not the law accursed. However, they neglected to accept the gracious terms of the Gospel, while the publicans and sinners, complying with these terms, entered into that inheritance which the Jews thought they had no legal claim to. Hence they are styled *the violent*, because he who is obliged to make use of violence to secure any thing cannot be supposed to have a legal claim to that thing. By referring to a parallel place, Luke vii. 29. the meaning of the present verses will more evidently appear: *And all the people who heard him* [that is to say, John], *says our Lord, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with his baptism.* The meaning is, that while John executed his ministry, the people, particularly the publicans, justified God, by receiving his baptism; or, to express the matter differently, by believing on John, they declared the Son of God's righteousness, and vindicated the divine wisdom in sending him. Hence we see the reason why faith is so absolutely required, and so highly commanded in the Scripture; for, can there be a more sacred duty than to attribute to God the glory of his righteousness, by believing what he has revealed; or a more heinous blasphemy than to rob him of his veracity, by rejecting the doctrine which comes from him? The sense we have given of this verse of St. Luke is confirmed by the passage before us, where our Lord expresses himself somewhat

differently, but to the same purpose: the general import whereof is, "The *tax-gatherers, soldiers, harlots, and others of the same stamp, persons of the most abandoned characters, whom ye look upon as having no right to become members of the Messiah's kingdom, enter into it; and this you think a violence done to the kingdom of heaven; but in reality it is not so, because the law and the prophets, the dispensation which makes a distinction between men, was virtually set aside at the coming of John, in whose ministry the kingdom of heaven began,—that dispensation which admits all persons equally to the enjoyment of its privileges upon their repentance and faith: for, if ye will believe it, he is the Messiah's forerunner, whom Malachi predicted under the name of Elijah.*" Dr. Heylin, upon the 13th verse, observes, that to *prophecy*, in Scripture language, is (frequently) the same as to *preach*; and the sense is, "The prophets and the law were your guides and instructors till John came; now God gives you another Master in me, and John is that Elias who was to prepare the way before me;" or, in other words, "Repentance, such as John taught and practised, is the necessary preparation for that kingdom of God which I came to establish in the hearts of men." St. Austin observes upon this verse, "God hath so ordained, that it is in every man's power to be happy: the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; to desire, to resolve, to endeavour, to strive, is to be qualified; and no man ever failed in his attempt who was willing to take it by force." See the Reflections.

Ver. 14. *And if ye will receive it*] There is nothing for the particle *it* in the original; therefore Dr. Heylin reads *him*; and if this be the proper supplement, says he, we must understand that total perfect repentance which constitutes the common character both of him and Elias. For more on this subject we refer the reader to Mal. iv. 5, 6. and Bullock on Prophecy, pref. p. 50.

Ver. 15. *He that hath ears to hear, &c.*] In the prophetic style of writing in general, there are two senses exhibited to the reader; first the literal, and then the figurative; for, as the words are intended to be the vehicle of the literal sense, so the literal sense is intended to be the vehicle of the figurative, to the man whose understanding is exercised "to discern the things of the Spirit." It is to such therefore, in a particular manner, that whatever is written in the symbolic style in the New Testament is addressed. Our Lord, to distinguish such from the unthinking multitude, calls them those who have ears to ear. *Whoso hath ears to hear, let him hear.* The same expression is also used in the Apocalypse, a book of prophecies. And it deserves

16 ¶ But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18 ° For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19 P The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man glut-

tonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. ° But wisdom is justified of her children.

20 ¶ Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! ° for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

° Luke, 7. 30—35. Rev. 3. 15—17. If. 28. 9—13. Jer. 5. 1—5. 1 Cor. 12. 6, 7. ° Ch. 3. 4. Luke, 1. 15. 1 Cor. 9. 27. 1 Peter, c. 2. with John, 10. 20. Ch. 10. 25. P Ch. 9. 11. Luke, 7. 36. & 15. 1, 2. 1 Cor. 9. 19. Rom. 15. 2. ° Phil. 2. 15, 16. & 3. 7—9. 1 Peter, 2. 7. Rom. 1. 26. 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24. ° Luke, 10. 13—15. If. 1. 2. Pf. 81. 11. Hosea, 11. 2, 7. Ezek. 3. 17. ° Ezek. 3. 6, 7. with If. xxiii. Ezek. xxvi—xxviii. Jonah, 3. 7, 8. ° 1 Kings, 21. 29. Jorah, 3. 10.

deserves to be attended to, that the Lord Jesus Christ never employs these words in the introduction or the conclusion of any plain moral instructions, but always after some parable or prophetic declarations figuratively expressed. For this also holds in respect to allegory, apologue, and parable. Campbell.

*Ver. 16, 17. But whereunto shall I liken, &c.*] For the better understanding of our Saviour in this place, see Luke vii. 29—35. To shew the Pharisees more plainly the perverseness of their disposition, our Saviour told them they were like children at play, who never do what their companions desire them; peevish and froward, and displeas'd with every thing. The phrase *it is like*, in St. Matthew's style, often signifies only, in general, that the thing spoken of may be illustrated by the following similitude. Compare ch. xiii. 24, 45. xviii. 23. xx. 1. xxii. 2. In Judæa, when the people were grown very luxurious and wanton, it was usual, at feasts, to have music of an airy kind, accompanied with dancing; and at funerals they had melancholy airs, to which were joined the lamentations of persons hired for the purpose. See ch. ix. 23. The children therefore of that country, imitating these things in their diversions, while one band of them performed the musical part, if the other happened to be froward, and would not answer or lament as the game directed, it naturally gave occasion to the complaint, *we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced*, &c. which at length was turned into a proverb; and we find it frequently quoted both in Jewish and heathen writers. The mourning airs here spoken of are used to represent the severity of the Baptist's manners, and the mournful doctrine of mortification and repentance which he preached: on the other hand, the cheerful airs are intended to represent our Lord's sweet disposition, affable condescension, and engaging method of giving instruction; so that every thing was tried which could possibly have influence, to bring the Jews to repentance. See Grotius and Wetstein.

*Ver. 18, 19. For John came neither eating, &c.*] Our Lord justifies the application of the proverb in the preceding verse to the Pharisees, by observing, that the divine Wisdom had tried every method proper for converting them, but in vain: for, first of all, the Baptist was

sent unto them, in the stern dignity of their ancient prophets, so that it was natural to think they would have revered him; nevertheless they rejected him altogether. Such, it seems, was the pride and malice of the Pharisees, that when they found their own ostentatious and hypocritical mortifications utterly eclipsed by the real austerities of this holy man's life, they impudently affirmed, that his living in deserts, his shunning the company of men, the coarseness of his clothing, the abstemiousness of his diet with the other severities which he practised, were all the effects of madness, religious melancholy, and diabolical agency: *John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine* (see Luke vii. 24, &c.), *and they say he hath a devil*; literally, *he hath a demon*. This method of converting the Pharisees proving unsuccessful, God sent his only Son in a more familiar manner, ver. 19. Jesus did not practise those mortifications which rendered the Baptist remarkable: he in general fared like other men, and went in mixed companies, not avoiding the company of publicans and sinners. But neither would they hear him: for withstanding he maintained the strictest temperance in himself, and never encouraged the vices of others, either by dissimulation or example, they attributed that easy temperate way of living to a certain looseness of devotion; but Wisdom is justified by her children. These words appear to be a Jewish proverb. See Isai. vi. 9. Luke vii. 29. Wisdom here implies the method which God followed in bringing the Jews to Christianity: *children of Wisdom* mean the *truly wise*, the *disciples of Wisdom*: they are the babes mentioned in the 25th verse of this chapter. The clause may be paraphrased, "who are truly wise and religious must needs see this beautiful variety in the conduct of Providence: see that the difference in our mode of living is for the purposes of our respective appearances, and is intended to promote the general design of God's glory, and our salvation."

*Ver. 20—24. Then began he to upbraid the cities* reproving the Pharisees, Jesus pronounced his judgments against Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, which he had often blessed with his presence; for they had heard him preach many awakening sermons

22 But I say unto you, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, \* which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in † Sodom, it

would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, † That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

25 ¶ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from

\* Luke, 12. 47. 48. & 10. 12—14. Heb. 6. 4—8. & 10. 26—31. Ch. 10. 15. Ver. 24. Lam. 4. 6. † Gen. 11. 4. Deut. 1. 28. If. 14. 13. Jer. 41. 53. Ezek. 16. 20. & 32. 8, 23. Lam. 4. 6. Luke, 10. 15. † Gen. 13. 13. & xix. Ezek. 16. 46, 47. † See ver. 22. † Luke, 10. 21. If. 8. 2, 4. Deut. 10. 14. 1 Cor. 1. 21, 26, 27. John, 9. 40, 41. Ch. 16. 17. & 13. 11. Pf. 25. 8, 9. If. 29. 14, 18. & 44. 18. & 32. 4. & 54. 13. & 61. 1. James, 2. 5. 2 Cor. 2. 16. 2. 4. 3—6.

seen him perform many astonishing miracles, such as would have converted Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, cities infamous for their impiety, contempt of religion, pride, luxury, and debauchery; yet so great was their obitancy, that they persisted in their wickedness, notwithstanding all that he had done to reclaim them. The words *were unto thee*, do not contain an imprecation against those cities, but only a denunciation of the judgments which they were bringing down upon themselves by their impenitence. The expression *long ago*, or *long since*, ver. 21., seems to refer to the time when Ezekiel reproved the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon for their enormous crimes; and intimates, that if Ezekiel had enforced his remonstrances by the aid of such miracles as he himself had wrought in the cities of Judæa, they would have been as exemplary for their penitence as the Ninevites were. See Jonah, iii. 5, &c. Hence our Lord infers the guilt of those who rejected his doctrine, although it was supported by such miraculous powers. But though the obduracy of the Tyrians and Sidonians in the time of Ezekiel was not comparable with the Galileans in the time of Christ, their punishment was nevertheless just and equitable; for they violated every principle of morality and humanity. In their commerce they were guilty of the greatest frauds, and insulted the Jews, their confederates and allies, in their distresses, when subdued by the Chaldeans. Their nearness to Judæa, their common language, their daily commerce, could not but bring them acquainted with the worthip of the true God, especially as prophets were raised to correct their faults. These and other advantages were sufficient to have converted the Phœnicians, if they would have yielded to the grace of God; and, on the other hand, were sufficient to manifest their obduracy, if they disregarded them, though they had not the benefit of those extraordinary miracles which infinite Wisdom had reserved for the times of the Messiah. See Grotius's excellent note. By the *day of judgment*, ver. 22., Dr. Hammond understands the temporal calamities to be brought on the places by the Romans, who did indeed shortly after overrun the whole country, and make dreadful ravages in some of these cities; but there is no evidence that the destruction of these Jewish cities was more dreadful than that of Tyre and Sidon, and it certainly was less so than that of Sodom and Gomorrah: besides, our Lord plainly speaks of a judgment which was yet to come on all these places before mentioned. *Capernaum*, ver. 23., was famous for its fishery, commerce, and every other advantage of a maritime situation. Here our Lord had fixed his abode

for some time, and frequently conversed with its inhabitants. It was in the most flourishing condition, and exalted to a very high pitch of earthly glory, as the phrase *which art exalted to heaven* implies. Compare Dan. iv. 22. *Brought down to hell* is a scripture phrase, used to denote an utter destruction, a total overthrow. See Isa. xiv. 13, 15. lviii. 9. 1 Sam. ii. 6. Dr. Heylin renders it, *shalt be brought to utter destruction*. "This prophecy has been so exactly fulfilled, say Beaufobre and Lenfant, in the destruction of Capernaum, that, according to the relation of travellers, there are not now above eight cottages where it stood." The word *hell*, *ἔδης*, does not signify here the place of the damned, but only the condition and place of the dead; the sepulchre. See Ephes. iv. 9. *In sackcloth and ashes* means the deepest contrition and sorrow. *Sackcloth and ashes* were the outward signs of penitence in those days.

Ver. 25. *At that time Jesus answered and said*] Dr. Doddridge reads this, *Jesus took occasion to say*; and when the words so introduced, says he, are not a reply to any preceding speech, I apprehend the version here given expresses the sense of them with greater exactness. Dr. Heylin renders it, *Jesus continuing his discourse, said*; and Mr. Pilkington, in his remarks, observes, after the generality of commentators, that this phrase is derived from the Hebrew, which not only signifies to answer, but likewise to utter a sentence, or begin a discourse; and thus the Hebrew word, Job iii. 2. is not answered, but spoke or said. We make this observation once for all, and it removes any little objection against the propriety of the writings of the New Testament, because the word answered is sometimes made use of where there is no previous question. Instead of *I thank thee*, Heylin reads, *I praise thee*; literally, *I confess or acknowledge thee*.

*Because thou hast hid*] God is often said in Scripture to do those things, which he determines to permit, and which he foresees will be in fact the consequences of those circumstances in which his creatures are placed, though their wills are laid under no constraint. See on Exod. ix. 34, 35. 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12. xxiv. 1. 1 Kings, xxii. 22, 23. In this sense alone could God be said to *hide those things* from the learned men of that age, which he revealed so plainly, that honest and well-disposed persons, though children in understanding, might come to the knowledge of them through his grace. See ch. x. 34, 35. It seems they were but a few, and those generally of the lower sort of people, who embraced the doctrine of Christ, and assisted him in erecting his kingdom; circumstances which,

the wife and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: <sup>b</sup> for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 <sup>c</sup> All things are delivered unto me of

my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; <sup>d</sup> neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

28 ¶ <sup>e</sup> Come unto me, all ye that labour and

<sup>b</sup> Eph. 1. 4, 11. 2 Tim. 1. 9. Rom. 5. 21. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 28. 18. Pf. 8. 7. John, 3. 35. & 13. 3. & 17. 2. 1 Cor. 15. 25, 27. Eph. 1. 21, 23. Heb. 1. 4. & 2. 8. Phil. 2. 9. 1f. 52. 13. & 53. 12. <sup>d</sup> John, 1. 18. & 6. 43, 46. & 10. 15. & 14. 9, 10. <sup>e</sup> 1f. 23. 12. & 43. 22. & 55. 1-7. Jer. 31. 31. 18-20.

in the eyes of common wisdom, were melancholy and mortifying; but our Lord foresaw that, by divine direction, these very circumstances would become the noblest demonstrations of his personal dignity, the clearest proofs of the excellency of his religion, and the most stupendous instances of his power, who, by such weak instruments, established his religion in every part of the habitable world, against the policy, power, and malice of devils and men combined to oppose him. Besides, had the great rulers and learned scribes, and nobles, the wits, and geniuses been converted, it must have been prejudicial to the Gospel in several respects, as such converts and teachers might probably have made the Gentiles look upon it as a trick of state: perhaps also they would have mixed it with things foreign to its nature: our Lord, therefore, most wisely made the rejection of the Gospel by the great men of the nation, and the reception of it by persons in lower stations, matter of especial *thanksgiving*. See Luke, x. 21. *Babes*, *νηπιον*, in scripture language, are persons whose faculties are not improved by learning; but who, to that sagacity and understanding which is purely natural, join, through the grace of God, the best dispositions of heart, such as meekness, modesty, honesty, humility, docility, and all the other engaging qualities which are in a carnal sense to be observed in children. This is plain from ch. xviii. 3. *Babes* therefore stand in opposition, not to men of sound judgment and reason, but to proud politicians, and men of learning, who are so full of themselves, that they disdain to receive instructions from others, and who make all their abilities subservient to their advancement in this world. See Macknight, Beausobre and Lennant, and Stockius.

*Ver. 26. Even so, Father*] The Prussian editors render this verse, *Thus it is, O Father, because such was thy will; and Mr. Wynne observes, that possibly the Greek would be more properly rendered, Be it so, O Father, since such has been thy pleasure.*

*Ver. 27. All things are delivered, &c.*] "Every thing relating to the salvation of the world is committed by my Father to my care as Mediator." *And no one knoweth, &c.*—"Knoweth his nature and dignity, what he hath done, and what he is yet to do, for the salvation of the world." *Neither knoweth any one the Father, but the Son, &c.* "None but the Son and his genuine disciples know the perfections and counsels of the Father." It is evident from this verse, that there is something inexplicably mysterious in the nature of the person of Christ, which indeed appears in the most convincing manner from the account elsewhere given of his Supreme Divinity in Scripture. See Doddridge, and Hammond, who interprets the verse differently. Our Lord, here addressing himself to

his disciples, shews why men, wise and understanding in other things, do not know this; namely, because none can know it by mere natural reason; none but those to whom he revealeth it; and the wise in the flesh reject it and despise it with the utmost scorn, and therefore in that spirit cannot possibly receive it.

*Ver. 28. Come unto me, &c.*] Our Saviour here shews to whom he is pleased to reveal these things. Warmed with the most ardent love to men, he graciously invites all who are weary of the slavery of sin, and desire to be in a state of reconciliation with God, to *come unto him* or to *believe in him*: not because he expected any advantage from them, but because he both knew how to give them relief, and was willing to do it, upon no other motive whatever, but merely to satisfy the immense desire he had to do them good. In this invitation our Lord seems to have had his eye on Isaiah, l. 4. where the Messiah is introduced, saying, *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary*, for, his having all things delivered to him of the Father, is parallel to the Lord's giving him the tongue of the learned; and his inviting all who labour and are heavy laden, is the end mentioned by the prophet for which the tongue of the learned was given him; and this, possibly, is the reason why many critics, by rest offered in this invitation, understand that freedom from the burdensome services of the law which Christ has granted to men, through the promulgation of the gospel, term in the prophecy *speaking a word in season to him that is weary*; and it must be owned that this interpretation favoured by the subsequent clause, in which men are invited to take on them *Christ's yoke*, from the consideration that it is *easy*, in comparison of Moses's yoke; and *burden*, from the consideration that it is *light*, in comparison of the ceremonial precepts of the law. There is no reason, however, for confining the *rest of the soul* offered, to that particular privilege of the Christian religion; it is more natural to think that it comprehends therewith all the blessings whatsoever of the gospel. Doddridge has well paraphrased it, "All ye that are heavy-burdened, whether with the distress of life, or with the sense of guilt, (See Psalm xxxi.) or with the load of ceremonial observances." It has been well observed, that Christianity, accompanied with the power of divine grace, gives rest to the soul, and it clearly informs the judgment concerning the most important points, removing all doubts concerning them because 2dly, it settles the will in the choice of the best for its happiness; because 3dly, it directs the mind to the right, and so keeps them under good government. See the *Reflections*.



are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; <sup>2</sup> for I am meek and lowly in heart:

<sup>b</sup> and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 'For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

Col. 2. 6. Gal. 6. 2. 1 Peter, 2. 21. Eph. 5. 2. <sup>2</sup> Rom. 8. 29. Ch. 12. 19. & 21. 5. Luke, 9. 54—56. John, 8. 29. 49. 1 Peter, 2. 22, 23.  
 Heb. 5. 7, 8. Zech. 9. 9. Phil. 2. 7, 8. <sup>b</sup> Jer. 6. 16. Heb. 4. 3. <sup>1</sup> Prov. 3. 17. Acts, 15. 10. Gal. 5. 1. 1 John, 5. 3.

*Ver. 29, 30. Take my yoke upon you]* The word *yoke* is used even by the heathen philologists, to signify doctrine and precepts. St. John interpreting this passage in his first Epistle, ch. v. 3. substitutes the word *commandments* instead of *yoke*. The meaning is, "My doctrine and precepts are easy and pleasant; in which respect they are distinguished from the Mosaic ceremonies, and also from the traditionary precepts of your doctors, who bind up heavy loads of duty, and lay them upon men's shoulders." Some have apprehended, says Dr. Doddridge, that when our Lord says, *I am meek, and lowly in heart*, he intends peculiarly to recommend the imitation of his humility and meekness, as what would especially conduce, in the natural consequence of things, to promote the repose and tranquillity of their minds. But I apprehend that our Lord chiefly means to remind them of the general lenity of his temper; which would engage him to decline all grievous impositions, and unnecessary burdens, and tenderly to instruct them in the way of pardon and life. See chap. xii. 19, 20. Dr. Heylin reads this, *For I am a mild and condescending master*. The original word *Ἐλαφρῶν*, ver. 30. properly signifies both *light* and *pleasant*; and the other *Χαρῶν*, *easy*, may be also rendered *good, gentle, and agreeable*; and so with great propriety may express that true pleasure and cheerfulness, which are the genuine result of a sincere subjection to Christ's government. That Christ's *yoke is easy* and *his burden light*, must be acknowledged, because all his affirmative precepts are as necessary to the souls of men, as food is to their bodies; and for his negative injunctions, abstinence from drink is not more expedient for persons swelled with the dropsy, than they are to all who would preserve the health and vigour of their souls. The obedience therefore which he required, is such a reasonable obedience as every gracious and well-informed mind must rejoice in; and the pleasures which he promises are the pleasures of goodness, the most extensive, satisfying, and durable of all pleasures, being to the mind a delicious and continual feast. See Macknight and Hammond.

*Inferences.*—Whatever were the motives which inclined the Baptist to send his disciples to Jesus, which we cannot doubt were the best, we certainly should be thankful for the inquiry; as thence we derive a convincing testimony of the truth of that Gospel, which is strongly supported by the evidence of prophecy and of miracles. If at any time tempted to doubt the truth of Christianity, we should recollect the veracity and unanswerable proofs of it which are contained in the comprehensive words of our Redeemer, ver. 4—6.—Proofs arising from the miracles, and from the prophetic testimony which was borne to him. Our Lord pronounces a *blissing* upon those *who shall not be offended in him*. It is our wisdom and our duty to consider what those things are in the doctrine or circumstances of

Christ, which have proved the most dangerous stumbling-blocks, and endeavour, in constant dependence on divine grace, to fortify our souls against those temptations which may arise from them: so the trial of that faith, which is a much more valuable treasure than gold which perisheth, though tried in the fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory.

How happy would it be, if we could learn, through the grace of God, to correct the natural inconsistencies of our tempers and conduct by wise reflections! how much more improving would our attendance on the ministrations of God's servants be, were we seriously to ask ourselves to what purpose we attend! *What went ye out for to see?* ver. 7—9. It ought surely to be followed with such considerations, since it is intended to lead us to the kingdom of heaven;—a glorious prize, too glorious to be obtained by faint wishes and inactive desires! There is a sense in which it still *suffers violence* (ver. 12.): and how sad is the degeneracy of our nature, that we should exert so little warmth in such a pursuit, and so much for every trifle!

Instead of that holy ardour with which men should press into it, they fold their hands in their bosoms, and lose themselves in soft luxurious dreams, till the precious opportunity is for ever gone. How eager then should we be, to *press* into that heavenly city, where our home and our privileges are! where we are free denizens, and may have our names enrolled in the book of God!

Whatever measures good men take, they will never escape the censures of the world: however contrary in their manners the Baptist and the holy Jesus, they were equally reproached by the Pharisees. The most unspotted innocence, and the most unparalleled excellence, did not prove a defence against the reproach of tongues. A man's best gifts, and best actions, which are both well intended, and well calculated for edification, may be made the matter of his reproach. It is true, in some sense, that Christ was a *friend of publicans and sinners* (ver. 19.), the best friend they ever had; for he came into the world to save sinners, great sinners, even the chief. So he said very feelingly, who had been himself, not a *publican* and *sinner*, but a *pharisee* and a *sinner*: but this is, and will be Christ's praise to eternity; and they forfeited the benefit of it, who thus turned it to his reproach. For ourselves, we shall discover in all things sufficient cause to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, when, happily, we are of the number of the true children of this incarnate Wisdom.

What can we imagine more dreadful than the guilt and condemnation of those, who hear the gospel only to despise it? How can we read the doom of *Chorazin*, *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum*, (ver. 21—24.) without trembling for ourselves, lest we should incur the like terrible sentence?—We (who have now the written word in our hands, the gospel preached, and gospel ordinances administered to us,

and

## C H A P. XII.

*Christ reprooveth the blindness of the Pharisees concerning the breach of the sabbath, by scriptures, by reason, and by a miracle: he healeth the man possessed, who was blind and dumb. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. Account shall be made of idle words: he rebuketh the unfaithful who seek after a sign, and speaketh who is his brother, sister, and mother.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**A**T that time <sup>a</sup> Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples

<sup>a</sup> Deut. 23. 25. Mark, 2. 27.—28. Luke, 6. 1—5. <sup>b</sup> Ver. 10. Luke, 13. 14. John, 5. 10, 16. with Exod. 20. 9. & 23. 12. & 31. 15. & 35. 2. Num. 15. 32—36. <sup>c</sup> 1 Sam. 21. 3—6. Mark, 2. 25, 26. Luke, 6. 3. 4.

and who live under the dispensation of the spirit,) have advantages not inferior to those of these ungrateful cities; and our account in the last day will be accordingly. The professors, therefore, of this age, whether they go to heaven, or to hell, will be the greater debtors in either of these places: If to heaven, the greatest debtors to divine mercy, for those rich means which brought them thither: If to hell, the greatest debtors to divine justice, for those rich means which would have kept them thence!

Still we see the gospel *hidden* from many, who are esteemed the *wisest* and most sensible of mankind (ver. 25.); and, blessed be God, we shall see it *revealed* to some, who, in comparison of them, are but *babes*. Let not this offend us: but rather, taking our notions from the word of God, let us learn to honour those babes, as possessed of the truest wisdom, and adore the riches of divine grace, if we are in their number, while many of superior capacities, but enemies to the work of grace, are left to stumble at this stone, till they fall into final ruin.

How solemn a truth have we in the words of Christ, ver. 27. *All things are delivered unto me, &c.*! Christ is the sovereign dispenser of salvation, and the Lord of all things, even in his mediatorial office, by the donation of his father; as well as in his divine nature God over all, blessed for evermore. All the springs, and the whole dispensation of the divine favours, are in the hands of Christ; as Priest and Sacrifice, as Saviour and Mediator, Head and Pattern, Pastor and sovereign Judge of men. There is no knowledge of the Father and the Son, no belief of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, but what is a gift of God, by Jesus Christ. How lovely is this dependence! blessed Lord! we accept it with joy; we desire to depend on thee! Make us to *know the father*; make thyself known to us: but let the *love* in us be yet greater than the *knowledge*!

Under all our troubles and afflictions, after our miscarriages, in our temptations, and in our inability to do good, our only remedy is, to have recourse to Christ; and how sweet is it to be able to fly to a Redeemer, who comes to meet us, in order to solicit us to *come to him*! ver. 28. Sinners, *unvaried* in the ways of iniquity, throw yourselves into the bosom of this amiable Shepherd, who, while on earth, took so much pains to seek you, and to bring you back to his fold. Penitents, *humbled* under the weight of your crimes, unite yourselves to this sanctifying Victim,

were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

2 But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, <sup>b</sup> Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath-day.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him;

4 How he entered into the house of God,

who bore your sins on the cross. Christians, *overburdened* with the multitude of your defects, and with the greatness of your duties, lift up yourselves to this eternal High-priest, who is at the right hand of God his father, continually making intercession for you. The blessed Jesus excepts none; *all* are invited, all are urged to *come* to him. None shall seek, and not find; none shall go to Christ, without receiving *rest*. He himself promises, and shall we not believe?

Jesus Christ is the great teacher of humility, ver. 29. *Learn of ME*, says the blessed Saviour, with great and peculiar propriety; for it was a lecture of philosophy until then but little known in the world. Humility was a virtue, which had not so much as a name among the Gentiles before Christianity. But, supposing it had been known to the world before our Saviour, yet no mere mortal was fitted to teach it in perfection; and therefore it was a doctrine and a discovery reserved for and peculiarly adapted to the character and condition of the Lord Jesus Christ; who not only humbled himself to the meanness of our nature, but vouchsafed to assume one of the lowest conditions of life, to teach us perfect *humility* in all its parts and circumstances; that *humility*, without which we can find no *rest to our souls*. Pride is the source of a thousand disquietudes.

It is not sufficient to go to Christ by faith; we must through his divine grace *take upon us the yoke* of his law and gospel, that we may conform our lives thereto, and study his disposition and behaviour, in order to imitate them. In the schools of the world, some study philosophy, others physic, law, &c.; in the school of Christ, every one must study *meekness* and *humility*: for to these two the whole science of Christianity may be reduced; the *meekness* of love, calm and sedate in the midst of wrongs, injuries, affronts, persecutions; without envy, without malice, without revenge: *humility* of heart, remote from all inordinate and worldly desires, by which pride is nourished; ascribing nothing to itself, and desiring nothing; ready to part with all things, to be placed below all men, to remain in silence and oblivion. Lord, vouchsafe to teach us this science, writing it in our hearts by thy love!

How easy and sweet it is to serve Christ, even bearing his cross! how hard and painful is the slavery of the world, of sin, and of our own passions, even with all their false pleasures! That satisfaction, peace and comfort, which

grace

and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him,<sup>d</sup> but only for the priests?  
5 Or have ye not read in the law,<sup>e</sup> how

<sup>d</sup> Exod. 25. 30. & 29. 32, 33. Lev. 8. 31. & 24. 6. 9.    <sup>e</sup> Num. 28. 9, 10.

grace gives here below, and that which hope encourages us to expect in heaven, make a Christian full amends for all his pains in subduing his passions through the power of grace, and in opposing the world.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having finished his instructions to his disciples whom he sent forth, our Lord did not devote the work to them and sit down idle himself, but *departed thence to teach and preach in their cities*; and in this blessed work the disciples sent from John found him employed. We are told,

1. Where John was; *in prison*, for his fidelity in reproving Herod the king. Such reward may the zealous ministers of God sometimes expect to meet. But the fame of Jesus reached him even there: and now, no doubt, with joy he heard of his labours and success. If we be disabled, it is still a most reviving cordial to hear that the work of God prospers.

2. The question that he put to Jesus by the disciples whom he sent; *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? art thou the promised Messiah, or not?* Some have supposed John was himself in doubt, and either discouraged by his long confinement, or, like the rest of his countrymen, prepossessed with the notions of a temporal Messiah; though it seems much more reasonable, from the testimony which John had borne to him, to suppose, that not for his own sake he sent this message, but for the sake of his disciples; whom, though they had cleaved to John hitherto, yet, he being shortly to leave them and to be cut off, he introduces to Jesus, that they might receive him from the fullest conviction of his character, and henceforward commence his disciples. *Note*; (1.) God will not leave his people destitute: if one able minister be removed, another is raised up. (2.) It is the duty of faithful ministers to lead their hearers off from all attachment to men, even themselves, and to direct them simply to Jesus. (3.) Where the matters of our eternal salvation are concerned, it becomes us to be inquisitive, and to see that our faith be built on sure grounds.

3. The answer of Christ returned to their inquiries. He refers them to the facts which they beheld, as the most satisfactory proofs of his being that Messiah who should come into the world. *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c.* full evidences these of a divine mission, and a clear fulfilment of the prophecies which went before concerning him. Isaiah, xxxv. 5, 6. lxi. 1. *And the poor have the gospel preached to them*; those whom the Scribes and Pharisees despised, he received kindly, and acquainted them with the glad tidings of his grace, which many of them willingly received: *or the poor preach the gospel*; mean and illiterate men are endued with great gifts and abilities to propagate the doctrines of the gospel: *and blessed is he whose name shall not be offended in me*; not prejudiced against him because of his poverty, the meanness of his station, and the despicable followers who attended him; but, look-

ing above all these things, beholds in his works and words his divine character, and gives him the glory due unto his name. *Note*; (1.) Many treat the poor with contempt; but Christ hath taught us a different lesson; of such his church is chiefly composed, and this adds abundant honour to them. (2.) There are many things in Christ's character and gospel which minister occasion of offence to the proud and self-righteous; but faith admires the condescensions of Jesus, and adores him for that at which others stumble and fall.

2dly, When John's disciples were gone, Jesus took this opportunity of passing a high encomium on his character and ministry. He would not say it in their hearing, lest it should seem flattery; nor would have it reported to John, for he well knew how ill the best can bear even deserved praise.

1. He addresses a question to the multitude around him, many of whom had been John's hearers. *What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind?* was it mere curiosity; or did you suppose him a man unsteady and wavering? It was John's honour that he was uniform and steady in his preaching and labours: and an intimation is contained in this question, that they who had gone so far to hear him should well consider what he had said, and inquire what profit they got by their attendance. *Note*; Many go a great way to hear ministers from curiosity, who soon forget all that they hear as a dream. *But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?* No. His garb bespoke his deadness to the world. He neither spoke nor dressed like a courtier. His reproofs were plain and rough as his appearance: the case of those to whom he addressed himself required it. *Behold, they that wear soft clothing, and live delicately, are in kings' houses*; and he was utterly unlike those; his manners austere, his conduct steady. *Note*; (1.) In the work of the ministry; unshaken resolution is needful, which is alike unmoved by frowns or smiles. (2.) They who have heard and seen God's ministers, should often inquire what they have gained thereby, or what end they purposed by their attendance. (3.) Our dress should be according to our station. It is no evil in those who are in kings' courts to put on soft clothing; though it would be sinful in others to imitate them in expensive apparel which they cannot afford, or which is unbecoming their situation or character in life.

2. He tells them plainly the distinguished honour of this eminent teacher. *But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.* In general all held John for a prophet, and yet they understood not that peculiar distinction which he enjoyed above all who went before him.

[1.] He was the person foretold, Mal. iii. 1. as the forerunner of the Messiah, who should more immediately prepare his way, and usher him into the world. The other prophets saw him at a distance, and only spoke of him

that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple \* profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

6 But I say unto you, That <sup>f</sup> in this place is one greater than the temple.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth,

\* In killing, slaying, walling, and burning the sacrifices, &c. as well as on another day.

<sup>f</sup> Mal. 3. 1. Hag. 2. 7. 2 Chron. 6. 18. Ch. 23. 18.

as to appear in the fulness of time. John beheld him face to face, and pointed him out as present: *behold the Lamb of God!*

[2.] Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Not only his miraculous birth, his being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, his exemplary life, rendered him singular; but, above all, the clear revelation that he had of the Messiah, his baptizing him in the Jordan, seeing the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descending upon him, and the testimony he bore to him on that occasion,—these made John far superior to all his predecessors. *Notwithstanding, he is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he;* the least of the ministers and apostles of Christ, or the meanest believer in him, would in clearness of gospel light, and knowledge of Jesus, be able to see farther, and to speak more distinctly of his sufferings, death, grace, and glory, and of the spiritual nature of his kingdom, than even the most eminent saints and prophets of old. *Note;* (1.) True greatness is not to be measured by outward splendour, but by the gifts and graces of God's spirit, and the manifestations which Jesus makes of himself to the soul. (2.) If we enjoy greater advantages than others, our condemnation will be the greater if we do not profit under them.

[3.] By John the gospel of the kingdom began to be preached, and God owned his ministry with eminent success; for *from the days of John the Baptist until now, a space of little more than two years, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;* the publicans and harlots, who by the Scribes and Pharisees would be reckoned intruders, convinced now of their guilt, and turned to the Lord, eagerly pressed for a place in the Messiah's kingdom; and multitudes of others, awakened to a discovery of their sin and danger, eagerly embraced the declarations of grace, and with a holy violence strove to enter in at the strait gate. *Note;* (1.) Wherever divine grace has quickened the soul, there salvation will be made the great concern, and eager diligence used to make our calling and election sure. (2.) It is a distinguished honour conferred on any minister of the gospel, when God is pleased to make him eminently instrumental in calling sinners to fly from the wrath to come. (3.) Sluggish and negligent triflers in religion may never hope for admission into the kingdom of God. See the Annotations.

[4.] In the ministry of John the Old Testament dispensation closed, and the New began. *For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John;* in types and predictions they pointed to the future Messiah, all the ritual service of the temple being designed to direct the worshippers to him; and, viewed in this light, it appears truly glorious: but now he was come, in whom all these were to be fulfilled. *And if ye will receive it, and can credit my assertion, this is*

*Elias which was for to come;* not Elijah personally, but he who was spoken of, Mal. iv. 5. and who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, like him in dress and manners, and imitating his zeal. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;* which intimates that these were things that deserved attentively to be weighed, and, though dark and difficult to be believed, were truths of great importance. *Note;* (1.) The word of God must be examined with serious concern: it is not a slight and cursory perusal which will be sufficient to let us into the meaning; deep meditation, fervent prayer, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, being necessary to a right understanding of the mysteries of grace. (2.) It is not hearing, but receiving the truth in the light and love of it, which can make us wise unto salvation.

3dly, Having spoken of the excellence of John's ministry, he cannot but reflect upon the inexcusable perverseness and stubbornness of that generation, which had for the most part continued in their impenitence, notwithstanding John's preaching, and in opposition to all the miracles and means of grace which they had enjoyed under his own ministry and that of his apostles. For which an awful reckoning remained.

1. He seems at a loss for a similitude whereunto he shall liken the men of that generation, they acted so contradictorily and absurdly; like fullen and froward children, who, when their playfellows use every little art to engage them, mimicking a wedding or a funeral, and inviting them to dance with them, or in mournful responses to answer them, morose and ill-natured they will join in neither. Such was the temper of the Scribes and Pharisees, with their disciples, respecting the ministry of Christ and his fore-runner; who used different means, but neither could prevail. John called to mourning, preaching repentance and humiliation, and in his own abstemious and self-denying conduct set them an example of mortification; and, so far from being affected thereby, they treated him as melancholy, and possessed by a devil. *The son of man, with the sweetest music of gospel grace, sought to engage their minds; and by every kind word and deed endeavoured to insinuate himself into their affections; free and open in his manners, affable to all, joining with them in partaking the innocent refreshments of nature, and ready to converse with the chief of sinners for their good; and immediately they brand him as a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, an encourager and a partaker with them in their immoralities. But wisdom is justified of her children.* They who are through grace made acquainted with the truth, will approve all the means and methods which God is pleased to use, though others reject and despise them: or *Christ, the wisdom of God, will be acquitted of all these malicious accusations of wicked men, by all who truly become the children of*

'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the <sup>b</sup> Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day.

<sup>a</sup> Hoſe, 6. 6. Ch. 9. 13. 1 Sam. 15. 22. Eccl. 5. 1. If. 1. 11—15. Micah, 6. 6—8. <sup>b</sup> Dan. 7. 13. Ch. 16. 13. Mark, 2. 27.

God, and are enlightened to know his true character. They will admire and adore him for what others revile and malign him. *Note*; (1.) There is nothing so absurd or contradictory which the enemies of the gospel will not say and do, in order to vent their malice against the ministers and truths of God. (2.) God uses every means with sinners, declaring the terrors of his law and the comforts of his gospel, fending them, by turns, mercies and judgments, and all to work on their obdurate hearts, or to leave them inexcusable in their impenitence. (3.) Different ministers have different manners of address, and are more particularly suited to the dispositions and tempers of some than of others: some are struck with a Boanerges, some melted under a Barnabas, a son of consolation; some are affected with the more austere manners of one like John the Baptist, others engaged by the sweetness and affability of Jesus. Every one has his gift, and all for the edification of the body of Christ, and for bringing sinners into his fold. (4.) The most powerful and engaging ministrations are not always crowned with success: but, when we have discharged our souls, and men refuse to hear the voice of truth, of reason, of conscience, neither drawn by the bonds of love, nor driven to God by all the terrors of wrath to come, then their blood is on their own heads; we are free. (5.) The greatest, the best of men, even he that was more than man, have been reviled as mad or libertines, as preaching doctrines of despair or licentiousness. Let it not seem strange if the same things be said of us, and if what is our highest honour in God's sight be made matter of severest reproach. He is near who will justify us. (6.) Though the gospel and the ministers of it in general be slighted and reviled of men, to some their word will be a favour of life, and they will justify God in all his ways, being themselves living instances of the efficacy of the methods that he has taken to bring poor sinners to himself.

2. As he had reproached the obstinacy of that generation in general, he particularly upbraids the cities *wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not*; for to lead them thereunto was the great end of all his miracles and preaching; but it had been in vain: and how shall they escape who neglect so great a salvation? They must needs perish who reject the only remedy which can cure them: and such wilful obstinacy must bring down greater damnation.

3. Two instances are particularly brought, of cities which had enjoyed the greatest means and mercies, and yet were more hardened than even the vilest of the heathen.

[1.] *Wo unto thee Chorazin! wo unto thee Bethsaida!* places in Galilee peculiarly favoured with Christ's miracles and preaching; and yet the generality of the inhabitants persisted in their impenitence; though, had the like mighty works been done even in Tyre and Sidon, abandoned to wickedness as they were, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, and humbled themselves to prevent

the impending ruin. Therefore at the judgment-day their doom shall be more tolerable than that of those cities which, by rejecting the gospel, fall under the most aggravated guilt. *Note*; An awful day is near, when the eternal states of all must be determined; when all the means of grace and mercies that we have enjoyed, must be accounted for; and none will receive so great damnation as those who, in opposition to the clearest light of the gospel, have persisted in the darkness of error and sin.

[2.] Capernaum, with peculiar emphasis, is threatened. *Thou* most dignified by the residence of Jesus, and distinguished with singular advantages above all other cities, *which art exalted to heaven in outward privileges, shalt be brought down to hell*, to utter destruction; and fall deeper into eternal misery from the heights of abused mercy. For even Sodom's doom will be more tolerable than hers; for if the like miracles and long-continued ministry of Jesus had been vouchsafed to that city, her ruin would have been averted: but if Sodom was not spared with less guilt, Capernaum, with greater, must needs sink under more aggravated ruin. *Note*; Many of this day seldom think of the inestimable talent committed to them in the oracles of God and the gospel of his Son; but for these things a solemn account must soon be given; and woe to the sinner whose profiting at that day shall not appear.

4thly, Though in general the perverseness of the many afforded the most melancholy prospect of their destruction, yet did not the gospel word return in vain.

1. Our blessed Lord offers up his thanks to God the Father for those who had already yielded to be saved by grace through his sacred ministry; who, though few, and in the eyes of men despicable, poor, and illiterate, yet were precious to Jesus, and were the travail of his soul.

[1.] He addresses God as his *Father*, in whose love he had the most assured interest, and as *the Lord of heaven and earth*, the sovereign disposer of all things, able to do whatever he pleased according to the counsels of his own will. *Note*; Prayer is then a pleasing service, when we can call God Father, approach him with confidence, and, persuaded of his all-sufficiency to supply our wants, can quietly cast our care upon him.

[2.] He adores his divine will in being pleased to hide the glorious truths of gospel grace from the worldly-wise and carnally prudent, and revealing them to such as, comparatively speaking, respecting natural abilities, learning, and human accomplishments, were vastly their inferiors. *Note*; (1.) It is a mortifying truth, and of hardest digestion to the proud heart of man, that those whom the world admires as great, learned, and wise, the deepest scholars, the most profound statesmen, the most reverend doctors, and acute metaphysicians, in general are not, through the indulgence of their pride and their unwillingness to stoop to the humiliating terms of the gospel, even on a level with the meanest clown, respecting the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation; but for the most part farther removed

9 ¶ And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue :

10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him,

<sup>1</sup> Mark, 3. 1—5. Luke, 6. 6—10.

removed from it, and, through the self-confidence of their own hearts, given up to learned ignorance, and left to the spiritual blindness of their fallen spirits. (2.) The major part of those who embrace the gospel in its power, are such as the great and wise in the flesh despise, poor in every respect but grace, poor in station, abilities, human literature, and all that a foolish world admires. Some few indeed are found of the wise, mighty, and noble, but not many; and this will ever be, till the latter day's glory arrives, as it was from the beginning, a stone of stumbling and rock of offence: *Have any of the rulers and Pharisees believed?*

2. Christ invites every mourning soul to come to him, with kindest assurances both of his power and willingness to help and save them.

[1.] He declares the plenitude of power with which he is invested for the comfort of all who should apply to him for refuge: *All things are delivered unto me of my Father.* As Mediator, he hath received a delegated authority, distinct from that which he essentially possesses as God over all, blessed for ever. The work of reconciliation, and all the blessings of grace and glory, are lodged in his hands. *And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* It is not the effort of man's natural skill and labour, but a divine revelation which alone can make known to us the true character of God, his triune existence and perfections, together with the designs of his grace. And as there is a mutual consciousness between the divine Persons in the undivided Godhead, he, who from eternity lay in the bosom of the Father, is alone able to make him known, being invested with his mediatorial character for this very purpose. *Note;* (1.) There is no true knowledge of God, or intercourse to be maintained with him, but in and by Jesus Christ. (2.) To all those who will embrace Christ as their Saviour, he *manifests himself as he doth not unto the world*, John xiv. 22, 23.

[2.] He declares his readiness to receive every poor sinner who comes to him weary and heavy laden; and invites them to lay down their burdens of sin and sorrow his feet, that they may find rest unto their souls. *Note;* (1.) The persons invited are *all that labour and are heavy laden*; those who are convinced of their guilt and danger feel the insupportable burthen of sin, and are weary not merely of the burthenful rites of the ceremonial law, but of the bondage of corruption. And *all*, without distinction of nation, or difference in the measure of their guilt and sinfulness, are invited. Jesus rejects none because of the depth of their miseries, who do not themselves reject his mercies. (2.) The invitation is, *Come to me*, willing to receive, and able to relieve, all the wants of the miserable and the desperate, who by faith cast their care upon me, renouncing every other hope and dependence, placing their trust on me alone as their Saviour to the uttermost, and taking me henceforward for their Lord and Master. (3.) The promise made to such is, *I will give you rest*; pardon

and peace of conscience to silence the accusations of guilt, power against sin to deliver you from the wearisome bondage of corruption, setting the soul at liberty from all terrifying fears, and enabling you on sure foundations to expect a part in the eternal rest which remaineth for the people of God. (4.) The dutiful returns for such mercies are here prescribed: *Take my yoke upon you.* We must receive Christ in all his offices; as the King to rule in and over us, as well as the Prophet to teach, and the Priest to atone for us. Obedience to his gospel must follow faith in his promises; and he asks nothing from us but that we should copy his example and be like him, that we may be meet for the enjoyment of him. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*; tempers which must ever characterise the disciples of Jesus, in opposition to that pride, perverseness, passion, and self-will, which are natural to the fallen mind. He was meek under every provocation, patient towards the dulness of his scholars; *lowly in heart*, condescending to the meanest, and submitting for our sakes to every abasement; and when we learn to be like him, we shall find rest to our souls; such divine dispositions will bring a present heaven to the soul, and enable us to enter into rest here below, happy in communion with Jesus, and stamped with his image. Nor may we think that his yoke implies any thing grievous. No: *his yoke is easy, and his burden light*: his service is perfect freedom. Even the afflictions, temptations, and difficulties that we may meet with, are to be counted all joy; since so powerful will be the assistance of his grace, so abundant his consolations, and so blessed the issue, that we have reason continually to go on our way rejoicing, and to own to his eternal praise, and for the encouragement of others, *that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.*

## CHAP. XII.

*Ver. 1. On the sabbath-day*] See the note on Luke vi. 1 where the Evangelist points out the sabbath and day whereon this happened. *Through the corn* means through the paths that were in the corn. The word *σικκός* may indifferently signify ears of any kind of grain; but it most probably was barley, which was ripe at that time. *John vi.*

*Ver. 2. When the Pharisees saw it, they said, &c.*] Jews were allowed by the law, when they came into standing corn of their neighbours, to pluck some ears to eat them, Deut. xxiii. 25. But as they were by the law forbid to reap on the sabbath-day, the Pharisees, very severely enough, accounted this action of the disciples a kind of reaping. They looked also upon the rubbing ears of corn in their hands as a breach of the law, they were not allowed by it to dress their victuals on the sabbath-day. See Beausobre and Lenfant, Introduction, p. 159.

*Ver. 3, 4. But he said unto them, &c.*] Concerning this transaction see the note on Mark ii. 25, 26. By *the temple of God* is not meant the temple, for it was not the

saying, <sup>k</sup> Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days? that they might accuse him.

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one

<sup>k</sup> Luke, 13. 14. & 14. 3. John, 5. 10—16. & 9. 16. Ch. 22. 17.

but the court of the tabernacle, which was at that time pitched at Nob, one of the priests' cities in the tribe of Benjamin.

Ver. 5. Or *how ye not read in the law, &c.*] He did not mean that these words were to be found in the law, but that they might read in the law, that the priests were obliged on the sabbath-day to perform such servile work in the temple, as, considered separately from the end of it, was a profanation of the sabbath; and yet were guiltless, because it was necessary to the public worship, on account of which the sabbath was instituted. From Numb. xxviii. 9. it appears, that, besides the continual burnt-offerings, the priests were obliged on the sabbaths to sacrifice two lambs extraordinary, by which their servile work was that day double of what it was on the other days of the week. This, though really no *profanation* of the sabbath, might, according to the common notion of the Jews, be so termed; and therefore, in speaking of it, our Lord calls it so. See Macknight and Calmct.

Ver. 6. *But I say unto you, that in this place, &c.*] "If you reply, that the priests were not culpable in those actions, because they were undertaken for the temple-service, I acknowledge it; but at the same time it should be observed, that if the temple, with its service, be of such importance as to demand a particular dispensation from the law of the sabbath; I who am the Lord of the temple, and of whom the temple is but the type, may, with equal reason, take the same liberty in a case of the like necessity." Every prophet was in some sense greater than the temple; and hence Elijah sacrificed out of the temple on an extraordinary occasion: but our blessed Lord was infinitely greater than any prophet. It should also be observed, that Christ and his apostles were so taken up in the discharge of their duty, that they had not leisure to prepare food for the sabbath; they were therefore under a necessity either to intermit their prophetic office, or to act contrary to the literal sense of the law. Now, as the Jews did not intermit the office of the priesthood on account of the law concerning the sabbath; so neither should the prophetic office be intermitted on that account, especially as it was superior in its dignity, and more extensive in its benefits. According to this interpretation the reading *μείζων*, a greater work, instead of *μείζων*, a greater person, which is authorized by a number of manuscripts, will have a peculiar elegance. "There is here a much more noble work carrying on than the temple-service." Or the common reading may be retained thus: "If the servile work done in the temple on a sabbath is not reckoned an offence, because it is undertaken on account of the temple-worship, the rubbing of the ears of corn, for which you blame my disciples, cannot be any; seeing they do it in order to support life, while they are employed in the service of one who is infinitely greater than the temple." For the Human Nature of Jesus was an infinitely more august temple, in respect of the essential habitation of the Divi-

nity, than that of Jerusalem. See Grotius, Hammond, Wetstein, and Mill.

Ver. 7. *I will have mercy, &c.*] *I delight in mercy* (so *θ'λεω* signifies, ch. xxvii. 43.), *more than sacrifice*; for this is the Hebrew form of comparison. See the note on ch. ix. 13. Works of mercy, acts of kindness and beneficence, are essential duties, and preferable to all the ceremonial law, named here (from its principal act) *sacrifice*, when that comes in competition with them. As the sense of so many important scriptures depends upon it, it may be proper to observe, that, according to the genius of the Hebrew language, one thing seems to be forbidden, and another commanded, when the meaning only is, that the latter is greatly to be preferred to the former. The text before us is a remarkable instance; as likewise John vi. 27. And it is evident, that Gen. xlv. 8. John vii. 19. and many more passages, are to be expounded in the same comparative sense. See Doddridge, Heylin, and Beaufobre and Lefant.

Ver. 8. *For the Son of man is Lord, &c.*] See on Mark ii. 27, 28. The expression *even of the sabbath-day*, *καὶ τῆ σαββάτου*, certainly implies, that the sabbath was an institution of great and distinguished importance. It may perhaps also refer to that signal act of authority which Christ afterwards, by the ministry of his apostles, exerted over it in changing it from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Ver. 9. *When he was departed thence*] There can be no doubt as to the connection of this history with the preceding, in which all the Evangelists agree; and indeed, had not St. Luke told us, that it was on another sabbath, the words of St. Matthew would have led us to imagine it had been the same day. Perhaps our Lord might spend most of the week in the town, to which the fields above mentioned belonged. See Doddridge and Chemnitz.

Ver. 10. *And they asked him, &c.*] That is, the Pharisees, ver. 14. who, when they saw Jesus going to perform the cure, put this question to him, *Is it lawful, &c.?* by which they declared in the strongest terms their opinion of its unlawfulness: but in so doing they had no intention to prevent the action which they knew he was resolved upon, but to render him odious to the common people; expecting that he would openly declare such things lawful, in opposition to the definitions of the doctors, who had all determined that to perform cures upon the sabbath was a violation of the Holy rest: or, if he should give no answer to their question, as it implied an affirmation of the unlawfulness of what he was about to attempt, they thought it would render him inexcusable, and give the better colour to their accusation. The word *θεραπεύειν*, rendered *to heal*, is very extensive, and properly includes all the care, labour, and attendance, which the case of any dis-tempered or wounded person can require; as I apprehend our English word *cure* also does, though through the poverty of our language we are forced to apply it to those miraculous effects, which were so instantaneously produced

sheep, and if it 'fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12 How much then is \* a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days.

13 Then saith he to the man, <sup>m</sup> Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

14 ¶ Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

15 But when ° Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and <sup>p</sup> great multitudes

followed him, and he healed them all;

16 <sup>q</sup> And charged them that they should not make him known:

17 That 'it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

18 'Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: 'I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall <sup>u</sup> shew judgment to the Gentiles.

19 <sup>x</sup> He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

20 <sup>y</sup> A bruised reed shall he not break, a

<sup>l</sup> Exod. 23. 4. 5. Deut. 22. 4. \* The man might have to work for his own and family's subsistence. <sup>m</sup> 1 Kings, 13. 6. Luke, 11. 13. Acts, 7. Mark, 3. 5. <sup>n</sup> Or took counsel. Mark, 3. 6, 7. Luke, 6. 11. John, 10. 39. & 11. 51. with Ch. 10. 23. <sup>o</sup> John, 2. 25. Pl. 119. 2. 4. 13. <sup>p</sup> Ch. 4. 24, 25. & 19. 2. Il. 35. 3-8. <sup>q</sup> Ch. 8. 3. & 9. 30. & 17. 9. Mark, 7. 35. & 5. 43. Luke, 5. 14. <sup>r</sup> Il. 41. 26. 23. 19. Titus, 1. 2. Acts, 10. 43. <sup>s</sup> Il. 42. 1-4. Ch. 3. 17. & 17. 5. Col. 1. 13. John, 1. 18. <sup>t</sup> Il. 61. 1. John, 3. 34. <sup>u</sup> 40. 10. Il. 11. 10. & 51. 3. & 49. 6. <sup>v</sup> Ch. 11. 29. Zech. 9. 9. <sup>w</sup> Il. 40. 11. & 61. 1. Pl. 147. 3. Job, 36. 7, 10. Lam. 3. 31. Ezek. 34. 16. Amos, 8. 7.

duced by the healing word of our blessed Redeemer. What Syriac word the Pharisees might use, we know not: but it is plain that the question is put in very general terms, which best favoured their base purpose of founding an accusation on our Lord's answer. See Doddridge and Macknight.

Ver. 11. *That shall have one sheep] Who, if he have but one sheep that on the sabbath-day should fall into a pit, will not, &c.* The stress is not here to be laid upon a man's having only one sheep, but upon one only falling into a pit. The following Jewish saying is mentioned by some writers: "It is unlawful to do any servile work on the sabbath-day, unless it be on purpose to save a life;" which comprehends also brutes. From what is said here, and Luke xiii. 15. xiv. 5. it appears, that this was then a common saying. The first clause of the next verse might be rendered, *Of how much greater value is a man than a sheep? To do well, καλῶς ποιεῖν*, implies all the offices of charity and tenderness, and is oftentimes used in opposition to *doing evil or killing*, when it bears the same sense as it does here; and the context seems to require it, namely, to *preserve life*. To perform the lovely pleasing acts of kindness and beneficence, is preferable to sacrifice or any ceremonial performance; the former being a more essential duty, more pleasing to God, and more beneficial to mankind. See Doddridge, Beaufobre and Lenfant, and Heylin.

Ver. 14. *How they might destroy him] This is the first time that mention is made of a design on our Saviour's life. It is natural to think that the historian would acquaint us of their concurring in the design, before he would speak of their consulting about the means. See Campbell.*

Ver. 15. *But when Jesus knew it] But Jesus knowing it withdrew.*

Ver. 16. *And charged them, &c.] To what we have observed concerning the reasons why our Lord desired*

to conceal his mighty works in the note on ch. viii. 2. would add the following remarks: This concealment himself may seem strange in one who was come to enlighten the world, and was to suffer death for the glory of the truth. This reservedness may be thought to look as if he had a mind to conceal himself, and not to be known to the world for the Messiah, nor to be believed as such; but we should be of another mind, and consider this proceeding of his according to divine wisdom, suited to a fuller manifestation and evidence of his being the Messiah, when we consider that he was to fill the time foretold for his ministry; and, after a life illustrious in miracles and good works, attended with humility, meekness, patience, and suffering, and every way conformable to the prophecies concerning him; should be brought to the cross, and with all quietness be brought to the cross, though there was no guilt found in him. This could not have been, if, as he appeared in public and began to preach, he had openly professed himself to have been the Messiah, who owned that kingdom which he published to be for the Sanhedrim would then have laid hold of him, and got him in their power, and thereby have taken his life; at least they would have disturbed his work, and hindered the work he was about; unless he had exercised his Almighty power in a way that we have not expected. That this induced him to avoid the reproaching them, and falling into their hands, is evident from John vii. 1. Such was the will of our Blessed Saviour, who could have called for legions of angels to help him, or done himself what he pleased in heaven and in hell.

Ver. 17-21. *That it might be fulfilled, &c.] In this prophecy, we refer the reader to the note on ch. xlii. 1, &c. just observing, that it is not quoted exactly according to the Hebrew original, though having contracted it.*



smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

21 <sup>a</sup> And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

22 ¶ <sup>a</sup> Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, inasmuch that the blind and dumb

both spake and saw.

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, <sup>b</sup> Is not this the son of David?

24 ¶ <sup>c</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

25 And <sup>d</sup> Jesus knew their thoughts, and

<sup>a</sup> H. 11. 10. Pf. 9. 10. Rom. 15. 9—12. Ver. 18. <sup>b</sup> Luke, 11. 14. Ch. 9. 32. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 9. 33. John, 3. 3. & 7. 31. Ch. 1. 1. & 15. 22. Luke, 1. 32. Rom. 1. 3. & 9. 5. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 9. 34. Mark, 3. 22—30. Luke, 11. 15—23. Ch. 10. 25. <sup>e</sup> Ver. 15. Ch. 9. 4. John, 2. 25. & 21. 17. Heb. 4. 13. Rev. 2. 23.

Ver. 20. *And smoking flax, &c.*] *And a dimly burning taper he will not extinguish, till he render his laws victorious; or, till he hath made justice victorious.* It is said at ver. 18. that he shall teach the nations judgment; by which I understand, says Dr. Heylin, in nearly these words, that self-judgment [the *nosce teipsum*, *self-knowledge*, reduced to practice] which is, under divine grace, the ground of all morality, and commonly named judgment in the scripture. This on the first awakenings of the soul must be greatly defective: self-knowledge is then dim, as the *smoking wick*, and good purposes weak as the *broken reed*; yet, under the conduct of Christ, these unpromising dispositions will improve by continual accessions of divine light, till the penitent sinner, enabled to lay hold upon Christ by simple faith, becomes conscious of an interest in his blood, and feels a renovation of nature, which is here meant by *sending forth judgment unto victory*.

Ver. 21. *And in his name, &c.*] St. Matthew has here followed the LXX. In Isaiah it is, *and the isles shall wait for his law*: but the meaning of both passages is the same; for the Evangelists use the name of God with that latitude which it has in the Hebrew language, wherein it denotes the Deity himself, his perfections, his worship, his laws, and, in one word, every thing relating to religion. In the language of the Old Testament, the *isles* commonly denote the idolatrous nations to the west of Judæa. The prophet's meaning therefore is, that the heathen nations, charmed with the kindness and gentleness of the Messiah's kingdom, the equity of his government, and the beauty and rectitude of his laws, shall, through divine grace, trust in him, or obtain for themselves protection and safety by becoming his subjects. See Macknight and Vitringa.

Ver. 22. *One possessed, &c.*] *A demoniac.*

Ver. 24. *This fellow doth not cast out, &c.*] The Pharisees affirmed, that Jesus performed his miracles, particularly on possessed persons, by the assistance of Beelzebub, for two reasons; first, Jesus had all along been at great pains to oppose those superstitions which most of the teachers and people of that age looked upon as the essentials of religion, and extolled as the principal branches of piety. Hence they considered him, who decried them, as a very flagitious person; and because it is supposed, Deut. xiii. 1—3. that a false prophet might work signs and wonders, with an intention to turn men from the worship of God, they thought our Lord was a deceiver of that kind; affirming that he performed all his miracles by the assistance of evil spirits, and with a view to seduce the people from their obedience to God. Secondly, The demons, in addressing

Jesus, honoured him with the title of Messiah. This, it is probable, his enemies said the devils would never have done, had he not been in compact with them. Hence we see the reason why our Lord, on several occasions, strictly charged the devils not to make him known: he would not have their testimony, because he foresaw that a bad use would be made of it by men of evil minds. The truth is, that the account which the Pharisees gave of Christ's miracles, and which they endeavoured to propagate, in order to prevent the effect which they might have had upon the people, though it was altogether false and malicious, and even absurd, in the sight of impartial judges; yet, placed in the light just now mentioned, had some shew of argument in it, at least to persons whose prejudices and interests were favoured by it. Accordingly, among other causes, it contributed not a little to the infidelity of the Jews, which, to any thinking mind, cannot but be matter of great wonder, considering what multitudes were witnesses of the many miracles which Jesus performed on the sick of all sorts; on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, and the lame; on paralytics, lunatics, demoniacs, and other miserable objects; nay, and on dead persons, whom he raised again to life; on the winds, and on the seas; in a word, on every part of nature. See the note on ch. x. 25. It may be proper to observe once for all, that the word *fellow* is not in the Greek, but inserted by our translators. In the original it is *Oütos*, *he*, or *this man*; the term is certainly used contemptuously.

Ver. 25, 26. *And Jesus knew their thoughts, &c.*] It frequently happens that, through ignorance or weakness, men form wrong judgments of things; a misfortune which, because it necessarily springs from the imperfection of human nature, does not deserve the very harshest censure; but when wrong judgments proceed from evil dispositions, they become highly culpable; therefore, to shew that the judgment which the Pharisees passed at this time upon our Lord's miracles was of the latter kind, the Evangelist observes, that Jesus *knew their thoughts*; *knew* that the wickedness of their hearts, and not the weakness of their understandings, had led them to form the opinion they had uttered, if it was their real opinion; or rather to affirm it contrary to their conviction; which was the reason that at the conclusion of his defence he reprimanded them in the sharpest manner. Accordingly, addressing himself both to them and the people, he demonstrated the absurdity of their calumny, by an argument drawn from the common affairs of life: *Every kingdom, &c.* as much

said unto them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

26 And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by 'Beelzebub cast out devils, 'by whom do your children cast *them* out?

? therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then 'the kingdom of God is come unto you.

29 'Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

30 'He that is not with me is against me

\* Gal. 5. 15. If. 9. 21. † Or *Beelzebub*. And so ver. 24. ‡ Mark, 9. 38, 39. Luke, 9. 49, 50. Acts, 19. 13. § Luke, 19. 22. ¶ John, 3. 20. to condemn you. † Luke, 9. 60. Mark, 1. 14, 15. Dan. 2. 44. & 7. 14. Luke, 1. 33. Heb. 12. 28. If. 9. 6, 7. The gospel dispensation. ‡ If. 49. 24, 25. John, 16. 11. Luke, 11. 21, 22. Mark, 3. 27. † Luke, 11. 23. & 9. 50. Mark, 9. 40.

as to say, "If evil spirits assist me in working miracles for the confirmation of my doctrine, they do what they can to promote the spiritual worship and ardent love of the true God, and as effectually as possible excite men to the practice of universal justice, benevolence, temperance, and self-government; all these virtues being powerfully recommended by my doctrine. But thus to make the evil spirits fight against themselves, is evidently to make them ruin their own interest; unless it can be thought that the strength and welfare of a society is advanced by jarring discord, and destructive civil wars: your judgment, therefore, of my conduct, is palpably malicious and absurd. This answer of our Lord's demonstratively proves, that *Beelzebub* and *Satan* are names of the same person; and consequently that *Satan* was considered as the *prince* of those *demons* who were cast out by Christ, and who are elsewhere represented as *his angels*. It may not be improper to add here, that the Jewish rabbis call every demon by the name of *Satan*, and often use the name in the plural number. So they call *Sammaël* (which is but another name for *Beelzebub*) the head or prince of all the *Satans*." See Casaubon on the place, and Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons, vol. iii. p. 545.

Ver. 27. *By whom do your children, &c.*] *Your sons, &c.* Dr. Chandler paraphrases the verse thus: "You do not impute the miracles of your prophets to *Beelzebub*, but, on the evidence of these miracles, you receive them as the messengers of God; nevertheless you reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of evil spirits. Is this conduct of a piece? Wherefore these prophets shall be your judges; they shall condemn you." Others, however, suppose, and, as it seems to me, with better reason, that by *your sons* is meant *your disciples*, or *your countrymen* in general; for that many of the Jews did at this time attempt to cast out devils, is plain from Mark ix. 38. Luke ix. 49. Acts xix. 13. and Josephus, Antiq. lib. viii. c. 2. Calvin thinks that God conferred a power of this kind on some particular persons among the Jews anciently, that, by thus proving his presence among them, he might retain the nation in the faith of his covenant; and that the people, having experienced God's power in those instances, came foolishly to institute for themselves the office of an exorcist. Agreeably to this it may be

observed, that our Lord's argument does not require that the demons were actually expelled by these exorcists; it is sufficient that the Jews thought they were expelled, and did not condemn those pretended miracles, as they Christ's real ones. See Whitby and Grotius on the place.

Ver. 28. *Then the kingdom of God is come unto you*] This is, "You may thereby discover that I am the Messiah; or that king who was promised to the Jews." The miracles of our Lord, and the manner in which he performed them, were manifest demonstrations of his having been sent from God (see John iii. 2.), and consequently that what he said of himself was true. But the *casting out of devils*, in particular, was a miracle which proved to be the Messiah; since he came into the world on purpose to *destroy the works of the devils*. See 1 John, John xii. 31. Heb. ii. 14. and Beaufobre and Lefebvre.

Ver. 29. *A strong man's house*] *The house of the strong one*. See Isai. xlix. 24, 25. The *strong one* is the *strong one*, and the *prince of this world*. The argument supposes, that the strong one is actually present to his house; and indeed the case in question proves the presence of Satan. The house of the strong one, into which Christ entered, was the world, fitly called *Beelzebub's palace*, because there he is served by luxury, lust, conceit, pride, anger, and other evil passions of men, *goods* or *vessels* belonging to this strong one, which are spoiled, are the wicked, called *Beelzebub's vessels* figuratively; as St. Paul is called by Christ *his chosen vessel*. Acts ix. 15. Or, if we choose to pursue the argument more closely, by the *vessels* or *furniture* of *Beelzebub's house* we may understand the lusts and passions of hearts, the instruments by which he keeps possession of them. See Heylin, Macknight, and Chemnitz.

Ver. 30. *He that is not with me, &c.*] "If, as the maxims of the world, those are reckoned who do not assist us against our foes; I, who am deeply engaged in the opposition to Satan, shall rather to be reckoned his enemy; and he who has set himself, according to his ability, to gain into my kingdom with me, is but vainly scattering abroad; and, however he is employed in his time and labour in what will at last turn to his account. Much more criminal and fatal than the character and conduct of those be, who, with

and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

31 Wherefore I say unto you, All-manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto

men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him:

▪ Matt. 28. Luke, 12. 10. Heb. 6. 6. & 10. 26—29. 1 John, 5. 16. with 1 Tim. 1. 13, 15, 16. Heb. 7. 25. 3 John, 1. 9 & 2. 1, 2. Ezek. 33. 11. 11. 1. 18. & 35. 7. & 44. 22.

“implacable malice, oppose my cause, and are resolved, at all adventures, to do their utmost to bear it down, as you are attempting to do by these vile insinuations which you have now suggested.” See Doddridge, and the note on Mark ix. 40.

Ver. 31. *Shall be forgiven unto men*] It is evidently our Lord's meaning here, not that every such sin shall actually be pardoned, but that it is, in the divine economy, capable of being pardoned, or is pardonable. Dr. Campbell renders the passage, *in men is pardonable*.

Ver. 31, 32. The inference in these verses is not particularly connected with the member of the discourse immediately preceding it; but it arises from the whole series of the reasoning; as if our Lord had said, “Since all these arguments make it evident that I perform my miracles by the Spirit of God, you should not ascribe them to the devil; yet this blasphemy may be forgiven you, because you may repent and believe, upon receiving stronger proofs of my mission from God. When that period comes, namely, after I am raised from the dead by the Holy Ghost; when his miraculous gifts are shed down upon believers, and the nature of the Messiah's kingdom is more fully made known, the foundation of your prejudices against me shall be wholly removed: wherefore, if you shall then speak against the Holy Ghost by maliciously affirming that his gifts and miracles come from the devil, it shall not be forgiven you; because it is a sin which you cannot possibly repent of, inasmuch as farther evidence shall not be offered you; but you shall be punished for it both in this world and in the world to come.” Or we may translate the clause differently: “It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, neither in the age to come;” importing, that no expiation was provided for the blasphemer of the Spirit, neither under the Jewish nor Christian dispensation. St. Mark adds, ch. iii. 30. *Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit; signifying, that our Lord declared the irremissibility of the sin against the Holy Ghost on this occasion, that the Pharisees might be awakened to a sense of their danger, in approaching so near as they did to that sin, when, being unable to deny his miracles, they represented them as performed by the assistance of the devil.* The reader desirous of seeing the above interpretation indubitably confirmed is referred to Dr. Whitby's note, and 4th appendix to St. Matthew, and to John Hales's tracts. Archbishop Tillotson, vol. i. serm. 17. has endeavoured to prove, that the sin against the Holy Ghost was that which these Pharisees committed in ascribing the miracles of Christ to Satan: and certainly, if they persisted in that blasphemy after the full demonstration of Christ's mission, this was really to sin against the Holy Ghost. Dr. Clarke's paraphrase, vol. vi. serm. 1. nearly agrees with what we have above given; but for the satisfaction of the reader

on a subject of so much inquiry, we shall here subjoin it:

“Since it is as evident as it is possible for any thing to be, that the works which I do are by the immediate authority of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, therefore whosoever shall resist this great conviction, by so unreasonable and obstinate a degree of malice, as to ascribe these very works, these greatest and highest evidences of divine authority, to the power of the devil; to such a person God will never afford any farther means of conviction; and therefore, though all other blasphemies, and all particular sins whatsoever, may be repented of and forgiven, yet he who is guilty of this total corruption of mind, this maliciously perverse and desperate rejecting of the greatest and highest conviction which God vouchsafes to afford men, shall never have granted him any farther means of repentance and forgiveness. Every particular kind or sort of sin whatsoever, and all other blasphemies whatsoever, shall be forgiven men: even he that speaks against me (says our Lord) in all other respects, or calumniates me upon any other account whatsoever, and is not at first convinced by my preaching and exhortations, may yet afterwards be convinced by the mighty works he shall see, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, and so repent and be forgiven: but he who obstinately resists even this greatest and most extraordinary method which God has thought fit to make use of for the conversion of mankind, and maliciously reviles the most evident operations of the Spirit of God; such a one has no farther means left, by which he might be convinced and brought to repentance, and consequently he can never be forgiven.”

Ver. 32. *Whosoever speaketh a word, &c.*] The prejudices which alleviated the sin of the Jews, who rejected Jesus during his own lifetime, and which in the period here referred to (*viz.* the day of Pentecost) were to be removed, arose from such causes as these: 1st, His parentage and place of abode; for his countrymen, being well acquainted with both, would not allow him to be the Messiah, because they imagined when the Messiah came, no man would know whence he was, John vii. 27. 2dly, The old prophet Elias had not appeared to usher in the Messiah, as they expected, according to the doctrine of the scribes, Matt. xvii. 10. founded on the prophecy, Mal. iv. 5. 3dly, Christ's mean condition of life occasioned violent prejudices against him in the minds of the Jews, who firmly believed that their Messiah would be surrounded with all the pomp and splendour of an earthly prince; and who, in speaking of him, had been accustomed to give him the titles of the *King of Israel*, and *Son of God*. But, by our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and by the descent of the Spirit on the Apostles, the foundation of all these prejudices was sapp'd. Then he was demon-

but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

33 ° Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

34 ° O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

35 ° A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

38 ¶ Then certain of the Scribes and

° Mark, 3. 29. Heb. 6. 4—8. & 10. 26—31. 1 Sam. 2. 25. 2 Theff. 1. 9. If. 22. 14. ° Ch. 7. 17. Luke, 6. 41—45. John, 15. 5. 3. 7. & 23. 33. Luke, 6. 45. Job, 32. 18—20. ° Ch. 13. 52. Prov. 10, 20, 21. 1 Sam. 24. 13. If. 32. 6. Jer. 6. 7. Luke, 6. 45. 15. Ecol. 12. 14. Rom. 14. 12. Exod. 20. 7. Lev. 19. 12. Eph. 5. 4, 6. Prov. 18. 1. ° Ch. 16. 1—4. Luke, 11. 16, 29—32. 1 Cor. 1. Mark, 8. 12.

frated to be *the Son of God with power*, Rom. i. 4. Then he was known to have *come down from heaven*, John vi. 60—62. Then he was *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31.—A kingly dignity, infinitely superior to all the most dazzling honours of an earthly diadem. See Macknight.

*Ver. 33. Either make the tree good, &c.*] “If you make my miracles *Beelzebub’s*, you must make my doctrine his also: all the good I do, you must say is his work; all the exhortations by which I excite sinners to repentance are his; the knowledge which I give you of the way of life, and the motives I offer for your encouragement to enter upon it, are his. On the other hand, if you make my doctrine *GOD’s*, you must make my miracles his likewise; for men judge of the nature of an agent by the actions which he does, just as they judge of trees by the fruit they produce; for which reason you may easily know that I am not in league with *Beelzebub*; but that you yourselves are so.” Or, we may give the words another turn, thus: “Since you, Pharisees, pretend to extraordinary holiness, your words and actions should be all holy; judge therefore candidly, and speak reverently of the divine dispensations; or, if you will blaspheme, lay aside your pretensions to religion; for, however specious these may be, your true characters will be discovered by your words and actions, even as a tree is known by its fruit.” See Macknight, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 34—37. O generation of vipers, &c.*] Without attending to the context, and our Saviour’s general argument, which he is here closely pursuing, interpreters have been strangely perplexed with the phrase *every idle word*, in ver. 36., which many of them have considered as a distinct and separate injunction; whereas it is closely connected with that *calumnious and blasphemous way of speaking*, proceeding out of an evil heart, which our Saviour is so sharply condemning in the Pharisees. He declares that the atrociousness of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not lessened by its being a sin committed in words; the reason whereof is obvious: words are only the dress of thought; they express the dispositions of men’s hearts, and consequently partake of the nature of those dispositions; on which account we shall be rewarded or punished for

our words as well as for our actions. The malicious blasphemous heart discovers its malignity by malicious and blasphemous words, and those are the *idle or vain words* whereof our Saviour here speaks, as the context indisputably proves. The editors of the Prussian translation have observed very well, that the LXX, where the apostles generally make use of, render the Hebrew word *שקר* *shaker*, which signifies *falsehood, reviling, lunny*,—by *vain, or unprofitable*. Compare the Hebrew with the LXX, Exod. v. 9. Hosea xii. 1. Mic. i. 14. ii. 3. and see Ephes. v. 6. Now it is manifest from ver. 31, 32. that our Saviour is not speaking here of *impertinent*, but of *false, reviling, and blasphemous*. For this reason some manuscripts read *ωωνησεν*, *wicked*; thus St. Chrysostom understood it. To what these observe, we may add, that the word *idle* was used formerly, and perhaps at the time when our translation was made, to convey the idea of *wicked*; for though *vain* is now in the first verse of the first psalm of St. Jerome’s version, *to wicked wight his ear*, in some ancient versions, *is, to idle wight*. But God forbid, that any thing should drop from my pen, which might in the least measure contribute to injure the cause of holiness. I am fully conscious, from a thousand texts, as well as from the general tenor of the word of God, that the whole of religion consists in living in the presence and to the glory of God in all well-pleasing, which includes the whole of the whole life, and consequently the whole of our conversation; and that every thing we are, and speak, has a constant and immediate reference to our state. But as an honest and faithful Commentator candidly and without reserve give the meaning of a passage in the word of God, agreeably to the best of my judgment, united with the best of the draw from other genuine Commentators. See ver. 26. and the whole of James, ch. iii. where the subject of our words and conversation will be treated at large, to the full satisfaction, I trust, of every reader.

*Ver. 38, 39. Then certain of the Scribes, &c.*] Our Saviour’s reasoning was clear and unanswerable; some of the Scribes and Pharisees, desirous to dispute to another topic, and fully demon-

the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39 But he answered and said unto them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas :

40 <sup>1</sup> For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 <sup>2</sup> The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 16. 4. & 23. 33. If. 57. 3. Mark, 8. 38. John, 4. 48. & 2. 18. James, 4. 4. 1 John, 2. 15. <sup>2</sup> Jonab, 1. 17. <sup>3</sup> 2. 2. Ch. 16. 27. & 20. <sup>4</sup> Luke, 2. 19. <sup>5</sup> Jonab, 3. 5-10. Luke, 11. 32. Jer. 3. 12. Esck. 16, 55. Rom. 2. 27.

hardness of their hearts, required a sign from heaven; as much as to say, "Master, thou professest thyself a teacher of extraordinary authority, and we may justly expect some proportionable proof of it: Now these supposed dispositions which we have lately seen or heard of, are so liable to fraud and collusion, that we cannot fully acquiesce in them, but would gladly see a more remarkable and convincing sign from thee; and particularly some such celestial appearance as several of our ancient prophets gave." The words of St. Luke, xi. 16. expressly fix it to this sense: and St. Matthew, in another relation of this kind, ch. xvi. 1. tells us they demanded a sign from heaven: (See Mark viii. 11. the note on ch. iv. 6. and John vi. 30.) and they might probably conclude, that they had the better excuse for making such a proposal, as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Elijah had given such signs. Jesus told them, that their requiring a sign after so many miracles were wrought to convince them, shewed them to be a wicked and adulterous generation, a spurious breed which had degenerated from the faith and piety of their great progenitor Abraham; for which reason they should have no other, but such as they were every day beholding in his miraculous works, the sign of the prophet Jonah excepted. He meant hereby the miracle of his own resurrection from the dead, typified by the deliverance of Jonah from the fish's belly, and to which he often appealed, as the great evidence of his mission from God. We may just observe, that as the resurrection of Christ was attended with the appearance of a descending angel, it was, with greater exactness than is generally observed, the very thing which these Pharisees demanded; a sign from heaven. Some have objected to our Saviour, as being unwilling to give all the evidence of his mission which he might have given, on account of his refusing a sign when it was demanded. But to this it may be replied, that as the persons who made this demand were actuated by no laudable motives, but by perverseness and prejudice, which had already made them withstand the clearest evidence, and the greatest miracles, and which it was in vain to expect to conquer by working more miracles; it was therefore as reasonable to refuse to work more, as it is not to persist in reasoning with a man, who shews that he reasons only for the sake of contention, without any concern to discover truth. But when we recollect what was the sign which they desired, the objection is even absurd. It was a sign which they were led to expect only by their false notions of a temporal Messiah; it was absolutely inconsistent with the truth of the Messiah's character: to have given it, would have been to become just such a deliverer as the Jews expected; it was therefore impossible that it could be

given: instead of giving it, it was proper to affirm expressly, as Jesus did affirm, that it never would be given, and that it did not belong to the Messiah, justly conceived. Whenever a sign was asked, he appealed for the certainty of his mission to his own resurrection from the dead. So far was he from refusing any rational evidence of his mission, that even their perverseness hindered him not from voluntarily pointing out the strongest. His resurrection was in itself the most stupendous miracle, and its force was increased by its being in this manner appealed to; for it thus became the accomplishment of the prophecies uttered by him. But there is a farther propriety in his foretelling it, when they required a sign: it was a plain insinuation that their opinion of the manner of the Messiah's appearance was wrong; that he was not such a prince as they expected; for by it he informed them expressly, that he must be put to death, or at least die, before he entered on his kingdom. His answer was therefore fit for leading them to a juster interpretation of Daniel's prophecy (ch. vii. 13, 14.), and for preventing their rejection of the Messiah, because he wanted a character which was never predicted of him. See Dr. Gerard's Dissertations on subjects relating to the Genius and Evidences of Christianity," p. 186, &c.

Ver. 40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights] See the note on Jonah, i. 17. Instead of the whale's, we should read the fish's belly. It is no where in the Old Testament said that it was a whale, and *κατος* signifies any large fish in general. See Mintert on the word. The heart of the earth is a Hebraism for the earth. See what Ezekiel says of the city of Tyre, which was situated on the sea-shore, ch. xxvii. 4. xxviii. 2. Our Saviour, in the expression here used, alludes to Jonah, ii. 2. The miraculous preservation of Jonah for three days in the belly of a fish, was to the Ninevites a certain proof of his mission from God, being credibly attested to them, either by the mariners, who threw him overboard at a great distance from land; or by some other persons, who happening to see the fish vomit him alive upon the shore might inquire his history of him; and who, in the course of their business, met him afterwards at Nineveh, where they confirmed his preaching by relating what they had seen. In like manner Christ's resurrection from the dead, after having been three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, being credibly attested to the Jews, should clearly demonstrate that he came from God.

Ver. 41, 42. The men of Nineveh, &c.] The Ninevites being judged at the same time with the men of that generation, and their behaviour being compared together, should make the guilt of the latter appear in its true colours,

it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and, behold, <sup>a</sup> a greater than Jonas is here.

42 <sup>a</sup> The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, <sup>a</sup> a greater than Solomon is here.

43 <sup>b</sup> When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he <sup>c</sup> walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

<sup>a</sup> If. 9. 6. John, 1. 14. & 10. 50. & 3. 31. Rom. 9. 5. Titus, 2. 13. Phil. 2. 6, 7. <sup>b</sup> 1 Kings, 10. 7. <sup>c</sup> Chr. 9. 1. Luke, 11. 31. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 7. 1 & 17. 5. Ch. 12. 5. Col. 2. 3, 9. John, 1. 18. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 11. 24. Acts, 8. 13. <sup>f</sup> Job. 1. 7. & 2. 2. <sup>g</sup> 1 Peter, 5. 8. Ch. 8. 29. <sup>h</sup> Pl. 87. 11. Gal. 5. 19—21. Titus, 3. 3. <sup>i</sup> Pl. 87. 12. If. 66. 3, 4. Heb. 6. 4—8. & 10. 26. <sup>j</sup> 2 Peter, 2. 20—22. Ch. 21. 38—41. & 15. 13. & 23. 34—John, 15. 22, 24. <sup>k</sup> 1 Thess. 2, 15, 16. <sup>l</sup> Mark, 3. 31—35. & 6. 3. Luke, 8. 19—21. Ch. 13. 55. John, 2. 11. & 7. 3. Acts, 1. 14. <sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. 9. Gal. 1. 19.

lours, and condemn them: for though they were idolaters, they repented at the preaching of Jonah, a stranger, a poor person, and one who continued among them only three days, and wrought no miracle among them to make them believe him: but the men of that generation, though worshippers of the true God by profession, could every day hear unmoved the much more powerful preaching of a prophet infinitely greater than Jonah; even the preaching of the eternal Son of God, who confirmed his doctrine by the most astonishing miracles. Our Saviour likewise told them that the *queen of the south*, (of the south-country, Campbell,) being compared in the day of judgment with them, would condemn them; she having undertaken a long journey to *hear the wisdom of Solomon*; whereas they would not hear one infinitely wiser than Solomon, though he was come to their very doors; or, if they condescended to *hear his wisdom*, they would not embrace it. See the note on 1 Kings, x. 1. *From the uttermost parts of the earth, ἐκ τῶν περὶ τῶν τῆς γῆς*, is rendered by some commentators, *from the utmost bounds of the land*. “I do not think,” says one of them, “that the word *γῆ* is used in the New Testament “for the earth: *γῆ* is the land, by eminence; οὐκ οὐρανὸν, the Roman empire; κοσμοῦ, the earth.” One cannot help remarking the very sublime manner, yet the perfect modesty and decorum, wherewith our Lord here speaks of himself. The humble form of his appearance, and his necessary reserve in declaring himself the Messiah in so many words, made it yet more expedient, that by such phrases as these before us, he should sometimes intimate it; and indeed, his saying that he *was greater than Solomon*, that most illustrious of all the descendants of David, was as plain an intimation as could well be given.

Ver. 43—45. *When the unclean spirit, &c.*] Our Lord here finishes his defence, alluding to the occasion of the dispute, ver. 22. with a parable of a possessed person, who, having had a devil or demon expelled out of him, received him back again, with many others, or was taken possession of by them, and thereby was brought into a worse condition than ever. By *dry places*, are meant *deserts*. See Psalm's cvi. 14. lxx. Dr. Whitby and some others interpret this of the devils being cast out of Judæa,

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out: and, when he is come, he findeth it <sup>d</sup> empty, swept, and garnished.

45 <sup>e</sup> Then goeth he, and taketh with himself 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. <sup>f</sup> Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

46 ¶ While he yet talked to the people, <sup>g</sup> behold, *his mother and his brethren stood*

yet finding no rest in the deserts of heathenism, because there also the apostles cast them out: which drove them to return again to the Jews, and to make them worse than before. Dr. Doddridge thinks, that after the devil driven out, he would be under a kind of restraint for a while; and that the circumstance of his going into *dry places* is beautifully imagined, to represent those malignant beings as impatient at the sight of mankind, when restrained from hurting them, and as choosing on such occasions to seek their rest in the prospect of a sandy desert: but needless perhaps thus to stretch the minute circumstances of a parable: if the moral intended be clearly expressed by the chief strokes of it, a variety of lesser circumstances may without any particular signification be added, to enliven the principal members of the composition: the interpretation of a parable, therefore, we are not under the least necessity of assigning a moral meaning to every particular circumstance; at the same time, if all circumstances naturally suggest such a meaning, the parable is so far from being the more perfect: in this of the ejected demon, the circumstance of his going away to deserts after he was possessed, may be one of the kind above mentioned. Those who have read the sad account which Josephus gives of the temper and conduct of the Jews after the ascension of Christ, and just before their final destruction by the Romans, must acknowledge that no emblem could be more proper to describe them, than that which our Saviour here uses. Their characters are the vilest that can be conceived, and they pressed on to their own ruin, they had been possessed by legions of devils, and were come up to the last degree of madness. See Macknight and Chemnitz.

Ver. 46. *Behold, his mother and his brethren*] <sup>h</sup> Ver. 55. Mary was attended by her sister's children, and the *cousins*, or, according to the Hebrew dialect, *brethren* of Christ, (see on ch. x. 2.) and who were present during her stay in Capernaum; a piece of respect to her blessed Son could not shew, on account of the nature of his ministry. It was on occasion of the dispute with him, that Jesus uttered that excellent parable in the subsequent verses, which will never be forgotten.

without, desiring to speak with him.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

<sup>c</sup> Ch. 10. 2-4. Luke, 6. 13-16. Acts, 1. 13. John, 17. 12. <sup>a</sup> Gal. 5. 6. & 6. 15. Col. 3. 11. Ch. 7. 21. Pf. xv. & 24. 3-5. John, 13. 17. & 14. 14. Rom. 2. 13. James, 1. 22. 1 Peter, 1. 15, 16. 2 Peter, 1. 4-10. Luke, 11. 27, 28.

there are memories in the world to retain it, or tongues to repeat it.

Ver. 48. *Who is my mother? &c.*] To suppose that our Lord here intends to put any slight on his mother, would be very absurd. He only took the opportunity of expressing his affection to his obedient disciples in a peculiarly endearing manner, which could not but be a very great comfort to them, and would be to Susanna, Joanna, Mary Magdalene, and the other pious women who sat near him, (Luke, viii. 2, 3.) a rich equivalent for all the fatigue and expence which their zeal for their heavenly Master occasioned. And as this seems to have been towards the beginning of their progress, it is observable that our Lord appears to have been peculiarly concerned for their encouragement. See Luke, xi. 27, 28. and Doddridge.

Ver. 50. *The same is my brother, and sister, and mother*] *He is my brother, or sister, or mother.* Doddridge. This short speech of our Lord, related by the evangelist with great simplicity, is, without his seeming to design it, one of the finest encomiums imaginable. Could the most elaborate panegyric have done our Lord and his religion half the honour which this divine sentiment has done them? *Whoever shall do the will of my Father, &c.* "I regard obedience to God so highly, that I prefer the relation that it constitutes, and the union which it begets, to the strongest ties of blood. They who do the will of my Father, have a much greater share in my esteem than my kinsmen; as such, I love them with an affection tender and steady, like that which subsists between the nearest relations; nay, I reckon them, and them only, my brethren, my sisters, and my mother." A high commendation this, and not a reflection upon our Lord's mother, who no doubt was among the chief of those who did the will of God. What veneration should reign in the hearts of men for Jesus and his religion, which exhibits an idea of such perfection and goodness!

*Inferences.*—We may observe with pleasure the zeal which the attendants of Christ expressed, who chose on a sacred festival to expose themselves to hunger as well as toil (ver. 1.), rather than they would lose the benefit of his instructions, which, like the heavenly manna on the day preceding the sabbath, were then poured out in a double plenty. But what numerous auditory is so candid as to contain none who come like these Pharisees, with a desire to cavil rather than to learn? The malignity of their temper sufficiently appeared in taking exception at so small a circumstance, ver. 2. Indeed this is the cha-

49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

acter of hypocrites, and of those who have only a false zeal; they are offended at things in their nature innocent, and even sometimes at such as are good, necessary, and acceptable to God; while they themselves neglect the most essential duties of religion, and especially the great duty of charity.

What our Lord says upon this occasion, and chiefly the expression *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, ver. 7. deserves our best attention. The Christian religion deals not in forms and ceremonies, nay, dispenses even with rituals of divine appointment, when humanity and benevolence interfere with the observation of them. How great then the perverseness and wickedness of those, who sacrifice mercy itself, not merely to ceremonies of divine original, but to their own arbitrary inventions, superstitious dreams, and precarious, though confident determinations. We should practise habitual caution and candour, lest before we are aware we condemn the innocent and the pious, and become guilty of what is much more displeasing in the sight of God, than the faults which a peevish and censorious temper may fancy it discovers in our brethren.

The change of the Jewish into the Christian and spiritual sabbath shews, that Christ is not only *the Lord*, ver. 3. but also the truth and completion of it. When, Lord, wilt thou change this sabbath into that of eternity! into that unchangeable rest, which remaineth to the people of God? Heb. iv. 9.

There are but too many Christians so called, it is to be feared, who regard their *cattle* even more than the souls committed by Providence to their care, and therefore, no doubt, more than their own too: ver. 11, 12. If we owe a great deal to a man, let him be what he will, how much more to a Christian, together with whom we help to form the body of Christ? Strange corruption of the heart of man, to whom it must be proved, that he is permitted at all times to do good!

The malice of the Pharisees did not restrain the benevolence of our compassionate Saviour, nor deprive the poor patient of his cure, ver. 13. The fear of giving offence to Pharisaical persons should never hinder an evangelical labourer from going forward with God's work, according to his rules and maxims. We should never be overcome of evil.

The bare will of our Lord has an Almighty power of restoring life and vigour to our souls. He makes the affliction evident, in order to make known his mercy: *Stretch forth thine hand.* When God designs to heal the withered band of a penitent (and when does he not?), he need only give command, and the penitent begins presently

## C H A P. XIII.

*The parable of the sower and the seed: the exposition of it. The parable of the tares, of the mustard-seed, of the leaven, of the hidden treasure, of the pearl, of the draw-net cast into the sea: and how Christ is contemned of his own countrymen.*

[Anno Domini 30.]

**T**HE same day went Jesus out of the house, <sup>b</sup> and sat by the sea-side.

<sup>a</sup> Acts, 10. 38. If. 63. 1. Gal. 6. 9. <sup>b</sup> Mark, 4. 1—13. Luke, 5. 3. & 8. 4—10. Gen. 49. 10. Ch. 4. 25. & 8. 2. & 14. 13. & 15. 30. & 19. 2. <sup>c</sup> Pf. 49. 3, 4. & 78. 2. Mark iv. Luke viii. xv. xvi. &c. <sup>d</sup> Ver. 37. 18—23. Mark, 4. 3—20. Luke, 8. 4—15.

to stretch it forth to him by prayer and faith. Lord, my soul is before thee, like this hand; vouchsafe to shew it the same saving mercy!

How striking is the prudence of our Lord, who avoided every thing that looked like vanity or ostentation! How striking his humility, meekness, and condescension!—ver. 15, 16. Surely face does not more exactly answer to face in water, than the character of Christ drawn by the prophet to his temper and conduct as described by the Evangelists. How should Zion rejoice, and the daughter of Judah shout, that such a king cometh unto her, meek, and having salvation! He discourages nobody; he bears with the weakness of men with great patience; and while there is any good in us, he forsakes us not. This ought, on one hand, to encourage and make us confide in him; and, on the other, induce us to imitate him; to be humble, meek, and peaceable as he was; to avoid vain-glory, and a desire of praise; to shun quarrels and disputes; to exercise great forbearance towards men; to make allowances for, and condescend to, their weakness.

The Spirit of Christ is not a spirit of contention, murmuring, clamour, or litigiousness: *He shall not strive nor cry!* He who loves all these belongs not to him. The meekness of Jesus Christ, as his Father's minister, was particularly foretold, to teach the ministers of the Gospel, that their ministry is not a ministry of pride, imperiousness, and violence; but of humility, moderation, and mildness.

We have here another triumph of Christ over the evil spirit, ver. 22. and another proof of the horrible corruption of human nature; how prone it is to be captious and cavilling; and at the same time how full of blindness, prejudice, and malignity, against Christ and the Gospel. Who could have thought the *Holy One*, and the *Wisdom of God*, who gave the clearest evidence of his excellent character as divine, and every way infinitely greater than that of Solomon, or any of the prophets, should ever have been traduced as a confederate with the devil; or that it should have ever entered into the heart of man to blaspheme the blessed Spirit in the highest manifestations of his glory, and stigmatize him as an evil spirit? If we shut our eyes and hearts against the rich means of grace which Christ has given us, in vain do we call for farther evidence, and better means to convince us: *no signs from heaven* would prevail upon us; and the very heathens must reproach us, and rise up in judgment against us; ver. 39, &c.

How great is the danger and the aggravation of sinning against light and grace! The more convictions are stifled,

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, <sup>a</sup> a sower went forth to sow:

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by

the greater is the hardness which ensues; till at length Satan obtains a secure dominion over the sinner, and the worst of all condemnation will pass upon him in the great day; ver. 45. How should the thoughts of such a day to come make us dread every word as well as action, which will then make against us! ver. 36, 37. How should it incite us to set a watch on the door of our lips, and to labour daily to use our tongue so that it may be indeed, as it is called in Scripture, our glory. For this purpose we should endeavour to lay up a good treasure of Christian knowledge and experience in our hearts, ver. 35; that while too many are poisoning those round about them with erroneous principles and vicious discourses, *the opening of our lips may be of righteous things*; and we may still be ready, upon all proper occasions, with freedom, variety, and spirit, to bring forth good and profitable things from the good treasure of our hearts, which may edify those who hear us, and may go from one heart to another.

But let us remember, that before the lips can be sanctified, and the life holy, the heart must be changed; and certainly it is the greatest comfort to hear that by gospel grace the heart may be changed. It is matter of the greatest thankfulness thus expressly to be told, that *all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven*, upon our true repentance; while it is awful to hear, that the *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost* is excepted. Those who, while they cannot deny the facts of Christianity, yet despise and oppose its doctrines, should tremble to think how near they approach to the boundaries of this sin. But let not the humble soul, that trembles at God's word, meditate terror to itself from such a passage; which, when viewed in its due connection, cannot with any shadow of reason be thought to belong to any but those who obstinately reject the Gospel, and maliciously oppose it, when made known to them with its fullest evidence.

In vain do men seek for ways of accommodation to soften the Gospel; there is no medium between loving God and being his enemy; between belonging to Christ or to the devil; between being governed by charity or by self-love; ver. 30. If we would belong to Christ as we ought, we must give ourselves entirely to him. He alone has paid down the price for us; he alone ought to be our Lord.

The devil ceases not to tempt those whom Christ has taken from him: he has no other joy but in doing hurt to man: he makes new efforts, and takes new precautions, that he may not fail to ruin us; while we perhaps use none at all to escape him. The reason is, because



the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.

5 Some fell upon <sup>e</sup> stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they

<sup>e</sup> Ezek. 11. 19. & 36. 26. Zech. 7. 12. Luke, 14. 28.

he counts our loss his gain and delight, and we count not our salvation our proper business. How much is a *relapse* to be dreaded! This renders the sinner more intolerable than before, through his ingratitude and perfidiousness, ver. 43—45. Habits are formed and strengthened by relapses, and relapses are multiplied and become more incurable through new habits. How is it that the sinner has not eyes to see what a soul is, when deserted by the Holy Ghost and his precious gifts, and made a slave to as many contrary habits, as it were to *seven devils*, to whom it has surrendered up itself by sin? What compassion would a poor galley-slave, loaded with seven chains, raise in our hearts! With what terror, then, ought we to be affected at the idea of a captive soul, reduced by frequent relapses under the power of *seven devils*!

What can be more gracious and indulgent than those declarations, by which our Redeemer draws us, as with the cords of a man, and as with the bands of love? Behold my mother and my brethren! All obedient believers are nearly related to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, they bear his image, they have his nature, they are of his family. He loves them, owns them, converses freely with them, as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, provides for them, sees that they want nothing proper for them. When he died, he left them rich legacies: now he is in heaven, he keeps up a correspondence with them by his Spirit, continually intercedes for them, and will at length,—glorious issue of his relationship!—receive all those who perseveringly cleave to him in faith into his eternal kingdom, and confess them before men, before angels, and before his Father himself. Who, then, would not exert their utmost endeavour, through his grace, to do the will of God; that they may be thus dear, thus nearly allied to that Redeemer, who ought by so many tender, so many interesting bonds, to be dear to them?

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Those who are most corrupt in their morals, sometimes think to atone for the defect by their rigid zeal for the rituals of religion; as was the case of the Pharisees, who, while they lowered the other commands to the mere letter, stretched the strict observation of the sabbatical rest to an extreme that was never designed: which false explanation our Lord confutes, and shews that works of mercy and charity may be practised consistent with the most religious observance of the sabbath-day.

1. The occasion given for this discourse arose from the invidious reflections of the Pharisees on the disciples of Jesus for rubbing the ears of corn in their hands on the sabbath-day, as they passed through the fields, and eating them, being hungry. This the Pharisees observed, and mentioned to Jesus as a thing unlawful to be done on the sabbath-day. The law had allowed the gathering of such ears of corn, Deut. xxiii. 25.; but they regard the bodily labour of rubbing them in their hands as a transgression

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of the rest enjoined, according to the traditions of the elders. Note; (1.) Christ's disciples were inured to want and coarse fare: we must not think it hard, if God in his providence at any time brings us into the like straits, and causes us to know what it is to be hungry. (2.) The most innocent actions are liable to the most perverse interpretations from those who wait for an opportunity to find fault.

2. Christ vindicates the practice of his disciples by allowed precedents or unanswerable arguments.

[1.] By allowed precedents.

(1.) In the case of David and his men; who, being pressed with hunger, were, with the high-priest's consent, permitted to eat the shew-bread, which none ordinarily might do but the priests alone. And if it was adjudged lawful to dispense with a positive institution of God to satisfy David's hunger, it surely could not be thought sinful, in like circumstances, to dispense merely with the traditions of the elders.

(2.) In the case of the priests; who were obliged to do much servile work on the sabbath-day, such as slaying, skinning, and cutting up the beasts for sacrifice, &c.; and yet none could conceive that to be a transgression of the commandment; and how much less the merely rubbing out a few ears of corn in their hands for necessary food. But it might be objected that they were not priests, and that the temple-service had a particular dispensation. Therefore,

[2.] Our Lord adds arguments to the examples which he produced.

(1.) *I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple.* And if the priests were blameless in their service, much more were the disciples of Jesus allowed to satisfy their hunger when attending on their Master, who was the Lord of the temple, in dignity and holiness infinitely greater, having all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, and from him alone that fabric derived all the sanctity which it possessed.

(2.) *If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice,* Hof. vi. 6. *ye would not have condemned the guiltless.* They were ignorant of those Scriptures which they pretended to urge; for, if they had understood them, they would have observed, that the great commandment of charity was vastly superior to mere ritual observances, and therefore would never have condemned the disciples for thus satisfying the cravings of hunger on the sabbath-day. Note; Ignorance of God's word is generally the cause of rash censures on our brethren; and this is especially culpable in those who pretend to teach others.

(3.) *The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day.* He who enjoined the rest, and prescribed the rule on mount Sinai, must needs know what obedience himself required, could best interpret his own mind, and was fully authorized to make any alteration that he should think fit. Thus now, though the commandment of observing a seventh day still is in force, he has transferred it from the last to the first day of the week, called from him *the Lord's day.*

A a

3. By

sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth :

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root,

<sup>f</sup> Eph. 3. 17. Col. 2. 7. & 1. 23.

3. By the cure of a paralytic man in the synagogue on a sabbath-day some time after, he took occasion farther to vindicate works of mercy and charity as most lawful and acceptable to God on that day.

[1.] The person on whom the cure was wrought had a *withered arm*, so that he was disabled from labour; yet, though unable to work, while he could walk he failed not to be at the place of worship: and in the way of duty we may hope for a blessing.

[2.] The Pharisees, ever on the watch, suspecting that Jesus would cure him, questioned him concerning his thoughts of the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath-day, which their doctors, except in cases of extremity, had forbidden; and their design herein was to *accuse him*, either to the Sanhedrim, if he acted contrary to their determinations, as a sabbath-breaker; or to the people, if he declared it unlawful, and contradicted his own vindication of his disciples.

[3.] Christ answers them by an appeal to their own conduct. If one of their sheep fell into a pit, none scrupled to draw it out on the sabbath-day: how much then was a man better than a sheep, and his distresses rather to be relieved! No doubt therefore could be made but that it was lawful to do good on the sabbath-day.

[4.] Without delay, and, for aught that appears, without waiting for a request from the poor patient, who might, seeing the temper of these men, be discouraged from making application, *Jesus bids him stretch out his hand*, and power accompanied the command. *He stretched it forth, and, to the astonishment of the beholders, it was restored whole, like as the other.* *Note;* Like this withered arm are our souls by nature, impotent of themselves to every thing that is good; and yet the calls to believe and obey are neither absurd nor unreasonable, since Christ has promised to accompany his word with the efficacy of his Spirit, if we will but use the grace which he has previously given, and stretch forth, as it were, the withered arm.

2dly, Exasperated, instead of convinced, by his preaching and miracles, we are told,

1. The malicious designs of the Pharisees. They met in consultation, determined some way or other to put an end to his obnoxious discourses and his life together; for which this last pretended breach of the sabbath might afford them a handle; cloaking with zeal for religion the blackest crimes of hell.

2. Christ hereupon chose to retire, and avoid the danger which he foresaw, his hour not being yet come; but still he was attended, even in his retirement, by multitudes, to whom he continued his accustomed mercies, healing all their infirmities; but *charged them that they should not make him known*, not desiring fame from his miracles, and now particularly willing to be concealed from the malice of his persecutors. *Note;* God's approbation, not man's applause, is what we should covet.

3. The fulfilment of the Scripture herein is observed, Isa. xlii. 1—4. *Behold*, with wonder and astonishment,

*my servant*, so low he humbled himself, who counted it no robbery to be equal with God,—*whom I have chosen*;—designed for the office of Mediator, and now qualified for the work of redemption; *my beloved*, in whom my soul is well pleased; from eternity the object of his complacence; and in his person, office, and character as the Messiah, God the Father delighted in him, and by repeated declarations from heaven expressed his approbation of him. *I will put my Spirit upon him*, anointing him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, bestowing such a plenitude of gifts and graces upon him as may enable him gloriously to discharge and accomplish his arduous undertaking; *and he shall bring judgment to the Gentiles*, preaching to them that Gospel wherein God's righteousness is revealed, and his counsels concerning sinful men are made known: *he shall not strive with noise and ostentation setting up his kingdom; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets*, contentious clamorous against his opposers: *a bruised reed shall he break*, the broken-hearted, weak, and trembling sinner will bind up and strengthen; *and smoking flax shall he quench*; those who have but the beginnings of spiritual life, in whom the graces are feeble, and much darkness and infirmity remain, he will quicken if they cleave unto him, and blow the smoking flax into a flame; *till he bring forth judgment unto victory*, by the power of his Gospel, dispelling the darkness of error, delivering the soul from bondage of corruption, and causing his grace to reign in all his faithful people. *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust*; the heathen nations shall become obedient to the faith, be incorporated with his Israel, and place all their hopes of salvation on the infinite merit and intercession of this divine Redeemer alone.

3dly, Christ had before shewn his power over the kingdom, dispossessing him from the bodies as well as the souls of many. And we have also,

1. Another instance of his curing one *possessed with a devil*; a man *blind and dumb* through the power of a wicked spirit; the emblem of the sinner, whose eyes the god of this world has blinded, and whose lips are closed from prayer and praise, and all conversation to God edifying. One word of Jesus restored his lost sight and speech were perfectly recovered.

2. The people admired the astonishing efficacy of the word of Jesus, and reasonably concluded, *Is not this David?* the promised Messiah? But the Pharisees, when they heard it, stung with envy, and obstinately denied against conviction, with blasphemous cavils and five insult, replied, *This fellow doth not cast out Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* The fact they would not deny; but imputed the miracle to a common devil. To such miserable shifts are they driven when terminated in infidelity, refuse to submit to the truth.

3. Christ refutes so base an accusation. He shews their malicious designs, and heard their words of blasphemy; and therefore he at large vindicates himself.

they withered away.

thorns sprung up, and choked them :

7 And some fell among <sup>a</sup> thorns ; and the

8 But other fell into <sup>b</sup> good ground, and

<sup>a</sup> Jer. 4. 3. Hof. 6. 4. Luke, 21. 34. <sup>b</sup> John, 15. 4, 5. 2 Cor. 5. 17. Rom. 7. 4. with Gen. 26. 12.

tion was absurd, and self-contradictory : it is an allowed maxim, that every kingdom, city, or family, divided against itself, must hasten its own dissolution : impossible, therefore, would it be for Satan to think of supporting his dominion by those means which naturally must subvert it ; the miracles of Christ being wrought in confirmation of those doctrines of truth and holiness which directly tend to destroy the works of the devil. Add to this, that among themselves they admitted some exorcists did cast out devils by the power of God. Acts, xix. Mark, ix. 38. Why then should they not, by parity of reason, admit that his miracles evinced a divine power ? therefore these men should rise up in judgment, and condemn them for this partiality and blasphemy. It being then incontestably apparent that Christ's miracles were effected by the Spirit of God, he urges this as a proof that *the kingdom of God*, of the Messiah promised to bruise the Serpent's head, was actually now *come unto them* : for if this had not been the case, how could it be possible that he should thus dispossess the devil from the bodies and souls of men ? This wicked spirit, as a strong man armed, will keep fast hold of his prey, and guard his house. Nothing but a superior power can bind his arms, and rescue his prisoners from him ; which Jesus had done, and therefore proved that he received no assistance from him, but was his superior and conqueror. Besides, the very nature of their kingdoms being directly opposite, there can be no fellowship ; on the contrary, there is implacable enmity between them ; and all who league with the one are regarded as rebels against the other : so that they who gather not to Christ as their shepherd, and list under his banners as their king, are *scattered*, exposed to his wrath, and devoted to destruction. So far, therefore, from a confederacy between Christ and Satan, there is open war between them, and not even a neutrality permitted. Note ; (1.) Divisions are the surest way to destruction both in religious and civil communities. (2.) The devil has a potent kingdom erected in the world, and he will do his utmost to support it : but Christ is come to destroy his dominion, and will finally prevail. (3.) They who are under the influence of prejudice will blame that very conduct in those whom they dislike, which they approve in those they love. (4.) The destruction of Satan's power in the soul is the work of the Spirit of God ; and whenever that is evidently seen, there the kingdom of God is assuredly come. (5.) Coldness and indifference in the cause of Christ will be regarded as enmity against him : we must be hearty in his service, or we shall be dealt with as traitors.

4. From what has been observed, our Lord takes occasion to caution his hearers against that unpardonable crime, *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. All other sins, however deep, multiplied, or aggravated, may be forgiven, Christ's blood being a sufficient atonement for them ; and whoever pleads it in faith will find pardon, even those who reviled or crucified him ; *but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the*

*world to come*. And this *blasphemy* is not any denial of his divine person, or opposition to his work through ignorance, nor any resistance against the ministry of his word, nor wilful sin committed against his light and warnings ; but " a wilful and despightful rejection of the Spirit of grace, the imputing his miraculous operations and illuminations to diabolical agency ; and this through obstinate malice, in opposition to a man's own light and conscience." This is a direct sin against our remedy, and must needs be attended with inevitable perdition. See the critical notes.

5. Christ addresses the Pharisees, convicting them of the wickedness of their hearts by the malice which appeared in their lips. It was as absurd for them, who committed such blasphemies, to pretend to sanctity, as to expect good fruit from an evil tree. For, as a man's heart is to be discerned by his words and actions, it plainly appeared, by what they spoke out of the *abundance of their hearts*, that they were a *generation of vipers*, thrusting out their envenomed tongues against Christ and blaspheming him, the natural effect of the *evil* which dwelt within them. *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, replenished with divine grace, bringeth forth good things*, such as are for the use of edifying, and for the glory of God. But *an evil man, whose spirit is unrenewed, out of the evil treasure of corruption which is natural to him, bringeth forth evil*, in the corrupt communication which proceeds out of his mouth, and the polluted streams in his life and conversation, which break forth from the inexhausted source within. And if not an idle word passes without the divine notice, but we must answer for it in the day of judgment, how much more terrible must be the blasphemer's guilt ? With what circumspection, then, should we keep the door of our lips, when our eternal state is to be determined thereby, and our words must all be produced at the bar of God as evidences of our justification or condemnation, and sentence proceed accordingly ? We may learn hence, (1.) That unless the heart be renewed by the power of God's spirit, nothing but evil, and that continually, can proceed out of it. (2.) Our words are the index of our minds, and by our general course of communication our state God-ward may be easily discovered. (3.) The solemn account which we must one day make for every word that is on our tongue should be ever on our mind, to restrain all idle, vain, impertinent discourse, as well as what is more immediately noxious. How much has every man to lament on this behalf !

4thly, Though what our Lord had said was sufficient to convince every impartial hearer, certain Scribes and Pharisees pretended that they were not yet satisfied of his divine mission ; and though they address him with respect, calling him *Master*, it seems to be done hypocritically ; for they demand a *sign from heaven* ; perhaps such as of old appeared on Mount Sinai ; intimating that, notwithstanding his other miracles, without this they should not acknowledge him as the Messiah : a demand unreasonable and insolent, and which our Lord justly denies. They who

brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.

9 <sup>1</sup> Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.  
10 ¶ And the disciples came, and said

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 29. 4. Ch. 11. 15. Rev. 2. 7, 11, 17, 29. & 3. 6, 13, 22.

are dissatisfied with the evidences of truth which he has been pleased to give, notwithstanding what they may pretend, would never be convinced by any other.

1. He brands them as an *evil and adulterous generation*, degenerate from the piety of their forefathers, and chargeable with the most criminal apostacy from God, literally and spiritually committing adultery against him.

2. He rejects their demand. No sign shall be given them, such as they required, *from heaven*; but one should be given them *from the earth* in his resurrection, which had been prefigured by Jonah the prophet, who, after being three days and three nights in the fish's belly, was cast alive on dry land: *so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*; that is, part of three natural days, as the Jews computed their time; for so long he lay in the grave, reckoning Friday, before sun-setting, as one; Saturday, as the second; and Sunday, after sun-set, when the third day commenced, as the third; our Lord then arising from the dead. *Note*; The resurrection of Jesus is the great hinge on which our everlasting salvation turns, and the grand sign confirming all the rest: and they who refuse the evidence with which this is attended, and ask for more, we may be fully sure, desire no sign to confirm their faith, but on the contrary a plea for their infidelity.

3. He warns them of the consequences which would attend the wilfulness and wickedness of the men of that generation. The men of Nineveh shall rise up as witnesses to condemn them; for they, though heathens, repented at the preaching of Jonas for one day only: but Christ had wrought manifold miracles, had long and earnestly preached the gospel of the kingdom, and shortly was to rise from the dead; in all which he was far superior to Jonas. If therefore they rejected him, far greater would be their condemnation than that which was threatened against the men of Nineveh; and their speedy repentance shall rise up to condemn the unbelief and impenitence of the men of that generation.

In like manner shall *the queen of the south*, who came from far on the report of Solomon's wisdom, condemn these despisers of Christ and his gospel. She, though a Gentile, no sooner heard the wise king, than she owned the truth of the report concerning him: but, when a *greater than Solomon* was there, even Jesus, in whom dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the men of that generation refused to receive his word, or believe in him, and therefore how aggravated will be their condemnation! They who have enjoyed and abused the greatest means and mercies, shall sink under heavier guilt and receive greater damnation.

4. He describes their character, as willing slaves of Satan. They were like one possessed of a devil who goeth for a while out, to return with double violence. He is called an *unclean spirit*: having lost all purity himself, he ceases not to tempt men to all manner of uncleanness. *He walketh through dry places*, like a melancholy person, *seeking rest, and findeth none*, being miserable when he is no longer

in mischief; and therefore, taking seven other spirits worse than himself, he returns to his former abode, and finds the sinner's heart ready to entertain them, as a house swept and garnished to receive its guests; and there they fix their stay, so that *the last state of that man is worse than the first*, more wicked than before; *even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

5thly, While Christ continued his discourses which bore so hard upon the Pharisees, we are told,

1. That his mother and brethren stood without: apprehensive perhaps of the danger to which he would be exposed, they desired to speak to him, and warn him against giving such offensive and plain rebukes. Hereupon one of his auditors immediately informed him of their request. *Note*; (1.) Near relations, by their fears for us, often hindrances in our way. (2.) Danger must not deter from fidelity in the way of our duty.

2. Christ replies, in answer to the message, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?* not as contemptuously, but as disregarding the ties of blood; but intimating that the address was unseasonable; for when glory was concerned, no natural or civil respects were to be regarded. We are bound to love them much, but to love God more: yea, and the union which divine love makes between kindred souls, is in many respects stronger than the bonds of blood. *He stretched forth his hand to his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren*: affectionately did he regard them: for *whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, attentive to the word and obedient to the faith, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother*, so near and dear to him. *Note*; (1.) A mark of discipleship to Jesus is obedience to the word and will of God. (2.) However despised or rejected of men, it is sufficient honour to be counted of the brethren of Jesus. (3.) They who resemble the spirit, temper, and disposition, and have the blessing of that one Father, even God, stamped upon them, perseveringly cleave to him, will be acknowledged as heirs of life and glory in the day of his appearance, admitted, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with him to share with him the eternal inheritance.

### CHAP. XIII.

*Ver. 1, 2. The same day*] This is the plain meaning of the original, and it may be understood of the day when the mother and relations of our Saviour were present. It must however be observed, that this is not always to be taken literally, but may only signify *at some time, or on a certain day,—on one of these days*. *Words* it, ch. v. 17. It seems the calumnies of the Jews had not the effect intended; for the crowd became so great, that neither the house, nor the street before it, could contain the people who came to hear him; and therefore carried them out to the sea-side, and because there were many still coming, he judged it necessary to enter into a boat, for the

unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, <sup>k</sup> Because it is given unto you to know the mys-

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 7. Ch. 11. 25. & 16, 17. Pl. 25. 8, 9, 14. If. 29. 14. 1 Cor. 2. 7—16. Eph. 3. 9. Col. 1. 26. 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. 2 Cor. 4. 3. 1 John. 1. 27.

of being heard and seen by all, which he might easily be, if the shore thereabouts was somewhat circular and declining, after the manner of an amphitheatre. Thus commodiously seated in the vessel, he delivered many doctrines of the highest importance, making choice of such for the subject of his sermons, when he had the greatest number of hearers, because there was a probability of doing the most good by them.

*Ver. 3. He spake many things unto them in parables*] The word *παραβολή*, which we translate *parable*, signifies a *comparison* or *simile*; a transferring of the ideas or properties which are in one subject generally familiar and well known, to another less known and understood, in order to heighten and enliven that other the more to the mind. It is a putting of one thing for another, that the matter intended to be taught may not immediately appear from the bare letter, and the case put; but when the key is given may strike more fully and strongly on the mind; for a *parable* is exactly what we call "putting a case;" when one thing is said and supposed, with a design to teach, illustrate, and enforce, some other. Such are our Saviour's parables; so that, to understand them, we must look beyond the *letter*; in such as he has not himself interpreted, we shall find the key either from his *general application*, or from the connection wherein the parable stands with his miracles or his discourses. And while, carefully attending hereto, we explain the other circumstances agreeably to the subject in hand, and the *analogy of faith*, there is no doubt but we shall obtain all the profit which was intended to be conveyed to us by this most pleasing, beautiful, and persuasive method of instruction. That parables were very familiar, and much in use among the Eastern nations, and particularly those of Palestine, we learn from the concurrent evidence of all writers on the subject; and, for the most part, as Sir Isaac Newton (on Daniel, p. 148.) observes, "Both Christ, and his forerunner John, as well as the old prophets, were wont in their parabolical discourses to allude to things present, and such as immediately offered themselves." See the note on ch. v. 1. and 14. These are some of the reasons why our Saviour spoke in parables: 1st, As a judicial punishment upon those who were hardened against, and ill disposed to the truth; and sometimes as a more lively method to convince and confute them, even from their own mouths: 2dly, As a means to awaken the attention and whet the inquiry of those who were well disposed, and to lead them to a serious examination and diligent searching after the truth, as a method the most natural, beautiful, and instructive, to teach, from common and familiar objects, the most divine and important lessons, and to imprint them on the memory. 3dly, As a veil to the mysteries of his kingdom, and a method less offensive to convey some very ungrateful and unpalatable truths, such particularly as the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, &c. 4thly, As a lesson of man's natural blindness and ignorance in spiritual matters, unless Christ, by

his grace, opens the understanding and enlightens the mind. And all this, 5thly, to fulfil the prophecies concerning him in this respect, as well as to comply with the customs and manners of the nation with whom this method of instruction was familiar.

In this chapter our Lord delivers seven parables, directing the four former, as being of general concern, to all the people; the three latter to his disciples. He began with the parable of the *sower*, who cast his seed on different soils, which, according to their natures, brought forth either plentifully, or sparingly, or not at all. By this similitude he represented the different kinds of hearers, with the different effects which the doctrines of religion have upon them, according to their different dispositions. In some, these doctrines are suppressed altogether; in others, they produce the fruits of righteousness, more or less, according to the goodness of their hearts, through divine grace. A parable of this kind was highly seasonable, now that the multitude shewed such an itching desire to hear Christ's sermons, while perhaps they neglected the end for which they ought to have heard them. This parable too was exquisitely proper for an introduction to all the rest, as our Lord answers in it a very obvious and very important question: "The same sower Christ, and the same preachers sent by him, always sow the same seed; why has it not always the same effect?" *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* See Bengelius.

*Ver. 4. And when he sowed, &c. the fowls*] *And as he sowed, &c. the birds.* It is observable, that our Lord points out the great hindrances of our bearing fruit, in the same order as they occur. The first danger is, that the *birds will devour* the seed; if it escape this, there is yet another danger, namely, lest it be *scorched* and wither away; it is not long after this that the thorns spring up and choke the good seed. A vast majority of those who hear the word of God receive the seed as by the way-side; of those who do not lose it by the birds, yet many receive it as on stony ground: many of those who receive it in a better soil, yet suffer the thorns to grow up and choke it; so that few comparatively even of those endure to the end, and bear fruit to perfection: and yet in all these cases it is not the will of God which hinders, but their own voluntary perverseness. See Mr. Wesley's notes on the New Testament.

*Ver. 5. Stony places*] *Rocky ground.* The phrase, *stony places*, does not express the sense. There may be many loose stones, from which the place would properly be denominated *stony*, where the soil is both rich and deep. What is meant here is evidently continued rock, with a very thin cover of earth.

*Ver. 6. And when the sun was up*] *This was the reason that, upon the sun's appearing, they were scorched, &c.* Prussian editors.

*Ver. 8. But other fell into good ground*] *But another part, falling on good ground, bare fruit; one grain yielding an hundred,*

teries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

12 <sup>1</sup> For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

13 <sup>m</sup> Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy

of Esaias, which saith, <sup>n</sup> By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 25. 29. Mark, 4. 25. Luke, 8. 18. & 19. 26. John, 15. 2—5. Rev. 22. 11. <sup>m</sup> 2 Thes. 2. 10, 11. H. 42. 19, 20. Deut. 29. 2—4. <sup>n</sup> If. 6. 9, 10. & 44. 18. Jer. 5. 21. Mark, 4. 12, 13. Luke, 8. 10. John, 12. 40. Acts, 28. 26. Rom. 11. 8. Deut. 29. 2—4. 2 Cor. 3. 14, 15. & 4. 3, 4. & 2. 16. 1 Cor. 2. 14. Ezek. 12. 2. Eph. 4. 18. Heb. 5. 11.

*dred, another sixty, another thirty.* Prussian editors. See Gen. xxvi. 12. The fruitfulness of the seed which was sown on good ground, is not to be understood, says Mac-knight, of the *field's* producing a hundred times as much as was sown on it; but it is to be understood of a *single grain* producing a hundred grains, which it might easily do where it met with a good soil, and was properly nourished; but there are many accidents by which the produce of a field, so rich as to be capable of nourishing a hundred grains by a single root, is reduced within ordinary bounds. The parable mentions some of them; part of the seed is trodden down by passengers, or destroyed by the birds, part is starved in bad soil among rocks, and part is choked by weeds.

*Ver. 10—13. And the disciples came, &c.]* See the note on Mark iv. 10. The answer which our Lord here returns to his disciples is remarkable: "You, my disciples, says he, who are of a humble, docile, temper, and are content to use means, and to resort to me for the understanding of such things as I deliver, to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are clothed in parables; for, besides that I am ready to interpret every thing to you, my discourses are so ordered, as to become plain and intelligible to such unprejudiced minds: the truth will shine through the veil, and the shadow shall guide you to the body and substance. But as for those proud and self-conceited Pharisees, who are elated with their own prejudices, and will neither understand nor practise things plainly delivered, for the judicial hardening of them, I deliver myself in a manner which will not readily be apprehended by men of their temper. They shall choke themselves with the *husks*, while you feed upon the *kernel*. They have brought this wilful blindness upon themselves, that in seeing they see not; and this wilful deafness, that in hearing they hear not, neither understand." This is elegantly paraphrased in the version of 1727. *They overlook what they see, and are inattentive to what they hear*: the Hebraism, however, is peculiarly emphatical. The account which Jamblichus gives of the obscurity of Pythagoras is something similar to what our Saviour says here: "Pythagoras studied some obscurity in his dictates, that those only who were virtuously disposed, and so prepared for his notions, might be benefited by his discourses; but as for others, they (as Ho-

mer says of Tantalus) should be surrounded with things as were in themselves desirable, but not be to touch them." The word *mystery* ver. 11. signifies general whatever is hidden and unknown. The hearers were accustomed to give that name to their secret religious ceremonies; but our Lord uses it here to denote some particulars which were to happen relative to the gospel, the preaching of it, and the success it was to meet with in the world; which were at that time unknown, and consequently mysteries, till they were revealed. See the note on the word *μυστήριον*. We have an expression in the text, parallel to the latter clause of the 12th verse:

Nil habuit Codrus;—et tamen illud  
Perdidit infelix totum nil.

Sat. iii.

'Tis true, poor Codrus nothing had to boast;—  
And yet, poor Codrus all that nothing lost.

This sentence of our Lord, which has the appearance of a paradox, is often made use of by him. *He that hath* he that improveth those advantages which God has given him, and continually receives more, till he has attained the full measure of them: *He that hath not*, is he that does not improve the like advantages, but makes so ill use of them, that they stand him in no more stead than if they were not. *Shall be taken away even that he hath*, or that he has, talents or advantages wherewith he has been favoured. This sentence is explained by the parable of the talents, ch. xxv. 14, &c. See also Luke viii. 18. In the text before us we have the grand rule of God's dealing with the children of men,—a rule fixed as the pillars of the temple: this is the key to all his providential dispensations. It shall appear to men and angels on the great day; and shall be the fore in pursuance of this general rule, *I speak to you in parables*, says our Saviour, ver. 13. "I do not speak to you in knowledge to this people, because they understand not, which they have already: having all the means of seeing, hearing, understanding, they use none of them: they do not effectually see, or hear, or understand any thing."

*Ver. 14, 15. And in them is fulfilled, &c.]* See the note on Isai. vi. 9. The prophet's meaning is, that they should certainly hear the doctrines of the gospel, and see the miracles which were wrought in their sight, but they should understand those doctrines, without perceiving the finger

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

18 ¶ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Ch. 16. 17. Luke, 10. 23. with ch. 5. 3—11. Luke, 2. 30. John, 1. 14. & 20. 29. Luke, 10. 24. Heb. 11. 13. 1 Pet. 1. 10. 11. Rom. 16. 26, 27. Eph. 3. 5, 6. Col. 1. 26. Ver. 11. 12. If. 54. 13. ch. 11. 25. 1 John, 2. 20, 27. Mark, 4. 14—20. Luke, 8. 11—15. Ch. 4. 23. Eph. 3. 8. 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4. 2 Pet. 2. 4. If. 53. 1. & 52. 7. 2 Cor. 2. 16. & 3. 24, 15. 1 Cor. 2. 14. If. 42. 19, 20. Job. 1. 6. & 2. 1. 1 Pet. 5. 8. 2 Cor. 2. 11. If. 53. 1. Rom. 10. 8. 2 Thes. 2. 10. Ver. 4, 5.

them; not because the evidences of the gospel, whether internal or external, were insufficient to establish it, but because the corruption of their hearts hindered them from discerning those evidences: *For this people's heart is waxed gross, &c.* In Isaiah the passage is worded somewhat differently, *Make the heart of this people fat, &c.* Now this form is peculiar to the prophetic writings; implying no more than an order to the prophet simply to foretel that the Jews would *make their own hearts hard*, sensual, proud, and stubborn; and *their ears heavy*, and *shut their eyes, &c.* They would shut their eyes against the miracles, and their ears against the doctrines of the Gospel, as if they were afraid of being converted and healed; having the strongest aversion to hear or see what was contrary to their inclination. See Jer. i. 9, 10. Ezek. xliii. 3. Gen. xli. 13. This prophesy, therefore, and its citation, are exactly the same; only the prophesy represents the thing as to happen, —*Make the heart of this people, &c.* whereas the citation represents it as already come to pass, —*This people's heart is, &c.* "This people have made themselves so wicked and proud, that they will neither hear nor see any thing opposite to their lusts, so that they appear as if they were resolved not to be converted." This interpretation of the prophesy, and of its application made by St. Matthew, is confirmed by Isaiah himself, ch. vi. 11. "Then said I, Lord, how long? How long are they to be in this miserable condition? And he answered, Till the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate; their blindness is to remain, till utter destruction falls upon them as a nation, overturning the constitution of their church and state." It is confirmed also by the subjects of the parables to which our Lord applied this prophesy: For, had he told the Jews plainly, what he told them in an obscure manner by the parable of the sower, namely, that a principal part of the Messiah's office was to instil the doctrines of true religion into the minds of men, and that the chief effect of his power on earth should be to set them free from the tyranny of their lusts, that they might become fruitful in goodness; had he plainly declared what he insinuated in the parable of the *grain of mustard*, which grew so great, as to shelter the fowls of heaven under its branches,—that the Gentiles were to be governed by the Messiah, not as slaves but free-born subjects, and to enjoy all the privileges of his kingdom on an equal footing with Jews; had he taught them plainly, what he insinuated obscurely, by the parable of the *sown seed*, which sprung up silently; and by the

parable of the *leaven* hid in a quantity of meal;—that the kingdom of the Messiah was neither to be erected nor supported by the violence of war, but by the secret force of truth, whose operation, though strong, is imperceptible;—I say, had our Lord taught his hearers these things in plain terms, they would have rejected them, been greatly offended, and probably have forsaken him altogether; so opposite were the doctrines mentioned to their favourite notions and expectations. In the mean time, if it be asked why he handled such subjects at all, since he delivered them in terms so obscure? The answer is, it was expedient for the confirmation of the Gospel, that he himself, in his own lifetime, should give some hints of the nature of it, and of the reception it was to meet with; because the Jews, comparing the events with these parabolical predictions, might be disposed thereby to acquiesce more peaceably in the admission of the Gentiles into the church, without subjecting them to the Mosaic institutions; a thing which they were not brought to do but with the utmost difficulty. See Macknight, and more in the note on Mark iv. 11. Dr. Doddridge renders these verses, *And in them is the prophesy of Isaiah fulfilled, which saith, By hearing you shall hear, but you shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, but shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is grown stiff with fatness, and they hear with heavy ears, and draw up their eyes [as if they were more than half asleep], lest at any time they should see, &c.*

Ver. 17. *Verily I say unto you, That, &c.*] This is what sets the disciples above all prophets, and renders them greatest in the kingdom of heaven. See ch. xi. 11. and comp. Ps. cxix. 174. Luke, ii. 25, 29, 30. x. 23, 24. John, viii. 56. 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

Ver. 19. *When any one heareth, &c.*] From this interpretation of the parable by our Saviour, we learn, that the *seed* signifies the doctrines of true religion; and the various kinds of ground, the various kinds of hearers: the comparison between God and the sower is frequent among the Jewish writers, and *seed* is among almost all nations used for doctrine or instruction. The ground by the highway side, which is apt to be beaten by men's treading upon it, is an image of those who have their hearts so hardened with impiety, that though they hear the Gospel preached, it makes no impression at all upon them; because they either hear it inattentively, or, if they attend, quickly forget it. This insensibility and inattention are strongly represented by the beaten ground along the highway, into which the seed never entering, it





standeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

24 ¶ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is

likened unto a man which sowed ' good seed in his field :

25 But while men <sup>s</sup> slept, his <sup>h</sup> enemy came and sowed 'tares among the wheat, and went his way.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 31, 33, 45, <sup>2</sup> Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. i. e. the gospel church. <sup>3</sup> Ch. 4. 23. <sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 23. ver 4. 19. <sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. 3. 15—17. Col. 1. 6. Phil. 1. 6. <sup>6</sup> Car. 2. 7. <sup>7</sup> Acts, 20. 29. Luke, 21. 34. <sup>8</sup> Ver. 36. <sup>9</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 8. <sup>10</sup> Ver. 39. Phil. 3. 18, 19. Acts, 8. 13.

they hear. The *honesty* of their heart consists in their disposition through grace to believe the truth, though contrary to their prejudices; and to practise it, though opposite to their inclinations: All who hear the word with these qualifications, and join thereto, through the spirit of God, firmness of resolution, and the government of their passions, never fail to bring forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty; fruits of righteousness, in proportion to the different degrees of strength in which they possess the graces necessary to constitute them profitable hearers of the word. See Macknight, and Bishop Beveridge's 9th sermon, vol. x. 8vo.

Ver. 24, 25. *The kingdom of heaven is likened, &c.*] *The kingdom of heaven may be compared to, &c.* or literally, *is like to*: It is a phrase often used by our Lord, to signify that the following parable, in its principal circumstances, bears a resemblance to what comes to pass in the kingdom of heaven; that is to say, the evangelical dispensation. See ch. xi. 16. and Luke, vii. 32. Respecting the *tares*, see the note on ver. 30. The great and judicious Bishop Sherlock has admirably illustrated this parable. Take away the dress of parable, says he, and what our Saviour here delivers amounts to this: "There will always be a mixture in the world of good and bad men, which no care or diligence can prevent; and though men may and will judge that the wicked ought immediately to be cut off by the hand of God, yet God judges otherwise, and delays his vengeance for wise and just reasons, sparing the wicked at present for the sake of the righteous; reserving all to the great day in which the divine justice shall be fully displayed, and every man shall receive according to his own works." The view of this parable has, in some parts of it, I think, been misapplied. It is intended to represent the condition of mankind arising from the nature of grace and moral agency,—some being good, some bad; a mixture, which from the very nature of mankind is always to be expected;—and to justify God in delaying the punishment of those sins which appear to be ripe for vengeance. This being the view of the parable, it is going out of the way to consider the particular causes to which the sins of men may be ascribed; for the question is, not from what origin the sins of men arise, but why, from whatever cause they spring, they are not punished? In the parable therefore our Lord assigns only a general reason of the wickedness of the world,—*an enemy hath done this*. But there are who think they see another reason assigned in the parable; namely, the carelessness of the public governors and rulers, intimated in those words, *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat*; and this text always finds a place in such complaints. And there is

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indeed no doubt but that the negligence of governors and magistrates, civil and ecclesiastical, may be often one cause of the ignorance and wickedness of the people: but that it is assigned as a cause in the parable cannot be proved; for these words *while men slept*, instead of charging the servants with negligence, plainly shew that no care or diligence of theirs could prevent the enemy. While they were awake, their care was awake also, and the enemy had no success; but *sleep* they must, nature requires it, and then it was that the enemy did the mischief. Had it been said, *while men played*, or were careless or riotous, that would have been a charge upon them; but to say *while men slept*, is so far from proving that their negligence caused it, that it plainly proved their diligence could not prevent it. For what will you say? Should husbandmen never sleep?—It is a condition upon which they cannot live, and therefore their sleeping cannot be charged as their crime. This circumstance therefore in the parable is to shew, not the fault of the husbandmen, but the zeal and industry of the enemy to do mischief. Watch him as narrowly as you will, yet still he will break through all your care and diligence. If you do but step aside, compelled by the calls of nature to eat, to drink, or to sleep, he is ready to take the opportunity to sow his tares. Farther, the character of the husbandmen throughout the parable agrees to this exposition: when they saw the tares spring up, they betrayed no consciousness of guilt or negligence; they did not come with excuses to their master, but with a question, which plainly speaks how little they mistrusted themselves: *Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? Would any servant, who had suffered the field to grow wild by his own laziness, have expostulated the case in such a manner? The master, far from charging any of his family with the fault, lays it at another door, an enemy hath done this*. Upon which the servants, not sparing of their pains, were desirous to go to work immediately, and to root out all the tares at once. What is there in all this that suits with the character of a lazy, idle, negligent, servant? What is there which does not speak a care and concern for their master's affairs? As soon as they discover the tares, they go directly to their master, and inform him, and offer their service to root them out. In this particular he corrects their judgment, though he does not condemn their diligence. And in truth one main view of the parable is, to correct the zeal of those who cannot see the iniquity of the world without great indignation; and not being able to stop or to correct it themselves, are apt to call upon God to vindicate his own cause, by taking the matter to himself, and punishing the evil-doers. The men who have this zeal and warmth against iniquity, are not commonly

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monly

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the <sup>\*</sup>servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, 'Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Cor. 12. 28. Eph. 4. 11. <sup>1</sup> Luke, 9. 54. with 1 Thef. 5. 14. Heb. 1. 14.

monly the idle negligent rulers; nor can we suppose that our Saviour would paint the same men in such different colours in the compass of a short parable; representing them idle and careless at the 25th verse, active and zealous at the 28th. Besides, as was observed before, to charge the wickedness of the world upon the negligence of this or that part of men answers no purpose of the parable; which is, to justify the wisdom of Providence, in permitting the sins of men to go unpunished for the present. But the justification does not arise from considering the causes of iniquity, but from considering the effect which immediate punishment would have. In the other way, now explained to you, this circumstance, that *while men slept, the tares were sown*, promotes the main end of the parable, and completes the justification of the Providence of God; for this shews, that *offences must needs come*: they are not to be prevented, without disturbing the very course of nature; without God's interposing miraculously to suspend the workings of second causes, since all care exercised in a human way is too little; for even when men sleep,—and sleep they must,—the *enemy will sow his tares*. Since therefore the parable shews, that iniquity can neither be prevented, nor immediately punished, consistently with the wisdom and goodness of God; it shuts out every complaint, and forces us to acknowledge that God is just in all his ways, and righteous in all his dealings with mankind. See his Discourses, vol. iii. disc. 8. part 1.

*Ver. 27. So the servants of the householder*] The original word *οικονομοί*, seems to signify in this connection, "the proprietor of the estate:" he is supposed to be the master of the field, and of some lodge or farm-house, in which these servants dwelt.

*Ver. 29. But he said, Nay, &c.*] These words account for the justice of God in suspending his judgments. To see the full force of the reason in this respect, it is necessary we should understand what sort of sinners are spoken of, for this reason is not always applicable to all cases; many sinners are spared upon other accounts than this which is here given: the sinners intended in this passage are spared merely on account of the righteous, that they may not be involved in the punishment due to the sins of others; but some sinners are spared out of a mercy which regards themselves, in hopes of their amendment. The sinners represented by the *tares* are such, of whose repentance and amendment there is no hope: and our Saviour has told us that these sinners shall certainly be punished at the last; which cannot certainly be said of any but incorrigible sinners: these sinners, therefore, being

considered as incorrigible, there was no room to justify delay of punishment from any circumstances arising out of their own case. Even the mercy of God was excluded in this respect; for if the incorrigible sinner be the object of mercy, no sinner need fear punishment. Our Saviour therefore, gives them up intirely, and justifies the wisdom and goodness of God in sparing them, from other motives. The interests of good and bad men are so united in this world; there is such a connection between them in many respects, that no signal calamity can befall the wicked, but the righteous must have his share in it. This was Abraham's plea when he interceded with the Lord for the men of Sodom. In public calamities it is evident that all must be sufferers without distinction: fire and famine and pestilence, rage indifferently in the bosom of the righteous and the sinner, and sweep away one as the other. Thus far then the reason of this verse certainly extends, and shews us the mercy of God in bearing to appear against sinners in such punishment, which would bring upon the best of men the punishment only to the worst. You see a great wicked man in a prosperous condition, and you think his happy transport perpetual reproach to the providence of God: you would not have God rain fire and brimstone upon the city for the sake of this great offender, since many innocents would necessarily suffer in the ruin? No; but you would have God take him suddenly away by some silent method; or you would have him punished in a more lowly tune, and reduced to that misery which his sinners deserve. This you think would be very just and reasonable, and highly becoming the wisdom of God. But you do not consider that there is no great man who is not surrounded by others? are all the relations and dependents of a sinner as wicked as himself? Is there not often a blessing the better for him? Are his children all abandoned? would you turn out a family of innocent children to beg their bread in the streets, rather than let the father go unpunished for a few years! Till you have answered these questions, you must not pretend to argue the wisdom and goodness of God, in sparing this offender. These considerations plainly shew the equity of God in delaying the punishment of the wicked in both the cases above-mentioned you see that nature is not over justice, and the guilty is preserved for the benefit of the innocent, which is such an act of goodness that it surely has reason to complain of. Nor will you think God suffer in this account, as will plainly be seen by the following considerations: the parable is intended as an answer to the common objection

30 Let both <sup>a</sup> grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

31 ¶ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, <sup>b</sup> The kingdom of heaven is

like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

<sup>a</sup> With ch. 3. 12. & 25. 32. <sup>b</sup> Mark, 4. 30—32. Luke, 13. 18. 19. 1 Cor. 1. 25, 27. Job, 8. 7. Pf. 80. 8—11. Ezek. 47. 1, 12. Dan. 2. 44. Il. 1. 1—4. Mic. 4. 1—3. Zech. 8. 20—23. Prov. 4. 18. Job. 17. 9. 2 Pet. 3. 18.

Providence, drawn from the prosperity of sinners, or the impunity of offenders. Ask the man who makes this objection against God's government, why he thinks it unbecoming the wisdom of God to delay the punishment of sinners? He will readily answer, because it is contrary to his justice; and to support his reason, he will farther add, that it is an undoubted maxim of justice, that all sinners deserve punishment. And here I think he must stop; for he cannot enter into particular cases, unless he knew more of man than he does, or can know. In answer to this, our Saviour owns the truth of the general maxim, as far as it relates to the desert of sinners; and therefore teaches us, that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world: but then he shews, from superior reasons of justice, that the application of the principle in the present case is wrong; for though it be just to punish all sinners, yet to punish them immediately, would destroy the very reason which makes it just to punish them. It is just to punish them, that there may be a difference made between the good and the bad, according to their deserts, that their punishment may be a discouragement to vice, and an encouragement to holiness and virtue. Now our Lord shews in this parable, that the immediate punishment of the wicked would quite destroy those ends of justice; for the righteous and the wicked, like the wheat and the tares, growing together in one field, are so mixed and united in interests in this world, that, as things stand, the wicked cannot be rooted out, but the righteous must suffer with them: consequently, the immediate destruction of the wicked, since it must inevitably fall upon the righteous also, would make no proper distinction between the good and the bad; could be no encouragement to holiness and virtue, for the virtuous would suffer; could be no discouragement to vice, for vice would fare as well as virtue: And therefore it is not only reasonable to delay, in innumerable instances, the punishment of the wicked, but even necessary, to the obtaining of the ends of justice, since they cannot be obtained in their immediate destruction. See Bishop Sherlock's 8th Discourse, parts 1 and 2. vol. 3. See also the Reflections.

Ver. 30. Gather—the tares, and bind them in bundles] The word *tares* does not seem to express the meaning of the original *ζιζανια*: for *tares*, with us, are not noxious weeds, but a serviceable kind of pulse, of great use for cattle, and very easily distinguished in their growth from wheat; whereas the original expresses somewhat (and the scope of the parable demands it) which is of no service at all; fit only to be burned, and which cannot easily be distinguished from the good corn till both are grown up; and to these

particulars answer either what are called the *deaf ears* in wheat, which cannot be discerned till the time of harvest; or rather a weed called *darnel*, the *infelix lolium*, which grows up with wheat, and unless gathered out of it before it be reaped, is very prejudicial to the corn. Dr. Johnson, indeed, in his Dictionary, says, that “tares (from *teeren*, Dutch, to *consume*) are a weed that grows “among corn.” The original word, as some very able Grecians tell us, is not found except in the Evangelists, and certain of the fathers; and they give it different derivations.

Ver. 31, 32. Another parable put he forth] The former parables relate chiefly to unfruitful hearers; these that follow, to those who bear good fruit. In the present parable our Lord shews, that notwithstanding the gospel appeared at first contemptible, by reason of the ignominy arising from the crucifixion of its Author, the difficulty of its precepts, the weakness of the persons by whom it was preached, and the small number and mean condition of those who received it; yet having in itself the strength of truth, it would grow so great as to fill the earth, affording spiritual sustenance to persons of all nations, who should be admitted to it, not in the quality of slaves, as the Jews imagined, but as free-born subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, enjoying therein equal privileges with the Jews. This sense of the parable is the more probable, as our Lord seems now to have had his eye on Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Dan. iv. 10—12. in which the nature and advantages of civil government are represented by a great tree with spreading branches, fair leaves, and much fruit. This parable was well calculated to encourage the disciples; who, judging of the Gospel by its beginning, might have been apt to fall into despair, when, instead of seeing it preached by the learned, countenanced by the great, and instantly received with applause by all, they found it generally opposed by men in high life, preached only by illiterate persons, and received by few besides the poor. These, certainly, were melancholy circumstances according to outward appearance, and what must have given great offence: yet in process of time they became strong confirmations of the Christian religion. The *treasure of the Gospel was committed to earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power might appear to be from God. The phrase, *the least of all seeds*, is a figure frequently used in common discourse, and signifies *one of the least*; or the least of all those seeds with which the people of Judæa were then acquainted; so small, that it was proverbially used by the Jews to denote a very little thing. “The globe of the earth, say the rabbies, is but a grain of mustard-seed, “when

33 ¶ Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three <sup>•</sup>measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

34 <sup>•</sup>All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>•</sup>I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

36 ¶ Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples

came unto him, saying, 'Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, 'He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 'The field is the world; <sup>•</sup>the good seed are the children of the kingdom; <sup>•</sup>but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 <sup>•</sup>The enemy that sowed them is the devil; <sup>•</sup>the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

<sup>•</sup> Luke, 13. 20. Rom. 1. 14, 16. 1 Cor. 9. 21, 23. Pf. 72. 16. & 119. 11. with 1 Cor. 5. 7. Gal. 5. 9. <sup>•</sup> Saxon, or feah, held a little more than a peck. <sup>•</sup> Mark, 1. 33, 34. Ver. 11. <sup>•</sup> Pf. 49. 3, 4. & 78. 2. Rom. 16. 25, 26. 1 Cor. 2. 7. Eph. 3. 9. Col. 1. 25, 26. 2 Tim. 1. 10. Heb. 1. 1. Ver. 11. Prov. 2. 1—7. Acts, 8. 30, 31. Ezek. 36, 37. James, 1. 5. Mat. 7. 7. <sup>•</sup> If. 61. 1, 2. Heb. 2. 3. & 1. 1. Acts, 3. 22. If. 48. 17. Ch. 28. 19. Mark, 16. 15. Rom. 15. 13, 21. & 16. 26. Col. 1. 6. Luke, 24. 47. Rom. 10. 18. & 11. 11, 12. <sup>•</sup> Pf. 22. 30. If. 53. 10—12. & 54. 13. Heb. 3. 1. 1 John, 3. 8. John, 3. 3, 5. 2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15. <sup>•</sup> Gen. 3. 15. John, 8. 44. Acts, 13. 10. Tit. 1. 16. Phil. 3. 13, 19. 2 Tim. 3. 2—5. 1 John, 3. 8. <sup>•</sup> Gen. iii. 2 Cor. 11. 3. 1 Pet. 5. 8. Rev. 20. 1, 2. <sup>•</sup> Joel, 3. 13. Rev. 14. 15.

“when compared with the expanse of the heavens.” See ch. xvii. 20. The term *tree* is applied by botanists to plants of the larger kind, which grow to the magnitude of shrubs; and for that reason are termed *planta arborescentes*. The Talmud mentions a mustard-tree, or at least what the Orientals comprehended under the species of the *fnapi*, so large that a man might with ease sit in it; and another, one of whose branches covered a tent. It is certain, that we should be much mistaken, if we judged of vegetables or animals in the Eastern or Southern countries, merely by what those of the same species are with us. The word *κατασκυβων*, rendered *lodge*, signifies, “They find shelter, and pass their time there.” See Tremellius and Lightfoot’s *Hor. Heb.* on the place.

Ver. 33. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven*] The meaning of this parable is commonly thought to be the same as that of the preceding; but there seems to be this difference between them; the parable of the *grain of mustard seed* represents the smallness of the Gospel in its beginnings, together with its subsequent greatness; whereas the parable of the *leaven*, which, being hid in a quantity of meal, fermented the whole, expresses in a very lively manner both the nature and strength of the operation of truth upon the mind; for though the doctrines of the Gospel, when first proposed, seemed to be lost in that enormous mass of passions and worldly thoughts with which men’s minds were filled; yet did they then, through the Divine Spirit, most eminently exert their influence, converting men’s thoughts and desires into a conformity to truth. The precise difference, therefore, between this and the foregoing parable is, that the former represents the extensive propagation of the Gospel from the smallest beginning; but this, the nature of the influence of its doctrines upon the minds of particular persons. Our Saviour

mentions here *three measures of meal* in particular, because this seems to be the quantity they usually kneaded at once. See Gen. xviii. 6. Macknight, Beaufobre and Lenfant.

Ver. 34, 35. *And without a parable spake he not, &c.*] That is, “not at that time,” or “to the people who then heard him.” See the note on ver. 1. Beaufobre and Lenfant observe, that the quotation from the Psalms is not a prophecy of the manner in which Christ was to teach, but only an application, made by the Evangelist, of the words of the Psalmist to the mysterious manner in which our Saviour taught. And Dr. Doddridge and several others are of the same opinion, supposing this passage quoted by way of allusion. See on ch. i. 22. But Dr. Whitby’s interpretation seems to me preferable, who observes that the sense may be this:—our Saviour spake in parables, that what David, filled with the prophetic spirit, said of himself, might be fulfilled also in that Son of David, of whom he was a type; for he, being our great law-giver, might more truly say, *Hear my law, O my people*, Pf. lxxviii. 1. See the note on Pf. xlix. 4. Olearius’s 49th Observation, and Wetstein.

Ver. 38. *The children of the kingdom*] This is a Hebraism, signifying the *heirs of the kingdom*, ch. viii. 12. where the unbelieving Jews are named the *children of the kingdom*, in opposition to the Gentiles, because they were born within the Mosaic covenant. Here the *children of the kingdom* are the true believers, as the *children of the wicked one* are the unregenerate and disobedient. See John, viii. 41, 44.

Ver. 39. *The end of the world*] *Of the age*, literally, a Hebraism, frequently used in the New Testament. Comp. the next verse, and Heb. i. 2. What follows is an allusion to Joel, iii. 13. See also Rev. xiv. 15.

Ver. 41.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all \* things that offend, and them which do iniquity ;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. <sup>d</sup> Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

44 ¶ <sup>e</sup> Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

45 ¶ <sup>f</sup> Again, the kingdom of heaven is like

unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls :

46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

47 ¶ Again, <sup>g</sup> the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind :

48 <sup>h</sup> Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 24. 31. & 25. 32. & 5. 29, 30. & 18. 7, 9. 1 Cor. 11. 19. with 1 Pet. 2. 1. \* Or scandals. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 3. 12. & 8. 12. & 22. 13. Rev. 14. 10, 11. & 20. 15. & 21. 8, 27. & 22. 15. & 19. 20. <sup>c</sup> Dan. 12. 3. 1 Cor. 15. 41—54. Ch. 25. 34. Phil. 3. 21. Rev. 7. 9—17. & xxi. 11. 60. 19. 20. <sup>d</sup> See ver. 9. Ch. 11. 15. <sup>e</sup> Prov. 2. 1—4. & 3. 13—16. 1 Cor. 2. 9. Col. 2. 3. & 3. 3. John, 3. 35. Phil. 3. 7—9. If. 55. 1. Rev. 3. 18. <sup>f</sup> Prov. 2. 4. & 3. 13—16. & 8. 10, 11. Ch. 16. 26. see ver. 44. <sup>g</sup> Ch. 4. 19. Luke, 5. 10. Mark, 16. 15. Ch. 28. 19. & 22. 9, 10. Luke, 11. 21, 23. Eph. 3. 8. Tit. 3. 3—7. <sup>h</sup> Rev. 10. 7. & 1. 7. & 20. 12—15. Ch. 24. 31. & 25. 32, 41—46. & 24—31. & xxv. 1 & 10. ver. 42.

Ver. 41. *The Son of man shall send forth, &c.*] The reader must observe how high an idea our Saviour here gives his disciples of himself, when he speaks of the angels as his attendants who were at the last day to wait on him, and at his order to assemble the whole world before him: they shall gather out of his kingdom all that offend, πάντα τὰ πονηρά, all things which are an offence to others, by laying stumbling-blocks in their way; Καὶ τοὺς, &c. "Even all the transgressors of the law; for so the word καὶ should be rendered in this and many other places of the New Testament.

Ver. 42. *A furnace]* The furnace.

Ver. 43. *Then shall the righteous shine forth, &c.*] In this beautiful expression, our blessed Saviour seems to allude to Dan. xiii. 3. *They that be wise shall shine, &c.* They shall shine like the sun in the firmament for brightness and beauty, and shall find no diminution of their splendour by age. A noble image this to represent the glory and happiness of righteous men with God their Father. The exclamation at the end of the verse intimates that truths of greater importance and solemnity cannot be uttered, than those which respect the final misery of the wicked, and the inconceivable happiness of the righteous; and that all who have the faculty of reason ought therefore to regard them with becoming attention. See Macknight and Calmet.

Ver. 44—46. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure]* These three following parables are proposed not so much to the multitude, as to the apostles particularly. The parable of the treasure which a man found hidden in a field, was designed to teach us, that some meet with the Gospel as it were by accident, and without seeking after it, agreeably to what the prophet Isaiah says, ch. lxx. 1. that God is found of them who seek him not. On the other hand, the parable of the merchant, who inquired after goodly or

beautiful pearls, and found one of great value, informs us, that men's receiving the Gospel is often, through the grace of God, the effect of a diligent search after truth. The Gospel is fitly compared to a treasure, as it enriches all who profess it; and to a pearl, because of its beauty and preciousness: both the parables represent the effect of divine truth upon those who find it through grace, whether by accident or upon inquiry. Being found and known, it appears exceedingly valuable, and raises in men's breasts such a vehemency of desire, that they willingly part with all that they have for the sake of obeying its precepts; and when they part with all on account of it, think themselves incomparably richer than before. The sacred writers elsewhere compare and prefer wisdom to jewels. See Job, xxviii. 15—19. Prov. iii. 15. viii. 11.

Ver. 47—50. *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net]* This parable intimates, that by the preaching of the Gospel a visible church should be gathered on earth, consisting both of good and bad men, mingled in such a manner, that it would be difficult to make a proper distinction between them; but that at the end of the world the bad shall be separated from the good, and cast into hell; which the parable represents under the image of casting them into the furnace of fire, because that was the most terrible punishment known in the Eastern countries. See Dan. iii. 6. This parable will appear peculiarly proper, if we consider that it was spoken to fishermen, who had been called from their employments with a promise that they should catch men. Ch. iv. 19. It differs from the parable of the tares in its extent, representing the final state and judgment of wicked men in general; whereas that of the tares describes more particularly the miserable end of hypocrites and apostates. The word σαπρὰ, rendered bad, ver. 48. generally signifies corrupt or putrid, and

51 Jesus saith unto them, <sup>1</sup> Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52 Then said he unto them, <sup>2</sup> Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

53 ¶ And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 <sup>1</sup> And when he was come into his own

country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works?

55 <sup>2</sup> Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?

57 And they were <sup>3</sup> offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, <sup>4</sup> A prophet is not with-

<sup>1</sup> Acts, 8. 30, 31. Ch. 16. 11. 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4. 1 Cor. 2. 10—16. John, 13. 17. <sup>2</sup> Neh. 8. 3. Ch. 23. 34. 1 Cor. 12. 28. Eph. 4. 11—13. Song, 7. 13. <sup>3</sup> Mark, 6. 1—5. Luke, 4. 16. Deut. 18. 15—19. <sup>4</sup> If. 50. 4. Pl. 22. 22. & 40. 9, 10. <sup>5</sup> John, 6. 42. Luke, 4. 22. Mark, 6. 3. Ch. 12. 46. If. 49. 7. & 53. 2, 3. <sup>6</sup> Ch. 11. 6. & 26. 31. If. 53. 2, 3. Pl. 22. 6. & 69. 8, 19, 20. <sup>7</sup> Mark, 6. 4. Luke, 4. 24. John, 4. 44.

and seems an allusion to the drawing up of some dead fish in the net with the living. It has been observed, that this in the strongest terms represents the hopeless state of sinners at last. See Herbery's Discourse of future Punishment.

Ver. 51, 52. *Have ye understood, &c.*] When Jesus had finished his parables, he asked his disciples if they understood them; and upon their answering in the affirmative, he told them, that every teacher of the Jewish religion, who was converted to Christianity, and made a preacher of the Gospel, might, by reason of the variety of his knowledge and his ability, be compared to a prudent master of a family, who nourishes them with the fruits both of the present and of the preceding years, as their need requires. Our Saviour has given the pattern and example of such a teacher in his discourse contained in this chapter; and by the similitude of the householder, he shews his disciples the use that they were to make of the knowledge they had acquired, whether from the old revelation transmitted to them by the prophets, or from the new revelation, of which Jesus was, in a more peculiar sense, the author and dispenser. See Macknight and Wetstein. Dr. Clarke in his Sermons, vol. x. serm. 4. gives the following exposition of the 52d verse: "Those thoroughly qualified to be successful preachers of the Gospel should be able on all occasions to bring forth out of their memory, as out of a copious storehouse, instructions suited to persons of all capacities." Concerning the word *treasures*, see the note on ch. ii. 11.

Ver. 54. *Into his own country*] Nazareth is so called, because it was the town in which Jesus was brought up, and to distinguish it from Capernaum, where he commonly resided. *This wisdom* signifies *this learning*. They were amazed to find in our Lord such extraordinary learning, without having ever been taught by their doctors. *These mighty works*, in the Greek is *δυναμεις*, *virtues*. The word denotes both *miracles*, and the *power* of performing them.

Ver. 55. *Is not this the carpenter's son?*] In St. Mark, ch. vi. 3. it is, *Is not this the carpenter?* Ὁ τικτων; Accordingly Justin Martyr tells us, and the ancient Christians were all of the same opinion, that Jesus was employed in this occupation. Their canons required that all parents

should teach their children some trade; and probably the poverty of the family engaged Christ, while he was at home with Joseph, to work at his. What an additional proof this, of the humiliation of the blessed Redeemer for our sakes! By comparing ch. xxvii. 56., Mark, xv. 40., John, xix. 25., with this passage, it appears, that the four persons mentioned here were the sons of Mary, sister to the virgin Mary, and the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, which is the same name. See ch. x. 3. xii. 46. By James is meant James the Lesser, whom St. Paul calls *our Lord's brother*, Galat. i. 19. Joses or Joseph (for it is the same name) is the only son of Mary, the wife of Alpheus, who never was an Apostle. Simon is he who is called the *Canaanite* or *Zealot*, to distinguish him from Simon Peter. And Judas or Jude is the author of the Epistle which goes under that name, wherein he styles himself *the brother of James*.

Ver. 56. *Whence then, &c.*] This, like many other things which have since been objected against the Gospel of Christ, is as much the language of stupidity as of infidelity; for the meanness of Christ's education was a demonstration, that his teaching in so excellent a manner must have been the effect of some extraordinary and divine influence on his mind.

Ver. 57. *And they were offended in him*] The Nazarenes, not being able to reconcile the miracles and wisdom of our Lord with the meanness of his birth, were full of doubts and uncertainties: they could not tell what to say or think of him, suspecting perhaps that he was a forcerer. The word *unbelief*, used in the next verse, serves to explain all this. And we learn from Luke, iv. 22. that, notwithstanding their unbelief, they could not forbear praising and admiring him. Dr. Doddridge renders the next clause, "A prophet is no where less esteemed than in his own country, and among his relations, even in his own family;" which is plainly the sense of the words, though ours is a literal translation: for a prophet may be, and often is, affronted at a distance from home, as our Saviour himself found by frequent experience. (See John, iv. 44. Luke, iv. 24.) The expression is proverbial, signifying that those who possess extraordinary endowments are no where in less request

out honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

58<sup>p</sup> And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

<sup>p</sup> Mark, 6. 5, 6. Heb. 4. 2. & 3. 19.

request than among their relations and acquaintance. The reason is, superior work never fails to be envied; and envy, ever industrious in its search, commonly finds some way or other to turn the knowledge it has of persons to their disadvantage.

*Ver. 58. And he did not, &c.]* We are not to understand these words as if the power of Christ was here disarmed: but only that they brought but *few sick people* to him for a cure, Mark vi. 5. He did not judge it convenient to obtrude his miracles upon them, and so could not honourably and properly perform them. On the same principle it is that *faith*, in some cases, though not in all, is made the condition of receiving a cure. Compare ch. ix. 29. Mark, ix. 23. and Acts, xiv. 9. Christ saw proper to make it so here, as he well might, considering what the Nazarenes must undoubtedly have heard of him from other places, and what they had themselves confessed but just before, of *mighty works* being wrought by his hands; which shews indeed that their unbelief did not so much consist in a doubt of his miraculous power, as of his divine mission, which, to any unprejudiced person's mind, that power so abundantly proved. In this view therefore it is hard to say, how he could, consistently with his character and perfections, have lavished away his favours on so unworthy a people. Dr. Clarke explains this, "He could not do any mighty works there, consistently with his rule and method of acting, or with his present purposes and designs." See vol. ix. serm. 3.; the note on Mark, vi. 6.; Doddridge; and Clearius. The reason, says one, why many *mighty works* are not wrought now is, not that the faith is everywhere planted, but that unbelief every where prevails.

*Inferences.*—We have in this chapter one more prophetic testimony to the divine character and mission of our great Redeemer,—his *speaking in parables*; and certainly we should think ourselves peculiarly favoured, that while the great truths of the Gospel were veiled in obscurity, and hid from the sight of those who had rendered themselves unworthy of clearer information, we, with the disciples of our Lord, are permitted to know the mysteries of the kingdom, and are indulged with the clearest and fullest intelligence of those great and interesting truths, which many prophets and righteous men have anxiously wished to know, but have not known them.

We should for ever fix it in our minds, that more abundant light and information require a proportionably higher degree of holiness and virtue; to whom much is given, of them much will be required. And as from the parable of the sower we are clearly informed, that increase and improvement depend, under the influence of God's grace, upon ourselves; that the seed and the sower being always the same, the success of that seed, and the fruitfulness of it, arise from the soil; we should be especially careful, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, duly to prepare our hearts, to bring that good and honest, that humble

and teachable, that attentive and considerate disposition to the hearing of the Gospel, which will always be abundantly recompensed with a right knowledge, a genuine experience, and the zealous practice of that Gospel.

When we review mankind, and consider the various pursuits in which they are engaged, the idleness and the occupations, the business and the pleasures which so totally engross the minds of the generality, we cannot wonder at the little influence which the preaching of the word of Christ has upon them. Cares are *thorns* to the poor, wealth to the rich, the desire of other things to all. *Riches* are called *deceitful*, and with great propriety: for they smile and betray, kiss and smite into perdition; they put out the eyes, harden the heart, steal away the divine life, fill the soul with pride, anger, and love of the world, and make men enemies to the whole cross of Christ; and all the while are eagerly desired, and vehemently pursued even by those who believe there is a God; nay, who profess to believe the Gospel of Christ.

How great is the forbearance and long-suffering of our God! However pernicious the *tares*, however abandoned the wicked; however they defy his power, defile his gifts, and dishonour his works, he will not suffer them instantly to be rooted up; he will not in terrible vengeance immediately exert the severity of his judgments upon them. And shall our forbearance and lenity be less than God's! When we behold vice triumphant, nay when we suffer beneath its oppressions, or in any respect feel its fatal consequences, let us preserve our souls in patience, and remember that a day is coming, when the great separation will be made; when *all things that offend shall be cast out of the kingdom of heaven*; and when the faithful righteous shall shine forth, bright and pure as the sun, in that kingdom of the Father. Glorious and triumphant consolation! What more do we want to sustain us, amidst all the evils and difficulties of this state of probation? What more can we want to encourage us to maintain the faith of Christ, and to make ourselves, through grace, of the number of those righteous?

The blessed Jesus renewed his visit to Nazareth, ver. 54. though the people of that place had attempted to murder him on his first preaching among them: So should we never be weary of *well-doing*, nor refuse to renew our attempts on the most obstinate sinners, where the interests of their immortal souls are concerned. Blind and deaf though they be, while hardened in guilt, to the dreadful danger of their unhappy state; yet we, as having our eyes open by Almighty grace to that danger, should be the more ready to compassionate and relieve them.

But though these Nazarenes were astonished at his wisdom, and could not but allow the mighty works which he had wrought; yet they went on, perverse and ungrateful, to reject him, and in so doing were condemned out of their own mouth. Well would it be if these persons afforded us the only instance of such self-condemnation. Well would it be, if, among those who profess the faith

of

## C H A P. XIV.

*Herod's opinion of Christ. Wherefore John Baptist was beheaded. Jesus departeth into a desert place: where he feedeth five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes: he walketh on the sea to his disciples: and, landing at Genesareth, healeth the sick by the touch of the hem of his garment.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**A**T that time <sup>a</sup> Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

<sup>a</sup> Mark 6. 13—10. Luke, 9. 7—9. If. 52. 15.  
<sup>c</sup> Lev. 18. 6, 16. & 20, 21. 2 Sam. 12. 7. Dan. 5. 22, 23.

\* Or are wrought by him.

<sup>b</sup> Luke, 3. 19, 20. Mark, 6. 17, 18, &c. Ch. 4. 12.

of Christ, who acknowledge his wisdom and mighty works, none were found, who in heart and life rejected him, disavowing by their actions what their lips continually expressed. Formality of profession is ever to be most dreaded by those, who, brought up in a speculative faith, receive their creed by tradition, and without due examination; and therefore we cannot be too carefully guarded against it.

How much did these Nazarenes lose by their obstinate prejudices against Jesus! How many diseased bodies might have been cured, how many lost souls might have been recovered and saved, had they given him a better reception! Their unbelief as it were disarmed Christ himself of his power to do good, and rendered him a *favour of death* rather than of *life* to their souls: and still the same destructive principles will work the same destructive consequences: faith seems to have put the Almighty power of God into the hands of men, while unbelief seems even to tie up the hands of Omnipotence. It is a sin pregnant with every other; and with respect to the dispensation of the Gospel, one which discovers no less blindness than dissingenuousness in the mind: *for what could the Lord have done more for his vineyard than he hath done in it?* What more abundant and convincing testimony could he have given in proof of his divine mission, than he has graciously afforded to mankind?—Prophecies clear and continued, miracles mighty and indisputable, wisdom pure and perfect. The Nazarenes allowed his wisdom; and we shall do well to observe, that the very argument which they made use of to support their rejection of this most Divine Prophet, is in itself a strong proof of his divine mission. *Whence hath this carpenter's son this wisdom?* Born and educated amongst us, without any of the means of improvement in human learning, *putting his hand to the nail, and his right hand to the workman's hammer?* Whence this wisdom, these mighty works, to a man so mean, so low, so utterly uninstructed, unlettered, unaided? O ye Nazarenes, can ye want an answer? *This wisdom is from God!* O wisdom of the Son of God! O power of the Father! who canst at the same time discover thyself to the eyes of simple and genuine believers, and conceal thyself from such as are carnal: my faith owns, adores, invokes thee, as the uncreated and incarnate Wisdom, as the light of angels and men, hid under the obscurity of our flesh, veiled in the voluntary meanness of thy humiliation, and debased in the proud conceits of self-sufficient philosophers of this world.

2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works \* do shew forth themselves in him.

3 ¶ <sup>b</sup> For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

4 For John said unto him, <sup>c</sup> It is not lawful for thee to have her.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, With indefatigable diligence did the great Prophet labour to inculcate the doctrines of his Gospel. *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side,* his auditory being too great for a house to contain them; and there, ascending a ship for his pulpit, while the attentive multitude crowded the shore, he spake many things unto them in parables, more, probably, than are here recorded; and he chose this method for reasons given. *Note;* (1.) In preaching the Gospel, we are called to be instant in season and out of season: no time nor place is unfuitable to speak a word for Christ and for immortal souls. (2.) Where Christ is preached, there should we with delight attend: his presence and blessing on the sea-shore are better than all the magnificence of Solomon's temple without him.

1. The parable with which Christ opens his discourse is that of a sower, sowing his seed, with the various soils on which it fell, and the consequences thereof. By familiar and well-known objects, Christ would thus convey more pleasingly his divine instructions, and teach them to spiritualize their daily labours, and to draw from them profitable meditation. The explication of the parable Christ is pleased himself to give, and we cannot err when following an infallible interpreter. *The seed is the word of the kingdom, the Gospel; the sower is the Lord Jesus,* with all his divinely appointed ministers; and he also by his Spirit quickens the seed sown, that it may bring forth fruit in the hearts of those who will with simplicity accept his grace. *The field is the world in general;* and the several sorts of ground here mentioned, on which the seed falls, represent the different tempers of those to whom the Gospel is preached, and the effects thereby produced upon them.

[1.] Some are like the way-side, where the seed, falling on the hard ground, not broken up, is exposed to the birds, and devoured. This represents the case of those who are careless, negligent, and inattentive hearers, on whom the word of God makes no impression: they *understand it not*, being wilfully under the darkness of their fallen mind, and their hearts hardened. *The wicked one,* the devil, ever watchful to prevent all good men from entering, no sooner observes such a one in the way of the Gospel than he seeks to divert him from it, and catches away the word from his heart as it falls, distracting his attention by some objects around him, or suggesting some idle, vain, worldly, or trifling thoughts, so that the word of God is

immediate



5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

6 But \* when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

\* Ch. 21. 26. Luke, 20. 6. \* When John had lain about a year and a half in prison. \* Gen. 40. 20. Acts, 12. 21. Esth. 1. 2 & 2. 18.

immediately effaced from the memory, and becomes utterly unprofitable.

[2.] Others are like the stony ground, on which whatever is sown springs up quickly, the earth being shallow; but, unable to bear the scorching sun, for want of root, it withers away. Such are they who attend the ministry of the word, and, greatly struck at first with what they hear, give an immediate assent to its truth; but the root of the matter is not in them; they are unfaithful; they are not brought to a deep and humble sense of the sinfulness of their nature; they do not see the utter impotence of their hearts to all good; they are not humbled to an universal renunciation of themselves; nor led to Christ alone for pardon, righteousness, grace, and glory: but while some lively impression or sudden flash of joy succeeds their hearing, they are ready to conclude that the work is done; their hearts continue unhumiliated and unholy; they are not influenced by the divine principle of faith which worketh by love; they have never truly counted the cost, and therefore, when they are called to painful self-denial for Christ's sake, to endure reproach, the loss of friends or fortune, or the severer sufferings which inveterate persecutions may inflict, then they shrink from the cross, dishonour their profession, comply with the world, are offended, and walk no more with Jesus. May we never be numbered among such!

[3.] Another sort of hearers are compared to the seed sown among thorns. These go farther than the former: they are attendants on the word and ordinances, and in appearance Christians altogether; but insensibly the cares of the world, a too great anxiety about a provision for themselves or families, an inordinate love of money, and too eager a pursuit after it, these, under many a specious cloak of prudent care and becoming industry, seduce the affections to gold from God, and insensibly, like the thorns, eat out the life and spirit of that godliness which they once possessed; the heart grows cold, eternal things lose their importance, the vanities of time appear more significant; and though the profession of religion and the form of duties may still be carried on, it is mere husk; no substantial fruit of grace remains: the word is choked, and the soul drowned in perdition and destruction. How many thus have fallen! May we be warned of the imminent danger, and fear for ourselves, lest this evil world steal away our hearts from God!

[4.] Though others were unfruitful, one sort of hearers are mentioned, who, like the good ground, repaid the husbandman's toils. Their hearts sincerely yielded to be sown by grace: they received the seed of the Gospel, and, watered by the dews of heavenly influence, it grew, and brought forth fruit abundantly. They are described not merely as hearing the word, but understanding it, the eyes of their mind being enlightened; and they receive the truth not only in the light but in the love of it: in their heart the seed takes root, and brings forth the genuine

fruits of righteousness and true holiness: and this variously; for though the quality of the fruit be the same in all, wrought by that one and the self-same spirit, yet in some these fruits are more eminent and abundant than in others. May Jesus give us then the hearing ear and understanding heart, that our profiting may appear; and may we seek to abide and abound in all the fruits of grace, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God!

2. Christ resolves the question addressed to him by his disciples, why he spoke to the people by parables? In general, such was the good pleasure of his will. With regard to those who were his disciples, he intended to stir up their inquiries after the explanation of what they heard; they had left all, and followed him; and to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom: but to those who refused to listen to the first inspirations of grace, and trod under foot or negligently cast away those divine seeds out of which faith and regeneration might have sprung up in time, it was not given. Where the divine light which he bestows is faithfully improved, there he will continue to work, increasing his gifts of wisdom and grace: but where there is no desire to profit by his word, but a determined obstinacy to reject it, there he will take away the external gifts, the means of grace, or ministry of the Gospel, which such persons before enjoyed, or at least leave them to the blindness they have chosen. And this he assigns as the reason why he spake to them in parables, without expounding them to the multitude, as he did to his own disciples. He designed to leave those, who wilfully had rejected the light of his miracles and doctrines, to the hardness and impenitence of their own hearts. They did not choose to see or understand, and therefore he decrees in just judgment that they shall not. And herein the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled. The Jews were now given up to that judicial blindness which he had foretold. In the midst of the glorious light of the Gospel, and in the face of the astonishing miracles wherewith Jesus as the Messiah had confirmed his mission, they obstinately stopped their ears, and closed their eyes, as if they were afraid lest the force of conviction and the strong evidence of truth should overpower them, and necessitate them to submit to the Saviour's doctrine, and yield up their hearts and ways to his government: which they being resolved not to do, his spirit will no longer strive with them, and they are left to the ignorance and impenitence of their hearts. But towards those simple souls that received the truth in the love of it, God had the most gracious designs: he had given them the seeing eye and the hearing ear, and blessed them with the understanding of those mysteries of his grace which were hidden from the eyes of the others: yea, they enjoyed transcendent favours beyond all the prophets and righteous men who had gone before them; for, earnestly as the pious in ancient days longed for the appearing of the Messiah, and to behold him incarnate, they

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's

<sup>f</sup> Esh. 5. 3, 6. & 7. 3. Ch. 4. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Prov. 10. 12, 13. & 1. 16. & 4. 16.

saw his day but at a distance, and chiefly beheld the great things of his kingdom wrapped up in types and figures; while his present disciples beheld him face to face, saw his miracles, and from his own mouth more distinctly were informed of those truths which the others saw only through a glass darkly. *Note*; (1.) Many enjoy the means of grace whose hearts only grow more hard and insensible under them. They hate the light, and therefore are justly abandoned to the darkness which they have chosen. (2.) The greatest of all blessings is the knowledge of Jesus; for to know him is everlasting life. (3.) If we be distinguished by peculiar circumstances of the divine regard, the stronger obligation is laid upon us to be thankful, and to walk in the light, as children of the light.

2dly, Our Lord farther continues his discourse to the people in parables, choosing in this manner to wrap up the doctrines that he inculcated, according to the prophecy (Pf. lxxviii. 2.); and while he thus opened a door for inquiry to his disciples, to whom he afterwards explained the meaning of the figures that he used, and informed them of the secrets of wisdom couched under these parables, he left the multitude in general, who shewed no solicitude to be informed of their meaning, to their wilful ignorance. Seven parables are delivered after that of the sower, one of which is afterwards particularly explained by our Lord in private to his disciples, who desired to be informed of its design. We have,

1. The parable of the tares, which is the representation of the visible church in particular, as the former related to the world in general.

[1.] The sower of the good seed is the Son of man, who, by himself, and his ministers whom he appoints, sows the seed of divine life in the hearts of believers, and causes it to take root and bring forth fruit: all that is good in man intirely originates with him.

[2.] The field is the world, through which the Gospel is spread; and particularly the visible church where the word is preached, and Christ's servants, under him the great Husbandman, continually labour to break up the fallow ground, and cast in the living seed.

[3.] The good seed are the children of the kingdom; those who by faith embrace the doctrines of the Gospel, and in all holy conversation and godliness adorn it.

[4.] The tares are the children of the wicked one; all hypocrites and careless professors, who, though they have a name to live in the visible church, are really dead in trespasses and sins; under the influence of the devil, resembling him in their spirit and tempers, and a trouble and vexation to the children of God among whom they associate.

[5.] The enemy that sowed them is the devil; that spirit of wickedness whose unwearied labours are employed to corrupt and destroy the souls of men, and who watches day and night to take advantage against the church of Christ: and while we are off our guard, or lulled by outward prosperity into a state of security, he insinuates his

pernicious errors in doctrine and practice, seducing unstable souls: and for a while the mischief is not discovered, so artful are his wiles; like the villain who sowed tares, and slipped away unnoticed under the covert of the night. But though at first the secret wickedness which lurked under the cloak of profession is not perceived, in a little while the difference between the wheat and tares becomes very visible. The exercise of grace in the one appears evident in the spirituality of their tempers, the simplicity of their hearts, and the purity of their manners; whilst observation and experience discover the unfaithfulness of the tares; and a day of trial shews their real character. With grief and surprize the faithful ministers and servants of Jesus behold the errors and immoralities among the professors of godliness, and carry their sorrowful inquiries to their Lord; for they who have a zeal for him cannot but be affected with every thing in his church which reflects dishonour upon his holy religion. He informs them whence these tares sprung; he marked his enemy in all his ways. He does not reflect upon his servants, as if negligence were to be charged on them: nor will he grant their request of immediately eradicating these pernicious inmates of the visible church. There would be danger, if it was left to us, left our undistinguishing eye might class among the hypocrites some who were sincere; or, too rigid or hasty in our judgments, we should count those tares, whom the Lord knew to be genuine believers; for his all-seeing eye alone can discern the true characters of men. They are therefore permitted to grow together; the day of separation will come, when the distinction between tares and wheat will be evident. And hence we should learn, (1.) That as long as Christ has a church, the devil will still be seeking to disturb the peace, or corrupt the purity of the professing members of it, notwithstanding the care of the most vigilant pastors, and the administration of the strictest discipline. (2.) We should be very cautious of pronouncing rash and hasty censures on the characters of others: God only knoweth the heart; and it is better that many criminals should escape, than one righteous person be condemned.

[6.] The harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels; they shall go forth, and make the awful separation. All that offend and do iniquity, whose pernicious doctrines, or immoral conduct, have been a scandal to the religion they professed, shall be gathered out, and, like tares, bound in bundles for the burning. The distinction between the righteous and the wicked shall then be too evident to admit of a mistake, and the separation between them shall be perfect and everlasting. For,

[7.] They shall cast them, the tares, into a furnace of fire; the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, the place of torment appointed for all the ungodly, where they shall burn, and none shall quench them; their pangs intolerable and eternal, under the wrath of God, which is for ever wrath to come; where every expression of acutest

head in a charger,  
9 And the king was <sup>h</sup> sorry: <sup>i</sup> nevertheless

for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *ber*.

<sup>h</sup> Ver. 5. Mark, 6. 20. Luke, 13. 32.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. 1. 32. Tit. 1. 16. James, 1. 14.

anguish and black despair shall prove how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Lord, gather not my soul with these sinners!

[8.] *The wheat shall be gathered into God's barn.* The righteous being proved and found faithful, shall be collected in one glorious company, and *shine forth as the sun* arrayed in robes of spotless purity, and clothed with honour and immortality; admitted into their Father's kingdom, and sitting down on the throne of their Lord, to reign with him for ever and ever. The prospect of such a glorious state before us should deeply engage our attention; *he therefore that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

2. The parable of the grain of mustard seed, which, from one of the smallest seeds, grows, in the Eastern countries, into the greatest of herbs; so that, like a spreading tree, the birds find shelter in its branches. And such is,

[1.] The work of God in a faithful soul. The beginnings are often small, and scarcely perceptible; but, watered with divine influences, the seed of eternal life springs up, and, amidst all the stormy blasts of temptation, corruption, persecution, affliction, to which it is exposed, increaseth with the increase of God.

[2.] Such also was the Messiah's kingdom at the first. Christ and his disciples seemed little, mean, and despicable; but their word took deep root; abundant converts were made; the Gospel spread on every side, and filled the face of the world with fruit: and, like the enlarging circle in the water, the church of Christ shall go on increasing, till the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of the Lord; and all the fowls of the air, both Jews and Gentiles, be converted, and flock together into it. Hasten, O Lord, this happy day!

3. The parable of the leaven. As a little of this diffuses itself gradually through the whole mass of meal with which it is mingled; so does the Gospel word, when quickened by Divine grace, powerfully diffuse its energy through all the faculties of the believing soul, and over all the members of the body; sanctifying the whole, communicating throughout a sweet favour of Christ, and working a blessed and universal change into his image and likeness: And spreading far and wide among all nations, the word of truth shall continue its mighty operations, till all nations shall be brought to the obedience of the faith. *Note;* Where the leaven of truth is hid in the heart, there its influence will infallibly appear; there will be a sweet favour of Christ in all we speak or do.

4. *The treasure hid in the field,* which is Christ himself, and the great and precious promises that are in him. The field is the Scripture, wherein *He* is revealed to us, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and from whom the most inestimable riches to a sinner, of pardon, peace, righteousness, and grace, are to be derived. These are *hid* from us in our state of nature: though we have the Scriptures before us, we cannot look farther than the surface of them, till God imparts the spiritual understanding, and enables us to dig deep in the

precious mine. When we have found the treasure, we must *hide* it in our hearts; and nothing can equal the joy with which a poor sinner discovers the riches of the grace revealed in Jesus Christ: for the sake of this we shall be ready to part with all besides, and count an interest in his love and favour the most invaluable treasure.

5. The parable of the pearl of great price is much of the same import with the foregoing. The *merchant* is the convinced sinner, seeking after Christ and his salvation, *the pearl of great price*, an object indeed deserving our most eager pursuit. Shall merchants compass sea and land for one poor jewel; and shall we not be more assiduous in securing an interest in Jesus, and the possession of all the jewels of grace and glory? He *finds* it, as all who truly seek the Saviour assuredly will; and then with cheerfulness sells all to become possessor of it; content to quit the world, with all its riches, honours, pleasures; and his sins, with all their allurements; that Christ may be to him all and in all.

6. The parable of *the net cast into the sea*, with the explication annexed. The *net* is the Gospel preached to every creature; the ministers of Christ are the fishermen, who cast it into the *sea*, the world: by it a multitude of souls are inclosed, and brought into the visible church. When it is *full*, in the latter days, and all, both Jews and Gentiles, are gathered into it, then cometh the end, when the net shall be drawn to shore, in the great day of final separation, and the contents of it be examined. The *good fish*, the *just*, who in Christ Jesus are justified from all things, and found faithful, shall be gathered into the vessels of glory prepared for their reception; while the angels, the ministers employed in this service, shall separate the *bad*, the *wicked*, from among them, and cast them away as vile and reprobate into the everlasting burnings. *Note;* (1.) Many, who have had a place in the Gospel church, will at the last day be rejected by the great Head of the church, as hypocrites and unfaithful. (2.) They who live in wickedness, have nothing to expect but an eternity of woe. (3.) The consideration of the dreadful end of those who perish, should awaken our greater solicitude to make our calling and election sure.

7. The parable of the householder aptly finishes, as the practical improvement of the whole. Our Lord had interrogated them on their proficiency, whether they had understood the meaning of the parables which he had uttered; and as they had replied in the affirmative, he directs them to the proper use of the knowledge which they possessed. They were to be evangelical *Scribes* to preach the everlasting Gospel, as the Scribes in their days expounded the law: and herein they were to resemble a *householder*, who, having made a liberal provision for the family under his care, brings forth out of his storehouse *things new and old*, as each is best suited to their wants. The family under our care is the church of Christ, that particular part of it to which we are ordained to minister. Our treasure is the word of truth, and Christ especially therein revealed,

C c 2

with

10 And he sent, and <sup>k</sup> beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it

<sup>k</sup> 2 Chr. 36. 16. Ch. 10. 21. & 21. 35, 36. & 22. 6.

with an experimental knowledge of him in all his offices, of the riches of his salvation, and the obligations to love and serve him thence arising. These we must set before the people, drawn from the sacred storehouses of the Old and New Testament; inculcating anew ancient truths; adding to old experiences, new observations; and providing thus a supply of spiritual food, suited to every state, condition, and circumstance of the people whom we serve. And this wisdom, this ability to minister, no attainments of science, no researches of philosophy, no force of genius can bestow: it is the gift of the great Master of the family, the Lord Jesus; and they who would savingly teach others the doctrines of the kingdom, must be themselves first taught of him.

3dly, When Jesus had finished this discourse, he returned to his own city Nazareth, where he had before been so contumeliously treated, and where he again met the like contempt.

1. Though they could not help being astonished at the wisdom and authority with which he spoke in their synagogue, and the mighty works that he performed, yet their questions shew the prejudices which they entertained against him. They knew his parentage and education: he had not been brought up under their admired doctors; and his father was of no higher rank than a carpenter: his mother Mary, a woman of no account; and his brethren and sisters mean, low, and illiterate people: and at this they stumbled, despised his person, and slighted his ministry.

2. Christ gently rebukes their unreasonable prejudices, and punishes them for their low thoughts of him. They acted according to vulgar prepossessions, which lead us to pay little reverence and respect to those with whom we have been familiar; and if they rise to superior excellence, and above their former station, they are envied. Therefore, since they despised and rejected him, refused to believe his doctrine, and submit to the evidence of his miracles, he *did not many mighty works there*; not for want of power, but in just judgment; leaving them to their unbelief and hardness of heart. *Note*; (1.) Prejudice entertained against ministers is a great obstruction to our profiting by their labours. (2.) We owe it to our unbelief, that we see and experience no more of the mighty works of Jesus.

#### CHAP. XIV.

*Ver. 1. Herod the Tetrarch*] Herod is called *Tetrarch*, because he inherited but a fourth part of his father's dominions. However, he exercised a regal authority in Galilee, and is styled a *king*, ver. 9. and Mark vi. 14. This was Herod Antipas. See ch. ii. 1.

*Ver. 2. This is John the Baptist*] From Luke ix. 7. we learn that Herod and his courtiers were strangely perplexed respecting the fame of Jesus, which occasioned many speculations among them. Some supposed that it was John risen from the dead, others, that it was Elias, and others

one of the old prophets; but Herod declared it to be his opinion that it was John; and *therefore*, says he, *mighty works do shew forth themselves in him*, that is to say, extraordinary and miraculous powers were exerted by him. Erasmus indeed thinks, that as Herod was of the sect of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, (compare ch. xvi. 6. Mark viii. 15.) he might say this by way of irony to his servants, ridiculing the notions of the lower people, and those who joined in that opinion; and this solution might have passed, had not Herod been *perplexed* on this occasion, Luke ix. 7. The image of the Baptist whom he wrongfully put to death, presented itself often to his thought, and tormented him; therefore, when it was reported that he was risen from the dead, and was working miracles, Herod, fearing some punishment would be inflicted on him for his crime, in the confusion of his thoughts said, that John was risen from the dead, notwithstanding he was a Sadducee. Nay, he might say this, although he had heard of Jesus and his miracles before, there being nothing more common than for persons in vehement perturbations to talk inconsistently. Besides, it is no easy matter to arrive at a steady belief of so great an absurdity as the annihilation of the human mind. The being of God, the immortality of the soul, the rewards and punishments of a future state, with the other great principles of natural religion; often obtrude themselves upon unbelievers, in spite of all their efforts to banish them; and leave a sting behind them in the conscience, whose pain, however it may be concealed, cannot easily be allayed. Of this, Herod is a remarkable example; for, notwithstanding he was a king, his conscience made itself heard and felt, amidst all the noise, the hurry, the flatteries, and the debaucheries of a court.

*Ver. 3. For Herod had laid hold on John*] Here is a digression in the history, from this to the 13th verse, in which the Evangelist gives us an account of the Baptist's death, though he does not tell us precisely when it happened. St. Mark indeed seems to assign it as the cause of the Apostles' return from their circuit; and St. Matthew and St. Luke mention it as the reason why Jesus retired with them to the desert of Bethsaida. It is therefore probable that John was put to death while the Apostles were first abroad, perhaps not long before Jesus became the subject of conversation at court: hence, because he was but lately dead, the people in general, the courtiers, and even Herod himself, believed that he was risen, when they heard the fame of Christ's miracles. In some of his private conferences with the king, the Baptist had been so bold as to reprove him for his adultery with Herodias. This princess was grand-daughter to Herod the Great, by his son Aristobulus, and had formerly been married to her uncle, Herod-Philip, the son of her grandfather by Mariamne. Some time after that marriage, this Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, and son of Herod the Great by Malthace, happening, in his way to Rome, to lodge at his brother's house, fell passionately in love with Herodias, and

to her mother.

the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

12 And his disciples came, and took up

1 Kings, 13. 29. Ch. 27. 58—61. Acts, 8. 19. Ch. 10. 16, 17.

and on his return made offers to her: she accepted his addresses, deserting her husband, who was only a private person, (Philip tetrarch of Iturea, mentioned Luke iii. 1. being a different person from this Philip,) that she might share with the tetrarch in the honours of a crown. On the other hand, to make way for her, he divorced his wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. As Antipas was Herod the Great's son, he was brother to Herod-Philip, the husband of Herodias, and uncle to Herodias herself; wherefore both parties being guilty of incest as well as adultery, they deserved the rebuke, which the Baptist gave them with a courage highly becoming the messenger of God: for though he had experienced the advantage of the tetrarch's friendship, he was not afraid to displease him when his duty required it. Herod had with great pleasure heard John's discourses, and by his persuasion had done many good actions; Mark, vi. 20. but now that he was touched to the quick, he repented it to such a degree, that he laid his monitor in irons. Thus it happens sometimes, that they who do not fear God sincerely, will go certain lengths in the obedience of his commandments, provided something is remitted to them by way of indulgence; but when they are more straitly pressed, throwing off the yoke, they not only become obstinate but furious; which shews that no man has any reason of self-complacency because he obeys many of the divine laws, unless he has learned through the power of Divine grace to subject himself to God in every respect, and without exception. Josephus asserts another reason for the apprehending of John; namely, his excessive popularity. See his Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 5. Macknight, and Jortin.

Ver. 4. For John said unto him, &c.] Possessed of great credit with Herod, and with the people, it is not possible to suppose that the Baptist would have incurred Herod's jealousy and displeasure, had he been an impostor, and an associate of a pretended Messiah,—for fear of blasting at once all his preconcerted designs. Certainly, he would now, more than ever, have employed all his art to keep the influence that he had acquired with the king and the people. But how opposite to all this was his conduct: at this critical point of time, in this peculiar situation, when both his own and his confederate's interest absolutely required him to act in the manner just mentioned, he even proceeded to reprove Herod himself for the wickedness of his life. An impostor, in John's particular situation, could not but have reflected, at the first thought of so dangerous a step as that which occasioned his death, that it was not his own immediate assistance only of which his associate would be deprived by his destruction,—though this alone would have been sufficient to prevent him from adopting it; but he would besides have considered, that his own imprisonment and death would probably strike such a panic into the people, however zealous they had before been in his favour, as would restrain them from listening afterwards to Jesus, or paying the same regard which

they might otherwise have done to his pretensions: nay, nothing was more probable, than that John's public ministry, being put to so ignominious an end, would even destroy that good opinion of John himself, which they had hitherto entertained, and induce them to believe, that, notwithstanding his fair outside, he could be no better than an impostor. For by what arguments could John think it possible, that the Jews would persuade themselves he was really sent to be the divine forerunner of this triumphant Messiah, when they should have seen him seized by Herod's order, imprisoned, and put to death? Besides, therefore, John's regard to his own success, his liberty, and even his life itself, which no impostor can be thought desirous of exposing to certain destruction for no reason; his connection with Jesus, if they were deceivers, and the necessary dependence of both upon the mutual success and assistance of each other, must unquestionably have restrained John from provoking at this time the inveterate hatred of Herodias, and drawing on himself Herod's violent suspicion and displeasure. So that the remarkable behaviour of John, in this important particular, and at so critical a conjuncture, affords us one of the strongest presumptive proofs imaginable, that neither he nor Jesus could possibly be deceivers. See on Mark i. 14. and Bell's Inquiry, p. 384.

Ver. 6. But when Herod's birth-day was kept] If Herod's resentment of the freedom which John the Baptist took with him was great, that of Herodias was much greater. The crime that she was guilty of was odious; she could not bear to have it named, and far less reprov'd. She was therefore enraged to the highest pitch, and nothing less than the Baptist's head would satisfy her. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not; Mark, vi. 19. Ever since he offended her, she had been plotting against his life, but could not yet accomplish her purpose; for (ver. 20.) Herod feared, or revered John, &c. Great and powerful as the king was, he stood in awe of John, though in low life, and durst not attempt any thing against him; such force have piety and virtue sometimes upon the minds of the highest offenders. Herodias, therefore, finding that she could not prevail against the Baptist in the way of direct solicitation, watched an opportunity to destroy him by craft. At length one offered itself. Herod, on his birth-day, made a sumptuous entertainment for the great lords, generals, and other great persons of his kingdom; wherefore, as it was the custom in those countries, for princes to bestow favours at their feasts, sometimes of their own accord, sometimes in consequence of petitions which were then presented, Herodias thought the birth-day a fit opportunity to get the Baptist destroyed. With this view she proposed to Salome, her daughter by Philip, who was now of age, and had followed her mother's fortunes, to dance before the company at the birth-day; pretending, no doubt, that it would turn out greatly to her advantage, because the king, in the excess of his good-humour, would probably bid

13 ¶ When Jesus heard of it, he departed when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

Mark, 6. 32, 33. Luke, 9. 10, 11. John, 6. 2. Ch. 12. 15. James, 1. 19. Ch. 10. 16, 17.

bid her name what she would please to have, as the reward of her complaisance; or if he should not, she might, consistently enough with good manners, beg him to grant her the boon she was most desirous to obtain: only, before she named any particular favour, it would be proper to come out and consult with her mother. The Evangelists, indeed, do not absolutely speak of this previous agreement: but St. Mark gives the strongest hint of it, ch. vi. 21, &c.; *And when a convenient day [ἐυναιρίων, a favourable opportunity] was come, that Herod, &c.:* for, as he had mentioned the attempts which Herodias had made, without success, to destroy the Baptist,—by calling this a *convenient day*, on account of the feast, he insinuates, that she thought the entertainment afforded favourable opportunity to take away the Baptist's life; consequently he directs us to consider all the favourable transactions of the birth-day, which have any reference to the Baptist's death, as the effect of Herodias's contrivance. Besides, a previous agreement between the mother and the daughter must be admitted, in order to account for the latter's dancing before the company on the birth-day: the reason is, in ancient times it was so far from being the custom for ladies of distinction to dance in public, that it was reckoned indecent if they were so much as present at public entertainments: we need refer only to the instance of queen Vashti, who thought it so dishonourable, that rather than submit to it even when commanded by Ahasuerus, she forfeited her crown. We may likewise remark, that notwithstanding Herodias was a lady of no distinguished character for virtue, she had such a regard to decency and reputation, that she did not appear at this birth-day feast. We may therefore believe, that it was an extraordinary thing for young ladies of quality to dance before large companies of men at public entertainments; and if so, the reader must be sensible, that this dance of Herodias's daughter could not happen by accident, but must have been brought about by some contrivance or another. See Calmet, Macknight, and Lardner's *Credibility*, part i. vol. i. p. 23.

*Ver. 7. He promised with an oath*] It is very probable that this oath of Herod's was repeatedly given; because, according to the manners of the East, it was disgraceful for women of rank to appear in public; and they never did appear, unless they were sent for, or had an important request to make. (See Esth. v. 2, 3. and the former note.) It was immediately concluded, that Salome's extraordinary condescension proceeded from her having some favour to ask of the king: besides, the honour she was doing to the day and the company might be interpreted as a public acknowledgment of Herod's civility to her, and at the same time judged a becoming expression of her gratitude. As for the king, he considered the respect shewn to his guests as terminating upon himself; and having greatly injured the young lady by debauching her mother, he was caught with flattery, and grew vain. His

fancy also being heated with wine and music, and the applause of his guests, the sight of the damsel dancing, and the idea of her mother, whom he passionately loved, he made her the promise which he imagined she was silently soliciting; a promise which, though it had the air of royal munificence, suited but ill with the gravity of wisdom or with any spark of goodness. See Mark vi. 22, 23. and Macknight.

*Ver. 8. And she, being before instructed*] *Being before urged.* Doddridge. When the plot had thus succeeded, and Salome had obtained the king's promise, she went out to consult with her mother, who immediately disclosed her purpose, bidding her ask the Baptist's head. A counsel of this kind, no doubt, surprised Salome, for she could not see of what use the head could be to her; besides, she might think the demand improper, as their quarrel with the Baptist, and the cause of it, were universally known; not to mention, that when she consented to dance, it was natural to imagine her fancy had been running on very different subjects: Probably, therefore, at the first she scrupled to comply, as may be gathered also from the force of the word *προεβασθησα* (rendered in our version *before instructed*), by which St. Matthew expresses the effect that her mother's solicitation had upon her. According to Helychius, the Greek word *προεβαλεν*, signifies to *urge, excite, or impel*; and consequently supposes reluctance in the person urged. Herodias, however, full of the fiercest resentment against the holy man, would take no denial. She peremptorily insisted that her counsel should be followed, without question representing to her daughter that John had attempted to expel and ruin them both; and that, considering the opinion which the king still entertained of him, he might some time or other, though in irons, regain Herod's favour, and accomplish his design; for which reason, the present opportunity of taking away his life was not to be neglected, if she regarded her own safety. These and the like arguments wrought up Salome to such a pitch, that she not only consented to do as she was bidden, but became hearty in the cause; for we read in Mark, vi. 25. (where the narration is by far the most circumstantial, and very animated) *that she came in εὐθέως μετὰ σπουδῆς, immediately, with eagerness*; and while all the guests sat mute, expecting what mighty thing would be asked, she demanded the holy Baptist's head, as of greater value to her than *half the kingdom*. *Give me here* (fearing that, if he had time to consider, he would not do it,) *John the Baptist's head in a charger, κινεζ, a large dish*, which the antiquated word *charger* well expresses. We must just observe, that it was and is customary with princes in the Eastern parts of the world, to require the heads of those whom they had ordered to be executed to be brought to them, that they might be assured of their death. The grand signior does it to this day. See Lardner's *Credibility*, as above; Beza; and Blackwall's *Sacred Classics* vol. i. p. 383.

*Ver. 9*

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude

away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 6. 34. Ch. 9. 36. & 15. 32. Heb. 4. 15. & 5. 2. & 2. 17.  
<sup>b</sup> 44. Ch. 6. 33. Luke, 9. 13. John, 6. 6—10.

<sup>c</sup> Mark, 6. 35—46. John, 6. 5—21. Luke, 9. 12—16. <sup>d</sup> 2 Kings, 4.

*Ver. 9. And the king was sorry*] Sudden horror, no doubt, seized every heart on hearing Salome's request; the king's gaiety vanished; he was confounded and vexed; but being unwilling to appear either rash, or fickle, or false, before a company of the first persons in his kingdom for rank and character, he commanded her request to be granted; not one of the guests being so friendly as to speak the least word to divert him from his mad purpose, though he gave them an opportunity to do it, by signifying to them that he performed his oath out of regard to the company—perhaps they dreaded the repentment of Herodias. Thus, out of a misplaced regard to his oath and his guests, king Herod committed the most unjust and cruel of actions, which will ever reflect the deepest dishonour and disgrace upon his memory. See Macknight, and the note on Numb. xxx. 2.

*Ver. 10. And he sent, and beheaded John*] This was contrary to the law of Moses, whereby it was enjoined that malefactors should be publicly executed. Thus the Baptist, having performed his office, died soon after Christ had begun his ministry. God took him then to himself, as St. Chrysostom has observed, that the people might no longer be divided between him and Christ, but might the more readily follow the Messiah. His reputation, however, ended not with his life: the people continued to honour his memory; insomuch, that when Herod had lost an army by a great overthrow, the Jews, as Josephus informs us, said that it was a divine judgment, and a just punishment inflicted upon him for putting John to death. See his Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 7. Chrysostom's 28th homily upon John, and Jortin's Discourses, p. 187.

*Ver. 11. And his head was brought in a charger*] The head of the prophet, whose rebukes had awed the king in his loosest moments, and whose exhortations had often excited him to virtuous actions, was immediately brought pale and bloody in a charger, and given to the daughter of Herodias, in presence of the guests; which proves that the prison in which they confined the Baptist was at hand, in Tiberias, where Herod kept his court, and not in Machoerus Castle, as the interpolator of Josephus asserts. Salome, forgetting the tenderness of her sex, and the dignity of her rank, with a steady cruelty, agreeable to her relation to so bad a woman, received the bloody present, and carried it to her mother; who enjoyed the whole pleasure of revenge, and feasted her eyes with the sight of her enemy's head, now rendered silent and harmless. St. Jerome tells us, that Herodias treated the head in a very disdainful manner, pulling out the tongue, which she imagined had injured her, and piercing it with a needle: thus they gratified themselves in the indulgence of their

lusts, and triumphed in the murder of this holy prophet, till the righteous judgment of God overtook them all: for Providence interested itself very remarkably in the revenge of this murder on all concerned; as Herod's army was defeated in a war, occasioned by marrying Herodias (see the last note); and both he and Herodias, whose ambition occasioned his ruin, were afterwards driven from their kingdom, and died in banishment at Lyons in Gaul; and if any credit may be given to Nicephorus, Salome,—who was afterwards infamous for a life suitable to this beginning,—fell into the ice, as she was walking over it, which, closing suddenly, cut off her head. See Whitby, Doddridge, and Univ. History, vol. x. p. 632. 8vo.

*Ver. 13. When Jesus heard of it, he departed, &c.*] Into the desert of Bethsaida, Luke 9, 10. on the other side of the sea, John vi. 1. and consequently in the tetrarchy of Philip, who was a meek and peaceable prince. Perhaps by this retreat Jesus proposed to shun Herod, who desired to see him, and might be contriving some method of obtaining an interview with him; for he had perfect knowledge not only of the conversation which passed at the court of Galilee, but of Herod's thoughts also. It is true he remained but a little while, perhaps two or three days only, under Philip's jurisdiction; for Herod's perplexity quickly wore off, and therefore, though about the time that our Lord retired, he might be contriving means to get a sight of him, yet, as he soon returned to his former state of mind, he troubled himself no farther with the matter. See Luke, xxiii. 8.

*Ver. 15. When it was evening*] When Jesus was come ashore, he taught the multitude with his usual goodness, and healed their sick (ver. 14.), spending several days in these charitable offices. The words of the text lead us to this supposition; for the disciples came and told him, that it was time to dismiss the people:—*And when it was evening*,—that is to say, at three o'clock in the afternoon, for the Jews had two evenings, one of which commenced when the sun had declined and the greater part of the day was spent, and the other when the sun was set. The first evening, which began at three, is here meant, as appears from ver. 23. where another evening is said to have come after the people were fed and dismissed; namely, the second evening, which began at sun-setting. See ch. xxviii. 1.—At this time his disciples came to him, saying, &c. which implies, that the people had now no meat remaining; and therefore, as it was the custom in those countries to have two or three days' provisions with them when they travelled (see on Luke x. 34.), we may reasonably presume, that the multitude had been with Jesus several days before the disciples had any thought of dismissing them.

The.

18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and, <sup>a</sup> looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

20 And they <sup>r</sup> did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

22 ¶ <sup>r</sup> And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent

the multitudes away.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up <sup>r</sup> into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

25 And in <sup>u</sup> the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they <sup>x</sup> were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them saying, <sup>r</sup> Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

<sup>a</sup> This was to bless the provision: for Christ never wrought his miracles by means of prayer. Ch. 15. 36. & 26. 26. 1 Sam. 9. 15. Deut. 8. 1. 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. Luke, 9. 16, 17. Mark, 6. 41—44. John, 6. 11—14. Ch. 16. 9. <sup>r</sup> Prov. 13. 25. & 6. 6. Pf. 145. 18. & 23. 1. <sup>u</sup> Mark, 45—52. John, 6. 15—21. <sup>x</sup> John, 6. 15. Mark, 6. 46. & 3. 7, 13. Luke, 6. 12. Acts, 1. 24. & 6. 4. & 13. 3. <sup>u</sup> Gen. 22. 14. Job, 9. Pf. 93. 3, 4. & 29. 10. <sup>x</sup> Job, 4. 14, 15. Pf. 88. 15. <sup>r</sup> If. 41. 10. & 43. 1, 2. Pf. 46. 1—5. Rom. 8. 31. Gen. 22. 11—14. Mark, 5. 3

*The time is now passed*, is interpreted by some, the time of dining. The Greek word *Ωρα*, denotes the *season* of doing any thing, and here it seems to signify the season of the people's attending on Christ, which was now *passed*, because they had continued with him till their provisions were consumed. See Macknight, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 19.* And he commanded the multitude, &c.] See the note on John vi. 11. where this miracle is related more circumstantially, and where we shall speak more fully concerning it.

*Ver. 22.* Jesus constrained his disciples] We learn from John vi. 15. that in consequence of this great miracle the people were desirous to take him by force, and make him a king; but Jesus knowing both the purpose of the multitude, and the inclination of the disciples, which most probably led them to encourage those purposes, he ordered the latter to get into their boat, and to go before him to the other side of the creek, to the city of Bethsaida, while he should dismiss the former. The disciples therefore express great unwillingness to depart: they would not go till he constrained or obliged them to depart. It seems they would gladly have detained the people, with whom they fully agreed in sentiment; for it was their opinion also, that he who could feed such a number with so little, had no reason to conceal himself; but, without running the least risk, might take the title of Messiah whenever he pleased. Besides, they certainly supposed that the favourable moment was come, the people being in so proper a temper, that if Jesus but spake the word, they would all to a man have lifted under him, and formed an army immediately. See Macknight and Doddridge.

*Ver. 24, 25.* The ship was now in the midst of the sea] The disciples, having met with a contrary wind, could not keep their course to Bethsaida, which was situated north-

wards, about a league or two from the desert mountain on which the miraculous dinner was given. If Bethsaida had been at a greater distance, Jesus would hardly have sent the disciples away; nor would the disciples probably have consented to go; but as it was only a few miles off, he could easily walk thither on foot. See the note on John vi. 17. The disciples rowed therefore against the wind to keep as near their course as possible, and were tossed violently up and down [*βασανίζομενοι*] all night, and so had gotten only about *one league* from the shore, John, vi. 19. when towards the conclusion of the *fourth watch*, or about *five o'clock in the morning*, Jesus on the mountain looked at them; but they did not see their Master, though he beheld their distress, and was about to appear for their relief. See the *Inferences*. The Jewish night was divided into four watches, each containing about three or four hours, especially so near the equinox; the first began at six in the evening, the second at nine, the third at midnight, and the fourth at three in the morning. Calmet thinks that they learned this division from the Roman *Walking on the sea* was thought so impracticable, that the picture of *two feet walking on the sea* was an Egyptian hieroglyphic for an impossibility; and in the Scripture is mentioned as the prerogative of God, that he alone treadeth upon the waves of the sea, Job, ix. 8. Thus Jesus asserted and proved his Divinity. See Calmet's Dictionary under the word HOURS, and Grotius, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 26.* When the disciples saw him—they were troubled] It is well known, that it is never intirely dark on the water; not to urge that the moon might perhaps now be in the last quarter, as it must have been, if this was about three weeks before the passover. By that little light, therefore, which they had, the disciples seeing Jesus, but not perfectly discerning who it was, were much terrified, and



28 And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, <sup>a</sup> bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But <sup>a</sup> when he saw the wind <sup>\*</sup> boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!

31 And <sup>b</sup> immediately Jesus stretched forth

his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, <sup>c</sup> O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And <sup>d</sup> when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 <sup>e</sup> Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

34 ¶ <sup>f</sup> And when they were gone over, they came into the land of <sup>\*</sup> Gennesaret.

<sup>a</sup> Luke, c. 9. Ch. 12. 20. Rom. 12. 3. <sup>b</sup> 2 Kings, 6. 15. Rom. 4. 19. Pf. 38. 17. <sup>c</sup> Or strong. <sup>d</sup> Gen. 22. 14. Pf. 46. 1—5.  
<sup>e</sup> Ch. 6. 30. & 8. 26. James, 1. 6. If. 7. 9. with Rom. 4. 19, 20. <sup>f</sup> Pf. 107. 29, 30. Ch. 8. 26, 27. <sup>\*</sup> Ch. 8. 27  
 & 16. 14, 16. & 27. 54. & 26. 63, 65. Pf. 2. 7. John, 1. 50. <sup>\*</sup> Mark, 6. 53—56. <sup>\*</sup> A city on the west of Jordan.

said, It is certainly an apparition, or evil spirit, [Φαντασμα]: for no human body, they conceived, could thus be supported by the water.

Ver. 28—30. *And Peter answered him, &c.*] St. Peter, a man of a warm and forward temper, looking at Jesus walking upon the sea, was exceedingly struck with it, and conceived a mighty desire of being enabled to do the like; wherefore, without weighing the matter, he immediately begged that Jesus would bid him come to him on the water. He did not doubt but his Master would gratify him. Perhaps he thought he shewed him respect thereby, his request insinuating, that he would undertake any thing, however difficult, at Christ's command. There was no height of obedience to which Peter would not soar. That this was the true language of his actions, may be gathered from the circumstances before us; it would have been perfectly ridiculous in the Apostle to have asked such a proof of the person's being Jesus who spake to him, as, had it failed, would have become fatal to himself. No man in his senses can be supposed to have desired a proof of that kind; Peter's request therefore should have been translated, *Lord, seeing it is thou, command me, &c.* the particle *si* being put for *επι*. (See Acts iv. 9. in the Greek.) To shew Peter the weakness of his faith, and to bear down that high opinion which he seems to have entertained of himself, as well as to demonstrate the greatness of his power, Jesus granted his request: for, in supporting him on the water together with himself, Jesus appeared greater than in walking thereon singly. Besides, it might be designed to obviate the conceit of those ancient heretics, who from this passage of the Sacred History pretended to prove, that our Lord did not assume a real human body, but only the appearance of one. Peter being thus permitted to walk upon the sea, it flattered his vanity not a little, when, descending from the vessel, he found the water firm under his feet. Hence at the first he walked towards his Master with abundance of confidence: the wind becoming more boisterous than before, made a dreadful noise; and the sea raging at the same time, shook him in such a manner, that he was on the point of being overturned. His courage staggered; in the hurry of his thoughts he forgot that Jesus was at hand, and fell into a panic; and now the

secret power of God, which, while Peter entertained no doubt, had made the sea firm under him, began to withdraw itself: in proportion as his faith decreased, the water yielded, and he sunk. In this extremity he looked round for Christ, and, upon the very brink of being swallowed up, cried out, in a great consternation of spirit, *Lord, save me!* Peter probably could swim, as most fishermen can (compare John xxi. 7.); and possibly he might venture on the attempt which he now made, with some secret dependence on his art, which God, for wise reasons, suffered to fail him. The verb καταποντισθησθαι, rendered *to sink*, is very expressive, and may intimate, that he felt himself sinking with such a weight, that he had no hope of recovering himself, and expected nothing but that he should go directly to the bottom of the sea. See Macknight, Doddridge, Mintert, and the note on ch. xviii. 6.

Ver. 31. *Jesus stretched forth his hand, &c.*] Peter did not doubt that it was Jesus who walked upon the water; he might have been convinced of that, as we observed in the former note, before he left the vessel; nay, must have been convinced of it while he was sinking, otherwise he would not have called to him for assistance; but he was afraid that Jesus could not or would not support him against the wind, which blew more fiercely than before: a doubt most unreasonable and culpable, since it was as easy to support him against the storm, as to keep him above the water, which Jesus had virtually promised to do by his permission, and which he had actually performed, when Peter first left the vessel. See the *Inferences*.

Ver. 34. *They came into the land of Gennesaret*] The land of Gennesaret was a large tract of ground on the western shore of the lake, in part of which Capernaum appears to have been situated; for though St. Matthew and St. Mark only speak of their coming to the land of Gennesaret, and putting to shore there, (See Mark vi. 53.) it is plain from St. John's account, that Jesus, at his landing, came to Capernaum; for it was there the people found him, who followed in the morning to the other side of the sea. See Doddridge; and compare John vi. 22, 24. and 59.

D d

Ver.

35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, <sup>2</sup> they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

<sup>2</sup> John, 4. 28. Ch. 4. 24, 25.

<sup>h</sup> Ch. 9. 20, 21. Mark, 3. 10. Luke, 6. 19. Acts, 19. 12.

*Ver. 35, 36. And when, &c.] And the men—knowing him, sent out; Jesus ordinarily resided in the neighbourhood of Capernaum; but he had been long absent, namely, ever since his mother had taken him with her to Nazareth; see ch. xiii. 54. and Mark, vi. 1—6. wherefore the inhabitants, glad of this new opportunity, came with their sick in such crowds, that it was impossible for Jesus to bestow particular attention on each of them, which when the sick observed, they besought him, that they might only touch the hem, the border, or fringe of his garment; when as many as touched it were made perfectly whole, and that whether they were good or bad people; not because there was any virtue in his garments, otherwise the soldiers who obtained them at his crucifixion might have wrought miracles; but because Jesus willed it to be so; for it was now with them the acceptable time, the day of salvation, foretold by Isaiah, xlix. 8. and Christ's volition was sufficient to remove any distemper whatever. This pitch of faith seems to have been wrought in the sick multitude by the instance of her who had lately been cured of the flux of blood at Capernaum, upon touching the hem of our Lord's garment. See Luke, viii. 43., &c. Macknight, and Chemnitz.*

*Inferences.—Men of flagitious lives are, and ever must be, subject to great uneasiness: whatever calm and repose of mind they may seem for a season to enjoy, yet anon, a quick and pungent sense of guilt, awakened by some accident, arises like a whirlwind, ruffles and disquiets them throughout, and turns up to open view, from the very bottom of their consciences, all the filth and impurity which had settled itself there: of this truth there is not perhaps in the whole book of God, a more apt and lively instance than that of Herod in the chapter before us, ver. i. 2.*

The crying guilt of John the Baptist's blood sat but ill, no doubt, on the conscience of Herod, from the moment of his spilling it. However, his anguish and remorse were stifled and kept under for a time by the splendour and luxury in which he lived, till he heard of the fame of Jesus; and then his heart smote him, at the remembrance of the inhuman treatment which he had given to such another just and good man; and wrung from him a confession of what he felt, by what he uttered on that occasion. *He said,—this is John, &c.* There could not be a wilder imagination than this, or which more betrayed the agony and confusion of thought under which he laboured. He had often heard John the Baptist preach, and must have known that the drift of all his sermons was to prepare the Jews for the reception of a prophet mightier than him, and whose shoes he was not worthy to bear. And yet no sooner does that prophet arrive, but Herod's frightened conscience gives him no leisure to recollect what his messenger had said;

36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

and immediately suggests to him, that this was the murdered Baptist himself!

Herod, though circumcised, appears to have been little better than a heathen in his principles and practices; or, if sincerely a Jew; at most only of the sect of the Sadducees, who said there was no resurrection; and yet under the present pangs and terrors of his guilt, he imagines that John was risen from the dead, on purpose to reprove him.

It was the Baptist's distinguishing character, that he did no miracles, (John x. 41.) nor pretended to the power of doing them; and yet, even hence the disturbed mind of Herod concludes that it must be he, because mighty works did shew forth themselves in him. And so great was his consternation and surprise, that it broke out before those who should least have been witnesses of it: for he whispers not his fears to a bosom-friend, to the partner of his crime and of his bed; but forgets his state and character, and declares them to his very servants. Surely nothing can be more just and apposite than the allusion of the prophet, in respect to this wicked tetrarch: he is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, Isaiah lvii. 20. And such is every one who sins with a high hand against the clear light of his conscience: although he may resist the checks of it at first, yet he will be sure to feel the lashes and reproaches of it afterwards. The avenging principle within us will certainly do its duty, upon any eminent breach of ours; and make every flagrant act of wickedness, even in this life, a punishment to itself. See the *Inferences* on Mark vi.

Who can help observing, on occasion of this remarkable event, how mysterious are the ways of that Providence, which left the life of so holy a man as the Baptist in such infamous hands? which permitted it to be sacrificed to the malice of an abandoned harlot, to the petulance of a vain girl, and to the rashness of a foolish and perhaps an intoxicated prince, who made the prophet's head the reward of a dance! ver. 8, 9. The ways of God are unsearchable; but we are sure that He can never be at a loss to repay his servants in another world for the greatest sufferings they endure in this, and even for life itself when given up in his cause.

What strange kind of religion was this in Herod, to remember God in the midst of sin, to no other end but to make his name subservient thereto by a scandalous oath, instead of thinking of him with reverential awe, in order to renounce his passion! An oath is criminal, and by consequence void, when it cannot be performed without sin and injustice.

We may reasonably conclude, that death could never be an unseasonable surprise to so holy a man as the Baptist, ver. 10. When the executioner came into the prison the

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CHAP. XV.

*Christ reproveth the Scribes and Pharisees for transgressing God's commandments through their own traditions; and teacheth how that which goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man: he healeth the daughter of the woman of C.anaan, and also great multitudes: and with seven loaves, and a few little fishes, feedeth four thousand men, besides women and children.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**T**HEN<sup>a</sup> came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 7. 1—9. <sup>b</sup> Mark, 7. 2. Gal. 1. 14. Col. 2. 8, 18—22. Ch. 7. 3—5. <sup>c</sup> Exod. 20. 12. & 21. 17. Lev. 19. 3, 12. & 20. 9. Deut. 5. 16. & 21. 18. & 27. 16. Prov. 20. 20. & 23. 22. & 30. 17. Eph. 6. 2. <sup>d</sup> Mark, 7. 11, 12. Lev. xxvii. Prov. 11. 25. Hof. 8. 12. It is allegorically ed to God. Prov. 20. 25.

2<sup>b</sup> Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, <sup>d</sup> Whosoever shall say to his

night, (perhaps breaking in upon his slumbers,) and fulfilled his bloody commission, almost as soon as he declared it,—a soul like his might welcome the stroke, as a means of liberty and glory,—assured, that the transient agony of a moment would transmit it to a kingdom, where the least of its inhabitants would be in holiness, honour, and felicity, superior to John in his most prosperous and successful state on earth.

We see here the fruit of a bad education; a wicked daughter of a wicked mother, ver. 11. They are serviceable to one another in order only to sin and damnation! This is a dreadful example for their sex, which is naturally soft, timorous, and bashful. A woman could not arrive at once at such an excess of fury, as to prefer the present of a head, swimming in blood, before every other favour which the might have asked; but revenge, a passion ever to be dreaded in its least approach, causes a person to take pleasure in that, which, if passion were absent, would raise the utmost horror.

The history of Herod's birth-day transmitted to posterity in the Scriptures stands a perpetual beacon, to warn the great, the gay, and the young, to beware of dissolute mirth. Admonished by so fatal an example, they ought to maintain, even in the midst of their festivals, an habitual recollection of spirit, lest reason at any time, enervated by the pleasures of sense, should slacken the rein of wisdom, or let it drop, though but for a moment, because their headstrong passions, ever impatient of the curb, may catch the opportunity, and rush with them into follies, whose consequences will be unspeakably, and, it may be, perpetually bitter!

How magnificent a proof did He who is the bread of life give of his power and goodness, by feeding a great multitude with a few loaves and fishes! ver. 17—21. This was one of the most astonishing, and at the same time most extensively convincing, of all the miracles which Jesus performed during the course of his ministry, and therefore every one of the Evangelists has recorded it; and what is remarkable, it is the only one found in each of their histories. We shall have occasion to consider it more fully hereafter: observing only at present, that though the people sat on the ground, under no canopy but the sky, and had only barley bread, and, as it seems, cold, or dried fishes to eat, and probably nothing but water to drink,

yet was there more real grandeur displayed by the Master of this feast, than by Ahasuerus in that royal festival, which was intended to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, (Esth. i. 4—7.) when the vessels and the beds were of gold and of silver, upon a pavement of porphyry, marble, and alabaster.

When the day had been thus employed in healing and feeding the people, Christ retired to a mountain to pray; ver. 23. Thus must secret devotion attend our public labours for the instruction and salvation of men, if we would secure that divine blessing, without which, neither the most eloquent preaching, nor the most engaging and benevolent conduct, can command or promise success. The proper dispositions and circumstances for praying well, are retirement from the world, elevation of heart, and solitude; and the silence and quiet of the night serve to increase the solemnity of the occasion.

The disciples, wanting their Master, were tossed on the billows of distress, ver. 24. When the stormy waves of affliction beat upon, and are ready to overwhelm God's people, they are apt to think that he has forgotten them, though his eye is all the while upon them; though he takes particular notice of every thing which befalls them, and is about to work their deliverance in a manner altogether unexpected. In such cases, he oftentimes on a sudden calms the storm, makes every thing serene around them, and at length brings them safe into the haven where they would be. So Jesus, who had left his disciples alone in the present danger, that he might teach them to rely in the greatest extremities on the providence of God, went to save them, walking upon the sea.

Happy is he who always discerns his Lord, and always conceives of him aright! but alas! how often does He appear to the disordered mind as the object of terror, (ver. 26.) rather than of confidence! And in a day of affliction, while he may seem to treat his suffering people with neglect; instead of seeking him with the more earnest importunity, how are we ready to be overwhelmed with fears, and to conclude that he has forgotten us! Speak, Lord, to the hearts of all such, to the hearts of all who doubt or disbelieve; who fear, or are troubled; speak the powerful, the efficacious word, *It is I*; and their incredulity will be changed into faith, their doubts into hope, their fears into fortitude.

father or *his* mother, *It is* a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free.* \* Thus have ye made

\* Prov. i. 25.

At the command of Jesus, Peter ventured to go to him on the sea; and through what storms and dangers may we not safely venture, if we are sure that our *Lord calls us?* ver. 28, 29. Yet the rebuke which he suffered may warn us, not rashly to throw ourselves on unnecessary trials. Warned by this example, we should beware of presumption and self-sufficiency, and in all our actions take care not to be precipitate. Wherever God calls, we are boldly to go; not terrified at the danger and difficulty of the duty, his providence being always able to support and protect us. But he who goes without a call, or proceeds farther than he is called; who rushes into difficulties and temptations without any reason; may, by the unhappy issue of his conduct, be made to feel how dangerous a thing it is for any one to go out of his sphere. Lord, say to my soul, *Come*; and it will then go to thee, and do whatsoever thou wouldst have it, without the least apprehension from the world!

In how many circumstances of life do too many weak believers appear, to their own imagination, like Peter beginning to sink in the waves: but in the time of our distress, let us cry to Jesus for help; and while we are lifting up our hands of faith and prayer, we may humbly hope that Christ will stretch forth his omnipotent arm for our rescue. It is good always to be dependent upon the Divine arm, weak and frail as we are; since not one moment passes, but we have occasion to say, *Lord, save me!*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, John, the harbinger of Jesus, had lately finished his glorious race, and won the crown of martyrdom. We have in this chapter an account of that bloody scene; and the occasion of its being here introduced is intimated. The fame of Jesus and his miracles began to be noised; and no sooner did they reach Herod's ears, than his guilty conscience betrayed his fears, and instantly suggested, that this was John whom he had beheaded, who was raised from the dead, and endued with more extraordinary powers to vindicate his injured character, and perhaps avenge himself on his persecutors. *Note*; (1.) On this side hell, the greatest torment is a guilty conscience. (2.) Persecutors will find that they in vain seek to be rid of their troubles: though one be slain or removed, God will raise up fresh witnesses to the truth. (3.) Many under the mere horrors of conscience, like the devils, tremble, yet continue in penitent.

In the history of John's sufferings, we are told,

1. The occasion of them: and this was, his fidelity and zeal in reproving Herod for his flagitious enormities, and especially for his adultery and incest with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had inveigled away from her own husband; and though he was alive, and had children by her, yet had Herod publicly married her, and continued to cohabit with her. This atrocious crime John plainly and faithfully charged upon his conscience, as utterly unlawful, and sure to bring down the wrath of

God upon him. Though Herod was a king, John feared not to discharge his commission. As the greatest monarchs have no prerogative to break God's laws, his ministers must boldly vindicate his honour, and, without respect of persons, declare his wrath against the mightiest transgressors.

2. For this, John was imprisoned. Instigated by Herodias, who meditated revenge, as well as to gratify his own resentment, Herod had seized, bound, and cast him into prison.—They who will be zealous against sin, must prepare to suffer. Faithful rebukes, however kindly meant, will be often resented as affronts, and expose us to the vengeance of an enraged persecutor; but when we have a good cause, and a good conscience, we need not fear bonds or imprisonment.

3. Herod would have dispatched him out of hand, and rid himself of this troubler; but his fears prevailed over his resentment, and for a while restrained him from the bloody deed. John's character as a prophet had procured him such general veneration, that to murder him outright might provoke some popular insurrection, and endanger his own person and government. *Note*; (1.) None are greater slaves to fear, than they who affect to tyrannize with despotic sway. (2.) The fear of man often restrains those who have cast off all fear of God.

4. At last the barbarous deed is contrived and executed; and, after a tedious confinement, the faithful martyr is by death released, and goes where the wicked cease from troubling. It appears probable, that the whole plot was concerted by Herodias, whose unrelenting malice could not rest while John was yet alive. Some suppose that Herod was privy to the design; the circumstances being contrived merely to blind the populace. However, whether he knew it, or rashly involved himself by his oath, Herod is without excuse. The time chosen for the execution of the design was Herod's birth-day, and the instrument was Salome, the daughter of Herodias. To grace the festival, she condescended to appear before the august assembly, and danced so exquisitely, that Herod in a transport of delight swore that he would gratify her in whatever request she should make: and she demands the head of John the Baptist at the instigation of her mother, who thought thereby at once to get rid of his reproofs, and glut her revenge. Struck with this bloody request, at least appearing to be so, Herod expressed great sorrow and reluctance to comply with it. The injustice, cruelty, and infamy of such an action cried aloud. Nevertheless, pretending conscience, as if a rash oath could oblige him to commit so wicked a deed, and out of respect to those around him, who being witnesses to the oath silently at least approved the performance of it, and probably were glad to get rid of so troublesome a reprover, he gives orders for John's execution in the prison, and instantly without form or process, sends one of his savage instruments to bring the head of the holy Baptist in a charger. The bloody dish is delivered to Salome, and she presents

the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

Ch. 23. 13—15, 23, 25, 27, 29. Tit. 1. 16. 2 Tim. 3. 5.

it to her mother, a feast for her cruel revenge; while with malicious delight she beholds that tongue for ever silent, which had so deeply wounded her repose. *Note;* (1.) Seasons of carnal mirth and jollity are usually attended with much mischief. Feasting and dancing are pleasing to the flesh; but they are pernicious to the spirit, and often productive of fatal consequences. (2.) Rash oaths involve the conscience in dreadful dilemmas, where guilt is sure to fasten on either side: yet, when we have sworn to do evil, that oath is more safely broken than kept. Our obligation to keep God's laws cannot be superseded by any other which we choose to lay ourselves under. (3.) The bosom, which should be the seat of tenderness, when fired with lust and revenge, becomes the most barbarous and savage. (4.) The bad examples of parents are fatally pernicious. We quickly learn the evil to which the bias of corrupt nature leans so strongly. (5.) Many are made sorry by their sins, who never have lasting and godly sorrow for them. Though scourged by their consciences, their love of evil bears down their convictions. (6.) The triumphing of the wicked is short; God will soon require at their hands the innocent blood they have shed.

5. The disciples of John hearing the sad catastrophe, came to pay their last kind offices to their master's corpse, and testify their affection and respect by attending it to the grave; and then went and informed Jesus of the event, on whose ministry probably they had attended since John's imprisonment: and if they were drawn nearer to him by their former master's removal, they were, in the issue, gainers by their loss. *Note;* (1.) As the dust of his saints is precious to the Lord, so should their very corpses be to us, for the sake of the spirit which dwelt in them. (2.) We must carry all our griefs to Jesus, and be confident that he will alleviate the sorrows which we pour into his compassionate bosom. (3.) Whatever human helps, friends, or ministers, we may be deprived of, we must not despond; our Master in heaven ever lives; and if we be driven nearer to him, he can more than compensate our losses.

2dly, To shelter himself from the jealousy of a cruel tyrant, as well as to give some rest to his disciples, returned from their travels and preaching, our Lord withdrew into a desert place. His hour was not yet come; nor was he called to expose himself to Herod's enmity; and therefore he took this prudential step, teaching us by his example, though always to be prepared for suffering in the way of duty, not rashly or needlessly to court persecution. Hereupon we are told,

1. That the multitude, who had heard of his departure, immediately followed him on foot; so eager were they to attend his ministry. Though there might be danger in cleaving to a man so obnoxious, and they must go many a weary step to attend him, nothing discouraged them. Those who have a relish for the Gospel, will follow it in all its removes, and stop at no pains to enjoy the sincere

milk of the word: nor will persecution abate their ardour, but increase it.

2. The sight of so many poor souls awakened the compassions of Jesus; and though he came thither for retirement, he gladly chose to forego his own ease, to do them good. He would not suffer them to come so far in vain, and therefore *went forth*, pitying their sad case, destitute of food for their bodies, many sick and weak, and, worst of all, their souls perishing for want of knowledge: and therefore he undertakes the relief of all their necessities; healing their sick; instructing them in the doctrines of his kingdom; and designing, ere they parted, to spread a table for them in the wilderness. With like compassions should we regard the souls and bodies of men, and then shall we readily lay out ourselves, and cheerfully spend and be spent in their service.

3. The disciples, ignorant of the intentions of their Master, and foreseeing the inconveniences which must arise from detaining so vast a multitude there, where no refreshment could be procured, desired the Lord to dismiss the congregation, the day beginning to decline. But he, who knew his own intentions, to try their faith, bids them communicate their little stock of provisions to the people. The disciples reasonably object the insufficiency of their slender store, amounting to no more than five loaves and two fishes, which, though they were ready to part with them, would not be tasted among such a multitude. Yet Jesus bade them bring them to him, and trust his power. *Note;* (1.) In following Christ, we may be reduced to the greatest straits; but in the way of duty we must trust, and not be afraid. (2.) They who have Christ, have all, and abound; his presence and love can abundantly compensate every loss, and enable us to be content even to be hungry, and in need of daily food. (3.) Christ and his disciples lived on coarse and scanty fare, to teach us abstinence and the mortification of our sensual appetites. (4.) Though we have but little, we should be ready, when duty calls, to give of that little.

4. Our Lord distributes the provision. Having commanded the multitude to sit down, where the grass was their carpet, he asked a blessing on the meal, and, breaking the bread, gave it to his disciples, who waited on the multitude, as they sat in ranks opposite each other, and with astonishment beheld the meat grow under their hands, and increase as it descended. *Note;* (1.) Christ himself is the living bread, which faith daily feeds upon; in him there is enough for all. (2.) We should never sit down to our meals without asking God's blessing. It is among the surest marks of an irreligious family, or an irreligious heart, wherever this is neglected. We who are fed by his bounty, are surely bound at least to acknowledge the favour. (3.) When we charitably break our bread to the hungry, we shall find no diminution of our store.

5. There was enough, and more than enough for all. *They did all eat, and were filled;* five thousand men, besides women

8 <sup>a</sup> This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.  
9 <sup>b</sup> But in vain they do worship me, teach-

<sup>a</sup> If. 29. 13. Ezek. 33. 31. Mark, 7. 6.

<sup>b</sup> If. 1. 13, 15. Tit. 1. 14. 1 Tim. 1. 6, 7. Col. 2. 18—22.

women and children: and, instead of suffering any loss, the disciples, on collecting the fragments, find that they far exceed the original food, amounting to *twelve baskets full*. *Note*; (1.) The blessing of God can multiply a little into abundance; and none are paid with so good interest, as those who in charity lend unto the Lord. (2.) Though we have plenty, it must not therefore tempt us to waste. Since we cannot make one bit of bread, and multitudes of God's poor may want it, every crumb should be carefully collected. The truly liberal will be the best oeconomists.

3dly, Miracle succeeds to miracle: he had just preserved the multitude from being famished, and now he saves his disciples from foundering in the storm. The Lord is ever a very present help in trouble. We are told,

1. The constraint that he put upon his disciples, ordering them to embark while he dismissed the multitude. There appeared in the people present a deep conviction of his being the Messiah; and, according to their prejudices, they now thought of proclaiming him king, which opportunity his disciples were eagerly ready to embrace: but they mistook the nature of his kingdom, and for a while entertained the false notions of their countrymen. *Note*; The disciples of Christ are too apt to look for a temporal instead of a spiritual kingdom.

2. When he had sent away his disciples, though reluctant, and dismissed the people, he retired for prayer and communion with God; and in that pleasing work continued till night drew on. *Note*; They who are much in public ministrations, need also be much in prayer and converse with God. They will be most fervent in their discourses, who come from their knees into their pulpits.

3. His disciples, who had embarked at his command, were now in imminent danger. All was smooth when they set sail; but now when they were far from land, the storm arose, and the wind blew directly against them. Thus in the way of duty we may meet with sore temptations, and be sometimes apparently in imminent danger: all things may seem to be against us, and the dispensations of Providence dark and gloomy as this tempestuous night; whilst even then all things are working together for our good. If we steadily hold on our course, and walk by faith, not by sight, we shall arrive safely at the shore of eternal rest.

4. In the time of need, Jesus approaches them at the morning watch, walking on the stormy waves, and thereby shewing them his power to save them, and his attention to them in the hour of danger. But they not knowing him, and observing something moving on the waters, concluded it an apparition, or some evil spirit; and, supposing that it foreboded some mischief to them, *cried out for fear*: but Jesus immediately undeceived them, and with his well-known voice endeavours to quiet their apprehensions of danger. *Be of good cheer; be undismayed; it is I, your*

Master and Lord; *be not afraid*, whilst I am so nigh, and able to save you. *Note*; (1.) Christ is nearer us when we are in trouble, than we are aware of; and when we seem in greatest danger, his right hand is under us, to keep us from sinking. (2.) When the soul is in distress, we are ready to interpret even the appearances in our favour as ominous, and to start from our approaching mercies. (3.) If Christ speaks comfort to our hearts, we need not then be afraid of any danger or distress; for he through all can make us more than conquerors.

5. Their fears being in some degree quieted, Peter, impatient to be at his Master's feet, and ever the foremost to express his fidelity and zeal, begs leave, if it was the Lord indeed, or seeing it was the Lord, that he would command him to come down, and enable him to go to him on the waters. Though eager to go, he dares not without a warrant; but if Jesus bids him, neither winds nor waves dismay him. The Lord grants his request, and, at once to convince him of his weakness, and confirm his faith, permits him to come. *Note*; (1.) They who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity will, at his bidding, go through fire or water. (2.) Though no dangers multiply to deter us in the way of duty, we must not wilfully run into them without a divine call. (3.) Christ knows our hearts; and though he sees much infirmity mingled with our warmest profession, he knows how to pity and pardon the one, while he kindly accepts the other.

6. Peter no sooner receives permission, than immediately he boldly casts himself into the deep, and, by faith upheld, walks on the foaming billows. But when he felt the stormy wind, and observed the boisterous waves, his faith staggered, his fears prevailed, and he began to sink. Ready to perish, he instantly and eagerly cries, *Lord, save me*; and in the last extremity stretches the arms of faith and prayer towards the almighty Saviour. *Note*; (1.) While we walk by faith, not by sight, we shall stand firm amid the storms of this tumultuous world. (2.) We must never expect perfect deliverance from our fears, till we are perfected in love. (3.) We cannot but stagger, the moment we take our eye off from Christ and his promises, to look at the difficulties and dangers before us, and our own inability to surmount them. (4.) Though Christ permits true believers sometimes to be in deep waters of adversity, he will not suffer them to be drowned, if they persevere in trusting him; but means only to magnify his power and grace towards them, and to excite their gratitude and love in the more abundant experience of his salvation. (5.) Times of danger should be times of prayer; and Jesus never yet failed the poor sinner, who sensible of his inevitable ruin without him, thus ardent cried, *Lord, save me*.

7. The prayer is scarcely sooner uttered than answered the almighty hand of Jesus stretched out, snatched him from the jaws of death; and, raising him up, he rebuked his weak and wavering faith, when, after experiencing much of his Lord's power, he could yet distrust him.

*Not*

ing for doctrines the commandments of men. **10 ¶** <sup>1</sup> And he called the multitude, and **11 <sup>k</sup>** Not that which goeth into the mouth

<sup>1</sup> Mark. 7. 14. Prov. 2. 1—6. & 4. 1—7. If. 55. 3. Tit. 1. 15.

<sup>k</sup> Acts. 10. 14, 15. Rom. 14. 14, 17. I Cor. 8. 1, 4 & 10. 25. I Tim. 4. 4.

*Note;* (1.) Every true believer may remember the time when he was more or less ready to give up all for lost, and seemed sinking into eternal death; and then did Jesus snatch him as a brand from the burning. (2.) All our disquieting fears arise from our unbelief, and should drive us more to our knees, that the cause of them may be removed by the increase of our faith. (3.) When we dishonour our Lord by distrusting his power and love, we deserve to be upbraided for it.

8. On the coming of Jesus into the ship with Peter, the storm instantly ceased, the waves subsided; and, struck with astonishment, all who were in the ship fell at his feet, acknowledging his divine power and Godhead in the wonders they had seen, and adoring him for the mercies they had received. *Note;* (1.) When Christ comes to visit the troubled soul, then the winds of distress and temptation are hushed, and the tempest of doubts and fears is calmed. (2.) Experience of the Redeemer's grace and power should confirm our faith, and excite our adoration; and this is the blessed end for which he permits his faithful people to be exercised, that he may more abundantly display his own glory in their salvation.

4thly, The storm being over, and their ship arrived safely in port, they disembarked in the fruitful land of Genesareth; and thus shall the faithful saints of God at last, when all the tempests of life are blown over, reach that land, where there is undisturbed repose, and pleasures for evermore.

No sooner is it known that Jesus is there, than we are told the eagerness with which the people of that country crowded around him, spreading the glad tidings through the neighbourhood, and bringing all their diseased to Jesus, the great and general physician. And such was their faith in his sufficiency to heal all their maladies, that they besought him, if but to touch the hem of his garment, persuaded such virtue resided in him, that nothing more was needful to their cure: nor were they disappointed in their confidence or application. He granted their request; and as many as touched him were immediately made perfectly whole. *Note;* (1.) Christ's visits are precious; we should improve them with diligence. (2.) If we have found him a Saviour unto us, it becomes us to spread the glad tidings, and invite others to come and share our blessings. (3.) There is no disease of our souls, but Jesus hath healing for it. If we perish, it is because we will not come to him that we may have life. (4.) They who in faith and humility approach the Saviour, are sure never to go disappointed away.

CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then came to Jesus, &c.]* The law of Moses required external cleanness as a part of religion: not however for its own sake, but to signify with what carefulness God's servants should purify their minds from moral pollutions: accordingly their duties are prescribed by Moses

with such moderation, as was fitted to promote the end of them; but in process of time they came to be multiplied prodigiously: for the ancient doctors, to secure the observation of those precepts which were really of divine institution, added many commandments of their own, as fences to the former; and the people, to shew their zeal, obeyed them. For example, because the law, Levit. xv. 11. faith, *Whosoever he toucheth that hath an issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening;* the people were ordered to wash their hands immediately on their return from the places of public concourse, and before they sat down to meat, lest, by touching some unclean person in the crowd, they might have defiled themselves. The Pharisees were very zealous in these trifles, and from this source came that endless variety of purifications not prescribed by the law, but ordained by the elders; such as the *washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and tables,* Mark vii. 4. not because they were dirty, but from a principle of religion, or rather of superstition. These ordinances, though they were of human invention, came at length to be looked upon as essential in religion; nay, were exalted to such a pitch, that, in comparison of them, the law of God was suffered to lie neglected and forgotten; insomuch that in some of the Jewish writings we find these blasphemous maxims: "The words of the Scribes are more lovely than the words of the law; the words of the ancients are more weighty than those of the prophets." See Beausobre and Lenfant, and Wetstein.

*Ver. 3—6. But he answered, &c.]* It was easy for our Lord to retort upon the Pharisees the charge of impiety which they had brought against his disciples, being themselves guilty of the grossest violations of the divine law, through the regard which they shewed to their own traditions. Accordingly, he produces an instance of an atrocious kind: "God (says he) has commanded children to honour their parents;" that is to say, among other things, to maintain them when reduced; for as the greater includes the less; so honour, ver. 4. imports assistance and maintenance when they are wanted, as appears from ver. 5. And honour is used for maintenance, I Tim. v. 17, 18. and elsewhere.—"Nevertheless (says our Lord) you Pharisees presumptuously make light of the divine commandments, and of the awful sanction annexed; affirming, that it is a more sacred duty to enrich the temple than to nourish one's parents, though they be in the utmost necessity; and pretending that what is offered to the Great Parent is better bestowed, than that which is given for the support of our parents on earth, as if the interest of God was different from that of his creatures. Nay, ye impiously teach, that a man may lawfully suffer his parents to starve, if he can say to them, *It is a gift, &c.* that is to say, what should have succoured you is given to the temple. Thus have you hypocrites made

defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees<sup>l</sup> were offended after they heard this saying?

13 But he answered and said,<sup>m</sup> Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

14<sup>n</sup> Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

15<sup>o</sup> Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

16 And Jesus said,<sup>p</sup> Are ye also yet without understanding?

17 Do not ye yet understand<sup>q</sup> that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

18<sup>r</sup> But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

<sup>l</sup> Ch. 9. 34. & 12. 24. & 11. 6.    <sup>m</sup> John, 15. 2.    <sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 9, 12—15.    <sup>o</sup> Ch. 3. 12. & 8. 12.    <sup>p</sup> Hof. 4. 14, 17.    <sup>q</sup> Luke, 6. 39.    <sup>r</sup> Ch. 23. 16.    <sup>s</sup> Jer. 6. 15.    <sup>t</sup> Hof. 4. 9.    <sup>u</sup> Jer. 5. 31. & 20. 6.    <sup>v</sup> Rev. 22. 15.    <sup>w</sup> Mark, 7. 17.    <sup>x</sup> Ch. 13. 36.    <sup>y</sup> Acts, 8. 30, 31.    <sup>z</sup> Prov. 2. 1—6. & 4. 1—7.    <sup>aa</sup> Mark, 7. 18.    <sup>ab</sup> Cn. 16. 9.    <sup>ac</sup> Heb. 5. 12.    <sup>ad</sup> Deut. 29. 29.    <sup>ae</sup> If. 28. 9, 10.    <sup>af</sup> 1 Cor. 6. 13.    <sup>ag</sup> Col. 2. 21, 22.    <sup>ah</sup> James, 3. 6.    <sup>ai</sup> Ch. 12. 34.    <sup>aj</sup> 1 Tim. 1. 15, 16.

“made void the commandment of God, though of immutable and eternal obligation, by your frivolous traditions; and distinguished with a cloak of piety the most horrid and unnatural actions whereof a man can be guilty.” See the note on Mark vii. 11. Dr. Heylin reads the 5th and 6th verses thus: *But you say, that whoever will declare to his father or mother, that what he might assist them with is an oblation, shall hereby be free from his obligation to maintain them. Thus you invalidate the command of God by your tradition.* Dr. Doddridge reads it: *But you assert, that any one may say to his father or mother, let that be a gift, by which thou mightest receive an advantage from me; and he shall not honour his father and mother. Thus, &c.* See Capellus and Sir Norton Knatchbull. The version of 1729 gives the sense of the passage thus: “*But your doctrine is this, If any man declare to his father or mother, that whatever he has to give for their relief is dedicated to the temple, he is not obliged to regard,*” &c.

Ver. 7—9. *Ye hypocrites, &c.*] See note on Isaiah xxix. 13. In St. Mark, our Lord makes this citation at the beginning of his discourse, ch. vii. 6, 7. Possibly therefore he cited and applied it twice; first, at the beginning, as St. Mark tells us; and having proved that it was truly applicable to the Scribes and Pharisees, he applied it again at the conclusion of his argument, as St. Matthew affirms. We have several examples of the like repetitions in the Gospels. See Mark x. 6—9. compared with Matthew xix. 4—6.; ch. xxiv. 5. compared with ver. 11, 24.; and Luke xxii. 18. compared with Matthew xxvii. 29. Dr. Doddridge renders the last clause of ver. 9. *While they teach doctrines that are human injunctions*, the mere precepts of men, which have no stamp of divine authority upon them.

Ver. 11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth*] Our Lord, addressing the multitude, observed to them, that nothing could be more absurd than the precepts which the Scribes and Pharisees endeavoured to inculcate: anxious about trifles, they neglected the great duties of morality, which are of unchangeable obligation. They shuddered with horror at *hands unwashed*, but were perfectly easy under the guilt of *impure minds*; although *not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man*; because,

in the sight of God, cleanness and uncleanness are qualities not of the body, but of the mind, which can be polluted by nothing but sin. Our Lord did not at all mean to overthrow the distinction which the law had established between things clean and unclean in the matter of men's food; that distinction, like all the other emblematical institutions of Moses, was wisely appointed, being designed to teach the Israelites how carefully the familiar company and conversation of the wicked is to be avoided: he only affirmed, that in itself no kind of meat can defile the mind, which is the man, though by accident it may: a man may bring guilt upon himself by wilfully eating what is pernicious to his health, or by excess in the quantity of food and liquor; and a Jew might have done it by presumptuously eating what was forbidden by the Mosaic law, which still continued in force; yet in all these instances the pollution would arise from the wickedness of the heart, and be proportionable to it: which is all that our Lord asserts. See Macknight, Doddridge, Calmet.

Ver. 13. *Every plant, &c.*] *Every plantation, Φυτὴν* that is to say, *doctrine*. The metaphor was familiar in the time of our Lord, and is still used by the Jewish writers with whom *to pull up plantations* signifies “to deny articles of faith.” See Heylin and Wetstein.

Ver. 14. *They be blind leaders, &c.*] “Teachers who foolishly think to lead their disciples to perfection by the observation of precepts wherein there is not the smallest degree of true piety; and who will not be convinced of the contrary: for which cause, both the guided and the guided, who prefer ignorance to knowledge and superstition to religion, shall fall into the ditch of eternal perdition. Therefore let them alone; concerning not yourselves about them.”

Ver. 15. *Declare unto us this parable*] The disciples, not understanding their Master's doctrine concerning meat, desired him, when they came home, to explain it. See Mark vii. 17. He complied, and shewed them that meat being of a corporeal nature, cannot defile the mind, but that which is used immoderately, or in opposition to the commandment of God; in which case the pollution arises from the heart and not from the meat: whereas that which proceed



19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

21 ¶ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously

\* Gen. 6. 5. & 8. 21. Prov. 6. 14. Jer. 17. 9. & 6. 7. Mark, 7. 21—23. Gal. 5. 19—21. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Tit. 3. 2, 3. Rom. 13. 13. & 3. 15—18. Mark, 7. 24—30. The confines of the Jews' territory. Ver. 24. Ch. 10. 5, 6. Rom. 15. 8. Gen. 49. 10. If. 11. 10. Luke, 18. 13. Tit. 3. 5. If. 11. 1. Ch. 1. 1. & 9. 27. & 20. 30, 31. & 22. 42—45. John, 6. 14. i. e. O Messiah. Ch. 4. 24. Mark, 9. 13, 20, 22, 26. Ch. 17. 15.

out of the man's mouth, coming from his heart, really pollutes the mind. See ver. 18. The verb φάσκειν, rendered *declare*, signifies properly, *make known* or *explain*. Comp. ch. xiii. 36.

Ver. 19. *Evil thoughts*] Διαλογισμοὶ πονηροί, *evil reasonings*: So I choose to render it, says Dr. Doddridge, as better suiting both the original and the occasion; and as containing a more universal and important truth; for those thoughts only defile the heart, which it willingly admits, and does as it were hold a parley and converse with; and I fear there are multitudes in the present age like these Pharisees, who are contracting immense guilt by those corrupt and sophistical reasonings, on the subtilty of which they may highly value themselves and each other. See Mark vii. 21, 22. Dr. Heylin renders it *ill designs*; and instead of *blasphemies*, he reads *calumnies*. The original word includes all reviling, backbiting, and evil-speaking. It is remarkable, that three of the crimes here mentioned as pollutions of the mind, namely, *murder*, *false-witness*, and *blasphemy*, were on this very occasion committed by the persons who charged our Lord with impiety, because he neglected such ceremonial precepts of religion as were of human invention: for while they scorned the highest reverence for the divine law, they were making void its most essential precepts. At the very time that they condemned the disciples for so small an offence as eating with unwashen hands, contrary only to the tradition of the elders, the Scribes and Pharisees were murdering Jesus by their calumnies and false-witnessings, notwithstanding it was the whole study of his life to do them all the good possible.

Ver. 20. *These are the things which defile a man*] Thus our Lord defended his disciples by a beautiful chain of reasoning, wherein he has shewn the true nature of actions, and loaded with perpetual infamy those Jewish teachers and all their posterity who should imitate them; the main strokes of whose characters are, that by their frivolous superstitions they weaken and sometimes destroy the eternal and immutable rules of righteousness. It may be proper just to observe, that St. Matthew represents these *evil things* as proceeding out of the mouth, ver. 18. not so much by way of contrast to meats which enter by the mouth into the man, as because some of them are committed with the faculty of speech, such as *false-witness* and *blasphemy*; and others of them are helped forwards by its assistance; as *adultery*, *deceit*, &c.

Ver. 21, 22. *Then Jesus went thence*] It may easily be believed, that the Pharisees were highly offended at the liberty which Jesus took in the preceding discourse; for

he had plucked off from them the mask wherewith they had covered their deformity, and rendered themselves so venerable in the eyes of the people. Accordingly, their plots being laid against his reputation and life, he judged it proper to retire to the remote regions which lay between the cities of Tyre and Sidon, proposing to conceal himself awhile. Sidon was a very ancient town, having been built by Sidon, the eldest son of Canaan, the son of Ham, the son of Noah. It appears from Joshua xxii. 9. that the whole country westward of Jordan was called *Canaan*, that on the east being named *Gilead*. From the same book, ch. xix. 28, 29. we learn that Tyre and Sidon were cities in the lot of Ashur; which tribe having never been able wholly to drive out the natives, their posterity remained even in our Lord's time. Hence he did not preach the doctrine of the kingdom in this country, because it was inhabited principally by heathens, to whom he was not sent as a minister or preacher. See ch. x. 5. Neither did he work miracles here with that readiness which he shewed everywhere else. The reason of his retiring to these parts was, as before observed, to shun the Pharisees by concealing himself; but he could not be hidden. It seems he was personally known to many of the Gentiles in this country, who no doubt had often heard and seen him in Galilee. See Mark iii. 8. As for the rest, they were sufficiently acquainted with him by his fame, which had spread itself very early through all Syria; see ch. iv. 24. In one of the towns of this remote country there lived a *Canaanitish woman*, whose daughter was possessed with a devil. She was a descendant of the ancient inhabitants, and by religion a *heathen*, as seems plain from St. Mark, who calls her a *Greek*, a *Syrophœnician* by nation, ch. vii. 26. For since the woman's nation is mentioned in the latter clause, the title of a *Greek*, which is given her in the former, must certainly be the denomination of her religion: Keuchenius thinks, that the epithet *Kαναταια*, a *Canaanite*, denotes the woman's occupation,—*she merchandized*; and supports his notion by the like use of the word in the Old Testament: but this conjecture will not hold, because our Lord's reply to her, ver. 26. *It is not meet, &c.* plainly imports that she was a heathen; *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. But though this woman was ignorant of the true religion, she had conceived a very great, honourable, and just opinion not only of our Lord's power and goodness, but even of his character as Messiah, which she had gained a knowledge of by conversing with the Jews; for when she had heard of his arrival, she went in quest of him, and meeting him as he passed along the street, she addressed him with

vouſly vexed with a devil.

23 But <sup>a</sup> he answered her not a word. And his diſciples came and beſought him, ſaying, Send her away; for ſhe crieth after us.

24 But he answered and ſaid, <sup>b</sup> I am not ſent but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.

25 <sup>c</sup> Then came ſhe and worſhipped him, ſaying, Lord, help me!

<sup>a</sup> Pf. 22. 1, 2. Lam. 3. 8. Jer. 14. 9. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 10. 5, 6, & 9. 36. Acts, 13. 46. Rom. 9. 4, 5. & 15. 8. If. 53. 6. 1 Pet. 2. 25. Jer. 50. 6, 17. Ezek. 34. 5, 6, 14, 16, 23. Zech. 11. 7, 11. Luke, 1. 54, 55. John, 1. 11. <sup>c</sup> Luke, 11. 8. & 18. 1. Eph. 6. 18. 1 Theſ. 5. 17. Gen. 32. 26. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 7. 6. & 10. 5, 6. Rom. 9. 4. with Eph. 2. 12. <sup>e</sup> Pf. 73. 22. Prov. 30. 2. Gen. 32. 10. <sup>f</sup> Ch. 5. 45. If. 49. 6. & 42. 6, 7. & 45. 22. & 11. 10. <sup>g</sup> Ch. 8. 10, 13. Mark, 9. 23. 1 Cor. 10. 13. Eph. 3. 20. If. 57. 16. <sup>h</sup> Ch. 8. 13. John, 4. 50—53. Acts, 19. 12.

with the title of *Son of David*, or promiſed Meſſiah, and cried after him for a cure of her daughter. See Macknight. Dr. Heylin renders the laſt clause of the 22d verſe, *My daughter is in a grievous manner poſſeſſed by a demon*.

*Ver. 23. But he answered her not a word*] Jeſus did not ſeem to regard the woman, intending that the greatneſs of her faith ſhould be made to appear; an end, highly worthy of the wiſdom of Jeſus; becauſe it not only juſtified his conduct in working a miracle for a heathen, but was a ſharp rebuke to the Jews for their infidelity. In the mean time his diſciples, being ignorant of his deſign, were uneaſy at the woman's importunity, thinking, that if ſhe was permitted to follow them, they ſhould ſoon be diſcovered. Deſirous, therefore, to get rid of her, they intreated their maſter to diſmiſs her, as he was uſed to diſmiſs ſuch petitioners, that is to ſay, with the grant of her requeſt. The verſion of 1729 renders the clause, *His diſciples came and intreated him to grant her requeſt; for, ſaid they, ſhe is very importunate with us*. As it appears from Mark vii. 24. that Chriſt was entered into an houſe, and that the application of this woman prevented his being concealed, as he ſeemed deſirous to have been; it appears probable, that, having learned that Jeſus was there, ſhe watched for the diſciples, as they went in and out, and having cried after them ſome time, ſhe at length got admittance into the houſe, and with the profoundeſt reſpect accoſted him; at firſt from ſome diſtance, and then drew near, and threw herſelf at his feet. See Doddridge.

*Ver. 24. I am not ſent but, &c.*] See the note on ch. x. 5. "Though I am come to ſave all the nations of the world, my miniſtry muſt be confined to the Iſraelites." Thus at firſt Jeſus ſeemed to reſuſe both the woman's requeſt, and the diſciples' interceſſion in her behalf: our Lord's anſwer was well adapted to their own prejudices. And as they entertained high notions of the Jewish prerogative, they were ſo well ſatisfied with the reply, that we hear them no more pleading for this unhappy Gentile.

*Ver. 26. It is not meet to take the children's bread, &c.*] The Jews gloried greatly in the honourable title of *God's children*, becauſe of all nations they alone knew and worſhipped the true Jehovah: they gave the name of dogs to

26 But he answered and ſaid, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to caſt it to dogs.

27 And ſhe ſaid, 'Truth, Lord: 'yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their maſters' table.

28 Then Jeſus answered and ſaid unto her, O woman, <sup>e</sup> great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. <sup>b</sup> And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

the heathens for their idolatry and other pollutions, by which they had in their judgment degraded themſelves from the rank of rational creatures. By this appellation the Jews intended to mark the impurity of the Gentiles, and their odiousneſs in the ſight of God; at the ſame time conveying an idea of the contempt in which they were held by the holy nation: though in ſome reſpects it was applicable, it muſt have been very offenſive to the heathens. Nevertheless, this good woman neither reſuſed it, nor grudged the Jews the honourable title of *children of God*: ſhe acknowledged the juſtneſs of what Chriſt ſaid, and, by a ſtrong exerciſe of faith, drew an argument from it, which the candour and benevolence of his diſpoſition could not reſiſt.

*Ver. 27. And ſhe ſaid, Truth, Lord*] Ναί, Κύριε: which is ſometimes uſed as a form of aſſenting, and ſometimes of intreating. "I acknowledge, Lord, the truth and juſtneſs of what thou haſt ſaid; nevertheless let me have ſuch kindneſs as the dogs of any family enjoy: from thee the plenty of miraculous cures which thou beſtowedſt on the Jews, drop the offal of this one to me, who am a poor diſtreſſed heathen; for by it they will ſuffer no greater loſs than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are caſt to the dogs." See Macknight and Blackwall's Claſſicks, vol. i. p. 143.

*Ver. 28. Then Jeſus answered—O woman! great is thy faith*] Jeſus having thus made it evident that the woman poſſeſſed a very high degree of faith, a juſt notion of his power and goodneſs, and of her own unworthineſs, wrought with pleaſure the cure which ſhe ſolicited on behalf of her daughter, and at the ſame time gave her the faith the praiſe which was due to it. As ſoon as ſhe had uttered the ſentiment which was ſo acceptable to Chriſt, he willed the ejection of the demon; and though ſcarcely any time paſſed between her uttering that ſentiment and his anſwer, ſo great was his power and goodneſs, that the devil was expelled before he ſpoke, *Go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter*, Mark, vii. 29. The ſucceſs which this Canaanitiſh woman's ſuit met with from Jeſus, teaches us two leſſons of great importance: 1ſt, That God is no reſpecter of perſons, but always accepts ſincere faith and fervent prayer, proceeding from a humble penitent heart. 2dly, That it is our duty to continue pray

29 ¶ <sup>1</sup> And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea <sup>k</sup> of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

30 <sup>1</sup> And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them :

31 Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see : and <sup>m</sup> they glorified the God of Israel.

32 ¶ <sup>n</sup> Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat : and I will not send them away fasting, lest they

faint in the way.

33 And his disciples say unto him, <sup>o</sup> Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude ?

34 And Jesus saith unto them, <sup>p</sup> How many loaves have ye ? and they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

35 And he commanded the multitude <sup>q</sup> to sit down on the ground.

36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and <sup>r</sup> gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

37 <sup>r</sup> And they did all eat, and were filled : and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full.

38 And they that did eat were four thou-

<sup>1</sup> Mark, 7. 31. Ch. c. 1. <sup>k</sup> Or of Tiberias. John, 6. 1, 23. & 21. 7. <sup>1</sup> Gen. 49. 10. Deut. 18. 15—18. Pf. 22. 27—31. If. 2. 2—5. & 4c. 27. & 35. 5, 6. & 40. 29. & 42. 18. Ch. 4. 23, 24. & 8. 16. & 9. 35. & 11. 5. & 14. 36. & 21. 14. Luke, 7. 22. <sup>m</sup> Ch. 9. 33. Mark, 7. 37. Luke, 17. 13. Pf. 115. 1. & xcvi. c. & cxlv. cl. If. 24. 14—16. <sup>n</sup> Mark, 3. 1—10. Ch. 9. 36. & 14. 14. Pf. 103. 13. & 145. 3, 9, 16. Heb. 2. 17. & 4. 15. John, 4. 34. <sup>o</sup> Mark, 8. 4. 2 Kings, 4. 42, 47. Num. 11. 21, 22. Mark, 6. 52. John, 6. 7—9. <sup>p</sup> Num. 11. 22. Ch. 14. 15. <sup>q</sup> Luke, 9. 14, 15. Ch. 14. 19. <sup>r</sup> Ch. 14. 19. & 26. 26. Deut. 8. 10. 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. Rom. 14. 6. <sup>r</sup> Mark, 8. 8, 9. Ch. 16. 10. Prov. 13. 25.

prayer with earnestness, although the answer thereof should be long deferred. But see more in the *Inferences* and *Reflections*.

*Ver. 29—31. And Jesus departed from thence*] Jesus at length departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, returned to the sea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis, on the east side of Jordan. See Mark vii. 31. Having continued in Decapolis a considerable time, the fame of his being in the country reached every corner; wherefore, to avoid the crowds, he retired into a desert mountain beside the sea of Galilee. Here the *sick, the lame, the dumb, the blind, and the maimed*, were brought to him from all quarters, and laid down around him by their friends who followed him thither. The sight of so many people in distress moved the compassion of the Son of God exceedingly; for he graciously healed them all; particularly the *dumb*, who are commonly *deaf* also. He not only conferred the faculty of hearing and pronouncing articulate sounds, but he conveyed into their mind at once the whole language of their country, making them perfectly acquainted with all the words in it, their significations, their forms, their powers, and their uses, so as to comprehend the whole distinctly in their memories; and at the same time he gave them the habit of speaking it both fluently and copiously! This was a kind of miracle very astonishing; but the change produced in the bodies of men was but the least part of it: what passed in their minds was the grand and principal thing, being an effect so extensive, that nothing inferior to infinite power could have produced it. With respect to the *blind* restored to sight by this great *Light of the world*, they saw every object distinctly, and immediately bore, without any inconvenience, the full force of unaccustomed light! A most wonderful circumstance, but which was universally the

case, so far as we can judge by all the accounts of the blind restored to sight which occur in the Gospels. And with respect to the *maimed*,—*καλλῶδες*, that is, *persons who had lost their legs and arms*, and who are here distinguished from the *lame* or *crippled* (see Mark ix. 43.), Jesus *gave new members* in their stead; but when he thus created such parts of their bodies as were wanting, without having any thing at all as a subject to work upon, the spectators could not have been more surpris'd, had they seen him form a whole human body out of the dust of the earth. The Jewish multitudes seem to have apprehended the greatness of these miracles more distinctly than the generality of Christians; for we are told, ch. ix. 33. when Jesus opened the mouth of the dumb man, *the multitude marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel*. See also ch. xii. 22, 23. On this occasion likewise they were not silent nor unaffected: *They glorified the God of Israel*; acknowledging that in this event was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, ch. xxxv. 5. This clause makes it probable, that many heathens were now present with our Lord, beheld his miracles, and formed a just notion of them. It seems, his fame spreading itself into the neighbouring countries had made such an impression even upon the idolatrous nations, that numbers of them came from far to hear and see the wonderful man of whom such things were reported, and if possible to experience his healing goodness; wherefore, when they beheld these effects of his power, they were exceedingly struck with them, and broke forth in praises of the God, by whose assistance and authority they considered him as acting: and it may be also, from that time forth devoted themselves to his worship. See Macknight, Beza, and Elfner.

*Ver. 32—38. I have compassion on the multitude*] *Σπλαγχνίζομαι*, a very expressive word, signifying *My bowels yearn*,

and men, beside women and children.

39 And he sent away the multitude, and

took ship, and came into the coasts of 'Magdala.

<sup>1</sup> A city or territory on the east of the sea of Tiberias, and near Dalmanutha. Mark, 8. 10.

or are moved, see ch. ix. 36. It is pleasing to remark the strong compassion which our blessed Lord continually discovered in all his actions toward mankind. The multitude, it is probable, intent on hearing Christ and seeing his miracles, had lodged two nights together in the fields, as the season of the year was pleasant, this event happening quickly after the passover: and, besides that the great number of the cures which had been wrought but just before might animate them,—perhaps they might conclude, that the miraculous power of Christ, which was displayed in so many glorious instances around them, would either preserve their health from being endangered by the large dews which fell in the night, or restore them from any disorder they might contract by their eagerness to attend on his ministry. The multitude having now, as on a former occasion, consumed all the provision they brought with them, Jesus would not send them away without feeding them, lest they might have fainted in the way home. The disciples, who it seems did not reflect on the former miraculous dinner, imagined that Jesus proposed to feed this great multitude in the natural way; and were greatly surpris'd, and strongly hinted the impracticability of so doing, ver. 33. Jesus did not reprove them for these wrong notions, but meekly asked them what meat they had; and upon their telling him that they had *seven loaves and a few little fishes*, he ordered them to be brought, and out of these made a second dinner for the multitude by miracle. The Evangelist having, in the history of the former dinner, described the manner in which the multitudes were set down, thought it needless on this occasion to say any thing of that particular; probably because they were ranged before in companies, by hundreds and by fifties. Few or none of these persons, it is most probable, were present at the former dinner; they seem to have been principally such as followed Jesus from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and the neighbouring heathen country: hence they are said, on seeing his miracles, to have glorified the *God of Israel*. This dinner was in all respects like to the first, except in the number of *loaves and fishes* of which it was made, the number of *persons* who were present at it, and the number of *baskets* which were filled with the fragments that remained. One cannot but remark with what wisdom Jesus chose to be so much in deserts during this period of his ministry: he was resolv'd, in the discharge of the duties of it, to make as little noise as possible, to avoid crowds, and to be followed only by such as had dispositions proper for profiting by his instructions; and to say the truth, not a great many others would have accompanied him into solitudes, where they were to sustain the inconveniences of hunger and the weather for several days together. As the multitude on this and the like occasions remained long with Jesus, doubtless his doctrine distilled upon them, all the while like dew, and as the small rain upon the tender herb; if so, what satisfaction and edification should we find in the divine discourses

which he then delivered, were we in possession of them! The refreshment that we receive from such of them as the inspired writers have preserved, raises an ardent desire of the rest. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that we are blessed with so much of Christ's doctrine as is fully sufficient to the purposes of salvation. See Mac-knight, Doddridge, and Wetstein.

*Ver. 39. And came into the coasts of Magdala*] Bengelius properly separated this verse from the present chapter, and placed it at the beginning of the next; for it was on the coasts of *Magdala* that the Pharisees came to our Saviour. Compare Mark viii. 10. where it is said, that *Jesus came into the parts of Dalmanutha*: but the Evangelists may be easily reconciled, by supposing that *Dalmanutha* was a city and territory within the district of *Magdala*. Reland (Palæst. p. 884.) mentions a castle called *Magdala*, not far from *Gamaba*, which he thinks gave this region its name. See Hammond, Calmet, and Wetstein.

*Inferences.*—The good Shepherd walks the wilderness to seek for immortal souls, ver. 21. Why are we weary in doing good, when our Saviour underwent this perpetual toil in healing bodies, and winning souls?

No nation carried such brands and marks of a curse as Canaan; yet, to the shame of these careless Jews, even a faithful Canaanite is a suppliant to Christ, while they neglect so great salvation. God is no acceptor of persons; in every nation they who fear him, will obtain his favour. This woman does not merely *speaking* but *crying*; need and desire have raised her voice to an important clamour; the God of mercy is quick to hear; yet he loves a vehement solicitation; not to make himself inclinable to grant, but to make us capable of receiving blessings. They are *words*, and not *prayers*, which fall from careless lips.—Neither does her vehemence so much argue her faith, as her address, *O Lord, thou Son of David!* What proselyte, what disciple could have said more? O blessed Syrophenician! who taught thee this abstract of divinity? What can we Christians confess more, than the Deity, the humanity, and the Messiahship of our glorious Saviour? His Deity as Lord, his humanity as a Son, his Messiahship as the Son of David. Whoever would come to Christ effectually, must come in the right style; apprehending a true God, a true man, a true God and man; any of these severed from the other, makes Christ an idol, and our prayers sin.

Being thus acknowledged, what suit is so fit for the Son of David as *mercy*? *Have mercy on me!* It was her daughter who was tormented; yet she says, *Have mercy on me*. Perhaps her possessed child was senseless of her misery: the parent feels both *her* sorrow and *her own*. As she was a good woman, so a good mother. No creature is so unnatural, as the reasonable who has put off affection.

*My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* It was this which sent her to Christ. I doubt whether she would have inquired after Christ, if it had not been for her daughter's distress.

CHAP. XVI.

*The Pharisees require a sign. Jesus warneth his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The people's opinion of Christ, and Peter's confession of him. Jesus forebeweth his death, reproveth Peter for dissuading him from it; and admonisheth those that will follow him, to bear the cross.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**T**HE Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and, tempting, desired him that

he would shew them a \* sign from heaven.

2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.*

3 And in the morning, *It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

\* Ch. 22. 23, 34. Acts, 5. 17, 34. & 23. 6—8. John, 7. 48.      b Mark, 8. 11—21. Luke, 12. 54—57. & 11. 16, 53, 54. Ch. 12. 38. & 19. 3. & 22. 18. John, 4. 48.      1 Cor. 1. 22. Exod. xix. xx. Deut. 4. 5.      c As at the giving of the law.      d The evidences that the Messiah is come. Gen. 49. 10. Deut. 18. 15. 11. 7. 14. & xi. xxxv. liii. Mic. v. Dan. 9. 24, 25. Hag. 2. 7. Mal. iii. iv. with Ch. 11. 5. & 4. 23.

distress. Our affections are the files and whetstones which set an edge on our devotions; neither are they stronger motives to our suit than our own misery; that misery sues, and pleads, and importunes for us; that, which sets men at a distance, whose compassion is finite, attracts God to us. Who can plead discouragements in his access to the throne of grace, when our wants are our forcible advocates, and all our worthiness is in a capable misery?

Who would expect any other than a kind answer to so pious and faithful a petition? But behold, *he answered her not a word!* O holy Saviour, we have often found cause to wonder at thy words; never, till now, at thy silence: A miserable suppliant cries and sues, while the God of mercies answereth not! he who comforts the afflicted, adds affliction to the comfortless by a willing disrespect! Whether for the trial of her patience and perseverance; whether for the farther sharpening of her desires, and raising of her zealous importunity; whether for the giving more sweetness to the blessing by the difficulty of obtaining it; whether for the engaging of his disciples in so charitable a suit; whether for the wise avoidance of exception from the captious Jews; or, lastly, for the drawing of a holy and imitable pattern of faithful perseverance, and to teach us not to measure God's hearing of our suit by his present answer; the wisdom of Jesus resolved upon silence.

It was no small fruit of this silence, that the disciples thereupon were moved to pray for a favourable dismissal of this woman; they felt her misery, and became suitors for her, unrequested. It is our duty, in case of necessity, to intercede for each other; and by how much the more familiar we are with Christ, so much the more to improve our interest for the relief of the distressed. We are bidden to say, *our father, not mine*; he cannot pray, or be heard for himself, who is no man's friend but his own. There is no prayer, without faith; no faith, without charity; no charity, without mutual intercession.

That which urged them to speak for her, is urged to Christ by them for her obtaining her request; *she crieth after us, ver. 23.* Prayer is as an arrow; if it be drawn up but a little, it goes not far; but if it be pulled to the head, it flies strongly, and pierces deep: heartless motions do but teach us to deny; fervent suits offer violence both to earth and heaven.

Christ would not answer the woman, but he answers his disciples, *I am not sent*, ver. 24. But who can tell whether his silence or his answer be more grievous? While he said nothing, his forbearance might have been supposed to proceed from the necessity of some greater thoughts. But now his answer professes that silence to have proceeded from a willing resolution not to answer. Yet is not this woman hereby to be discouraged. Neither the silence of Christ, nor his denial, can repulse her: as if she saw no arguments of discouragement, she comes, and worships, and cries, *Lord, help me!* no contempt can cast her off. Faith is an undaunted grace. It has a strong heart and a bold forehead; even denials cannot dismay it, much less delays. The woman's first suit was for mercy; her present, for help. There is no use of mercy, if it produce not help. To be pitied without aid, is but an addition to misery. Who can blame us, if we care not for an unprofitable compassion? the very suit was gracious. She says not, *Lord, if thou canst,—help me*, like the father of the lunatic; but professes the power, while she begs the act, and gives glory, where she would have relief.

Who can expect other than a fair and yielding answer to so humble; so faithful, so patient a suppliant? What can succeed well, if a prayer of faith, from the knees of humility, succeed not?—And yet, behold! her discouragement is doubled with her suit. *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* First, his silence seemed to imply a contempt; then, his answer defended his silence; now, his speech expresses and defends his apparent contempt. Lo, he has turned her from a woman to a dog; and, as it were, spurns her from his feet with a harsh repulse. What shall we say? Is the Lamb of God turned a lion? Does that clear fountain of mercy run blood? O Saviour! did ever so hard a word fall from those mild lips? Thou calledst Herod fox, and most worthily,—he was crafty and wicked;—the Scribes and Pharisees a generation of vipers,—they were venomous and cruel;—Judas a devil,—he was both covetous and a traitor:—but here,—was a woman in distress, and challenges mercy;—a good woman, a faithful suppliant, a Canaanitish disciple, a Christian Canaanite;—yet treated by thee with great severity; by thee, who wert all goodness and mercy. How different are thy ways from ours! even thy severity argues favour: the trial had not been so sharp, if thou hadst

4<sup>d</sup> A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. <sup>c</sup> And he left them, and departed.

<sup>d</sup> Ch. 12. 39, 40. Jon. 1. 17. 1 Cor. 15. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Pf. 81. 12. Hof. 4. 17. Gen. 6. 7. & 15. 16.

hadst not found the faith so strong,—if thou hadst not meant the issue so happy!

What ordinary patience would not have been overstrained with such a repulse? how few but would have fallen into passionate expostulations? “Art thou the prophet of God, who so disdainfully entertainest poor supplicants? Is this the comfort which thou dealest to the distressed? Is this the fruit of my humble adoration, of my faithful profession?”—But here was nothing of this kind; on the contrary, her humility grants all; her patience overcomes all; and she meekly answers, *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* “Thou, O Lord, art truth itself; thy word can be no other than truth; thou hast called me a dog, and indeed such I am; a poor outcast, a sinner, and a Gentile. Give me therefore the favour and privilege of a dog, that I may gather up some crumbs of mercy from under the table whereat thy children sit. This blessing, though great to me, yet, to the infinitude of thy power and mercy, is but a crumb to a feast. I presume not to preside to the board, but to creep under it: deny me not those small offals, which else would be swept away, and lost in the dust!”

O woman, say I, great is thy humility, great is thy patience; but, O woman, says my Saviour, *great is thy faith!* He sees the root, we the flock; nothing but faith could thus temper the heart, thus strengthen the soul, thus charm the tongue. It is no wonder, if that chiding end in favour; *be it unto thee even as thou wilt:* Never did such grace go away uncrowned: the beneficence had been strait, if thou hadst not carried away more than thou suedst for; lo, thou, that camest as a dog, goest away a child. Thou that wouldst but creep under the children's feet, art set at their elbow, art fed with full dishes. The way to succeed well at God's hand, is to be humbled in His eyes, and in our own. It is quite otherwise with God than with men: with men, we are so accounted of, as we account of ourselves; he will be sure to be vile in the sight of the children of this world, who is vile in his own: but with God nothing is got by vain ostentation; nothing is lost by abasement. *He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted!*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Since the purity of the Redeemer's conduct was such that his most inveterate enemies could not convict him of sin, the Scribes and Pharisees endeavoured, if they could not prove him guilty of a breach of God's law, to accuse him at least as a breaker of the canons of their church.

1. The accusation laid against him is for permitting his disciples “to transgress the tradition of the elders; and “eat bread with unwashen hands:” which to them appeared highly criminal, who, having lost the spirit and power of godliness, were wholly engrossed with the form, and spent their zeal in practising and enforcing the vain superstitions of their own invention as the most essential

parts of religion. And, similar to this, we still too frequently see the most rigid and superstitious observers of the form of godliness the greatest enemies to the power of it, and the most inveterate persecutors of the spiritually-minded.

2. Christ answers their accusation, vindicates his disciples, and rebukes their hypocrisy.

[1.] He vindicates his disciples, by shewing the folly and wickedness of the traditions on which they grounded their charge, and recriminates by a juster accusation of their conduct who made void the commandments of God by their traditions. In proof of which, he produces the fifth commandment, where the duty of children towards their parents is enjoined; and in the honour that we must pay to them there is included the relief of their wants, in case of need: and to this law God has annexed the most awful sanction: the transgressor who curses, or but *speaks contemptibly* of, his father or mother, is doomed to death, Exod. xxi. 17. But their false casuistry had provided an evasion, to avoid ministering to the necessities of their parents; and their tradition asserted, that however urgent these might be, if they vowed to employ in sacred uses what should have been given to relieve their parents' wants; or, as Dr. Gill interprets the passage, vowed that what they had should be *as Corban*, as if dedicated to the sanctuary, and should not be given to their parents' use; they were then supposed to be bound by their vow; and though the things were not employed in sacred uses, they thought themselves authorized under this pretence to withhold from their father or mother the relief which they ought to have afforded them: a tradition as absurd as impious, and utterly overturning the law of God. *Note;* (1.) Many who are flaming in zeal for trifling human ceremonies, disregard and violate the most essential precepts of charity, and the most evident commands of God's law. (2.) Tradition has been ever a treacherous guide; therefore neither antiquity nor authority must weigh a rush with us against the revealed truths of God's word.

[2.] He rebukes their hypocrisy. He knew their hearts, and therefore there was no rashness nor uncharitableness in the charge laid against them: and he brings his reproof from Isaiah; for what the prophet spake as the character of the men of his day, had also a farther view to the generation then present, who exactly answered the description; and it is indeed equally applicable to the state of all hypocrites and formal professors to the end of time. They made an outward shew of religion, and, so far as lip-service and external worship went, pretended to honour God; but their hearts, without which he is pleased with no services, were far estranged from him: and while they appeared to pay the highest respect to God, they set up their traditions and human inventions, or many of them at least, in direct opposition to God's law; and this rendered all their worship and apparent devotion vain, useless, and rejected. *Note;* (1.) Hypocrisy is among the most common and fatal sins; and though men may not discover it

5 ¶ And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed

† Ch. 15. 39. Mark, 8. 14. † Mark, 8. 15—21. Luke, 12. 1. † Cor. 5. 7.

in us, it cannot be hidden from God. (2.) God's first requirement of us is our heart; if this be alienated from him, nothing that we can offer him besides will meet with any acceptance.

2dly, Having vindicated his disciples, and rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, he endeavours to set the multitude in general right in a matter of such importance, which had been so grievously mistaken. And for this purpose he calls them to him, as perhaps they had withdrawn while the Pharisees talked with him, and bids them hear and understand; for it requires much attention and careful examination before we can emancipate ourselves from the fetters of long-rooted error, and the prejudices of education.

1. He lays down this grand axiom, that all defilement comes from within. It was a superstitious tradition which the Pharisees inculcated, that the meat eaten with unwashen hands communicated pollution to the soul; whereas nothing can defile the soul but sin, which, taking its rise in the heart, issues forth at the mouth. And herein he levelled a tacit rebuke against these cavillers, who, while they contended for cleanness and purity, betrayed the venom and malignity of their own hearts. The severest censurers of others are usually thus found most culpable themselves. While they pretend to pluck the mote from their brother's eye, they discover not the beam which is in their own.

2. When they were retired into a house, the disciples, aware of the great offence which this declaration gave to the Pharisees, expressed their concern about it, as if the observation had been better suppressed, and might prejudice and exasperate them against him. *Note;* (1.) Truth, however offensive, must on proper occasions be spoken; and the woe lies not against those who give the offence, but against those who take it. (2.) We are too apt to hear for others, and to fear, lest some of the audience should be disgusted with plain dealing. But they who would convert men's souls, must often be content to offend nice ears.

3. In answer to their suggestion, Jesus vindicates what he had spoken, as proper and necessary. As these men, and their traditions, were not those heavenly plants which God the Father had planted; they are thus, by the piercing word of truth, discovered, detected, and rooted up. If they be offended, the disciples need not regard it; for high as their character was among the people, they were in fact no better than *blind leaders of the blind*, ignorant themselves of saving truth, and misleading those who blindly and implicitly obeyed their dictates. And the necessary consequence of this was, that they must perish together, and fall into the pit of eternal misery. *Note;* (1.) However plausible men's professions may be, and however admired their characters, if they are not the planting of God, and experimentally partakers of the quickening influences of his Spirit, their ruin is as sure as that of impenitent publicans and harlots. (2.) Pride and blindness of heart are inseparable companions; and none are so far from the light of truth, as those who,

filled with the conceit of their own wisdom and abilities, vainly boast how clearly they see. (3.) The deceived and the deceiver will perish together; and they who choose their own delusions, have themselves only to blame for the ruin which ensues.

4. Peter, in the name of the disciples, not understanding the meaning of the parable, or still biased by the prejudices of education, desires his Master to explain himself more distinctly on this point: and though their backwardness to understand was culpable, their desire to be informed was commendable. It is always good to be inquisitive about the great concerns of our souls, and Christ is willing to teach those who desire to learn; while the wilfully ignorant, the self-sufficient, and the proud, are justly left to their darkness and ruin.

5. Christ rebukes the dulness of their capacity, yet graciously condescends to give a farther explication of what he had advanced. *Are ye also yet without understanding?* They had enjoyed many and long opportunities for profiting under him; and it was a shame that, in a matter so plain, they should be yet so ignorant. Christ justly expects that our means and mercies should produce a proportionate advancement in grace and knowledge. Nothing could be more evident than that the meat, of whatever sort it were, which entered at the mouth, and merely passed through the body, could communicate no moral defilement to the soul. But the heart being the source and fountain of all spiritual impurity, what flowed thence alone communicated in God's sight defilement to the man: and the corrupt and impure streams which flow from that spring he enumerates,—a dreadful catalogue, but the natural produce of every fallen spirit. (1.) *Evil thoughts*, such as lewd desires, infidel reasonings, covetous wishes, malicious purposes, fraudulent designs, which never appeared in words or actions, but were naked and open before God, and brought guilt upon the soul. (2.) *Murders*, not only the effusion of human blood, but every word of anger, every act of violence, every expression of malice, hatred, or revenge. (3.) *Adulteries, fornications*, with all the various steps and contrivances which have a tendency to lead men to these horrid deeds. (4.) *Thefts*, whether committed by force or fraud. (5.) *False witness*, in perjuries, lies, deceit, and misrepresentation. (6.) *Blasphemies*, against God or man. These are the great violations of God's law, the things which involve the conscience in guilt, and make us loathsome in the eyes of divine purity: while to eat with unwashen hands communicates no defilement to the soul, nor in the least renders any man a sinner before God.

3dly, Departing from the country of Gennesaret, our Lord visited the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; where, by an act of favour to one of the poor Gentiles, he intimated the mercy which he had in store for them. We have,

1. The application made to him by a poor woman of that country, a Canaanite. Having heard the fame of Jesus, she seized the present moment to prefer her request.

Her

and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, <sup>b</sup> *It is because we have taken no bread.*

<sup>b</sup> Pf. 94. 8, 11. Luke, 24. 25. Ch. 15. 16—18.

Her case was very afflictive, her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil, possessed and tormented by him, and therefore she earnestly cries, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.* She professes her faith in him as the true Messiah, expresses her confidence of his power to help her, and, conscious of her own unworthiness to receive any favour from him, casts herself intirely on his mercy. *Note;* (1.) To see their children under the power of disease, is deeply felt by every tender parent; but to behold them under the power of sin and Satan, is far more grievous. (2.) When we can do no more for our unhappy offspring, we must continue in prayer to present their miserable state to Jesus, if so be he may interpose to heal them. (3.) The mercies shewn to our children are favours done to ourselves, and should be so acknowledged. (4.) All that a sinner has to ask of the Saviour, is mere mercy; we have no claim upon him, and can only cast ourselves at his feet, to do with us, and by us, according to the riches of his grace.

2. Her application at first appears to be utterly disregarded, and Jesus did not condescend to make a reply; not that he meant to deny her request, but to exercise her faith, and quicken her importunity. His disciples, who had never before seen their Master deaf to the intreaties of the miserable, interested themselves in her behalf; and not merely to be rid of her cries, but probably affected with her deep distress, wished her request granted, and that she were dismissed in peace; but his answer seemed to carry a still more unfavourable aspect, as if his ministry and miracles were to be confined to Israel alone. Nay, when the poor petitioner, notwithstanding all discouragement, approaching nearer, fell down at his feet, importunately reiterating her request, she apparently meets with still a rougher reception; seems to be spurned away as a dog, and excluded from the participation of mercies which were confined to the Jews; as if all out of the pale of their church deserved to be treated as impure animals, and rejected by the faithful. *Note;* (1.) We must not conclude that our requests are refused, because they are not immediately granted; nor that though the Saviour seems to frown, or even really frowns, he forbids farther intreaty; it is to exercise our faith, and quicken our prayers. (2.) Gracious souls are ever ready advocates and intercessors for the miserable.

3. Not dismayed by this repulse, nor driven to quit her hold, her faith cleaves to Jesus, and her soul bows down before him. Far from being offended at being treated as a dog, or sinking into despair at Christ's reply, her answer expressed the deep humility and unshaken dependence of her heart upon him. "*Truth, Lord, she replied; I own the charge; more vile and worthless than I am, no dog can be; a sinner, a Gentile, undeserving of any favour: yet, as a dog regard me;*" (So gracefully and powerfully does she improve that for her plea, which seemed to convey the greatest discouragement;) "*They are permitted, under their master's table, to pick up the crumbs*

" which fall; I ask no more. While happier Israelites enjoy the abundance of thy miracles, let one crumb fall on me, a poor Canaanite; no loss to them, to me a mercy so unspeakable." *Note;* (1.) Nothing must ever drive us from Christ; the more we are distressed, the more should we cleave to him. If we perish, we perish; but let it be at least at the feet of Jesus, and there none ever yet were cast away. (2.) We can never have too lowly thoughts of ourselves; the worst that we can say of ourselves, or others can say of us, is nothing in comparison with what God has seen in us. (3.) Active faith lays hold even on the hand which seems stretched out to destroy: "*Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee;*" and this is indeed the triumph of faith.

4. As if amazed and overcome by faith so distinguished, Jesus grants her request, and dismisses her with the highest marks of his approbation. To her utmost wishes he extends the favour, and instantly her daughter was made whole. *Note;* (1.) Nothing is so pleasing and honourable to Jesus as great faith in his power and love. (2.) There is no mercy that we can ask, believing, which Jesus will ever refuse us; whether it be pardon, holiness, or consolation, it shall assuredly be given us.

4thly, Jesus returned again to the coasts of Galilee: and seating himself on a rising ground, as the great and universal physician, appeared ready to receive and relieve every miserable patient, whatever his disease might be, without money, and without price. We have an account,

1. Of the multitudes who came to him, bringing the afflicted with various maladies, and casting them down at his feet. And his compassions were so great, his power so effectual, that he healed them all. *Note;* (1.) The diseases of our bodies drive us instantly to the physician, though his art is uncertain; shall not then the more dangerous diseases of our souls drive us to Jesus, whose medicines of grace are infallible? (2.) The world is full of sickness and pain because full of sin; but if the cause be removed through the infinite merit of Jesus, and by the spirit of grace, in the faithful soul, the effects will quickly cease, and the inhabitants above shall never more say *I am sick.*

2. These wonders of power and grace deeply affected the beholders. Amazed to hear the dumb speak, to see the lame walk, the blind restored to sight, and every malady removed with a word, *they glorified the God of Israel* for sending the promised Messiah; for such their words bespoke him whom they now beheld. *Note;* Every mercy demands a tribute of praise; and if the removal of bodily complaints excited such wonder and thankfulness, how much more should we admire the spiritual riches of Christ, and adore the God of our salvation, if our souls have experienced the power of his healing grace; if our once blind eyes see the light of truth; if our ears, once deaf, are open to the Gospel's joyful sound; if our once lame feet are strengthened to run the way of his commandments! For these unutterable blessings, praise the Lord, O my soul.



8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason

ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Ch. 9. 4. & 12. 15, 25. Mark, 8. 16, 17. Jer. 17. 10. John, 2. 24, 25. 31. Jam. 1. 6. Am not I as able and ready to supply you as ever?

Heb. 4. 12, 13. Rev. 2. 23.

\* Ch. 6. 30. & 8. 25. & 17. 17. & 14.

3. A singular miracle is wrought, wherein all partook, similar to what he had done before, chap. xiv. with this little variation, that in the present instance *four thousand, besides women and children, are fed with seven loaves and a few little fishes*: in the former, *five thousand men, besides women and children, were fed with five loaves*.

[1.] The circumstances of the people assembled moved the compassion of Jesus. So eager were they to attend on his ministry, and to behold his miracles, that for three days successively they continued with him; and if they brought any little provision with them, it was ere this consumed, so that they had now nothing to eat; and as many of them came from far, and could not soon get a supply of food, to send them away thus fasting might expose them to faint by the way through weakness, and to perish with hunger. Calling his disciples, therefore, he acquainted them with his gracious design of feeding them there; but they forgetting what they had so lately seen, chap. xiv. 21. objected to the possibility of providing meat for such a multitude in that wilderness; and especially when by his question he seemed to intend supplying the table out of their scanty store, which appeared so insufficient, being no more than seven loaves, and a few small fishes. *Note*; (1.) They who know the sweetness of the Gospel word, will undergo weariness and hunger, rather than be deprived of it. (2.) It is through our forgetfulness of the past interpositions we have experienced, that under new difficulties we fall into fresh perplexity.

[2.] Having commanded the multitude to sit down, he took the loaves and fishes, as before, and, thanking God for the provision, divided the bread and fishes among the disciples, that they should distribute them to the people; and far from any lack, when all had eaten and were filled, seven baskets full of fragments still remained. The provision indeed was somewhat more, the company fewer, and the fragments less than in the former instance, but the miracle was the same in one case as the other; and the wondrous enlargement of the food evidenced the same divine creative power. *Note*; We stand astonished at this relation; but is not every corn which is cast into the earth as marvellously increased at the harvest? yet who thinks of the wonder-working hand of him, by whose daily bread we are continually fed?

[3.] Having liberally satisfied his guests, he dismisses them to their own homes. Thither duty called them; we cannot always be in attendance on the sanctuary, it is not proper that we should. As for himself and his disciples, they took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala. His work was to be going about doing good; and in every place he left behind him abundant marks of his transcendent power, grace, and love.

#### CHAP. XVI.

Ver. 7. The Pharisees also] Dr. Campbell reads the last verse of the last chapter and the present verse, *Then having dismissed the multitude, he embarked, and sailed to the coast of Galilee.*

Magdala. Thither some Pharisees and Sadducees repaired, who, to try him, desired that he would shew them a sign in the sky. Whilst Jesus was in Dalmanutha, or Magdala, the Pharisees, having heard of the second miraculous dinner, and fearing that the whole body of the people would acknowledge him for the Messiah, resolved to confute his pretensions fully and publicly: for this reason they came forth with the Sadducees, who, though the opposers and rivals of the Pharisees in all other matters, joined them in their design of oppressing Jesus, and together with them demanded of him *the sign from heaven*. It seems that the Jews, from Daniel, vii. 13. expected that the Messiah would make his first appearance in the clouds of heaven, and take unto himself glory and a temporal kingdom. See the note on ch. xii. 38, 39. Agreeable to this, Josephus, describing the state of the affairs in Judæa under Felix, tells us, "That the deceivers and impostors pretending to inspiration, endeavouring to bring about changes, and so making the people mad, led them into the wilderness, as if it had been to shew them signs of liberty:" Wherefore when the Pharisees desired Jesus to shew them *the sign from heaven*, they certainly meant, that he should demonstrate himself to be the Messiah, by coming in a visible and miraculous manner from heaven with great pomp, and by wresting the kingdom out of the hands of the Romans. These hypocrites craftily feigned an inclination to believe, if he would but give them sufficient evidence of his mission: however, their true design was, that by his failure in the proof which they required, he should expose himself to general blame. It was upon the same principles that they continued their demands in the Apostles' time (see 1 Cor. i. 22.); though so many *signs from heaven* had then been given, in the voice from thence, in the preternatural darkness at our Lord's crucifixion, in the descent of angels in repeated instances, and in that of the Holy Spirit in a visible form, as well as in most sensible effects. See Josephus's Jewish War, b. ii. c. 12. and Lardner's *Credibility*, lib. i. c. 5.

Ver. 2, 3. He—said unto them, &c.] Our Saviour's reply may be thus paraphrased: "It is most apparent that you ask this out of a desire to cavil, rather than to learn the divine will: for, in other cases you take up with degrees of evidence, far short of those which you here reject. As for instance, you readily say in an evening, *It will be fair weather to-morrow; because the sky is, this evening, of a bright and fiery red: And in the morning, —It will be tempestuous weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, you know how to distinguish the face of the heavens, and to form thence probable conjectures concerning the weather, and can you not distinguish the signs of the present times?* and see, by the various miracles which are daily performed among you, by the prophetic and various other tokens which attend my appearance, that this is indeed the period which you profess to desire with so much eagerness, and which you might discern with much less sagacity." Dr. Lightfoot

has

9 <sup>1</sup> Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

10 <sup>m</sup> Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

11 <sup>\*</sup> How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

12 Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the <sup>o</sup> doctrine of the Pharisees and of the

Sadducees.

13 ¶ When Jesus came into the coasts of <sup>\*</sup> Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, <sup>p</sup> Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, <sup>q</sup> Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, <sup>r</sup> But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, <sup>s</sup> Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 14. 17—21. Mark, 6. 34—44. Luke, 9. 12—17. John, 6. 2—13. <sup>m</sup> Ch. 15. 31—38. Mark, 8. 1—9. <sup>n</sup> Heb. 5. 12. <sup>o</sup> 1 Cor. 5. 2. Pf. 94. 8. Luke, 24. 25. <sup>p</sup> 1 Cor. 5. 6, 7. Gal. 5. 9. with Ch. 15. 6, 9. & xxiii. & 22. 23. Acts, 23. 8. <sup>q</sup> A city in the north-east of Canaan. <sup>r</sup> Mark, 8. 27. Luke, 9. 18—22. Pf. 8. 4, 5. Dan. 7. 13, 14. <sup>s</sup> 11. 7. 14. & 9. 6. & 11. 1. Jer. 23. 5, 6. & 33. 15, 16. Mic. 5. 2. John, 1. 14. Rom. 1. 3, 4. & 9. 5. & 8. 31. <sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. 3. 16. Gal. 4. 4. Heb. 2. 14, 16—18. <sup>u</sup> Luke, 9. 7—9. Ch. 14. 2. Mark, 6. 14. Mat. 4. 5. <sup>v</sup> Ch. 13. 11. Luke, 12. 48. <sup>w</sup> John, 6. 69. & 11. 27. Acts, 8. 37. & 9. 20. <sup>x</sup> 2 John, 4. 15. & 5. 5. Ch. 26. 63. John, 1. 42, 49. Pf. 2. 7. Heb. 1. 5.

has observed, that the Jews used to value themselves highly on their skill in prognosticating the weather; and Grotius, in his note on this place, has shewn what a variety of signs marked out that time for the arrival of the Messiah. The Syriac version, instead of *the times*, reads very well *the time, Kaipov*. See Doddridge, Lightfoot, and Grotius.

*Ver. 5. And when his disciples were come, &c.*] This would be rendered more properly, *Now the disciples, going to the other side, had forgotten to take bread*; for it is more agreeable to the nature of the thing to suppose, that this conversation happened as they sailed, than when they were come to the other side, where they might easily have been supplied with bread. The version of 1729 renders it, *Now at their departure to go to the other side, &c.* And with it, Dr. Heylin and the Prussian editors agree. It seems Jesus and the disciples had remained so long in Dalmanutha, that they had consumed the seven baskets of fragments which they had taken up after the late miraculous dinner. Our Saviour hence took occasion to give his disciples a solemn charge to beware of the *doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees*, which he called *leaven*, because of its pernicious influence to four men's tempers with pride and other evil passions. For as these hypocrites chiefly enjoined the observation of frivolous traditions, their doctrine was a great enemy to the principles of true piety, and puffed men up with a high conceit of their own sanctity. The slowness of the disciples' understanding shewed itself on this occasion, as it had done on many others. As they had forgotten to take bread with them, and had often heard the doctors prohibit the use of the leaven of heathens and Samaritans, they thought that he forbade them to buy bread from bakers of either sects, lest it might be made with impure leaven; and so they looked on the advice as an indirect reproof of their carelessness. Our Saviour, after properly reproofing them, soon gave them to understand his meaning. See ver. 12. Mac-knight, and Calmet.

*Ver. 13. When Jesus came into the coasts, &c.*] *When Jesus came into the territories of, or was going towards, Cæsarea*

*Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say I am? the son of man?* Heylin. Cæsarea Philippi, while it was possessed by the Canaanites, was called *Lesbem*, Josh. xix. 47. and *Laisb*, Judg. xviii. 27. But when the children of Dan took it, they named it after their progenitor. In later times it was called *Paneas*, from the mountain beneath which it stood. The situation of *Paneas* pleased Philip the tetrarch so exceedingly, that he resolved to make it the seat of his court; for which purpose he enlarged and adorned it with many sumptuous buildings, and called it *Cæsarea* in honour of the Roman emperor: the tetrarch's name, however, was commonly added to distinguish it from the other Cæsarea, so often mentioned in the Acts, which was a fine port in the Mediterranean sea, and had been rebuilt by Herod the Great, and named in honour of Augustus Cæsar. See the note on Acts, viii. 40. Josephus gave Philip so good a character, that some have thought our Lord retired into his territories for security from the insults of his enemies elsewhere. See Beaufobre and Lenfant, Introduction, p. 27.

*Ver. 14. And they said, Some, &c.*] Perhaps those who held Christ to be Elias, did not think him the Messiah, but only his forerunner; this being the received opinion of the whole nation, that Elias was to come before the Messiah, and anoint him when he came. Those who thought that he was *Jesus the Baptist* risen from the dead, spoke suitably to the opinion of the Pharisees, "who (says Josephus) held "that there was for good men an easy return to life." That *he was Jeremias, or one of the prophets*, was the consequence of an opinion which prevailed, that the Messiah was to come not from the living, but from the dead: As they thought none of that age of piety sufficient to bear him, and that the resurrection was to begin with his kingdom, they might easily be induced to think that he would be one who should rise from the dead; and as God had said of Jeremias, that *he was set to root out, pull down, and destroy kingdoms, &c.* ch. i. 5—10.; and as it was their opinion that the great business of the king Messiah was to pull down all the nations which ruled over them, and make

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, " but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, that ' thou

art Peter; and ' upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 ' And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 13. 16, 17. & 5. 3—11. Eph. 1. 3. <sup>2</sup> Man. Pf. 56. 4. If. 40. 5, 6. Ch. 24. 22. Rom. 3. 20. <sup>3</sup> Ch. 11. 25, 27. John, 1. 18.  
<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 2. 10—15. Gal. 1. 15, 16. Eph. 1. 17, 18. & 3. 18, 19. <sup>5</sup> John, 1. 42. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 3. 11. & 10. 4. If. 28. 16. Eph. 2. 19—22.  
 Luke, 22. 31, 32. Rev. 21. 14, 19. Heb. 12. 28. Pf. 125. 1, 2. If. 2. 2, 3. & 54. 17. <sup>7</sup> John, 20. 23. Ch. 18. 18. If. 22. 22. 1 Cor. 4. 12.  
 Mark, 16. 15, 16. Rom. 1. 16. Luke, 11. 22. Lev. 13. 13, 15.

make them tributaries and servants to the Jews; they might on this account pitch on him, as the fittest person to be the Messiah. See Whitby, Craddock's Harmony, and 2 Macc. ii. 5. Messrs. Beaufobre and Lenfant think, that they mentioned Jeremiah rather than any other prophet, because the ancient Jews used to place Jeremiah at the head of the prophets. It seems to follow, both from the question in the preceding and in the following verse, that Jesus had not as yet directly assumed the title of the Messiah, at least in their hearing.

Ver. 17, 18. *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, &c.*] *Bar-jona is the Son of Jona.* Some authors suppose, that *John and Jona* are one and the same. *Flesh and blood* is a Hebrewism, signifying his own reason, or any natural power whatever. This knowledge had not been communicated to him, either by the sentence of the Sanhedrim, declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, or by the authority of any human testimony whatever, but merely by the teaching of God. See on John vi. 45. "Blessed and happy art thou, O Peter; for this confession which thou hast made is not a bare human conjecture, formed by report, or by the unassisted sagacity of thine own mind; but my Father in heaven has discovered it to thee, and wrought in thy soul this cordial assent, in the midst of those prejudices against it, which present circumstances might suggest." Our Saviour goes on, and promises, (alluding to the surname of Peter, which comes from Πέτρα, a rock,) that he should have a principal concern in establishing his kingdom. "Thou art, as thy name signifies, a substantial rock; and, as thou hast shewn it in this good confession, I assure thee, that upon this rock I will build my church: faith in me, as the Son of God, shall be its great support, and I will use thee as a glorious instrument in raising it." This is evidently one of those Scriptures, the sense of which might be most certainly fixed by the particular tone of voice and gesture with which it was spoken: if our Lord altered his accent, and laid his hand on his breast, it would shew, that he spoke not of the person, but of the confession of Peter,—as most protestant divines have understood it; and meant to point out himself as the great foundation. Compare 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. And it is observable, to confirm this sense, that the Lord, when he says upon this rock, does not make use of the word Πέτρος, referring to Peter himself, but πέτρα, which is an appellative noun, and immediately refers to Peter's confession: but if our Saviour turned to the other Apostles, and pointed to Peter, that would shew that he meant to intimate the honour he would do him, in making him an eminent support to his church. This is the sense in which many of the commentators have understood it.

However, to be a foundation in this sense was not his honour alone; his brethren shared with him in it (see Ephes. ii. 20. Rev. xxi. 14.); as they did also in the power of binding and loosing; (see Matth. xviii. 18. John, xx. 23.) Upon the whole, how weak the arguments are which the papists draw hence to support the supremacy of Peter in their wild sense of it, is sufficiently shewn by Bishop Burnett on the Articles, p. 198. Dr. Barrow on the Creed, ferm. 28.; Dr. Patrick, in his sermon on the text; and many others needless to be named. There seems a reference in the expression before us to the common custom of building citadels upon a rock. The gates of hell or of death, is a periphrasis for hell or death itself. So the phrase is used, Isaiah xxxviii. 10. where Hezekiah, speaking of himself, says, *I shall go, εν πυλαις αιδου, to the gates of Hades,* that is to say, "I shall die." Our Lord's meaning therefore is, that the Christian church shall never be annihilated; no, not by the united force of men and devils combined against it. See More's Theological Works, page 110. Whitby, Grotius, &c.

Ver. 19. *And I will give unto thee the keys*] As stewards of great families, especially of the royal household, bore a key, (probably a golden one, as Lords of the bed-chamber do with us, in token of their office,) the phrase of giving a person the key naturally grew into an expression of raising him to great power. See the note on Isaiah xxii. 22. The keys of the kingdom of heaven, which on this occasion are given to Peter, are to be understood metaphorically: for our Lord's meaning was, that Peter should open the gates of the kingdom of heaven, or Gospel dispensation, both to Jews and Gentiles; that is to say, should be the first who preached the Gospel to them, particularly the latter; and in this sense Peter seems to have understood the matter himself, Acts xv. 7. Or by the keys, we may understand power and authority, which is sometimes the meaning of the metaphor: and according to this interpretation, the power of binding and loosing, added to the power of the keys, may be considered as explicatory thereof: "After my ascension into heaven, I will give thee, and thy companions in the apostolate, authority to order all the affairs of my church; so that whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, &c." It can be no objection against this interpretation, that it connects the idea of binding and loosing with that of the keys, contrary to the exact propriety of the two metaphors; for all who have studied the Scriptures know, that in many passages the ideas and expressions are accommodated to the subject matter, rather than to the precedent metaphors. The power of binding and loosing now conferred on Peter, and afterwards on all the Apostles, (see ch. xviii. 18.)

shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 <sup>b</sup> Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

21 ¶ From that time forth began Jesus <sup>c</sup> to

shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, <sup>d</sup> Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall not be unto thee.

<sup>b</sup> Ch. 17. 9. Luke, 9. 21, 22. Mark, 8. 30. 1 Cor. 2. 8. See Ch. 8. 4. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 17. 22, 23. & 20. 17, 18. & 26. 2. Mark, 9. 30. Luke, 9. 22, 44 & 18. 31. & 24. 7, 26. John, 16. 16. 1 Cor. 15. 4. <sup>d</sup> Gr. *Pity thyself.* 2 Sam. 23. 17. 1 Chr. 11. 19.

was a power of declaring the laws of the Gospel, and the terms of salvation ; for in the Jewish nation, to *bind* and *loose* are words made use of by the doctors to signify the unlawfulness or lawfulness of things. Wherefore our Lord's meaning was, " Whatever things thou shalt *bind* " up from men, or declare forbidden on earth, shall be " forbidden by heaven ; and whatsoever things thou shalt " loose to men, or bid to be done, shall be lawful and " obligatory in the esteem of heaven." Accordingly it may be observed, that the gender made use of in both passages agrees to this interpretation : in that under consideration it is *δ*, not *δν* ; in the other it is *δσζ*, not *εσους*. This high power of declaring the terms of salvation, and precepts of the Gospel, the Apostles did not enjoy in its full extent till the memorable day of Pentecost, when they received the Holy Ghost in the plenitude of his gifts. After this their decisions on points of doctrine and duty being all given by inspiration, were infallible definitions, and ratified in heaven. Here then was an immense honour conferred on the Apostles, and what must yield great consolation to all believers. There is nothing doubtful in the Gospel, much less false ; but we may safely rest the salvation of our souls on the discoveries made to us there, since they are all originally derived from God. See Doddridge, Macknight, Lightfoot, Bishop Hoadly, and the other writers on this controverted passage of Scripture.

*Ver. 20. Then charged he his disciples, &c.]* Jesus forbade his disciples to tell any man that he was the Messiah, because he was to suffer the punishment of death ;—a circumstance, which could not fail to give his followers great offence, as they did not yet understand the nature of his kingdom ; for which reason he thought it better to leave every one to form a judgment of his character from his doctrine and miracles, than in all places to assume the title of Messiah publicly under such disadvantages. Or, his meaning may have been, " Because it is determined " that the Messiah shall suffer death, it is not proper to " assume that title publicly, lest the people, declaring in " my behalf, endeavour to prevent the execution of the " divine counsel." The Romans certainly, say some, would not have suffered him to proceed, if he had gone about preaching that he was the king whom the Jews expected ; unless he had interfered by his divine and irresistible power. Such an accusation would have been instantly brought against him by the Jews, if they could have heard it out of his own mouth ; and if that had been his public doctrine to his followers, which was openly preached by his Apostles after his death, and of which they are accused, Acts xvii. 5—9. Though the magistrates

of the world had no great regard to the talk of a king who had suffered death, and appeared no longer upon earth ; yet, if our Saviour had openly declared this of himself in his lifetime, with a train of disciples and followers everywhere owning and crying him up for their king, the Roman governors of Judea could not have borne to take notice of it, and to make use of their force against it. In this the Jews were not mistaken, and therefore they made use of it as the strongest accusation, and the likeliest to prevail with Pilate against him, for the taking away his life ; it being treason, and an unpardonable offence, which could not escape death from a Roman deputy, without the forfeiture of his own life. See Luke xxiii. 2. and the note on Matth. xii. 16. Dr. Campbell, following many of the manuscripts, leaves out the word *Jesus* : then he forbade his disciples to tell any man that he is the Messiah.

*Ver. 21. From that time forth began Jesus, &c.]* Though all the circumstances mentioned in this verse were marks of the Messiah, yet, says a commentator, how little they were understood by the Apostles, or suited to their expectation of the Messiah, appears from the manner in which they were received by Peter, ver. 22. Peter had twice before acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah, and yet here he cannot bear the thought that he should suffer, and be put to death, and be raised again : whereby we may perceive how little Jesus had at this time explained to the Apostles what personally concerned himself. They had been a good while witnesses of his life and miracles, and thereby being grown into a belief that he was the Messiah, were in some degree prepared to receive the particulars which were to fill up the character, and answer the prophecies concerning him. This *from henceforth* he began to open to them, though in a way out of which the Jews could not form an accusation ; the time of the accomplishment of all, in his sufferings, death, and resurrection, now drawing on, (for this was in the last year of his life,) he being to meet the Jews at Jerusalem but once more at the passover, and then they were to have their will upon him ; wherefore he might now begin to be a little more open concerning himself, though yet so as to keep himself out of the reach of any accusation, which might appear just or weighty to the Roman deputy.

*Ver. 22. Then Peter, &c.]* Then Peter—began to expostulate with him, &c. Dr. Doddridge renders the original word *προσλαβόμενος*, by *taking him by the hand* : Dr. Fuller supposes that phrase *Ἰλαῖς σοι*, should be rendered, *may God have compassion upon thee* : Heinsius, Grotius, and Le Clerc give the same interpretation ; and the accurate Dr.

Scott,

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, me. Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou favourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

24 ¶ Then said Jesus unto his disciples. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

\* John, 6. 70. & 8. 44. Acts, 15. 10. Rev. 2. 10. James, 3. 15. Rom. 8. 7, 8. 1 Cor. 2. 14. 2 Cor. 2. 16. Luke, 14. 27. & 9. 25—  
 † & 17. 33. Ch. 10. 38. Mark, 8. 34—38. Gal. 4. 24. & 6. 14. 2 Tim. 3. 12. Acts, 14. 22. Col. 1. 24. 1 Th. 4. 16. 1 Cor. 3. 18. Phil. 3. 7, 8. Heb. 11. 24. ‡ Ch. 10. 39. Luke, 17. 33. John, 12. 25. Gal. 6. 12. Rev. 12. 11. Heb. 11. 35. § Job, 2. 4. Mark, 8. 37.  
 † Luke, 9. 25. & 12. 19, 20. Pl. 49. 7, 8. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

Scott, who is followed by Dr. Heylin, renders it, *Mercy on thee!* which is most literal. The phrase, as used by the LXX, generally signifies *God forbid!* or, as we render it, *far from thee.* See 1 Sam. xiv. 45. 2 Sam. xx. 20. 1 Kings, xxi. 3. 1 Chron. xi. 19. Compare 1 Macc. ii. 21. and see Doddridge, and Wetstein.

Ver. 23. *Get thee behind me, Satan!*] See Luke iv. 8. The word *Satan*, which is originally Hebrew, and has thence been taken into several languages, is often used in the Old Testament, as we have had occasion to observe, to signify an *adversary*; and the expression has appeared so harsh to some, as coming from the mouth of Christ to one of his Apostles, that they have rather chosen to translate it, *O mine adversary.* The version of 1729, reads the verse, *But he frowned upon Peter, and said, Out of my sight, pernicious obstacle to my designs! your views are all worldly, regardless of what is divine.* But as the Evangelists have made use of the word *Σατανᾶ*, which must be owned to have a sound as harsh in the Greek, as it has now with us; we may conclude that it was used by Christ, or his rebuke to Peter would have been otherwise expressed by some Greek word signifying an adversary. Nor can the word appear at all too harsh, when we consider that the tendency of Peter's saying, though it might be spoken out of a singular affection to his Master, was to obstruct the great design for which he came into the world; and none but Satan could desire to prevent what he was ready to submit to for the salvation of lost sinners. Dr. Young, in his sermons, vol. ii. p. 137. rendering the phrase *ἰδὼς ἐν, favour thyself*, supposes that our Lord calls Peter, *Satan*, because he now fell on that advice, which Satan uses the most successfully of all his artifices to undo men,—that of self-indulgence, and so makes this Scripture an introduction to his discourse on self-denial. See Rom. viii. 5. Philip. iii. 19. and Col. iii. 2. It is remarkable, that our Lord, immediately after conferring upon St. Peter the high dignity before mentioned, openly, in the hearing of all his disciples, calls him *Satan*, or *adversary*; and declares that he had then no particular relish for the divine appointments, but was influenced merely by human views and expectations of worldly interest. If the papists rightly attended to this passage of the Sacred History, they would see their fancies of the primacy of St. Peter, which they built upon it, in a better light than they seem to do. See Macknight, Doddridge, and Beaufovre and Lensant.

Ver. 24. *If any man will come after me*] Because Peter's improper behaviour, just before mentioned, proceeded from his love to the world and its pleasures, Jesus declares publicly, that all who would be his disciples, and share with him in the glory of his kingdom, must deny themselves; that is to say, be in constant readiness to renounce every earthly pleasure, with life itself, when called to do so, (See Luke xiv. 33.); and, in ordinary cases, take up his cross; see on ch. x. 38. After having undergone many afflictions, the disciples of Christ may still look for more; which, when laid upon them, they must sustain with equal patience, following their Master in the footsteps of his afflictions. This indeed is a hard and difficult lesson, but at the same time it is absolutely necessary; because if, in order to preserve our temporal life, we displease Christ, ver. 25. we shall lose what is really and truly our *life*,—the eternal happiness of our souls: whereas, if we will die rather than disobey him, we shall obtain infinite and endless joys. See the next note. Dr. Clarke paraphrases the latter part of ver. 25.: "Whoever parts with his virtue and good conscience to save his temporal life, shall lose that which is eternal; and, by escaping the first death for a time, shall incur the penalty of the second death for ever." See sermon iv. vol. 7. and for an exposition of ver. 17, 18. his 17th sermon, vol. 8.

Ver. 26. *For what is a man profited, &c.*] To carry home the argument more closely, he puts them in mind of the method according to which men estimate things. If God should offer the riches of Solomon, the strength of Samson, the policy of Achitophel, the beauty of Absalom, the eloquence of Apollon, universal monarchy, and all kinds of pleasures, and say, *Take them for one hour, and then die*,—who is the man that would not immediately reject the proposed condition, and reply that life is better than them all? But will men forego every earthly thing for life,—the life of the body? and will they not part with them, nay, and with life itself, for their souls? since the longest any one can enjoy this life with all its pleasures is, in comparison of eternity, no longer than he enjoys the good things before mentioned, who dies in the same hour that he receives them. The latter part of this verse may be rendered, *and lose his own life*; *ψυχή*, (the same word is used, ver. 25.) or *what shall a man give as a ransom for his life?* The Greek word *ἀντάλλαγμα*, properly signifies a *ransom*; and in this connection leads us to reflect, how willing

27 <sup>i</sup> For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; <sup>k</sup> and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

<sup>i</sup> Ch. 24. 30. & 25. 31. & 26. 64. Zech. 14. 5. Jude, 14. Job, 19. 25. 10, 11. Jer. 17. 10. & 32. 19. Ezek. 7. 27. Rom. 2. 6. 1 Cor. 3. 8. 2

& 22. 12.

<sup>k</sup> Job, 24. 11. Pf. 62. 12. & 96. 13. & 98. 9. Prov. 24. 12. If. 3.

1 Mark, 9. 1. Luke, 9. 27. & 22. 18. Ch. 26. 64. Heb. 2. 9. & 12. 28.

28 Verily I say unto you, <sup>l</sup> There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

willing a condemned malefactor would be, to give up all that he had gotten by his crimes to buy his pardon, and how vain his attempt must in this case prove. The phrase *Τὴν Ψυχὴν ζῆναι βιάσθαι*, does not merely signify *to lose the life*, which might be applied to a man who accidentally met death in the pursuit of gain,—as a merchant who should be lost in his voyage; but it properly imports the undergoing a capital execution; which is an idea of much greater terror, as well as of much stricter propriety in the present case. See Job, ii. 4. Luke, ix. 25. Raphelius's Annotations, and Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons, vol. 3.

*Ver. 27. For the Son of man shall come, &c.]* That the argument in the preceding verse, by which the necessity of self-denial is so clearly established, might have the greater weight, our Lord spake more particularly concerning the rewards and punishments of a future state; assuring his disciples, that they are all to be distributed by himself, the Father having appointed him universal Judge; so that his enemies cannot flatter themselves with the hope of escaping condign punishment, nor his faithful friends be in the least afraid of losing their reward: and to encourage them the more, he told them, that he would come to judge the world, not in his present low and contemned state, but most magnificently arrayed, both in his own glory, and in his Father's. See Luke, ix. 26. He would come, not attended by twelve weak disciples, but surrounded with numberless hosts of mighty angels, to reward every man, not with the honours of a temporal kingdom, great offices and large possessions, but with the joys of immortality. See the *Inferences and Reflections* at the end of this chapter.

*Ver. 28. Verily I say unto you]* Because the doctrine of Christ's being constituted universal judge might appear to the disciples incredible at that time, on account of his humiliation, he told them, that some of them should not taste of death till they saw him coming in his kingdom; and by that should have not only a proof of his being the judge, but an example of the judgment which he was to execute: "Do not doubt that there shall be a day of judgment, when I shall come clothed with Divine Majesty, and attended by millions of angels, to render unto men according as their actions in this life have been good or bad: there are some here present who shall not die till they have seen a faint representation of the glory in which I will come, and an eminent example of this my power, exercised on the men of the present generation." Accordingly, the disciples saw their Master coming in his kingdom, when they were witnesses of his transfiguration, resurrection and ascension, had the miraculous gifts of the spirit conferred upon them, and lived to see Jerusalem with the Jewish state destroyed, and the Gospel propagated through the greatest part of the then

known world. Raphelius, Albert, and some other critics would have the latter part of the verse translated, *till they shall see the Son of man going into his kingdom*; understanding it to be the disciples beholding Christ's ascension into heaven, where he took possession of his mediatorial kingdom, and which without doubt was a very proper proof of his coming again to judge the world; but the common translation appears much more natural and just, as well as the sense above given; especially as our Lord's manner of speaking intimates, that most of these present should be dead before the event referred to; but his ascension happened a few months after this. This verse, says commentator, which imports the dominion that some there present should see him exercise over the nation of the Jews, was so covered by being annexed to ver. 27.—where Christ speaks of the manifestation and glory of his kingdom at the day of judgment,—that though his plain meaning be, that the appearance and visible exercise of his kingly power was so near, that some there should live to see it; yet if the foregoing words had not cast a shadow on these latter, but had been left plainly to be understood as they plainly signified that he should be a king, and that it was so near, that *some there* should see him in his kingdom,—this might have been laid hold on, and made the matter of a plausible and seemingly just accusation against him by the Jews before Pilate. This seems to be the reason of our Saviour's inverting here the order of the two solemn manifestations to the world of his rule and power, thereby perplexing at present his meaning, and securing himself, as was necessary, from the malice of the Jews, which always lay ready to entrap him, and accuse him to the Roman governor: and they would no doubt have been ready to allege these words,—*Some here shall not taste, &c.* against him, as criminal, had not their meaning been, by the former verse, perplexed, and the sense at that time rendered unintelligible, and not applicable by any of his auditors to a sense that might have been prejudicial to him before Pontius Pilate: for how well the chief of the Jews were disposed towards him St. Luke tells us, ch. xi. 54. which may be a reason to satisfy us respecting the seemingly doubtful and obscure way of speaking used by our Saviour in other places;—his circumstances being such, that without such a prudent carriage and reserve, he could not have gone through his work in the way that it pleased the Father and him, nor have performed all the parts of it in a way correspondent to the descriptions given of the Messiah, and which would be afterwards fully understood to belong to him when he had left the world.

*Inferences.*—How awful an event does our great Redeemer here offer to the serious contemplation of all mankind!

CHAP. XVII.

*The transfiguration of Christ: he bealeth the lunatic, foretelleth his own passion, and payeth tribute.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

AND <sup>a</sup> after six days Jesus taketh <sup>b</sup> Peter, James, and John his brother, and

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 9. 2—10. Luke, 9. 28—36. <sup>b</sup> Mark, 5. 37. & 14. 33. Ch. 26. 37. <sup>c</sup> Exod. 34. 29, 35. 1f. 33. 17. Ch. 28. 3. John, 1. 14. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 13. 11. Acts, 10. 43. Rom. 3. 21. Luke, 24. 27, 44.

bringeth them up into an high mountain apart;

2 <sup>c</sup> And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

3 <sup>d</sup> And, behold, there appeared unto them

mankind! In the glory of his Father, accompanied with a mighty host of holy angels, he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, making all heaven, earth, and hell to resound. The dead of all countries and times hear the tremendous call. Hark! the living, filled with joy, exult at the approach of God; or, seized with inexpressible terror, send up doleful cries, and are all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Behold; the dead pass forth from their graves, following each other in close procession, the earth seems quick, and the sea gives up its dead. Mark the beauty, the boldness, and the gladness of some, springing up to honour; but the ghastly countenances, the trembling, the despair of others, arising to shame and everlasting contempt. See how amazed and terrified they look! with what vehemence they wish the extinction of their being! fain would they fly, but cannot: impelled by a force as strong as necessity, they hasten to the place of judgment. As they advance, the sight of the tribunal from afar strikes new terror: they come on in the deepest silence, and gather round the throne by thousands of thousands. In the mean time the angels, having brought up their bands from the uttermost parts of the earth, fly round the numberless multitudes, singing melodiously with loud voices, for joy that the day of general retribution is come, when vice shall be thrown from its usurpation, business exalted from its debasement to a superior station, the intricacies of Providence unravelled, the perfections of God vindicated, the church of God, purchased with his blood, cleared of them that do iniquity and of every thing that offendeth, and established impeccable for ever. *Let God arise! let his enemies be scattered! as smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad! let them rejoice before God! yea, let them exceedingly rejoice!* Pl. lxxviii. 1, &c. *For strong is the Lord God who judgeth.* Rev. xviii. 8.

And now the Son of man appears on the throne of his glory; and all nations, princes, warriors, nobles, the rich, the poor, all intirely stripped of their attendance, and every external distinction, stand naked and equal before him, silently waiting to be sentenced to their unchangeable state; and every individual is filled with an awful consciousness that he in particular is the object of the observation of Almighty God, manifest in his sight, and equally under his eye, so that there is not one single person concealed in the immensity of the crowd. The judge, who can be biassed by no bribe, softened by no subtle insinuations, imposed upon by no feigned excuses, having been himself privy to the most secret actions of

each, needs no evidence, but distinguishes with an unerring certainty.

He speaks! *Come from among them, my people, that ye receive not of their plagues.* They separate; they feel their judge within them, and hasten to their proper places, the righteous on the one hand of the throne, and the wicked on the other; not so much as one of the wicked daring to join himself with the just. Here the righteous, most beautiful with the brightness of holiness, stand serene in their looks, and full of hope at the bar of God,—a glad company! while the wicked, confounded at the remembrance of their lives, and terrified at the thought of what is to come, hang down their heads, inwardly cursing the day of their birth, and wishing, a thousand and a thousand times, that the rocks would fall on them, and the mountains cover them: but in vain; for there is no escaping nor appealing from this tribunal.

Behold, with mercy shining in his countenance and mild majesty, the king invites the righteous to take possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world: but with angry frowns he drives the wicked away, into punishment that shall have no end, no refreshment, no alleviation, *everlasting punishment!*—O the rejoicing! O the lamenting! the triumphant shouting of ascending saints, *caught up in the clouds, to be ever with the Lord!* the horror, the despair, the hideous shrieking of the damned, when they see hell gaping, hear the devils roaring, and feel the unspeakable torment of an awakened conscience!

Now they bitterly cry for death;—but death flies from them. Now they envy the righteous, and gladly would be such;—but all too late! Lo! the Son of God bows his head,—the signal for his servants;—the heavens and the earth depart, their works being at an end. See and hear—with what a terrible thundering noise the heavens pass away,—the *elements melt with fervent heat*, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, are burnt up! the frame of nature dissolves! earth, seas, skies, all vanish together, making way for the new heaven and the new earth.—It appears!—the happy land of Promise, formed by the hand of God, large, beautiful, and pleasant, a fit habitation for his glorified saints, and long expected by them as their country.—Here all the righteous, great and small, are assembled, making one vast blest society, even the kingdom and city of God. Here God manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his servants, *wipes away all tears from off their faces*, and adorns them with the beauties of immortality, glorious to behold. Here they drink fulness of joys, from the crystal river proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and eat of the tree of life;

Moses and Elias talking with him.

4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou

wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

life; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; but every one, happy in himself, imparts the blessing to his fellows: for mutual love warms every breast; love like that which subsists between the Father and the Son; mutual conference on the sublimest subjects refreshes every spirit with a divine repast of wisdom, and joys flowing from the tenderest friendship, fixed on the stable foundation of an immovable virtue, gladden every heart. All the servants of God serve him in perfect holiness, see his face, feel transports of joy, and, by the reflection of his glory, shine as the sun in the firmament for ever and ever. *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord God hath given them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Happy day! happy place and happy people! O blessed hope of joining that glorious society!—*All the servants of God shall serve him, and see his face.*—Serve God, and see his face!—What an immensity of felicity is here! imagination faints with the fatigue of stretching itself to comprehend the vast, the unmeasurable thought.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, However opposite in their tenets the Pharisees and Sadducees were, they perfectly agreed in their enmity against Christ and his gospel.

1. They came in concert with a view to tempt and entangle him, and, pretending dissatisfaction with the miracles that he wrought, desired a proof of the divine mission which he assumed, by some sign from heaven. Not indeed that they wished to be convinced, but merely sought some refuge for their infidelity. *Note;* They who, after all the miracles which Jesus has wrought, desire farther evidence of his character, evidently shew that they determine not to receive him; and if never so many signs or wonders were granted them, yet would they not believe in him.

2. Christ justly refuses to gratify their vain curiosity, and unreasonable requests. There was evidence sufficient before them, if they chose to see; and they did not want natural sagacity to judge of it. From observing the appearances of the sky, they determined what weather would follow. If the sky was red at evening, they presumed, by observation and experience, that the following day would be fair: but, if in the morning the sky appeared red and lowering, then it would be wet or windy: and from great probability they drew these conclusions. But how glaringly did they play the hypocrite, when, pretending the highest veneration for Moses and the prophets, though they could judge of the weather by the appearances of the sky, they could not discern *the signs of the times*, so clearly and distinctly revealed in the sacred writings; could neither see the present exact fulfilment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, nor the ruin coming upon themselves for rejecting him: and therefore, since they were a wicked and adulterous generation, wilfully blind to the evidence of truth, no other sign shall be given them than the miracles which they had already rejected, except his resurrection

from the dead after three days, prefigured by the abode of the prophet Jonas in the belly of the great fish. And with this he left them, as incorrigible sinners, with whom it was in vain to remonstrate, and crossed the lake to another part of the country. *Note;* (1.) Many are wise enough in human concerns, yea, deeply skilled in the mysteries of science, who yet are stark blind with regard to their souls. (2.) They who by their obstinacy and infidelity provoke Christ to depart from them, are justly given up to perdition.

2dly, Departing in haste, the disciples had forgotten to take with them provisions as usual: and thereupon from temporal things he takes occasion to introduce spiritual instructions.

1. He cautions them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees; of their principles and doctrines, which would spread their pernicious influence through the whole man.

2. They mistook his meaning, and, taking his words literally, concluded privately among themselves that it was intended as a rebuke for their carelessness; or a caution not to make use of the bread of the Pharisees and Sadducees, or so much as to eat with them.

3. He reproves them for the sinful distrust of their hearts, and the dulness of their apprehensions. It was a proof of the weakness of their faith, after the miracles they had so lately seen, to harbour a moment's distrust about a provision which their Master could so easily supply: and it shewed their stupidity, not to understand after what had passed, that it could not be of bread, literally, that he spoke, but of something spiritual and figurative, of much greater moment than merely bread. *Note;* (1.) Christ is displeased with his people, when they harbour worldly fears, and are disturbed about the meat which perisheth. It is a proof of little faith indeed, to suppose that those who have a promise of heaven for their home, should want bread by the way. (2.) If we remember better the past experience of God's care, it would administer an argument to silence our present distrusts and perplexities.

4. At last they comprehend his meaning, that he spake not of the bread, but of the doctrines of these sects, cautioning them against the false traditions, pride, and self-righteousness of the Pharisees, and against the infidelity and licentious principles of the Sadducees; both fatally dangerous: against which we have alike need to be on our guard. *Take heed and beware of them.*

3dly, Being now in the remotest part of the country, our Lord took occasion in private conference to inquire into the opinions entertained concerning himself by the people in general, and by his disciples in particular. Not that he was ignorant of either; but he meant to lead them to an open confession of their faith in him.

1. He asks concerning the general opinion which the people formed of himself, who appeared under the name of *the Son of man*—the humble title which he assumed when he emptied



5 While he yet spake, behold a bright voice out of the cloud, which said, This is cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;

1 Pet. i. 17. Exod. 40. 34. 1 Kin. 3. 10. 1 K. 42. 1, 21. Pf. 2. 7. John, i. 14. & 3. 16. & 1. 34. Ch. 3. 17. & 16. 16. Col. 1. 13.

emptied himself, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Or it may be read, *Whom do men say that I am? the Son of man?* Do they acknowledge my character and mission as the Messiah: or, what do they think of me?

2. The disciples, who had heard the different sentiments of the multitude, informed him that there were various conjectures formed concerning him; some supposing him John the Baptist risen from the dead; others Elias, prophesied of by Malachi; others Jeremias, or one of the ancient prophets sent to reform the guilty age: opinions which shewed the honourable sentiments that the people in general entertained of him, yet far short of the truth. The meanness of his birth, relations, dress, and followers, seem to have quite excluded the notion of his true character as the Messiah, whom their prejudices had always represented as to come with all the pomp of majesty, and the glory of a conquering hero.

3. He questions them concerning their own sentiments of him. They had been better taught, and therefore should have higher notions of his true character; and, being shortly to become teachers of others, they were peculiarly called upon to entertain right apprehensions of this important truth themselves. *Note;* We must know Jesus ourselves, his person and offices, or it is impossible that we should truly be his ministers to others.

4. Peter, according to his usual zeal and forwardness, in the name of the rest, and as their spokesman, nobly replies, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* They understood his real character, they truly believed in him as the divine Messiah, the anointed prophet, priest, and king of the church, and were ready to confess him not merely as Son of man, but as the coequal Son of God.

5. Christ expresses his high commendation of this truly apostolic confession. It was a distinguished blessing which Peter possessed, thus to know the Lord's Christ; and what neither sprang from his birth, education, nor his own reasoning, but from divine revelation. So noble and open a profession of his faith shewed him to be what his name imported, a rock: and hereupon Christ adds, *Upon this rock I will build my church:* which some apply personally to Peter, who may in a sound sense be admitted as one of those apostles on whom, as the foundation, the church is said to be built, being raised in the first instance by their ministry, Eph. ii. 20. Rev. xxi. 14. Nor can this at all countenance the absurd pretensions of the bishops of Rome, who are neither his successors in office nor in doctrine. Indeed, nothing can more evince the weakness of their claims, than such perverted scriptures, wrested and pressed into the service. But by the rock more probably is meant Christ himself, who in speaking pointed to his own person, and who was evidently the rock on which Peter himself built, the true foundation, other than which can no man lay, 1 Cor. iii. 11. Hereon he is pleased to raise the glorious superstructure of his church: the glory of it is all his own; and on his power, love, and faithfulness, its stability rests: nor shall the gates of hell ever prevail against

it: the faithful souls that cleave to him, he will save from Satan, sin, death, and hell. *Note;* (1.) Nothing is so acceptable to Jesus as a bold profession of our confidence in him. (2.) They are truly blessed who savingly know the Son of God. (3.) All that we know of God and his Christ is from his own revelation.

6. Having engaged to erect his church, Christ provides for the government of it, and commits to Peter and the other Apostles the keys, the ensigns of authority, empowering him and them, in his name, to declare what was lawful and unlawful, to charge sin upon men's consciences, and to declare the absolution of them on their humiliation and genuine repentance, to pronounce spiritual censures, or loose men from them; and what they did upon earth in his name, and according to his will and word, he engages to ratify in heaven. And this is particularly addressed to Peter, as being appointed to be the first preacher of the Gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and as the honour conferred upon him for the glorious confession which he had made.

7. He strictly charges his disciples to conceal at present what they knew of his divine person and character: and this for many reasons; because his hour was not yet come, and such declarations would exasperate the Pharisees to destroy him, alarm the government, and occasion an insurrection among the people, big with the hopes of a temporal Messiah: besides that they were to be better furnished, after his resurrection, with greater abilities for their work, and fuller evidence of the truth in their own souls, and for the conviction of others.

4thly, To check the aspiring hopes which his own disciples foolishly entertained concerning the nature of his kingdom, he begins to inform them of the sufferings that he must undergo: and *from that time*, when their faith appeared more or less established in him, inculcated this mortifying lesson, as they were able to bear it. Christ's method is to let us into the knowledge of his truth by degrees: it might utterly have staggered them; if they had known at first all the discouragements with which they were afterwards to meet.

1. He foretels his sufferings and death, (strange tidings to their ears!) the scene of which would be in Jerusalem, the holy city; and the instruments, the most admired characters, the elders, chief priests, and Scribes, who by their office and profession should have been the first to receive and honour him as the Messiah: but withal he informs them, to support their hopes, that the third day he should rise again.

2. Peter, still the foremost to speak, though now as faulty as he had been before commendable, could not bear to hear of his death and sufferings, and therefore had the boldness to take him aside and expostulate with him, expressing his displeasure at what he had heard, his abhorrence of the thought of it, and his presumption that it was impossible the Messiah should thus suffer, and the Son of the living God be put to death. *Note;* (1.) Our hearts

G g.

hear ye him.

6 And when the disciples heard it they

fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and

<sup>8</sup> Exod. 23. 21. Deut. 18. 15—18. Acts, 3. 22, 23. Heb. 2. 9. & 12. 25, 26. *i. e.* instead of all the prophets.

20, 22. Dan. 8. 18. & 10. 9, 15.

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 8. 18. & 9. 21. & 10. 10, 18.

Rev. 1. 17. 16. 41. 10.

<sup>a</sup> Num. 24. 5. & 16. 22. Judg. 13.

hearts ill bear commendation; like Peter, we are too apt to presume upon it. (2.) How intricate soever God's ways may appear, and his dispensations however painful to us, it is not for us to question the rectitude of his procedure, or pretend to be wiser than he: submission and silence are our bounden duty. (3.) Our corrupt nature ever shrinks from the cross with abhorrence. Had Christ thus started back from it, what had become of us?

3. With a sharp rebuke the Lord testifies his displeasure against Peter. *He turned, with sternness in his look, and said unto Peter, in the hearing of the twelve, Get thee behind me, Satan; be gone: thou speakest under his influence: and this pretended kindness implies real enmity. Thou art an offence, or hinderance to me, opposing the great end for which I came into the world: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, dost not relish the contrivance of infinite wisdom, for the manifestation of his own glory, and the redemption of sinners, by my sufferings, but those that be of men, expecting in the Messiah a temporal monarch, and influenced by the hopes of worldly wealth, power, and honour.* Note: (1.) We may find often as dangerous snares in the false kindness of our friends as in the avowed enmity of our foes. (2.) If any one would dissuade us upon any pretence from the path of duty, we must reject the advice with abhorrence, and rebuke him with severity. (3.) Maxims of carnal policy, and desire of earthly ease and honour, are strangely apt to insinuate themselves even into good men, and disincline them from taking up that cross which God hath appointed them. We have need of constant jealousy over our hearts, lest, imitating Peter's conduct in the present instance, we should meet with his rebuke.

4thly, As he had foretold to them the sufferings that himself must endure, he forewarns them also to expect the like treatment, and advertises them that only thus bearing his cross they could be truly his disciples.

1. He plainly sets before them the terms of discipleship; very different from what their national prejudices suggested. *If any man will come after me, a volunteer in my service, and choosing it with all the trials which for my sake he may be exposed to endure, let him deny himself, his own will and wisdom, his pride and self-righteousness, his carnal lusts and appetites, his worldly honour, ease, and advantage, and whatever else would tend to clog, retard, or turn him back from my service; and let him take up his cross, cheerfully submitting to every providential affliction, and ready to expose himself in the way of duty to persecutions, losses, reproaches, sufferings, yea, even to death itself, if need be, for my sake, and the open and avowed profession of my name: and let him follow me in all humility, patience, faith, perseverance, steadfast and unmoveable in the work of the Lord, whether to do or suffer according to his holy will. Hard terms for flesh and blood! Indeed we must have more than human ability,*

or they would be impracticable. Note: (1.) Self-denial is the first lesson of Christ's school. (2.) There never yet was a Christian without his cross. Far therefore from being discouraged by what we suffer, we should rather conclude our real discipleship from this conformity to our Lord. (3.) It becomes us however to take care that the cross we bear is the cross of Christ; and not what our own wilfulness or sins have brought upon us.

2. Christ suggests the most powerful arguments to engage us with steadiness and cheerfulness to embrace his proposal.

[1.] An eternity of happiness or misery depends on our present choice and conduct. Whoever by base and sinful compliances with a world which lieth in wickedness, would screen himself from sufferings and death, takes the direct method to destroy for ever the life that he thus seeks to preserve: while he who with unshaken fidelity, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, is ready to endure the loss of all things, and even of life itself, rather than dishonour his profession, or betray the cause in which he is engaged,—this man shall in eternity be unspeakably a gainer, and effectually secure the life that he thus bravely dares to part with. We must therefore weigh time against eternity, and, under the influences of realizing faith, shall not hesitate a moment, whether we shall suffer with Christ that we may reign with him, or, prolonging a momentary existence by our cowardice, perish everlastingly.

[2.] Our immortal souls are at stake, infinitely more valuable than ten thousand worlds. Admit that we should, by complying with the world, gain all that it has to bestow, wallow in its wealth, riot in its pleasures, or rise to the pinnacle of earthly grandeur, yet if this be purchased by the loss of our souls for ever, driven from the presence of God, and consigned to everlasting torment, how inconceivably foolish will this bargain shortly appear, and how irreparable the damage? since, had a man millions of gold and silver, yea, worlds unnumbered, to bestow, they would in God's account be lighter in the balances than vanity itself; yea, would be less than nothing, if proffered in exchange to redeem but one soul from death eternal.

Note: (1.) The value of the soul and the vanity of the world should be the subjects of our frequent meditation. (2.) How many thousands are daily bartering their souls for the most miserable pittance of this world's honours, gain, and pleasures! and yet so has the God of this world blinded them, that they will not see the folly, the madness of their pursuits. (3.) A soul lost, is lost for ever; there is no redemption in the grave. (4.) There is but one sufficient price to redeem the soul from death, and that is the blood of Christ; and all other things for this purpose are in God's account as dung and dross.

[3.] The rewards of eternal glory will infinitely compensate all the sufferings of this present time. This is a perishing world; the end of all things is at hand; the Judge is at the door; the Son of man shall come in all the

said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And when they had lifted up their eyes

they saw no man, save Jesus only.

9 And as they came down from the moun-

the glory of Divinity with his angelic guards around his throne of judgment, and then will he dispense his rewards according to men's works; when the faithful shall receive the eternal glory, honour, and immortality, which he has promised; and the wicked, the worldling and apostates, the wages of their iniquity in eternal torment. *Note*; To live under the constant expectation of this great day, is the best means of strengthening us against every trial that we may be called to encounter.

[4.] As an especial argument to secure their fidelity, Christ assures them, that some there present, before their death, should see the glory of the Messiah's kingdom begun, in his resurrection from the dead, the out-pouring of his Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the spreading of his Gospel, and the destruction of the Jewish state and nation, their bitterest persecutors, which would be an emblem of the final perdition of all ungodly men in the day of judgment.

C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 1. And after six days*] That is, about six days if we reckon exclusively, and about eight days if we reckon inclusively, after our Lord had accepted the title of Messiah. See Luke, ix. 28. who has it, *about eight days after*. The two accounts differ only, as if one should say, that Christ appeared to his disciples *after his death*, another *after his resurrection*: the connection with the end of the former chapter must be attended to here, as in many other places. Heylin. Tradition has generally conferred the honour of the transfiguration on mount *Tabor*, famed in ancient history for the victory which Deborah and Barak gained over Sisera, Judges, iv. 14. Reland observes, that this tradition took its rise from Mark, ix. 2. where it is said, that Jesus carried Peter, James, and John into a high mountain *apart by themselves*. It seems the original words *κατ' ιδίαν*, apart, were thought to describe the position of the mountain; and because *Tabor* is very high, and stands in the plain of *Esdraon*, at a distance from other hills, they thought it could be said of no other mountain so properly, that it is *an high mountain by itself*. Hence the tradition of our Lord's being transfigured on this mountain might arise; especially as this mountain is not only high, but verdant also, and woody, and of a beautiful regular form; nevertheless the whole account determines the transfiguration to some mountain not far from *Caesarea Philippi*, rather than to *Tabor*, which was situated in the south of Galilee: for after the transfiguration, when Jesus had cured an epileptic who was also possessed by a demon, it is said, Mark, ix. 30. that they departed and passed through Galilee, and then to *Capernaum*. Now it is not very probable that the Evangelist would in this manner have related our Lord's journey from the mount of transfiguration to *Capernaum*, if that mountain had been in Galilee, the region in which *Capernaum* stood, especially if, as the continuators of *Chemnitz's Harmony* affirm, the word *καταπευσεσθαι* signifies *to pass through quickly, secretly, and as it were in a journey*:

yet, upon the faith of the tradition mentioned above, the Christians very early built a monastery and church on the top of *Tabor*, which, according to the account of travellers, spreads itself into an ample plain, surrounded with a wood. The church was dedicated to Jesus, and his two attendants *Moses* and *Elias*; and from 2 Peter, i. 18. they call the mountain itself *the Holy Mount*. Our Lord admitted to the singular honour of his transfiguration Peter his most zealous, James his most active, and John his most beloved disciple. It was necessary that this remarkable occurrence should be supported by sufficient evidence: hence it was that three of the disciples were chosen, because so many witnesses were required to establish a fact by the Jews; and no more were chosen, because this number was sufficient. Besides this reason for electing these three persons in particular, we may add, that Peter was the most sanguine and the most forward speaker among the apostles, that James was the first martyr, and that John, being the survivor of all the other Apostles, gave a sanction to this record, as it is most probable that he had a sight of all the other Gospels, and likewise confirmed it by his personal testimony as long as he lived. See Macknight, *Renald's Palæst. Illust. lib. 1. and Maundrell's Journey*, p. 112.

*Ver. 2. And was transfigured before them*] The word *μεταμορφωθη* implies either that there was a transfiguration made on the substance of his body, according to the import of the word in the best classic writers; (See Phil. iii. 21.) or that the outward appearance only of his body was altered, as seems most probable from the manner in which St. Luke has expressed it. In this transfiguration the face of Jesus became radiant and dazzling; for it shone like the sun in its unclouded meridian clearness, and so was incomparably more glorious than the face of Moses at the giving of the law: at the same time his garments acquired a snowy whiteness bright as light, and sweetly resplendent, but in a degree inferior to the radiancy of his countenance. Thus for a little while, during the state of his humiliation, the Son of God permitted the glory of his divinity to break forth, as it were, and shine through the veil of his human nature with which it was covered. See Macknight and Calmet.

*Ver. 3. And behold, there appeared—Moses and Elias*] See Luke, ix. 30., &c. respecting the remainder of this transfiguration.

*Ver. 8. And when they had lifted up their eyes, &c.*] This transfiguration of our Lord was intended for several important purposes. About six days before it happened, Jesus had predicted his own sufferings and death; at the same time, to prevent his disciples from being dejected by the melancholy prospect, as well as from falling into despair when the dismal scene should open, he told them; that though in appearance he was nothing but a man, and affliction was generally to be the lot of his disciples, he would come hereafter in great glory as universal Judge, and render unto every man according to his deeds, ch. xvi. 27, 28. And for proof of this he declared, that *some of*

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themselves

tain Jesus \* charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

10 ¶ And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that <sup>1</sup> Elias must first come?

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, <sup>2</sup> Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things:

12 But I say unto you, that Elias is

come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed: <sup>3</sup> likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

14 ¶ And when they were come to the multitude there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15 <sup>4</sup> Lord, have mercy on my son: for he

\* Luke, 9. 21, 22. Mark, 8. 30. & 9. 9. Ch. 16. 20. & 9. 30. & 12. 16. If. 42. 2. John, 5. 41. & 7. 18. & 8. 50. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 11. 14. Mark, 9. 11. Mal. 4. 5. & 3. 1. If. 40. 3. <sup>2</sup> Ch. iii. & 11. 2—18. & 14. 3—12. & 21. 24, 25. Mark, 1. 2—9. & 6. 16—29. Luke, i. iii. John, 1. 6—76. & 3. 23—36. & 5. 33—35. Luke, 16. 16, 17. <sup>3</sup> Ch. 16. 21. Luke, 9. 21, 22, 44. & 18. 31. If. 50. 6. & 52. 14. & liii. Pf. xxii. lxxv. <sup>4</sup> Mark, 9. 14—30. Luke, 9. 37—45. Pf. 50. 15. Hof. 5. 15. <sup>5</sup> Ch. 15. 22. Luke, 18. 13. Pf. 6. 2—4. Mark, 9. 18.

themselves should not taste of death till they saw him coming in his kingdom; saw a lively representation of the glory which he spake of, and were witnesses to the extent of his power as judge, on his enemies, the unbelieving Jews, who were to be punished by him with the most terrible destruction that ever befel any nation. The first article of his promise he fulfilled by the transfiguration, wherein he gives three of his Apostles both a visible representation, and also a clear proof of the glory in which he will come to judgment. That this was one principal end of the transfiguration, and of the voice from heaven which attended it, we learn from St. Peter, who urges both, to demonstrate the certainty of Christ's coming: 2 Epist. i. 16—18. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And this voice which came from heaven, we heard when we were with him in the holy mount.*—Nevertheless, other purposes might likewise have been served by the transfiguration: as, 1. The conference which our Lord had with Moses and Elias, concerning the sufferings that he was to meet with in Jerusalem, might animate him to encounter them with resolution, and make his disciples sensible how agreeable it was to the doctrine of Moses and the Prophets, that the Messiah should be evil-intreated and die, before he entered into glory.—2. The appearing of these two great men, so long after they had gone into the invisible world, was a sensible proof and a clear example of the immortality of the soul, very necessary in those times, when the opinion of the Sadducees was so prevalent.—3. To find Moses and Elias assisting Jesus in the new dispensation, must have given great satisfaction to the converted Jews, and particularly the Apostles, who thus could not doubt that the Gospel was the completion and perfection of the law. For had it not been so, Moses, the giver of the law, and Elias, who with a flaming zeal had maintained it in times of the greatest corruption, would not have appeared on earth to encourage Jesus in his design of setting it aside.—4. The three Apostles were allowed to be witnesses of their Master's glory in the mountain, that they might not be offended by the depth of affliction into which they in par-

ticular were soon to see him plunged.—5. The transfiguration demonstrated, that all the sufferings befalling Jesus, were on his part perfectly voluntary, it being as easy to deliver himself from dying, as to have adorned himself with celestial glory.—6. The glory with which our Lord's body was adorned in the transfiguration, exhibited a specimen of the beauty and perfection of the glorified bodies of the saints after their resurrection. This the Apostle intimates, Philip. iii. 21. *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* It is also intimated by St. Luke: for although the glory of Moses and Elias at the transfiguration was vastly inferior to that of Jesus, he says expressly, that they appeared in glory; not because they appeared in heaven, but because they appeared in glorified bodies, like to those which the saints shall have in heaven. There can be no doubt of this, with respect to Elias, for his body was changed and fitted for immortality when he was translated; and as for Moses, though he had not his own body, he might have one formed for the occasion. See Macknight.

[*Ver. 9. And as they came down, &c.*] Jesus and his disciples having been in the mountain all night, (See Luke, ix. 37.) the transfiguration may be supposed to have happened either in the day-time, or in the night: that it happened in the night-time is probable, from the disciples falling asleep while Jesus prayed; a circumstance which could hardly happen by day to all the three, and in the open air. Next morning, as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged the Apostles to conceal what they had seen, till he should arise from the dead. He knew that the world, and even his own disciples, were not yet capable of comprehending the design of his transfiguration, nor of the appearance of Moses and Elias; and that if this transaction had been published before his resurrection, it might have appeared incredible, because nothing hitherto but afflictions and persecution had attended him. See Macknight, and for an explication of the following verses, the note on Mark, ix. 10, &c.

[*Ver. 11. Elias truly, &c.*] True, Elias was to come first, and to set all things right: ver. 12. *But I tell you, &c.*

[*Ver. 15. For he is lunatic*] Σαδννίαζεται. The English word *lunatic* always implies *madness*; but the Greek word

is lunatic, and fore vexed: for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16 And <sup>9</sup> I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, <sup>1</sup> O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you! bring him hither to me.

18 <sup>1</sup> And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

19 <sup>1</sup> Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

20 And Jesus said unto them, <sup>2</sup> Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, <sup>3</sup> If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and <sup>4</sup> nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by <sup>5</sup> prayer and fasting.

<sup>9</sup> Mark, 9. 14—16. Luke, 9. 40. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 6. 30. & 8. 26. & 14. 31. & 16. 8. & 13. 58. Heb. 3. 12, 10. & 4. 2. <sup>2</sup> Ch. 4. 24. & 9. 33. & 12. 22. <sup>3</sup> Acts, 10. 38. Mark, 9. 20—27. Luke, 9. 42. <sup>4</sup> Mark, 9. 28. Ch. 11. 10. 56. & 15. 15. <sup>5</sup> Ch. 13. 58. & 6. 30. See ver. 1. <sup>6</sup> Luke, 17. 6. Ch. 21. 21. Mark, 11. 23. 1 Cor. 13. 2. <sup>7</sup> Ch. 21. 22. Mark. 9. 23. <sup>8</sup> Eph. 6. 18. 2 Cor. 12. 7, 8. 1 Kings, 17. 20, 21. 2 Kings, 11. 4, 33, 34.

is applied to any disease which is under the influence of the moon, such as the *epilepsy*, which seems to have been the distemper wherewith this man's son was afflicted by the power of the demon which possessed him. See also for this history the parallel places in St. Mark and Luke, who relate it more circumstantially than St. Matthew.

*Ver. 20. Because of your unbelief*] When the disciples were come with our Lord, they asked him the reason why they could not cast out that particular demon; to which he replies, *because of your unbelief*.—"Knowing that you doubted whether I could enable you to cast out this demon, I ordered it so, that he would not go out at your command, for a reproach of the weakness of your faith." We may observe that the disciples had attempted to cast him out. To encourage them, our Lord describes to them the efficacy of the faith of miracles; *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, &c.* If you have but the least degree of the faith of miracles, you may say to the vast mountain whence we just now came down, Move thyself, and go to some other place, and it shall obey you. Ye shall by that faith be able to accomplish the most difficult things, in all cases where the glory of God and the good of his church are concerned. It is certain that the faith which is here spoken of may subsist without saving faith: Judas had it, and so had many, who thereby cast out devils, and yet will at last have their portion with them. It is only a supernatural persuasion given to a man that God will work miracles by him at that hour. Now, though I have all this faith so as to remove mountains, yet if I have not the faith which worketh by love, I am nothing. Not only the persons on whom the power of working miracles was bestowed, were obliged to have faith likewise, in order to the exercise of that power; but it was a different kind of faith from that which was necessary in the subject of the miracles. For it consisted, *first*, in a just and high notion of the divine power, by which the miracle was to be effected: *secondly*, as we observed, in a firm persuasion that the miracle was to be wrought at that particular time. Now this persuasion was to spring from a two-fold source: 1. A consciousness of the power which Christ had conferred on them when he ordained them his Apostles: 2. It was to arise

from a sensible impression made upon their minds by the Spirit of God, signifying to them that a miracle was to be performed at that time. Accordingly, the Apostles, and such of the first Christians as were afterwards honoured with the power of miracles, never attempted to exercise it without feeling an impression of this kind; as is plain from St. Paul's leaving Trophimus at Miletum, sick.—Wherefore as the nine had, in all probability, attempted to cure the youth spoken of in this account, and had made the attempt with some degree of doubtfulness, it is no wonder that they were unsuccessful. To *remove mountains* is a proverbial expression, which signifies the doing of any thing seemingly impossible, as we may learn from Zech. iv. 7. When the Jews had a mind to extol any of their doctors, they were used to say of him *that he plucked up mountains by the roots*. In this description of the efficacy of faith, there is a beautiful contrast between the smallness of a grain of mustard seed, to which their faith is compared, and the vast size of the mountain that was to be removed thereby. Dr. Heylin finely remarks, "All inanimate nature is passive to Deity, and therefore infallibly executes what it is designed for. When faith is consummate in the human nature, that becomes alike susceptible of the divine energy."

*Ver. 21. This kind goeth not out, &c.*] Prayer and fasting could have no relation to the ejection of demons, but so far only as they had a tendency to increase the faith of miracles in him who had that power formerly conferred upon him. For example, *prayer*, by impressing a man's mind with a more intimate sense that all things whatsoever depend upon the infinite and incomprehensible power of God, raises his idea of that power to a greater sublimity than can be done in the way of ordinary speculation. And as for *fasting*, by weakening the animal life, it subdues such passions as are nourished by continual repletion of body. Hence *fasting* has a tendency to free the mind from the dominion of passion, which never fails to occasion a great inward perturbation, and at times has been found to make even holy men inattentive, at least to the more silent impressions of God's Spirit. *Fasting* therefore produces an inward quietness and calm, very favourable to the growth of faith.

*Ver. 22.*

22 ¶ And while they abode in Galilee Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men :

23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And <sup>b</sup> they were exceeding sorry.

24 ¶ And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received <sup>c</sup> tribute-money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute ?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house Jesus prevented him, saying,

What thinkest thou, Simon ? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute ? of their own children, or of strangers ?

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should <sup>d</sup> offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up : and, when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find \* a piece of money : that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 20. 17. 18. & 16. 21. Mark, 9. 31. & 8. 31. & 10. 33. Luke, 9. 22. 44. & 18. 31. & 24. 26. John, 2. 19. & 10. 18. & 19. 11. Acts, 2. 23. 1 Cor. 15. 4. 1f. liii. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 26. 22. John, 16. 6, 20. <sup>c</sup> Gr. *Didrachma*, in value fifteen-pence. This appears to be a payment to the Romans rather than for the temple-service. Exod. 30. 13. & 38. 26. <sup>d</sup> 1 John, 2. 10. 1 Cor. 10. 32. Rom. 14. 13. & 13. 7. \* Or a *stater*: It is half an ounce of silver, in value two shillings and sixpence, after five shillings the ounce.

*Ver. 22. And while they abode in Galilee*] It should seem that the wonder of the disciples was accompanied with proportionably high expectations of happiness in that temporal kingdom, which they were now convinced Jesus could easily erect. Our Lord, knowing this, thought fit when they came to Galilee, the country where he had the greatest train of followers, to moderate his disciples' ambition, not only by concealing himself for awhile, forbearing to preach and work miracles as he returned through Galilee, but also by predicting a third time his own sufferings and death. Upon this *they were exceeding sorry*, taking no comfort from the mention that he made of his resurrection: the prediction concerning his death raised such fears in their minds, that they durst not ask him to explain it; especially as they remembered that he had often inculcated it, and reprimanded Peter for being unwilling to hear it.

*Ver. 24. And when they were come to Capernaum*] Josephus has expressly asserted, that each of the Jews used yearly to pay a didrachma, or half shekel, the piece of money here mentioned, and in value about fifteen-pence of our currency, to the service of the temple, (See *Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 9.*) a custom which probably took its rise from the demand of that sum from each of the Israelites when they were numbered, Exod. xxx. 13. Thus Casaubon, Hammond, and many other great critics, understood it. It was gathered every year through all their cities; and, as it should seem from the manner of the collectors' making the demand, was a voluntary thing, which custom rather than law had established. See Neh. x. 32. Beza is of opinion, that it was the poll-tax levied by the Romans, after Judaea was reduced into the form of a province, (see Ch. xxii. 17.) and which Agrippa Major, in the reign of Claudius, remitted to the Jews. If this was the tribute which the collectors demanded of Peter, the import of their question was this: "Is your master of the sect of Judas of Galilee, whose opinion is, that taxes should be paid to no foreign power?" They demanded the tribute for Jesus from Peter, either because the house in which Jesus lived was his, or because they observed him to

be more forward than the rest, or because none of them were with him at that time but Peter. See Macknight.

*Ver. 25—27. He saith, Yes*] Peter told the collectors, that his Master would pay tribute, and consequently, made a sort of promise to procure it for them; yet when he considered the matter more minutely, he was afraid to speak to the Messiah concerning his paying taxes upon any pretences whatever. In the mean time, Jesus knowing both what had happened, and what was turning in Peter's thoughts, saved him the pain of introducing the discourse: *Jesus prevented him, saying, what thinkest thou, Simon, &c.* hereby insinuating, that because he was the Son of the Great King, to whom heaven, earth, and sea, and all things in them belong, he was not obliged to pay tribute, as not holding any thing by a derived right from any king whatever. Or if, as is more probable, the contribution was made for the service and reparation of the temple, his meaning was, that being the Son of Him to whom the tribute was paid, he could justly have excused himself. Nevertheless, that he might not give offence, He sent Peter to the lake, with a line and a hook, telling him, that in the mouth of the first fish that came he should find a *stater*, a Grecian piece of money so called, equal in value to two *didrachma*, or one *shekel* of Jewish money, the sum required for himself and for Peter. There can be no reason to suppose, with some commentators, that the piece of money was created on this occasion; but if the fish had accidentally swallowed it, perhaps as it was falling into the water near some other prey, one cannot forbear remarking how illustrious a degree of knowledge and power our Lord discovers in the event before us. Jesus chose to provide the tribute-money by miracle, either because the disciple who carried the bag was absent, or because he had not so much money as was necessary. Farther, he chose to provide it by this particular miracle rather than any other, because it was of such a kind as to demonstrate that he was the Son of the Great Monarch worshipped in the temple, and who rules the universe. Wherefore, in this very manner of paying the tax, he shewed Peter that he was free from all taxes; and at the same time gave his followers

CHAP. XVIII.

*Christ warneth his disciples to be humble and harmless, to avoid offences, and not to despise the little ones: teacheth how we are to deal with our brethren when they offend us, and how often to forgive them; which he setteth forth by a parable of the king, who took account of his servants, and punished him who showed no mercy to his fellow.*

[Anno Domini 31.]

**A**T the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,

5 And whoso shall receive one such little

\* Mark, 9. 33—37. Luke, 9. 46—48. Ch. 20. 21—24. Mark, 10. 42. Luke, 22. 24—27. Ch. 19. 14. Pl. 34. 11. & 45. 10. Prov. 8. 17. & 23. 26. Ch. 19. 14. Luke, 18. 17. 1 Cor. 14. 20. 1 Peter, 2. 1, 2. John, 3. 3-5. 2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15. Esck. 11. 19. & 36. 26. Pl. 131. 2. & 138. 6. Ch. 20. 26. & 23. 11. If. 57. 15. & 66. 2. Luke, 9. 48. & 14. 11. Ch. 10. 40. & 25. 40, 45.

followers this useful lesson, that in matters which affect their property in a smaller degree, it is better to recede somewhat from their just rights, than by stubbornly insisting on them to offend their brethren, or disturb the state. Instead of *strangers*, ver. 25, 26. Dr. Campbell reads *others*. We postpone the *Inferences* on the transfiguration, and the cure of the lunatic, to the other Evangelists, and subjoin here *Inferences* on our Lord's payment of the tribute-money.

*Inferences.*—All the other histories set forth the power of Christ; this shews both his power and obedience; his power over the creature, his obedience to the civil authority. Capernaum was one of his own cities: to his host therefore the collectors repair for the tribute. *Doth not your master, say they, pay tribute?* All Capernaum knew that Christ was a great prophet; his doctrine had delighted them, his miracles had astonished them; yet when it comes to a money matter, his share is as deep as the rest. Questions of profit admit no difference: and whatever reverence may be challenged by the sacred tribe, who cares how little they receive, how much they pay? Yet no man knows with what mind this demand was made, whether in a churlish grudging at Christ's immunity, or in an awful address to the *servant*, rather than the *master*.

Peter had a ready answer at hand; I do not hear him require them to stay till he should go in, and learn his Master's resolution; but as one well acquainted with the mind and practice of his Lord, he answers, *Yes; Peter well knowing that he not only gave but preached tribute.* When the Herodians had laid snares for him, supposing that so great a prophet would be for insisting on the liberty and exemption of God's chosen people, he repels their artifices in their own way, and tells them that the stamp argued the *right*,—*Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.* O Saviour! if thou by whom kings reign didst not withhold the payment of tribute, what power under thee can deny it to those who rule for thee?

The demand was made without doors; but no sooner is Peter come in, than he is prevented by his Master's question, *What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom, &c.* The very interrogation was a sufficient answer to his intended inquiry. He who could thus know the heart was certainly, by true right, liable to no human exaction. But

O Saviour! may I presume to ask, What this is to thee? Thou hast said, *my kingdom is not of this world*; how then does it concern thee what is done by the *kings of the earth*, or imposed upon the sons of earthly kings? Thou wouldst be the son of a humble virgin, and choos'dst not a royal but a servile state; but it is thy divine royalty and Sonship which thou here justly urgest. Hence the argument is irrefragable: "If the kings of the earth do so privilege their children, that they are free from all tributes and impositions, how much more shall the King of heaven give this immunity to his only Son? So that in true reason I might claim an exemption for me and my train."

Our Saviour was free, and yet would not urge that freedom. He was free by natural right, yet he would not be so by voluntary dispensation, *lest an offence might be taken.* Surely, had there followed an offence, it had been taken only, and not given; *Woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh!* It cometh by him who gives it; it cometh by him who takes it when it is not given; no part therefore of this censure could have cleaved unto our Lord either way: yet such was his goodness, that he would not suffer an offence even to be *unjustly taken* at that which he might justly have denied. We may hence learn *that meekness of wisdom*, which will teach us to seek the interest of others rather than our own, and to consider how we may edify mankind by the abundance of our good works, rather than how we may excuse ourselves in the omission of any.

To avoid the unjust offence even of publicans, Jesus will work a miracle. What would not one of a loving spirit do for peace? Any thing surely, which is not expressly forbidden in the word of God. Peter is sent to the lake, and that not with a net but with a hook: he knew a net might enclose many fishes: a hook could take but one. The disciple was now in his own trade: with that hook he must go and angle for the tribute-money! a fish shall bring him a *stater* in his mouth, and that fish which bites first. What an unusual *bearer* is here! What an unlikely element to yield a piece of ready coin! I adore thine infinite knowledge and power, O Saviour! which could make use of the unlikelyest means, and serve thyself of the very fishes of the sea, in a business of earthly and civil employment. Thy *knowledge*, in penetrating into the bowels

child in my name receiveth me.

6 But whoso shall offend one of these

little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about

<sup>f</sup> Mark, c. 42. Luke, 17. 1, 2. Ch. 25. 41—46. <sup>a</sup> T. ch. 1. 6—9. Zeck. 2. 3. Ezek. xxv. xxxv.

bowels of this animal, though in the sea; thy power, in directing the very fish to Peter's hook, though thou thyself wert at a distance! how must this have encouraged both Peter and his brethren in a firm dependence on the Divine Providence!

It was not out of need that our Saviour did this: what veins of gold and mines of silver lay open to his command! but out of a desire to instruct Peter, that, while he would be tributary to Cæsar, the very fishes of the sea were tributaries to him. How should this encourage our dependence on that omnipotent hand of the Saviour, which hath heaven, earth, and sea at his disposal! still he is the same for us his members, as he was for himself the head: rather than offences shall be given to the world, by a seeming neglect of his dear children, he will cause the very fowls of heaven to bring them meat, and the fishes of the sea to bring them money. O let us then ever look up to Him by the eye of our faith, and not be wanting in our dependence on Him who cannot be wanting in his providential care of us.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As Christ had so lately spoken of the Son of man's coming in his kingdom, he here gives them a glimpse of his glory on the mount of transfiguration. We are told,

1. When and where this happened, and who were the spectators. It was six days after the former discourse before recorded; or, according to St. Luke, about eight, he taking in the day the discourse passed, and that on which the transfiguration happened; but the other evangelists only mentioned the intervening space of time. The place was the top of a mountain apart, whither he had retired for prayer, with three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, whom he was pleased to favour with the glorious vision, the lively impression of which dwelt long after on their minds. See 2-Pet. i. 16—18.

2. The manner of his transfiguration. As he was praying, Luke, ix. 29. the glory of the Divinity burst forth, and he who bore the form of a servant suddenly appeared in the form of God, Phil. ii. 6. His face as the sun shining in its strength, dazzled the beholders with its transcendent lustre, and such bright beams darted from his glorified body, that, surrounded with irradiation, his very raiment glittered, and became white as the light—An awful pleasing sight! Happy the favoured souls who then beheld him! and yet far happier they who shall with open face behold him on the mount of God, and be changed into the same image, fashioned like to his glorious body.

3. The attendants who waited on him, Moses and Elias. They too appeared in glory, known probably to the disciples by immediate revelation, or by the conversation they heard, which we are told, Luke, ix. 31. respected Christ's suffering and death at Jerusalem.

4. Overwhelmed with wonder and delight, Peter, the ready spokesman for his brethren, expresses the exulting rapture of his heart, and wishes for the continuance of

the glorious vision. Fain would he for ever there fix his abode, and, with a mixture of commendable piety and inconsiderate weakness, proposes to make three booths, where Christ with his celestial visitants might dwell; scarce knowing what he said through the transport of his mind. *Note;* (1.) They who have ever known experimentally the sweetness of communion with Jesus, and have by faith beheld some of his glory, long to maintain the delightful intercourse; for it is good to be with him. (2.) The place to enjoy Christ's visits is not in the busy world, or gay circle, but in retirement, meditation, and prayer: in this mount of the Lord he may still be seen.

5. A bright cloud, at the instant Peter spoke, overshadowed them, the emblem of the Divine presence; and from the excellent glory issued forth the voice of God the Father proclaiming the dignity, excellence, and acceptableness of his dear Son Jesus, and enjoining on them solemn attention to all his words: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* Where we may observe, (1.) That this was a repetition of what had been declared at Christ's baptism, containing the grand truth on which our everlasting hopes depend, that God is well pleased with the undertaking of Jesus, and is in him reconciling sinners to himself, satisfied with his substitution on their behalf, and therefore not imputing their trespasses unto them. (2.) There never has appeared but one person under the sun concerning whom God could fully say, In him I am well pleased, and that was his own Son. Him therefore we must hear, since only by and through him can God be well pleased with us: the infinite merit of his righteous obedience unto the death of the cross must be alone our trust; his word of gospel-grace our constant rule, his will our duty and delight. Lord, speak thou to my heart, that I may thus hear thee!

6. Terrified with the appearance of the Divine Majesty, and trembling at the voice of God, the disciples prostrated themselves on the earth in silent adoration, conscious of their own vileness, and afraid to lift up their eyes before the holy Lord God. But Jesus kindly approached and quieted their fears, encouraged them to arise, and bid them not be afraid; the voice which they had heard was not that of an angry God, but of the Father of mercies; not speaking out of the thick darkness, as on Mount Sinai, the demands of an inexorable law, but, out of the bright cloud of Gospel light and love, publishing salvation, and pointing them to a Redeemer. *Note;* (1.) It is through the infinite merit of Christ alone that we can with boldness approach the throne of God. (2.) Jesus is the comforter of his afflicted people; and when we are dismayed under what we feel or fear, and ready to sink down in despair, his words of consolation revive our drooping heads, and embolden us to look up.

7. Rising at the command of Jesus, when they looked around the vision had disappeared, and Moses and Elias were gone. Jesus however still remained with them in his usual form as before his transfiguration. *Note;* If Christ



his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 ¶ Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences

• Luke, 17. 1. • Cor. 11. 19. • Thef. 2. 11, 12. with ver. 8, 9. Ch. 3. 29, 30. & 26. 24.

Christ remain with us, we can easily rest content with the loss of any thing besides.

8. He charged them as they came down from the mount, to take no notice of the vision they had seen, but reserve it till his resurrection from the dead, when that would add credibility to their report, which now, considering the state of sufferings which was before him, might be disbelieved and rejected.

9. A difficulty arose in the disciples' minds; revolving what had passed; the short stay that Elias made; and the injunctions of secrecy laid upon them; why it should be so often inculcated by the scribes that Elias must first come, publicly ushering in the appearing of the Messiah; and this question they begged their Master to resolve: which he does to their full satisfaction. He tells them, it was true that Elias must be the forerunner of the Messiah, as was prophesied, Mal. iv. 5, 6. and by his preaching *refore all things*, preach the doctrine of repentance, and direct the people to him who comes to make all things new. But this had already been fulfilled; there had appeared one in the spirit and power of Elias, whom they knew not as the person meant by the prophesy; and him the scribes and Pharisees in general had rejected, and treated with contempt: and Herod had murdered him. And as they had persecuted to death the messenger, so would they deal by the Master, that *Son of man*, whose way he was led to prepare, who would suffer the like indignities, cruelty, and death itself, by their hands: *Note*; (1.) When we do not thoroughly understand any passage of Scripture, we must go to Christ on our knees, and shall find prayer the best means of arriving at all necessary truth. (2.) If we be treated with insult and cruelty by the world, let it not be thought strange; we are compassed with a great cloud of witnesses who have trod the way before us. Lastly, the disciples now understood clearly what he meant, and that John the Baptist was the person to whom he pointed; and from the fulfilment of the prophesy in him, they received a fresh confirmation of their faith in Jesus, as the Christ.

adly, The next day, when Jesus, with the three disciples, returned from the mountain to the rest of their company and the people who waited for him, he found his presence greatly needed, and opportunely arrived to give a fresh display of his power and mercy.

1. An afflicted father addresses him on his knees, in behalf of his only son, possessed with a devil, a lunatic, and frequently seized with epileptic fits, in which he fell into the fire or water, which-ever he chanced to be near, to the great hazard of his life. In the absence of Christ he had applied in vain to the disciples, who were unable to cast out the evil spirit; so that, unless Jesus could help, the case was desperate. *Note*; (1.) Tender parents suffer in every pang which their children feel. (2.) Under all their diseases of body or soul, we must carry our children's miseries to Jesus, and at least commend them in prayer to him, when every other means and method fail.

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2. Christ compassionates the case, and bids the patient be brought to him; but he directs a sharp rebuke to that perverse and faithless generation the Scribes and Pharisees, and the people, who probably insulted the disciples on their failing in attempting the cure, and imagined this was a case which would baffle the Master's skill. Justly he upbraids them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, after all the miracles that he had wrought before them; and well might he refuse any longer to bear with their perverseness. Yet his patience waits, and he will give them fresh instances of his power, that at least they may be inexcusable in their rejecting him. *Note*; (1.) Nothing is so provoking to the Redeemer, as the perverseness and unbelief of those, to whom he has long vouchsafed the means of grace. (2.) Men's wickedness will not prevent the exercise of Christ's goodness; and if this lead them not to repentance, it will heap up wrath upon them against the day of wrath.

3. Jesus with a word dispossessed the devil, and the child immediately received a perfect cure. Before his authoritative command, Satan fell a vanquished foe; and by the word of Jesus, the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, shall we still triumph over the powers of darkness, and see the arch enemy of our souls bruised under our feet.

4. The disciples took the first opportunity, when alone, to inquire of their Master why they had failed in attempting the cure, and dispossessing the evil spirit; being concerned perhaps for their reputation among the people, or fearful lest they had provoked the Lord to withdraw that miraculous power which he had once bestowed upon them. *Note*; When we see ourselves baffled in contending with the powers of evil, it becomes us seriously to inquire how we came to fail, and by what means the fault may be amended.

5. Christ gives them a full answer: it was *their unbelief* which prevented the cure. While the multitude in general were *utterly* faithless, they were culpable in a *lesser measure*; for though they were not utterly destitute of faith, they had at this time failed in the exercise of it. For, else, the least measure of this miraculous faith, possessed and exerted, was sufficient to remove the mountain now before them, and to do whatever else should be needful to confirm the truth of their mission, and to promote the glory of God and the good of mankind, however to human view impossible: but this faith must be the fruit of earnest prayer and fasting, the means appointed of God for obtaining it. Some refer the words, *this kind*, not to faith, but to the devils, supposing some more difficult to be dispossessed than others, and considering this as another reason why they could not succeed. See the critical notes. *Note*; (1.) Whenever we fail in duty, and are foiled in temptation—to this we must ever ascribe it, it is *because of our unbelief*. (2.) Though we may not be classed with unbelievers, yet have we daily cause to lament the weakness of our faith. (3.) The faith of miracles has ceased; we

H b

cannot

come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

8<sup>b</sup> Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from

<sup>b</sup> See ch. 5. 29, 30. Mark, 9. 43—48. Deut. 13. 6. *i. e.* if what is very useful or dear to thee cause thee to sin, renounce, avoid, or mortify it.

cannot now say to this mountain, remove: but it is as great an instance of divine power, and requires as real an exercise of divine faith, to remove the mountains of guilt and corruption. And, blessed be the Lord, this faith remaineth in all the faithful people of God.

3dly, While they were journeying through Galilee, in their return to Capernaum, we are told,

1. That Jesus again took occasion to remind his disciples of the sufferings to which he must be delivered up through the treachery and malice of wicked men, who, thirsting for his blood, would murder him by the most cruel and ignominious death. See Luke, xxiv. 7. But for their comfort he added, that on the third day he should rise again.

2. His disciples appeared exceeding sorry, and deeply affected with what he told them. They did not understand what his rising again meant, and then all the rest appeared dark and dismal, and utterly contradictory to those opinions of the Messiah which they had entertained. *Note:* Through the darkness of our minds we suffer, needlessly, many a gloomy hour under afflictive providences. We do not look to their end, or understand how all these things are working together for our good: if we did, we should be always rejoicing.

4thly, The tribute mentioned ver. 24, &c. was probably the half shekel, about fifteen pence in value, which every Jew, above twenty years of age, paid annually to the temple for the maintenance of the service. See the notes.

1. The collectors of this tax applied to Peter, at whose house, probably, Jesus abode when at Capernaum, Chap. viii. 14. to know if his Master did not pay the usual tribute. And Peter, not doubting his Master's readiness to comply with the established law, answered in the affirmative.

2. Jesus prevented him, as he came to speak to him of the matter, with a question which shewed his omniscience, as being acquainted with the purpose of his coming, and the right he had to exemption, had he chosen to plead his privilege. *Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?* The answer was obvious: and Peter instantly replied, such taxes could be exacted from none but strangers, since to tax their own children would be absurd and useless. *Then,* said Jesus, *are the children free;* and consequently I, who am the Son of God, for the service of whose temple this tribute is levied, am excused from the payment of it. Nevertheless he waves his right, though so poor as to be unable, without a miracle, to furnish the pittance demanded; and, to avoid the appearance of offence to those who, not knowing his character, might be led to esteem him, if he had refused to pay, a despiser of the temple, and thereby might be prejudiced against his doctrine, he orders Peter to go to the sea, and, baiting his hook, to take up the first fish which came to it, in the mouth of which he would find a *later*, a piece of money of the value of a Jewish shekel,

which would just suffice to pay for both, and remove all occasion of offence. We may learn hence, (1.) The divine perfections which shone forth in Jesus during his humiliation. All creatures are under his controul, and subservient to his pleasure: he is acquainted with all that passes in the heart of man and in the depths of the sea; thus, even when in the form of a man, shewing still his divine power and Godhead. (2.) If Christ paid tribute, and submitted to the existing powers, who can plead a right to exemption? (3.) In many cases it is a Christian's duty to wave his title to what may be strictly his due, and even to suffer in his secular interests, rather than give offence, or prejudice any against the Gospel. We shall in the end be no losers by such self-denial. (4.) When Christ would work a miracle, Peter must use the appointed means; for it is in the way of diligence in duty, not in sloth, that we can expect a divine interposition in our behalf. (5.) When Christ could have furnished all his wants for ever, he chose just a sufficiency for the present emergence, and depended for a subsistence afterwards in the ordinary way; to teach us, if we have enough for to-day, to trust God for the morrow.

#### CHAP. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. At the same time came the disciples]* This chapter is connected with the two preceding; for after Christ had delivered the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, and had taken him up into the mountain with James and John, leaving the rest of his Apostles, these three seem to have exalted themselves above their colleagues, and to have been envied by them. In consequence of their ambition, they began to inquire which of them should hold the highest dignities under the Messiah? who should be his general, his privy counsellor, and his steward? (ch. xx. 21.) he who first embraced his doctrine? or he who is the nearest in blood to him? or he to whom he has been the most frequent guest? or he who is the eldest? And as St. Matthew treats more largely of this contention of the Apostles than the other Evangelists, he seems to insinuate that he was aimed at by the inquiry of his colleagues, and in some measure despised for the infamy of his former life; but that he was happily and fully vindicated and comforted by our Lord's answer. Wetstein.

*Ver. 2. Jesus called a little child]* See Luke, ix. 47. Mark, ix. 33., &c. To check the foolish emulation of his disciples, Jesus called a little child to him, and having set him in *the midst*, that they might consider him attentively, he shewed them, by the sweetness, docility, and modesty visible in its countenance, what the temper and dispositions of his disciples ought to be, and how dear to him persons of such dispositions are, though otherwise weak and infirm. Some are of opinion, that the child here mentioned was the celebrated St. Ignatius, who suffered martyrdom under the reign and by the command of Trajan. The method of instruction here used was agreeable to the

manner

thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And, if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather

than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

10 ¶ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven<sup>k</sup> their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

11 ¶ For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 6. Pf. 15. 4. & 16. 3. & 119. 63. Luke, 10. 16. Prov. 11. 12. & 14. 21. 1 Thes. 4. 8. <sup>k</sup> Gen. 32. 1, 2. 2 Kings, 6. 16, 17. Pf. 34. 7. & 91. 11. Heb. 1. 14. <sup>1</sup> Pf. 16. 11. & 17. 15. Exod. 33. 18, 20. 1 Cor. 13. 12. Luke, 1. 19. <sup>m</sup> Luke, 19. 10. & 9. 56. Ch. 10. 6. & 15. 24. John, 3. 16, 17. & 12. 47. 1 Tim. 1. 15.

manner of the Eastern doctors and prophets, who, in teaching, impressed the minds of their disciples by symbolical actions, as well as by words. Thus John, xx. 22. Jesus, by *breathing on his Apostles*, signified, that through the invisible energy of his power he conferred on them the gifts of his spirit. Thus, John, xxi. 19. he bade Peter *follow him*, to shew that he was to be his follower in afflictions. And in Rev. xviii. 21. an angel cast a stone into the depth of the sea, to signify the utter destruction of Babylon. For more examples, see John, xiii. 4, 5, 14. Acts, xxi. 11. and Macknight.

Ver. 3, 4. *And said, Verily, &c.*] “So far shall ye be from becoming the greatest in my kingdom, that ye shall not so much as enter into it, unless ye be like little children, free from pride, covetousness, and ambition, and resemble them in humility, sincerity, docility, and in disengagement of affection from the things of the present life, which fire the ambition of grown men.” Whosoever therefore (ver. 4.) rests satisfied with the providence which God has assigned him, whatever it may be, and meekly receives all the divine instructions, though contrary to his own inclinations, and prefers others in honour to himself, such a person is really the greatest in my kingdom. The first step towards entering into the kingdom of grace is to become as little children, lowly in heart, knowing ourselves utterly ignorant and helpless, and depending wholly on our Father who is in heaven, for a supply of all our wants. Except we be turned from darkness to light, and be renewed in the image of God here, we can never enter into the kingdom of glory.

Ver. 5, 6. *And who so shall receive, &c.*] “All who in the sense above explained are little children, are un- speakably dear to me; therefore help them all you can, as if it were myself in person, and see that ye offend them not; that is to say, that ye neither turn them out of the right way, nor hinder them in it.” Dr. Clarke thinks, that *little ones* mean plain and sincere Christians, before compared, for their simplicity and sincerity, to little children; and that to *offend* them signifies to *cast a stumbling-block before them*, to cause them to sin, to discourage them in their duty, or attempt to offend them. So that whoever, by a scandalous life, should lead others to think ill of the Christian profession in general, or should by persecution discourage the weak, or by sophistry, bad example, or otherwise, pervert them from the way of truth and goodness, would fall under the weight of the terrible sentence here denounced. Casaubon, Ellsner, and others,

have shewn at large, that drowning in the sea was a punishment frequently used among the Syrians, Greeks, and Romans; and that the persons condemned had sometimes heavy stones tied about their necks, or were rolled up in sheets of lead, *καταποντιζεσθαι*, to sink them with the weight. It seems to have grown into a proverb for dreadful and inevitable ruin. See on ch. xiv. 28. and Mintert on the word *καταποντιζω*. *Μύλος δυνεός* probably signifies a mill-stone too large to be turned, as some were, by the hand; and requiring the force of *asses* to move it, as it seems those animals were generally used by the Jews on this occasion. See Raphelius, Riping, Antiq. Rom. lib. ii. c. 7. and Lightfoot.

Ver. 7. *For it must needs be that offences come*] See Luke, xvii. 1. where our Lord expresses this more fully; *it is impossible but that offences will come*; impossible, through the weakness, folly, and wickedness of mankind. But *woe unto the man by whom*, that is to say, by whose faults, *these offences, or scandals, come!* Dr. Campbell translates this verse, *Woe unto the world because of snares: snares indeed there must be; nevertheless woe to the insnarer.*

Ver. 8. *Wherefore, if thy hand or foot offend thee*] *Insnare thee.* Campbell, and so ver. 9. Our Lord here renews the exhortation which he formerly gave, Ch. v. 29, 30. rather to submit to the severest mortifications, than to indulge our sinful inclinations, to the scandal of others, and our own ruin. We may observe, that St. Matthew, who has so largely recorded the sermon on the mount, gives us again this passage of it on the present occasion; which is one proof among others, that our Lord did not think it improper or unnecessary sometimes to repeat what he had then said; and considering the importance of these maxims, and how little many of his hearers were disposed to receive and retain them, it was a valuable instance of his compassion and wisdom. See Doddridge.

Ver. 10, 11. *Take heed that ye despise not, &c.*] Because pride, or a high opinion of one's self, with the contempt of others, is often the parent of offences, our Lord solemnly cautioned his disciples against that evil, and shewed them the unreasonableness of it by this delightful argument,—that the meanest Christian is an object of the care of Providence—*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones*; one who is converted, and becomes as a little child; one of my real disciples, of whom I have been speaking to you; for I say unto you, that in heaven, &c. which Dr. Clarke interprets, “they are the care of angels, and under the protection of God.” The expression, *behold the face of my Father*, alludes to the custom

12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13 And, if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he ° rejoiceth more of that *sheep* than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14 Even <sup>p</sup> so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

15 ¶ Moreover, <sup>v</sup> if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother:

16 But, if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in <sup>v</sup> the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And, if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* <sup>v</sup> unto the church: but, if he neglect to hear the church, <sup>v</sup> let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

° Luke, 15. 4—7. Jer. 50. 6. Ezek. 34. 6, 8, 16, 23. If. 63. 6, 10—12. John, 10. 11. 1 Peter, 2. 25. Pf. 119. 176. If. 63. 1. & 45. 22, 24. 1 Tim. 1. 13, 15, 16. ° Luke, 15. 7. & 19. 9. & 7. 36—50. & 18. 13—43. John, iv. viii. 1 Tim. 1. 13—16. P Eph. 1. 5. Rom. 9. 19. John, 10. 28. 9 Lev. 19. 17. Luke, 17. 3, 4. James, 5. 19, 20. Prov. 25. 8, 9. & 28. 23. & 9. 8, 9. Pf. 141. 5. Gal. 6. 1. 7 Numb. 35. 30. Deut. 17. 6. & 10. 15. 1 Kings, 21. 10. John, 8. 17. 2 Cor. 13. 1. Heb. 10. 28. ° Numb. 16. 33. Acts, 8. 1. 1 Tim. 5. 20. 2 Rom. 16. 17. 1 Cor. 5. 5, 9, 13, 13. 2 Cor. 2. 6. 2 Thes. 3. 6, 14. 1 Tim. 1. 20. Tit. 3. 10. John, 2. 10.

of earthly courts, where the great men, those who are highest in office and favour, are most frequently in the prince's palace and presence. Wherefore, when we are told that the *angels* of the least of Christ's disciples behold the face of God, the meaning is, that the chief angels are employed in taking care of such; and our Lord's reasoning is both strong and beautiful, when on this account he cautions us against despising them. To conclude, by telling them that the *Son of man* was come to seek and save *that which was lost*; and by delivering the parable of the lost sheep, which its owner found after much painful searching, he has eminently displayed the immense care which the Father Almighty takes of men, and has given us a just notion of the value which he puts on the least of his reasonable creatures. He gives his angels charge concerning them; he has sent his only-begotten Son to save them, and condescends to share in the joy which the heavenly beings are filled with upon their recovery. The particle *γὰρ*, rendered *for* in ver. 11. introduces another reason to enforce the caution not to *despise these little ones*; and therefore would be rendered more properly, *moreover* or *further*. "Not only the *angels* minister to their salvation, but *I*, the Lord of men and angels, am come down from heaven for their sakes." See Macknight, Grotius, and Suicer's Thesaurus, vol. i. p. 43.

Ver. 12. *Doth he not leave the ninety and nine*] This might be rendered, *Would he not leave the ninety and nine on the mountains* (in their pasture or fold) *and go out to seek, &c.*? See this parable in Luke, xv.

Ver. 14. *Even so, &c.*] That is, "God greatly delights in the conversion and salvation of men, and is at as much pains to reclaim them, as a shepherd is to bring back a sheep which was strayed from the fold." We may observe the gradation in these verses: first, the *angels* do not despise these little ones;—neither the *Son*,—nor the *Father*.

Ver. 15—17. *Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass, &c.*] Our Lord, having thus spoken to the *persons offending*, now addresses his discourse to the *persons offended*, shewing

them in what manner they ought to behave towards an offending brother; and whosoever shall closely observe this threefold rule, will seldom offend others, and never be offended himself. "If any, more especially one who is a member of the same religious community, do any thing amiss, of which thou art an eye or ear-witness, first, go and tell him alone: if it may be, *in person*; if that cannot so well be done, by thy messenger, or in writing: If this succeed, thou hast gained thy brother; hast recovered him to God, who rejoices at the repentance of a sinner; and to thyself, with whom he was at enmity; and so hast saved him from perishing." See Prov. xxviii. 23. Observe, our Lord gives no liberty to omit this, or to exchange it for either of the following steps: "If this gentle method do not succeed, *Secondly*, Take with thee one or two more men whom he esteems and loves, who may then confirm and enforce what thou sayest, and afterwards, if need require, bear witness of what was spoken. (See Deut. xix. 15.) If even this do not succeed, then and not before, *tell it to the church*, or to that particular congregation of the faithful to which he belongs; whose sentence being declared, will shew him, that in the judgment of all good men, thou hast done thy duty, and he is to blame. If all this avail not, you will do well to enter into a protest against him, by forbearing any intimate friendship with such a person; and let him therefore, in this case, be unto thee as an heathen and a publican, or other most notorious sinner, to whom you would perform only the common offices of humanity, but would avoid his intimate society, as scandalous; and to whom you are not under those peculiar obligations, whereby Christian brethren are bound to each other." Can any thing be plainer than this? Christ here as expressly commands all Christians who see a brother do evil, to follow this method, not another, and to take these steps in this order,—as he does, to honour our father and mother.—But if so, in what land do the Christians live? See Doddridge, and Bengelius.

Ver. 18.

18 Verily I say unto you, <sup>a</sup> Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, <sup>x</sup> That, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, <sup>y</sup> there am I in the midst

of them.

21 ¶ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? <sup>z</sup> till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, <sup>a</sup> Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is <sup>b</sup> the kingdom of heaven likened unto a <sup>c</sup> certain king which would take account of his servants.

24 And, when he had begun to reckon,

<sup>a</sup> John, 20. 23. 1 Cor. 5. 4. Ch. 16. 19. Luke, 11. 9. James, 1. 5. & 5. 16. Rev. 21. 3. <sup>b</sup> Luke, 17. 4. ver. 15. & 5. 44. Mark, 11. 25. <sup>c</sup> Gospel-church. Ch. 25. 34.

<sup>x</sup> 1 John, 3. 24. & 5. 14. John, 16. 23. & 14. 15. & 15. 7, 16. Ch. 7. 7, 11. & 21. 22. Mark, Ch. 28. 20. Rev. 1. 13. & 2. 1. 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. Exod. 20. 24. Ezek. 48. 35. Zech. 2. 5. <sup>y</sup> i. e. many hundred times. Rom. 12. 19, 20. Eph. 4. 32. Col. 3. 13. 1 Cor. 4. 12. Ch. 6. 12, 14. <sup>z</sup> Pl. 2. 6. If. 9. 6, 7. John, 1. 49. & 18. 36.

Ver. 18. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, &c.*] Our Saviour here confers on his disciples in general the power of binding and loosing, which he had formerly conferred on Peter singly: but the present grant, from the connection in which it stands, appears manifestly to refer to something further than the former, which had respect to nothing but doctrine and precept. Whatever Peter declared lawful and unlawful should be held so in heaven; whereas here it relates not only to doctrine, but to discipline. If by their admonitions, whether public or private, the Apostles brought their brethren to repentance, they loosed the guilt of their sins, the fetters by which the divine justice detains men its prisoners; or, as it is expressed above, they gain their brethren. On the other hand, if the offending brother continued impenitent, after the methods prescribed were all tried, they bound his guilt the faster upon him; because, according to the laws of heaven—the terms of salvation which they were to preach by inspiration, none but penitents shall obtain pardon. Wetstein gives the following explanation of this verse: “If any one shall despise your sentence passed upon him, according to your appointed rules, he will do it to his own extreme hazard; for, refusing to return into favour with you, he will be esteemed guilty before God. On the contrary, if he shall reconcile himself to you, he shall also obtain from God pardon for the sin committed against you.” See Macknight, Grotius, and ch. xvi. 19.

Ver. 19, 20. *Again I say unto you*] Further to encourage good men to be very earnest in their endeavours to bring sinners to repentance, he assured them, that if they prayed to God for it, he would hear them, provided it was agreeable to the wise ends of his providence. Perhaps here is an allusion to a notion of the Jews, that it was necessary, that ten at least should concur in social prayer, if an extraordinary success was expected. *I am in the midst of them*, ver. 20. means, “by my special favour and presence: for, observing that in those religious assemblies they act as the duty which they owe to me directs, I will intercede with my Father for them, and procure them from him a gracious answer to their prayers.” The Hebrew doctors have a saying, that “where two

persons sit together conversing about the law, there the *Shechinah* is among them.” Dr. Clarke paraphrases the 20th verse thus: “In whatever place the true doctrine of Christ is professed and practised, whether by many or few, there is the true church of Christ.” See Sermon 18. vol. 10. Wetstein, and Tillotson’s Works, vol. iii. p. 307.

Ver. 21, 22. *Then came Peter—and said, Lord, how oft, &c.*] If my brother repeatedly trespass against me; how often must I forgive him? Campbell. When our Saviour had given his advice for the accommodation of differences among his disciples, Peter, imagining that it might be abused by ill-disposed persons, as an encouragement to offer injuries to others, asks his Lord, how often his brother might offend, and claim forgiveness? See Luke, xvii. 4. where it is *seven times in a day*, which implies *very often*. Here it is *seven times only*, a mode of expression which some imagine to have been borrowed from the Jewish tradition, by which the necessity of pardoning in lighter matters, is limited to *seven times*, and no more. In opposition to this tradition, our Lord may be understood as extending the terms of forgiveness, and ordering that pardon should be repeated as often as the injury,—*till seventy times seven*,—as often as there is occasion; a certain number for an uncertain. See Grotius and Wetstein.

Ver. 23. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened, &c.*] For this reason, or, with respect to this matter, I may properly say that the kingdom of heaven, in its constitution and final process, may be likened to, or illustrated by the instance of a certain king who ruled over a large country, and who, as he had a great number of officers under him, was determined at length to settle accounts with his servants.” Thus our Lord illustrates the excellent morality in the preceding verse, by a lively parable; in which is shewn the necessity of forgiving the greatest injuries—a necessity of the strongest kind, arising from this law of the divine government, an invariable rule of which is, that God will not forgive us our trespasses, if we do not forgive others. See ch. vi. 12.

Ver. 24. *One was brought unto him, &c.*] When the king began to inspect the accounts of his servants, one

was

one was brought unto him which owed him  
 † ten thousand \* talents.

25 But, forasmuch as he had not to pay,  
 † his lord commanded him to be sold, and his  
 wife and children, and all that he had, and  
 payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and  
 † worshipped him, saying, Lord, have pa-  
 tience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant † was  
 moved with compassion, and loosed him, and  
 forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and  
 found one of his fellow servants which owed  
 him an hundred † pence: and he laid hands  
 on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying,  
 Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow servant fell down at his  
 feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience  
 with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast  
 him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31 So, when his fellow servants saw  
 what was done, † they were very sorry, and  
 came and told unto their lord all that was  
 done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called  
 him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant,  
 I forgave thee all that debt, because thou  
 desiredst me:

33 † Shouldst not thou also have had com-  
 passion on thy fellow servant, even as I had  
 pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered  
 him to the † tormentors till he should pay all  
 that was due unto him.

35 † So likewise shall my heavenly Father  
 do also unto you, if ye from your hearts  
 forgive not every one his brother their tres-  
 passes.

† Gen. 13. 13. 1 Tim. 1. 13, 15, 16. \* A talent of silver is 342l. 3s. 9d. † Lev. 25. 39. Neh. 5. 2, 5, 8. 2 Kings, 4. 1. † Or  
 besought him. † Pf. 103. 13. & 145. 7, 8. & 130. 4, 7. Eph. 2. 4—8. Tit. 3. 5. Hof. 11. 8. Judges, 10. 16. † The Roman penny is the  
 eighth part of an ounce, in value seven pence three farthings. Ch. 20. 2. & 22. 19. Rev. 6. 6. † Rom. 12. 15. 2 Cor. 11. 29. Heb. 13. 3. They  
 were offended and grieved at such unnatural cruelty and revenge. † Eph. 4. 32. & 5. 2. Col. 3. 13. Ch. 5. 43, 45. Luke, 6. 36. † 2 Cor. 12. 7.  
 † 1 Pet. 5. 8. † h. 5. 25. 2 Thes. 1. 8, 9. Rev. 14. 10, 11. † Prov. 21. 13. Ch. 6. 12, 14, 15. Mark, 11. 26. Eph. 4. 32. Col. 3. 13. 1 Cor.

was brought unto him, probably his steward or treasurer,—  
 who had so abused the eminent station in which he had  
 been placed, and the high confidence which his prince had  
 reposed in him, that he owed him a most immense sum,  
 and stood accountable for *ten thousand talents*; that is to  
 say, upwards of 1,870,000l. sterling. The Prussian edi-  
 tors say, that the *ten thousand talents* are here put for an  
 immense sum. Our Lord seems to mention so large a  
 sum with a design to intimate the number and weight of  
 our offences against God, and our utter incapacity of  
 making him any satisfaction. See Prideaux's Connection,  
 vol. i. preface, p. xx. and vol. ii. p. 138.

Ver. 25. *But, forasmuch as he had not to pay*] As it plainly  
 appeared by this servant's having run through such vast  
 sums, that he had been both negligent and extravagant,  
 his lord, according to frequent custom in such cases,  
*ordered him, &c. to be sold.* See Exod. xxii. 3. Lev. xxv.  
 39. 2 Kings, iv. 1. Neh. v. 5. Isaiah, l. 1. Not that  
 the value of him, his family and effects, was any way  
 equal to the debt, but as a punishment for his wickedness;  
 for on any other supposition, it is hard to conceive how  
 his lord, whose humanity was so great, came to take so  
 rigorous a measure, especially as the advantage accruing  
 to himself therefrom must have been but a trifle in com-  
 parison of his loss. See Macknight and Olearius.

Ver. 27. *Then the Lord—was moved with compassion*]  
 See ch. xv. 32. It is plain that the Lord forgave the ser-  
 vant his debt conditionally, as is strongly implied by the  
 revocation of the pardon afterwards, ver. 34.

Ver. 28. *Which owed him an hundred pence*] The Roman  
*penny, or denarius*, here spoken of, being in value about *seven-*  
*pence halfpenny* of our money, the whole sum which was  
 due to him did not much exceed three pounds sterling;  
 therefore the servant's demanding this trifle in so rough  
 a manner from his fellow-servant, immediately on his  
 coming out of the palace, where so much lenity had been  
 shewed to him in a matter of far greater importance,  
 manifested the very basest disposition in the man. The  
 word *πνιγε*, which we render *took him by the throat*, im-  
 ports the doing so in the most furious manner, so as almost  
 to *strangle* him; and therefore more strongly expresses the  
 man's cruelty.

Ver. 31. *His fellow-servants—told unto their Lord, &c.*] *Διεσάφησαν.* “They gave their Lord an exact and faithful  
 “account,” which is the full meaning of the word. See  
 Albert, and the *Inferences* on this chapter.

Ver. 32. *O thou wicked servant!*] Slave. Doddridge;  
 who observes that the word *Δούλε* is not always a term of  
 reproach, nor does it necessarily imply more than a *servant*;  
 yet in this connection the word *slave* seems best to express  
 the indignation with which his lord is supposed to speak.  
 The verb *παρεκάλεισας*, rendered *desiredst*, implies something  
 more strong; *because thou didst earnestly request and intreat*  
*me.*

Ver. 34. *Delivered him to the tormentors*] *Βασανισαῖς*, the  
*executioners of justice.* Heylin. The word does not only  
 signify *executioners*, or persons who put criminals to the  
*torture*; but also *gaslers*, who had the charge of prisoners  
 and

CHAP. XIX.

*Christ healeth the sick; answereth the Pharisees concerning divorcement: sheweth when marriage is necessary: receiveth little children: instructeth the young man how to attain eternal life, and how to be perfect: telleth his disciples how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God: and promiseth reward to those that forsake any thing to follow him.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**A**ND it came to pass <sup>a</sup> that, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed

<sup>a</sup> Mark. 10. 1. John, 10. 40. & 3. 22. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 4. 23—25. & 8. 1, 18. & 9. 35, 36. & 12. 15. & 13. 1. & 14. 35. & 15. 30. & 17. 14. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 16. 1. & 22. 15. Luke, 11. 53; 54. Mark, 10. 3—12. <sup>d</sup> Gen. 1. 27. & 5. 2. Mal. 2. 15, 16:

and examined them. Imprisonment is a much severer punishment in the Eastern parts of the world than here: state-prisoners especially, when condemned to it, are not only forced to submit to a very mean and scanty allowance, but are frequently loaded with *clogs*, or *yokes of heavy wood*, in which they cannot either lie or sit at ease; and by frequent scourgings, and sometimes racking, are quickly brought to an untimely end! There is probably a reference to this in the present passage. It may perhaps seem at first a very improper method pursued by the lord, of obtaining payment in these circumstances; yet when it is considered that the man's behaviour to his fellow-servant shewed him to be a wretch, not only of the most barbarous disposition, but extremely covetous; his lord had reason to suspect that he had secreted his money and goods, especially as nothing appeared in his possession; wherefore he wisely ordered him to be tormented on the rack, till he should discover with whom they were lodged, and make complete payment.—Besides, it may be considered in the light of a punishment incomparably heavier than that which was to have been inflicted on him purely for his insolvency: for though the debt was immense, yet whilst it appeared to have been contracted not by fraud, but by extravagance and bad management, he was only to be sold with his family for a certain term of years, that payment might be made as far as their price would go: but now that he added to his former misbehaviour, covetousness, and unmercifulness in the exaction of a trifling debt from a fellow-servant, to whom he ought to have been more indulgent for the sake of their common lord, who had been so kind to him; there was all the reason in the world to suspect, that in his lord's affairs he was more fraudulent than negligent; for which cause he was delivered to the tormentors, to be punished in the manner his crimes deserved; than which a stronger representation of God's displeasure against men of unmerciful, unforgiving, and revengeful dispositions cannot be set forth, or even conceived, by the utmost force of human imagination. May it not be proper to put it here to the consciences of some, and to ask, whether rigour in exacting temporal debts, in treating without mercy such as are unable to satisfy them, and confining them in a miserable prison, where they are totally incapacitated from any probability of satisfying them;—whether this can be allowed to a Christian, who is bound to imitate his God and Fa-

from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan:

2 <sup>b</sup> And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

3 ¶ <sup>c</sup> The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, <sup>d</sup> that he which made

ther?—to a *debtor*, who can expect forgiveness only on the condition of forgiving others?—to a *servant*, who should obey his master?—and to a *criminal*, who is in daily expectation of his judge and final sentence? See Macknight, Hesychius, and Samedo's China, p. 225.

*Inferences.*—How great and common a misfortune is it for men to think of nothing but their own greatness, and how to raise themselves above others! If the Apostles, who had forsaken all, and who had so long enjoyed the daily instructions and edifying example of Christ, were not void of this passion, who ought not to be afraid?

Either Christ is not truth itself, or without a true *conversion and humility* (ver. 3.) there is not the least *hope of any place in heaven*. What is it to be an evangelical *child*, but to be pure in mind and body? to wish ill to none, to be ready to do good to all, and to have no projects for advancement, riches, honours, fortunes, &c.? This Christian childhood will make us great in the kingdom of heaven. But alas! how low do we debase ourselves, in order to be great on *earth*! To be great in *heaven*, how little do we do it! The humility which pleases God, is that of choice, or of acceptance, not a natural meanness of heart and spirit; and the first place is promised to this virtue, which seems the most easy, and to the exercise of which external things are least needful; on which account we are certainly the less to be excused, if we be found deficient in it.

It is melancholy to think, that many who have by their office been employed to read and explain this lesson to others, and who have not been *children in understanding*, seem to have learned so little of it themselves, as if it had never been at all intended for that order of men to whom however it was immediately addressed! If there be any such yet remaining in the Christian ministry, (and would to God there were not too many!) let them seriously weigh the *wise denounced on that man by whom the offence cometh*, ver. 7. We can never too earnestly pray that the mercies of God may be extended to all professing Christians, who wholly give themselves up to worldly pursuits and projects; but especially to those who make the church of Christ only a kind of porch to the temple of Mammon. May the divine grace deliver us from such fatal snares, and form us to that self-denial and mortification, without which we cannot be the true disciples of Christ,

them at the beginning made them male and female;

5 And said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to

\* Gen. 2. 24. Eph. 5. 31. Pf. 45. 10.

Christ, but after *having pierced ourselves through with many unnecessary sorrows here*, shall plunge ourselves deep into eternal perdition.

How happy are the meanest servants of Christ, in the care and favour of their blessed Master, and in the *angelic guard* (ver. 10.) which by his high command are continually attending even the lambs of his flock! So condescending are the blessed spirits above, that even the greatest of them do not disdain to minister unto the heirs of salvation: how then shall the wisest and greatest of men dare to despise those, whom angels honour with their guardianship and care; especially, since God hath loved them so exceedingly, as to *give even his own Son* for them! ver. 11. Who can either doubt or wonder as to God's sending his angels for the service of souls, after he has sent his own Son to serve them even with his blood! They do what they can to destroy the workmanship of Christ, who, by the means of scandal and offence, cause those to relapse into sin, whom he by his labours and sufferings has rescued and cleansed from it.

It is a rule to be observed by pastors, to apply themselves most to those souls whose wants are greatest. The good shepherd left the *ninety and nine*, to seek *the sheep* that was lost. In order to comprehend *our good shepherd's joy* on the recovery and conversion of a sinner, it is necessary to comprehend his love towards souls. But who is able to do this? If we would have some idea of it which comes near the truth, let us judge of it by his descent from heaven to be incarnate, by the labours of his life, and by the pain and ignominy of his death.

What could have been happier for the church of Christ than the observation of that plain and easy rule which he has given for ending disputes among his followers? ver. 15—17. and yet, who that sees the conduct of the generality of Christians, would imagine that they had ever heard or read of such a rule?—Instead of this *private expostulation*, which might often bring a debate to a speedy and amicable conclusion, what public charges! what passionate complaints! what frequent and laboured attempts to take, if the least scandalous, yet not the least pernicious kind of revenge, by wounding the characters of those whom we imagine to have injured us! Alas! what is there of the spirit of Christianity in all this? If from the private carriage of man to man, we carry our reflections to proceedings of a more public nature, in what Christian nation are church censures conformed to this rule? Is this the form in which ecclesiastical judgements appear, in the popish or even the protestant world? Are these the methods used by those who boast the most loudly of the authority of Christ to confirm their sentence? Let us earnestly pray, that this dishonour to the Christian name may be wiped away, and that true religion and even common humanity, may not with such solemn mockery be destroyed, *in the name of the Lord*.

God is found in union and agreement: nothing is more efficacious than *prayer*, (ver. 19.) when we are united

to Jesus Christ, and offer up our prayers through his mediation. It is He himself who prays, His merits which ask, His love which intercedes; and it is the Son who obtains all from his Father. This shews the advantages of prayer made in common by Christian societies, where God is served as it were with one heart, and one soul; but above all, by the great society of the church, where we are united in the body and by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Where love is, there is Christ; where division is, there is the evil spirit. A Christian family, which, like that of Tobias in choosing the state of marriage, seeks God alone, which brings up children only for him, and which does all the good that lies within its sphere, may be assured, by virtue of this promise, that Christ is present in the midst of them in a very particular manner. None but an omnipresent, and consequently a divine Person could say, *wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*: His power and his goodness can never be impaired: be it therefore our encouragement to social prayer; and let the remembrance of our Redeemer's continual presence and inspection always encourage us to behave ourselves agreeable to the relation which we claim to him, and to those expectations from him which we profess.

How unreasonable and how odious does a severe and uncharitable temper appear, when we view it in the light of this just and convincing *parable*! ver. 23, &c. which may be considered as our Lord's explication of the fifth petition of his own prayer. There are three things in it opposed to each other; the lord to his servant,—an immense sum to a trifle,—and the most extraordinary clemency to the greatest cruelty. The application of the parable therefore is easy, and sufficient to overturn all the arguments whereby evil minds would justify revenge; particularly those taken from the nature and number of the offences committed, or from the benefits conferred on the persons who commit them. For, in the first place, what are men compared with God? In the second place, how immense a debt does each of us owe to him?—A debt, which from infancy we began to contract, and are daily increasing in our ripening years. And in the third place, how trifling are the offences which our brethren commit against us, perhaps through inadvertency, or in consequence of some provocation received from us! most unworthy therefore of the divine mercy are weak mortals, who, notwithstanding they are themselves weighed down with an infinite load of guilt, are implacable towards their fellow-creatures, and will not forgive them the smallest offence.

Persons of this monstrous disposition should seriously consider the conclusion and application of the parable before us: *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts*, that is to say, really, inwardly, and not in word or tongue only, *forgive not every one*, however great, or rich, or powerful you may be, *his brother their*



his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. 6. 16. & 7. 2. Gen. 2. 24.

<sup>g</sup> Except for adultery, fornication, or wilful desertion. Ver. 9. Mal. 2. 14—16. 1 Cor. 7. 10—13.

*their trespasses*—A most awful denunciation! which ought, and surely must strike terror into men of fierce and implacable minds: for, whatever they may think, it will in its utmost extent be executed upon all, who will not be persuaded by the consideration of the divine mercy fully to forgive, not their *fellow-servants* merely, but their own *brethren*, such petty trespasses as they may happen to commit against them. O let us think seriously on that awful moment, wherein we shall fall down at the feet of our Judge, there to receive the sentence of our eternal fate,—insolvent debtors as we are, without any plea but the infinite merits of the adorable Jesus; and then we shall have but little inclination to insult those whom we see prostrate before us; we shall discharge our hearts of every sentiment of rancour and revenge, nor ever allow a word, or even a wish that favours of it: and to this end give us, Lord of love, that Christian heart, whose bottom is all charity and mercy, whose works are all mildness and indulgence!

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The disciples, deeply tinctured with Jewish prejudices, entertained very false conceptions of the Messiah's kingdom, and had, in the way to Capernaum, been disputing which of them should have the precedence in it. Jesus, who knew what had been the subject of their contention, now asked them concerning it. And, after some silence and shame at being discovered, see Mark. ix. 33, 34. they,

1. Propose to him the question in dispute, which of them should be promoted to the first post of honour in his kingdom; for each had formed some pretence to this distinguished place: and so ready are we all to be partial in our own favour; instead of being humbly content, in the views of our real defects, to sit down with the least and the lowest.

2. By an apposite emblem Christ seeks to rebuke their vanity, and teach them what spirit they should put on. He took a little child and set him in the midst of them, that they might look and learn while he commented on the case; assuring them, that such was the nature of his kingdom, that none could enter therein, or partake of its honours and privileges, unless their hearts were converted, and turned from the affectation of earthly grandeur and greatness, and, like little children, they became dead to the contentions of ambition, and the vain desires of outward wealth and eminence: while the way to secure the most honourable place among his members upon earth, and the highest throne next his own in glory, was by sinking lowest in their own apprehensions of themselves, and, instead of affecting magisterial dominion over others, becoming humble, teachable, and ready to sit down at the feet of the meanest. Hard lessons these for human pride!

*Note;* (1.) The way to honour is humility. The lowliest souls are dearest to the Lord; they most resemble him; while pride made angels devils, defaced God's image from

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the human soul, drove man from paradise, and bars the gate against his return.

3. Christ expresses his high regard and tender concern for those who in this childlike spirit are his disciples indeed. If any shall shew them the least kindness for the sake of their relation to him, he will regard it as if the favour had been shewn to his own person; while if any offend one of these, persecute or oppress them, take advantage of their simplicity or meekness to trample on them, or of their weakness to endeavour to deceive or discourage them, the most dreadful of judgements will be the punishment of such an offender: and better were it for him to have come to the most fearful death by the hands of the public executioner, even to be thrown into the sea with a millstone about his neck, than with such guilt to fall into the hands of an avenging God, under whose wrath he must perish, both body and soul, in hell. *Note;* (1.) Christ has the tenderest care for his poor people; and a cup of cold water given to the meanest in his name shall not lose its reward. (2.) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a jealous God. They who now oppress and oppose the meek disciples of Jesus, little think against whom they offend, and the vengeance which awaits them.

2dly, We have the woe denounced against the world because of offences: under which is comprehended whatever has a tendency to seduce or affright the soul from the good ways of the Lord, or to discourage and grieve the hearts of the righteous.

1. That there will be offences is certain. Considering the craft, malice, and vigilance of Satan, the perverseness of ungodly men and their rooted enmity to the Gospel, and, above all, the deep and desperate wickedness of every human heart by nature, it is morally impossible that offences should not come; and God, for wise ends, is pleased to permit them; but this will in no wise extenuate the guilt of those by whom the offence cometh, nor abate the severity of their judgement. *Note;* (1.) We are travelling a dangerous road: this world is full of evil, of snares and stumbling-blocks; the multitude lieth in wickedness, and many who pretend to know the path of safety only lie in wait to deceive. We need be jealous of our going, cleave to God's word alone, and neither be offended with the enmity of those that are without, nor the hypocrisy and falls of those that are professors within, remembering that *the foundation of God standeth sure. He knoweth those that are his, and will keep his faithful saints that nothing shall offend them,* Psalm cxix. 165. (2.) Though the deceived and the deceiver perish together, yet will they lie down under aggravated guilt who have been Satan's instruments to lead others into error or sin: the blood of the latter will be upon the heads of their seducers.

2. Whatever may be occasion of offence to ourselves or others, however near and dear to us it may be, we must

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7 They say unto him, <sup>b</sup> Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce-

ment, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses, because of

<sup>b</sup> Deut. 24. 1. Ch. 5. 31.

must part with it. The body of sin must be crucified. And though it may be as painful to mortify particular corruptions as to suffer the amputation of a hand or a foot, unrelenting severity is needful, where our own souls or others are in danger. And however acute the pain, or however sensibly felt the loss may be, it is better, infinitely better to endure the momentary pang of present self-denial, that we may escape eternal misery, and secure a life of never-ending glory, than for a transitory indulgence of appetite, and the sensual enjoyments of an hour, to be cast into devouring fire, and dwell in everlasting burnings. *Note*; (1.) In this state of corruption, not only the grosser pollutions which are in the world through lust must be abhorred, but every word, every action, be avoided, which may tend in the remotest way to inflame our own passions or ensnare others. (2.) It is highly useful for us, when in temptation, to look into the burnings of hell, and thence gain arguments to start from the most pleasurable sins. (3.) They only who have begun the life of grace, know experimentally what is meant by these severe operations of self-denial.

3. A particular caution is given to beware of despising the least of Christ's little ones, the weakest of his disciples. We must not be indifferent about our behaviour towards them, careless of what may offend them; must not treat them with contempt, as if regardless of their welfare, or slighting their weakness or infirmities; nor do ought to distress, discourage, ensnare, or lead them into sin; but we should shew our tenderness towards them, and our jealousy for them, by every expression of kindness in word and deed, and by a careful avoiding of whatever may grieve or hurt them.

4. He enforces his discourse with the consideration, that the meanest heir of salvation is attended by angelic ministers. And if those glorious spirits, who in heaven behold the face of God, and stand around his throne, the ready servants of his will, do not disdain to wait upon these little ones, much less should we think them beneath our regard; and may justly dread, if we should treat them ill, that these guardian spirits would be our accusers, and be employed as executioners of the divine displeasure against us.

3dly, As we must be careful not to give offence, equally careful should we be to shew all Christian tenderness and charity when we are justly offended. Since in this frail and corrupted state even good men are but men, and liable to fall, transgressing the precepts of prudence, justice, or charity, we are therefore directed how to behave towards them in such cases.

1. If a brother, a professing member of our most holy faith, act uncharitably therunto, and do us an injury, or give us cause of complaint against him, we must first give him a private and kind admonition of his fault, and mildly argue the case, desiring to bring him to repentance and amendment; more solicitous for his good, than the

redress of our own wrongs. We may not in this case, through fear of offending on the one hand, be silent, and suffer sin upon our brother without rebuke; nor, on the other, give way to rash anger or revenge, and by a public reproof expose him to others, which, however true the charge, would serve not to recover, but exasperate him the more. In this way of mild and secret admonition we may hope for success; and if he expresses his sorrow, and desire reconciliation, then the rebuke will be esteemed a kindness, the friendship more strongly cemented, our brother recovered, and the offence forgiven and forgotten.

2. If this method of reproof prove abortive, and he is obstinate against conviction, and displeased instead of humbling himself; then take two or three faithful impartial Christian brethren, and in their presence let the matter be discussed, that they may hear and judge, and add their weight to bring the party offending to due submission and reparation of the injury. Or if their sentiments be disregarded also, they will be evidences before the church of the steps which have been taken, and ready to confirm the truth of the just accusation of the injured person.

3. If every other method prove ineffectual, then the matter should be laid before the church, the society of faithful people among whom such a one associates, that he may have a public admonition for his offence, and be called upon to repent and amend of the evil that he has done.

4. If he still remain incorrigible, and persist in his iniquity, then he is to be excluded from the communion of the faithful, and no more connection and familiarity are to be maintained with him; for the charity which teaches us to forgive our enemies, does not forbid us to be on our guard against those who have used us ill, and refuse to repair the injury. From the whole we may learn, (1.) Under every injury received, to guard our own hearts against passion or revenge: this wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (2.) Never to speak of another's faults behind his back, till we have in love and the spirit of meekness first admonished him to his face. (3.) To be ready under every provocation to forgive and forget, the moment real repentance appears in our brother. (4.) Not to endeavour to form a party in our favour, but in cases of offence, real or supposed, where the sentiments of brethren may differ about the facts, to let some common impartial friends hear and judge, before the matter be mentioned in public, or but whispered to others.

5. Christ delegates authority to his church thus to censure offenders, and ratifies the sentence which shall be pronounced in correspondence with this his revealed word: so that those who for their notorious evils are excluded from the society of the faithful now, shall be written among the reprobate, and for ever banished from

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' the hardness of your hearts, \* suffered you to put away your wives: <sup>k</sup> but from the beginning it was not so. 9 ' And I say unto you, Whosoever shall

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 9. 6. & 31. 27. Act. 7. 51. & 13. 18. & 14. 16. i. e. their cruelty to their wives. Mal. 2. 13—16. \* But not commanded nor approved. <sup>2</sup> Gen. 2. 24. Jer. 6. 16. 1 Cor. 11. 23. Ch. 28. 20. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 5. 32. Mark, 10. 11. Luke, 16. 18. 1 Cor. 7. 11, 12. Mal. 2. 14—16. Rom. 7. 1—3. Jer. 3. 18.

the presence of God, unless they repent of their transgressions; and then they are again to be received into the bosom of the church, and all that is past to be intirely forgiven. The absolution pronounced on them by the ministers of God on earth shall be ratified in heaven, and, the correction having become effectual, the broken-hearted penitent is to be comforted, and restored to his former place, both in the church of God, and in our brotherly affliction and regard.

6. For their encouragement in every religious concern, and especially with regard to the recovery of those who are fallen into sin, that they may be restored, our Lord declares the mighty efficacy of united prayer. Whatever, according to the divine will, two or three faithful souls shall meet together with joint supplications to beg at God's hands, he will assuredly hear, and will grant their requests. For wherever the smallest number of real believers assemble in Christ's name, depending on his promises, and desiring above all things the advancement of his glory, there will he ever be, quickening their prayers, strengthening their faith, enlivening their hopes, and comforting their hearts; and when he is one of the company, their supplications must be effectual, for him the Father heareth always; and what an encouragement is this to social prayer!

4thly, As our Lord had just given directions concerning the charitable conduct to be observed towards offenders, Peter, desirous to know how far this forgiveness of personal injuries extended, proposed to his Master the question, Whether, if the offence was repeated seven times, the forgiveness must be as often granted, on the repentance of the offender? He concluded this to be a great stretch of charity; but our Lord's answer shewed him how limited his apprehensions were: *I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven*: intimating, that we must make no limitation to our forgiveness, but be always and in all cases ready to grant it, whenever the offender repents; imitating the divine compassions, which know no bounds, nor end. And, to enforce and elucidate this, he introduces a parable, wherein this godlike charity appears most eminent, and the guilt and danger of the opposite conduct is drawn in striking colours. The parable represents,

1. The noble clemency of a great lord, who, looking into his affairs, and revising his own accounts, (which it were well if every great man did) found, among other debtors, one who owed him an immense sum, the least part of which he was unable to discharge. In consequence whereof, in course of law, according to the custom of those times, he gave orders that himself and family should be sold for slaves, and all that he had be disposed of for his use. But, terrified at the sentence, though just, the poor debtor intreats a respite, with many fair promises of payment; when, moved with his distress, the compassionate master generously and freely forgave him all, and delivered him at once from his terrors and his debt. And this may be applied to the case between God and the sinner. (1.) We

are deeply in arrear to him: every sin is a debt, and we are overwhelmed with it: we are born with a sinful nature; and our thoughts, words, and deeds have been so perverse before God, so often and so greatly have we offended, that no computation can reach the number of our transgressions, nor can we conceive the greatness of our guilt or provocations. (2.) The misery of our case; and what renders it most deplorable, yea, desperate, is, that we have nothing to pay. Could we render by a perfect obedience the present debt of duty, this would make no compensation for past iniquity. (3.) God keeps an account of all: not a word is on our tongue, nor a thought in our hearts, but he knoweth it altogether; so that we can no more conceal our transgressions from him, than we can cancel them. (4.) If the divine law take its course, the consequence must be, that we should be sold to suffer for our iniquities, and in the place of torment, in body and soul, continue satisfying the justice of God to eternity. (5.) The discovery of this dreadful situation made to the sinner's soul by the preaching of the word to his conscience, or by some awakening providence, fills him with terror, and sets him crying for mercy. But frequently at first the cries of the awakened conscience are for a respite, with many promises of amendment, which the sinner sometimes foolishly thinks will be accepted in payment. And he does not see his own utter insolvency, but thinks, through the ignorance and self-righteousness of his heart, that he can make God some payment; till by and by the trial convinces him that his best is bad; and self-despair strips him naked at the foot of the cross of Christ. (6.) God's infinite compassions extend through the Redeemer to the most guilty and desperate. He freely and fully forgives all that is past: not that he does it without a satisfaction made to his justice; this the Son of his love, incarnate, and dying under the guilt of our sins, has paid; but the mercy of pardon, reconciliation, and deliverance from the bondage of guilt and corruption, is to us freely given, to the praise of the glory of his grace, without money and without price.

2. We are told the unsuitable conduct which this much-obliged servant shewed respecting a fellow-servant of his, who owed him a trifling debt. He no sooner obtained his own pardon and liberty, than he went out, seized and throttled his fellow-servant, till he was almost choked; and, with menaces and insolence demanded instant payment, or threatened him with a prison. In vain his poor brother begged a respite, and, in the very words that himself had used, desired only time, and the debt should be paid: he was deaf to intreaty, and thrust him into a jail—a piece of cruelty and oppression which the other servants beheld with grief and indignation; and they failed not to acquaint their lord with this inhuman behaviour. Note; (1.) Many professors, who presume upon God's forgiveness, shew, by their covetousness and rigorous censures of others, the hypocrisy of their hearts, and the vanity of their hopes.

put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and whoſo marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

(2.) Offences done to us, compared with thoſe which we have committed againſt God, are ſo trivial, that we ſhould be aſhamed to ſhow rigour in exacting reparation. (3.) Pride and paſſion render men unmerciful: though they know that a priſon pays no debts, they take delight in thus gratifying their inſolence or revenge. (4.) The debtor muſt not complain, though he be dealt with rigorouſly; humble intreaty becomes his condition, eſpecially when he ſuffers only the fruits of his folly or extravagance. (5.) A compaſſionate heart feels for the diſtreſſes of others, and, if it can afford no other relief to them, carries the caſe of the oppreſſor and the oppreſſed to God in prayer, and his ears are open thereunto; he will answer in mercy and judgment. (6.) It is eſpecially grievous to a gracious perſon, to ſee in profeſſors of religion a ſpirit of bitterness and unmercifulneſs; and he laments it before the Lord.

3. Juſt reſentment fired the maſter's heart on hearing theſe tidings; and, inſtantly citing this hardened wretch before him, he charges him with his wickedneſs, and upbraids him with his cruelty and ingratitude for all the mercies that he had ſo lately received! expoſtulating with him on the caſe, and leaving him without excuſe. In wrath, he bids him therefore inſtantly be ſeized and delivered to the tormentors; to be confined in priſon, and ſuffer the moſt rigorous puniſhment, till all the former debt ſhould be paid.

4. The whole parable is intended to ſhew us, that God will deal with us as we deal with our brethren; and if we ſhew an implacable and unforgiving ſpirit; whatever hopes of pardon we may entertain, they are deluſive; his wrath hangs over us, and, in the great day of account, we ſhall be delivered to the tormentors. Moſt bounden are we therefore to forgive every injury, and never to cheriſh the leaſt wiſh or deſire of revenge; for we expect greater mercy and forgiveneſs from God than ever man can from us; and therefore a ſenſe of his pardoning love ſhould kindle ours.

#### CHAP. XIX.

*Ver. 1, 2. The coaſts of Judea, beyond Jordan*] Properly ſpeaking, no part of Judea was on the further ſide of Jordan; for though, after the Jews returned from the captivity, the whole of their land was called Judea, eſpecially by foreigners who happened to mention their affairs, it is certain, that in the Goſpels Judea is always ſpoken of as a particular diviſion of the country: we may therefore reaſonably ſuppoſe that St. Matthew's expreſſion is elliptical, and may ſupply it from St. Mark, x. 1. thus: *And came into the coaſts of Judea, δια τῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου,*—*through the country beyond Jordan.* See John, x. 40. In this journey our Lord paſſed through the country beyond Jordan, that the Jews living there might enjoy the benefit of his doctrine and miracles; and great multitudes followed him, namely, from Galilee into Perea. Our Saviour's fame was become exceedingly great, inſomuch that every where he was reſorted to and followed;—by the ſick, who wiſhed to be healed; by their friends, who attended them;

by thoſe whoſe curioſity prompted them to ſee and examine things ſo wonderful; by well-diſpoſed perſons, who found themſelves greatly profited and pleaſed with his ſermons; by enemies, who watched all his words and actions, with a deſign to expoſe him as a deceiver; and, laſtly, by thoſe who expected that he would ſet up the kingdom immediately. Beſides, at this time the multitude might have been greater than ordinary, becauſe, as the paſſover was at hand, many going thither might have choſen to travel in our Lord's train, expecting to ſee new miracles. See Macknight and Lamy. The verſion of 1729 renders the latter part of the 1ſt verſe, *And came into the confines of Judea on the other ſide Jordan.*

*Ver. 3. The Pharifees alſo came, &c.—for every cauſe] Upon every pretence.* Campbell. *At diſcretion.* Verſion of 1729. Our Lord had delivered his ſentiments on the ſubject twice; once in Galilee, ch. v. 32. and again in Perea, Luke, xvi. 18. It is probable, therefore, that they knew his opinion, and ſolicited him to declare it, hoping that it would incenſe the people, who reckoned the liberty which the law gave them of divorcing their wives, one of their chief privileges. Or, if, ſtanding in awe of the people, he ſhould deliver a doctrine different from what he had taught on former occaſions, they thought it would be a fit ground for accuſing him of diſſimulation. But they miſſed their aim entirely; for Jeſus, always conſiſtent with himſelf, boldly declared the third time againſt arbitrary divorces, not in the leaſt fearing the popular reſentment. See Macknight, and the note on ch. v. 31, 32. and on Deut. xxiv. 1.

*Ver. 4—7. And he answered, &c.]* The accounts which St. Matthew and St. Mark have given of this matter, though they ſeem to claſh upon the firſt view, are in reality perfectly conſiſtent. The two hiſtorians, indeed, take notice of different particulars; but theſe, when joined together, mutually throw a light on each other. According to both the evangeliſts, the Pharifees came with an inſidious intention, and asked our Lord's opinion concerning divorce. But the answer returned to their queſtion is differently repreſented by the hiſtorians. Matthew ſays, that our Lord deſired the Pharifees to conſider the original inſtitution of marriage in Paradife, where God created the human kind of different ſexes, and implanted in their breſts ſuch a mutual inclination towards each other, as in warmth and ſtrength ſurpaſſes all other affections wherewith he has endowed them towards any other of their fellow-creatures; and becauſe they have ſuch a ſtrong love to each other, he declared, that in all ages the tie which unites them together in marriage ſhould be ſtronger than any other tie, and among the reſt ſtronger even than that which binds them to their parents; and that male and female, thus joined together in marriage, are by the ſtrength of their mutual affection *no more twain but one fleſh*; that is to ſay, conſtitute only one perſon in reſpect to the unity of their inclinations and intereſts, and of the mutual power which they have over each other's body, (1 Cor. vi. 16. vii. 4.) and that as long as they continued

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, <sup>m</sup> it is not good to marry.

11 But he said unto them, <sup>n</sup> All men cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.

<sup>m</sup> Prov. 21. 9, 19. & 19. 13. & 9. 13.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. 7. 2, 9, 17.

faithful to this law, they must remain undivided till death separates them. From the original institution of marriage in Paradise, and from the great law thereof declared by God himself upon that occasion, it evidently appears, that it is the strongest and tenderest of all friendships; a friendship supported by the authority of the divine sanction and approbation; a friendship therefore which ought to be indissoluble till death: *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*, by unseasonable divorces. Thus, according to St. Matthew, our Lord answered the Pharisees' question concerning divorce, by referring to the original institution of marriage in Paradise: but St. Mark says, ch. x. 3. that he answered them by referring them to the Mosaic precepts; *he answered, What did Moses command you?* The evangelists, however, may be easily freed from the imputation of inconsistency, by supposing, that the answer in St. Mark was given after the Pharisees had, as St. Matthew informs us, ver. 7. objected the precept in the law to the argument against divorce drawn from the original institution: *Why did Moses then, &c.?* "If divorce be contrary to the original institution of marriage, as you affirm, how came it that Moses has commanded us to give a bill of divorce, and to put her away?" The Pharisees, by calling the law concerning divorce a *command*, insinuated, that Moses had been so tender of their happiness, that he would not suffer them to live with bad wives, though they themselves had been willing; but pre-emptorily enjoined them, that such should be put away: to this our Lord answers, Mark, x. 3. *What did Moses command you, &c.?* and this question being placed in this order, implies, that he wondered how they came to consider Moses's permission in the light of an absolute command, since it was granted merely on account of the hardness of their hearts. See Macknight, Doddridge, and other harmonists, and the following note. Dr. Heylin, instead of *He which made them*, in the fourth verse, *ὁ ποιησας*, reads *the Creator*; and instead of *said*, ver. 5. he reads *it was said*; for I take the word *εἰπεν* here, says he, for an impersonal verb. It was *Adam* who said so, and not *God*. The Prussian editors read, *says the Scripture*. But on this subject, see the note on Gen. ii. 24.

*Ver. 8. Because of the hardness of your hearts*] He meant their passionate, stubborn, perverse temper, which was such, that had they not been permitted to divorce their wives, some would not have scrupled to murder them; others would have got rid of them by suborning witnesses to prove the crime of adultery against them. Others would have reckoned it great mildness, if they had contented themselves with separating from their wives, and living unmarried. Moses therefore acted as a prudent lawgiver in allowing other causes of divorce besides adultery; because, by admitting the less, he avoided the greater evil. At the same time the Jews, whose hardness of heart rendered this expedient necessary, were chargeable with

all the evils that followed it; for which reason, as often as they divorced their wives, unless in the case of *adultery*, they sinned against the original law of marriage, and were criminal in the sight of God, notwithstanding that their law allowed such divorces. Our Lord, as Grotius well observes, strongly intimates, that a more tender disposition than that which characterized the Jews under the Mosaic dispensation, might justly be expected from his disciples.

*Ver. 9. Whoever shall put away his wife, &c.*] From our Lord's answer it appears, that the school of *Sammai* taught the best morality on the subject of divorce, but that the opinion of the school of *Hillel* was more agreeable to the law of Moses on that point. See on ch. v. 31. The present verse seems to be parallel to Mark, x. 11. having been spoken to the disciples in the house, as is probable from the unusual change of persons observable in this part of the discourse. The practice of unlimited divorces, which prevailed among the Jews, gave great encouragement to family quarrels, was very destructive of charity, and hindered the good education of their common offspring: besides, it tended not a little to make their children lose that reverence for them which is due to parents, as it was scarcely possible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel. Our Lord's prohibition, therefore, of these divorces is founded on the strongest reason, and tends highly to the peace and welfare of society. See Macknight, and Mintert on the word *πορνεια*.

*Ver. 10. If the case of the man be so, &c.*] The disciples observed to their Lord, that since the law of marriage is so rigid, that, unless the woman breaks the bond by going astray, her husband cannot dismiss her, but must bear with her, whatever are her other vices, deformities, or defects,—a man had better not marry at all. To this our Lord replies, that certainly it is not in every one's power to live continently; yet if any man has the gift, whether by natural constitution, or by the injury of human force used upon him, which has rendered him incapable of the matrimonial union,—according to that infamous traffic which the luxury and effeminacy of the Eastern world rendered so common; or by an ardent desire of promoting the interests of religion, animating him to subdue his natural appetite, and enabling him to live in voluntary chastity, unincumbered with the cares of the world; such a person will not sin, though he lead a single life. That the imputation of desire only is meant by the phrase, *who have made themselves eunuchs*, may be gathered from the other clauses of the passage: for there is mention made first of *eunuchs, who were so born from their mother's womb*; plainly importing that some are continent by natural constitution. Next we are told of *eunuchs who have been made so by men*; and last of all, *there be, who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake*; not by doing violence to themselves, but by a strong resolution of living continently

12 For there are some eunuchs which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

13 ¶ Then were there brought unto

him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray. And the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

15 And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.

° If. 56. 3—5. 1 Cor. 7. 7, 17, 32—35. & 9. 5. Mark, 10. 12. Some abstain from marriage from a natural, and others from a forced, defect; and others in order that they may the better serve Christ. P Mark, 10. 13—16. Luke, 18. 15, 16. Gen. 43. 14, 15. 1 Sam. 1. 24. Jer. 49. 11. Ch. 18. 3. Mark, 10. 14. Luke, 18. 16. 1 Cor. 14. 20. 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. Prov. 8. 17. & 23. 26. Pl. 34. 11. & 45. 16, 11. Gen. 48. 14. Mark, 6. 5. & 16. 18. Luke, 4. 40. & 13. 13. Num. 8. 20. Acts, 8. 16, &c.

continently in a state of celibacy, for the sake of promoting more effectually the interests of religion: See 1 Cor. vii. 7, 37. Our Lord adds, *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*; which words must not be referred to the clauses immediately preceding them, as if our Lord meant to say, "He who is able to become an eunuch by any of the ways I have mentioned, let him become one:" for the second way is without all question unlawful: but they must refer to ver. 11. as is plain from the words themselves. In that verse Jesus had said, "All men cannot receive this saying, &c. They cannot live without marriage chastely, unless they have the gift of continency." In the 12th verse he shews how that gift is obtained, mentioning three ways of it; and then adds, *he that is able to receive it, let him receive it*. "He who by any of the methods that I have mentioned is in a capacity of living chastely, may continue unmarried without sinning." We may just observe, that what is here said of a single life, is entirely perverted by the Roman Catholics, when they produce it to discredit matrimony, and exalt celibacy as a more perfect state; for on this very occasion marriage is declared to be an institution of God: and, lest any one might have replied, that it was a remedy contrived purely for the weakness of our fallen state, it is particularly observed, that it was instituted in the time of man's innocence. Wherefore, as the Apostle tells us, *Marriage is honourable in all ranks and conditions of persons*, provided the duties thereof are inevitably maintained. Besides, it is false to affirm that our Lord recommends celibacy; he only gives permission for it, as a thing not unlawful; telling them, that if they were able to live continently, they would not sin, though they did not marry; especially as the times they lived in were times of persecution. In this light also the judgment of the apostle St. Paul is to be considered, 1 Cor. vii. 26. See Macknight, Wetstein, and Chemnitz.

Ver. 13. *Then were there brought unto him little children*] Grotius observes, that it was a custom with the Jews to bring their children to persons of remarkable sanctity, to receive their blessing, and to enjoy the benefit of their prayers; a custom which is preserved among them to this day. The imposition of hands was a ceremony with which the ancient prophets always accompanied their prayers in behalf of others. This action of our Saviour might be performed only in compliance with the above-mentioned custom; yet there are others who imagine that

these children were brought by certain persons, who, seeing the many wonders performed by Christ, thought perhaps that his power would be effectual in preventing, as in removing distempers; and therefore proposed to get their little ones secured by his prayers from all harms. Whatever was their design *the disciples rebuked them*; apprehending them too troublesome, and thinking it beneath the dignity of so great a prophet, to concern himself about such little creatures, who were incapable of receiving any instruction from him. Wetstein thinks that, being deeply engaged in the discourse concerning matrimony, and having many curious questions to propose to their Master, they were displeased to be thus unreasonably interrupted.

Ver. 14. *Suffer little children, &c.*] *Let the little children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me.* See Dr. Scott, Doddridge, &c. Christ's shewing his regard in such a manner for these children, must not only have been exceedingly pleasing to the parents, but the memory of this condescension might make tender and lasting impressions on the children themselves; and the sight must have been very edifying and encouraging to other young persons who might happen to be present; not to say how instructive this gentleness to children may be to ministers, and how much their usefulness may be promoted by a regard to it. Our Lord might reasonably be the more displeased with his disciples for endeavouring to prevent their being brought, as he had so lately set a child among them, and insisted on the necessity of their being made conformable to it. See ch. xviii. 2, 3. And perhaps, as the disciples expressed some dissatisfaction at his doctrine concerning divorce, ver. 10. Jesus took this opportunity to inform them again, that unless they possessed the humility, meekness, and docility of children, they should not enter into the kingdom of God; *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*; that is to say, as Dr. Doddridge paraphrases it, "Persons of such a character are the true subjects of my kingdom, and heirs of eternal glory, to which my little children are received; and, in token of it, the children of believing parents are to be admitted into my church by baptism." See Mark, x. 15.

Ver. 15. *And he laid his hands on them, &c.*] Though the little ones could not profit by our Saviour's instructions, yet being capable of his good wishes and blessings, St. Mark tells us, ch. x. 16. *He took them up in his arms, and, with his usual benevolence, blessed them.* The imposition of hands being always accompanied with prayer, St.

16 ¶ And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is God:* but, if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not

commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to

\* Mark, 10. 17—22. Luke, 18. 18—23. & 10. 25—29. † Rom. 10. 2, 3. & 9. 31, 32. John, 6. 28. ‡ 1 Sam. 2. 2. Pf. 119. 68. James, 1. 17. § Lev. 18. 5. Rom. 10. 5. Gal. 3. 10, 12. H. 1. 19. & 3. 10. ¶ Exod. 20. 12—17. Deut. 5. 16—21. Mark, 10. 19. Luke, 18. 20. Rom. 13. 8, 9. Gal. 5. 14. James, 2. 8. Eph. 6. 2. Lev. 19. 13. Ch. 22. 39. † Titus, 1. 16. H. 58. 2. Ezek. 33. 31. Luke, 18. 11, 12. ‡ Ca. 6. 19, 20. & 5. 48. Luke, 12. 33. & 16. 9. 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19. Acts, 2. 44. & 4. 32, 34.

St. Matthew, who, in the beginning of this account, had joined these two together, says simply at the conclusion, that *He laid his hands on them, and departed.* It is probable, therefore, that Jesus both recommended the young ones to God in prayer, and blessed them himself.

Ver. 16. *Behold, one came and said*] For the explanation of this event see the notes on Mark, x. 17. &c. where it is more circumstantially related.

Ver. 17. *There is none good but one, that is God*] This passage has been produced and strongly argued by the Arians in favour of their system. They found their argument upon the Greek, which runs thus, Ουδεις εις αγαθου, η μη εις, ο Θεου. *There is none good, but εις one; and that (one) is ο Θεου, God.* Whence it is argued, that the adjective εις being in the masculine gender, cannot be interpreted to signify *one being, or nature* (for then it should have been εις in the neuter), but *one person*; so that by confining the attribute of goodness to the single person of the Father, it must of course exclude the persons of the Son and Holy Ghost from the unity of the Godhead. This, it must be owned, is a plausible objection: for, supposing the word εις to signify *one person* (and in that lies the whole force of the argument) then, if *one person only is good*, and that person is *God*, it must also follow, that there is but *one person who is God*; the name of *God* being as much confined hereby to a *single person*, as the attribute of *goodness*. But this is utterly false; the names of *God, Lord, Lord of hosts, the Almighty, Most High, Eternal, God of Israel, &c.* being also ascribed to the *second and third persons* of the blessed Trinity. Take it in this way, therefore, and the objection, by proving too much, confutes itself, and proves nothing. The truth is, this criticism, upon the strength of which some have dared to *undeify* the Saviour, has no foundation in the original. The word εις is so far from requiring the substantive *person* to be understood with it, that it is put in the *masculine* gender to agree with its substantive Θεου, and is best construed by an adverb. If you follow the Greek by a literal translation, it will be thus, *There is none good,—εις μη εις ο Θεου,—but the one God; that is, in common English, but God only.* And it happens, that the same Greek, word for word, occurs in Mark, ii. 7. *Who can forgive sins,—εις μη εις ο Θεου, but God only?* So it is rendered by our translators; and we have a plain matter of fact, that the word εις in this place cannot possibly admit the sense of *one person*, because Christ, who is

another person, took upon him to *forgive sins*. In the parallel place of St. Luke's Gospel (ch. v. 21.) the expression is varied, so as to make it still clearer,—ει μη μου ο Θεου,—not εις, but μου, another adjective of the masculine gender, which, though it agree with its substantive Θεου, is rightly construed with an adverb,—either the *alone God, or God only*: and the Greek itself uses one for the other indifferently, as επ' αρω μου, *by bread only*, Matth. iv. 4. εν λογω μου, *in word only*, 1 Thess. i. 5. The utmost that can be gathered therefore from these words, is no more than this, that there is *one God*, (in which we are all agreed) and that there is *none good* besides him, which nobody will dispute. Whether in this *God* there be *one person* or *three*, remains yet to be considered; and the Scripture is so express in other places as to settle it beyond all dispute. If it should here be asked, for what reason Christ put the question before us, *Why callest thou me good?* I answer, for the same reason that he asked the Pharisees, *Why David in spirit called him LORD?* ch. xxii. 43. and that was, to try if they were able to account for it. This young man, by addressing our Saviour under the name of *good master*, when the Psalmist had affirmed long before, that *there is none that doeth good, no NOT ONE*, (Ps. xiv. 3.) did in effect allow him to be *God*; no mere man since the fall of *Adam* having any claim to that character; and, when he was called upon to explain his meaning, for that *God only was good*, he should have replied in the words of St. Thomas, *My Lord, and my God!* which would have been a noble instance of faith, and have cleared up the whole difficulty. See Jones's "Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity," p. 13.

Ver. 21. *If thou wilt be perfect; &c.*] That is, "If thou wilt prove thyself a true disciple of mine; if thou wilt enter perfectly and unfeignedly under my banner, and enlist in my cause." It may not be improper to observe, that the terms of salvation here settled are not different from those mentioned elsewhere in Scripture: for though faith is declared by our Lord himself to be the condition of salvation, it is such a faith, as influences to the universal righteousness here described; *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* Moreover, the Christian religion, being from God, is established upon such solid evidences, that every humble person to whom it is offered will receive it with pleasure; and, if any man refuse it, his infidelity can be owing to no other cause than this,

the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

22 But, when the young man heard that saying, <sup>b</sup> he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

23 ¶ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, <sup>c</sup> that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, <sup>d</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard *it* they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, <sup>e</sup> With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

27 ¶ Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me <sup>f</sup> in the regeneration, when the Son of man

<sup>b</sup> Ch. 13. 22. Judges, 18. 23, 24. Pf. 17. 14. Phil. 3. 19. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 13. 22. Job, 31. 24. Pf. 62. 11. Prov. 11. 28. 1 Cor. 1. 26. James, 4. 4. & 5. 1—3. 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. James, 2. 5. Mark, 10. 23—26. Luke, 18. 24—27. <sup>d</sup> Jer. 13. 23. Luke, 18. 25. John, 5. 44. 1 Cor. 1. 26. <sup>e</sup> Job, 10. 13. & 42. 2. Jer. 32. 17. Zech. 8. 6. Gen. 18. 14. Luke, 1. 37. & 18. 27. Phil. 4. 13. Heb. 7. 25. If. 63. 1—4. Mark, 10. 27. <sup>f</sup> Mark, 10. 28—31. Luke, 18. 28—30. Ch. 4. 20, 22. Luke, 5. 11. Phil. 3. 7—9. Deut. 33. 9. <sup>g</sup> If. 65. 17. & 66. 22. John, 3. 3, 5. 2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15. Heb. 9. 10. 2 Peter, 3. 13. Acts, 3. 21.

this, that his deeds are evil. So our Lord himself says expressly, John, iii. 19. and therefore, in returning a general answer concerning the terms of salvation, Jesus fitly directed this young man to a sincere, constant, and universal obedience; and, when he replied that he had arrived at that already, and desired to know if he lacked any thing more,—namely, to render him perfectly good, our Lord, who knew how destitute he was of the true evangelical principles of holiness, required him to become his disciple; which, as he had acknowledged our Lord's divine mission, he could not refuse to do, if he was the man that he pretended to be. At the same time Jesus let him know, that he could not be *perfect*, or his disciple, and much less a preacher of the Gospel, without renouncing worldly possessions; because, as matters then stood, the very profession of his religion, and much more the preaching of it, would infallibly expose him to the loss of his estate. Here, therefore, our Lord has declared, that all men to whom the Gospel is offered must believe it, and make profession of it, and produce all the fruits of it internally and externally, or they cannot be saved; but he by no means says, that it is absolutely necessary for all Christians to sell their goods, and give them to the poor. An intire actual renunciation of worldly possessions might, in innumerable instances, be necessary in the first ages, when the profession of Christianity, but especially the preaching of it, exposed men to persecution and death; which was the reason that Jesus mentioned it to the young man as his indispensable duty, especially as he aimed at the highest degree of goodness: but all that our Master requires of us at present is, that we be in constant and habitual readiness to part with all things in the world; and that we actually do so with perfect acquiescence in God's good pleasure, when he in his providence calls thereto. See on Luke, xiv. 33. Macknight, and Law's Christian Perfection, ch. 3.

*Ver. 23. Shall hardly] Will hardly.*

*Ver. 24. It is easier for a camel, &c.] Or, a cable. See Boch. tom. i. p. 92. Vorst. Adag. p. 14. The rendering of the original word by cable, undoubtedly coalesces more perfectly with the other metaphor of the needle; but, as*

there is nothing in the proverbial expression, as it stands in the common versions, but what is very agreeable to the Eastern taste, and may be paralleled in other Jewish writings, there seems no great reason to depart from it. The Jews generally made use of the phrase, *An elephant cannot pass through the eye of a needle*; which our Saviour changes for a *camel*, an animal very common in Syria, and whose bunch on its neck is apt to hinder its passage through any low entrance. In our Saviour's time, too, the word *camel* was proverbially used to express any vast object, that being the largest animal in Palestine. Thus we read, ch. xxiii. 24. *Strain at a gnat and swallow a camel*. We may just observe, that these strong expressions must be understood in their strictest sense, of the state of things at that time subsisting; yet in some degree are applicable to rich men in all ages: the reason is, riches have a woeful effect upon piety in two respects: *first*, in the acquisition; for, not to mention the many frauds and other sins which men too often commit to obtain riches,—they occasion an endless variety of cares and anxieties, which draw the affections away from God. *Secondly*, They are generally offensive to piety in the possession; because if they be hoarded, they never fail to beget covetousness, which is the root of all evil; and if they be enjoyed, they become strong temptations to luxury and drunkenness, to lust, pride, and idleness. See Heylin, and Mintert on the word *καυναλ*.

*Ver. 28. Ye which have followed, &c.] Ye who have followed me, shall in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon, &c. sit also upon, &c. See Doddridge, and the version of 1729. The latter has the passage thus: In the new age, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye that have followed me shall likewise sit upon twelve thrones, &c. This appears to be a very natural sense of this difficult passage: many commentators, however, understand it differently, and agreeably to our translation. "Jesus replied (says Macknight) to the inquiry of Peter, "that he and the rest of the apostles should certainly have "a peculiar reward even in this life; because, immediately after his resurrection, when he ascended the throne*



<sup>1</sup> shall sit in the throne of his glory, <sup>1</sup> ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 <sup>2</sup> And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or

mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30 <sup>1</sup> But many *that are first* shall be last; and the last *shall be first*.

<sup>1</sup> Pl. 110. 1. Heb. 1. 3. or ch. 25. 31. Rev. 20. 4, 11. 1 Thess. 4. 17. 2. 26. & 3. 21. 2 Tim. 4. 8. & 2. 12. <sup>2</sup> Mark, 10. 29, 30. Luke, 18. 29, 30. Ch. 8. 11, 12. & 21. 31, 32. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 8. 11, 12.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 12. 28. Eph. 4. 11. Luke, 22. 28—30. 1 Cor. 6. 2, 3. Rev. 18. 29, 30. Ch. 8. 11, 12. & 21. 31, 32. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 8. 11, 12.

“ of his mediatorial kingdom, he would advance them to the high honour of *judging the twelve tribes of Israel*; that is to say, of ruling his church and people, of which the twelve tribes were a type. *You who have followed me in the regeneration,  $\omega\lambda\lambda\iota\gamma\gamma\epsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ , you who have left all and followed me, in order to assist me in accomplishing the creation of the new heavens and the new earth,* predicted Isai. lxxv. 17. *when the Son of man shall sit, &c. you also shall sit, &c.* In the 7th chapter of Daniel, the prophet, speaking of the Messiah's kingdom, says, ver. 9. &c. *I beheld till the thrones were set, (not cast down, as it is in our translation,) and the Ancient of days did sit, namely, on one of those thrones; and behold, one like the Son of man came to the Ancient of days, while he sat on his throne, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom.* By the kingdom which was given to the Son of man, the prophet meant his mediatorial kingdom; and by the glory, his being seated beside the Ancient of days on one of the thrones, in testimony of his exaltation to that kingdom. The throne of his glory therefore, which our Lord speaks of in the text, is the throne of his mediatorial kingdom; called the *throne of his glory*, in allusion to the representation which Daniel had given of it. In this kingdom the apostles likewise were to be seated on thrones, and to judge the tribes; that is to say, were to be next to the Messiah in dignity and office; his ministers, by whom he was to subdue and govern his church. In Luke, xxii. 28. we find this promise repeated to the disciples in words more fully to the same purpose. See the note on that place. Our Lord adds, *judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Now, according to the common interpretation of these words, they imply, that at the general judgment the apostles shall assist Christ in passing sentence on the *Israelites*; yet this explication may justly be disputed, because the promise thus understood would make the apostles very much inferior to all other saints, of whom it is said that *they shall judge the world*, and not the world only, but angels also, 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. Besides, the promise, in the ordinary sense of it, is not applicable to Judas at all, who, having proved so bad a man, cannot be supposed capable of the dignity of Christ's assessors at the general judgment. Our Lord certainly well knew that Judas would fall from his office and dignity; but as Matthias filled his place, and stood entitled to the promise, he did not think fit to enter into any particular distinction, but speaks to the whole body of the apostles in words which he knew would be accomplished to the far greater part of those to whom they were addressed. In the Hebrew language, *to judge* signifies *to rule or govern*. See Judges, <sup>1</sup> vi. 1.

“ xii. 7. 1 Sam. viii. 5. wherefore, by the apostles sitting on the thrones, judging the tribes, may be understood their ruling the Christian church, of which the Jewish was a type, by the laws of the Gospel which their Master inspired them to preach, and by the infallible decisions relative to faith and manners which he enabled them to give in all difficult cases. Such seems to have been the true nature of the dignity which Jesus promised to his apostles: however, as they had always been accustomed to look on the Messiah's kingdom as a secular empire, they would naturally interpret their *sitting on thrones, and judging the tribes*, of their being made chief magistrates in Judea under their Master; and would thence take courage again, after having been greatly dispirited by the declaration which Jesus had made concerning the impossibility of a rich man's entering into his kingdom.” See Macknight, Fleming's Christology, vol. i. p. 28. Grotius, Wetstein, and Bishop Bull's Works, vol. i. p. 281.

Ver. 29. *And every one that hath forsaken, &c.*] Our Saviour speaks next of the rewards which his other disciples should receive, both in this life, and that which is to come. See Mark, x. 30. where the promise is more fully expressed. Wetstein observes, that the event confirmed the prediction. For *one house*, the first preachers of the Gospel found a hospitable reception in almost every part of the earth;—for a few *brethren and sisters*, an innumerable multitude of true believers; for *children*, all those whom they had truly converted to the Christian faith; for *lands*, all the goods of the Christians, which were in common; and in fine, for this *life, life eternal*. *They shall receive an hundred fold,  $\epsilon\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\alpha\pi\lambda\lambda\acute{o}\sigma\iota\upsilon\alpha$ .* That is, says one, “ They shall have abundantly more and greater blessings than they part with;—a full content of mind, and the comforts of an upright conscience, the joys of the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, hopes of glory; they shall have God for their *father*, Christ for their *spouse*, and all good Christians for their *brethren*.”

Ver. 30. *But many that are first, &c.*] “ Many, who in the eyes of their fellow-creatures are least in this life, by reason of their affliction, mortification, and self-denial, are really first, not only in point of future reward, but even in respect of present satisfaction.” These words were spoken also with a view to keep the disciples humble, after their imaginations had been warmed with the prospect of their reward; for, in all probability, they interpreted the promise of the thrones so, as to make it refer to the highest offices in the temporal kingdom,—the offices of greatest power, honour, and profit in Judea; and supposed that the other posts, which were to be occupied at a distance from the Messiah's person, such as the government

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## CHAP. XX.

*Christ, by the similitude of the labourers in the vineyard, sheweth that God is debtor unto no man; foretelleth his passion; by answering the mother of Zebedee's children, teacheth his disciples to be lowly: and giveth two blind men their sight.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**F**OR <sup>a</sup> the kingdom of heaven is like unto <sup>b</sup> a man *that is* an householder, which went

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. & 13. 1-52. <sup>b</sup> If. 5. 1, 2. Pf. 80. 8-17. Jer. 2. 21. Ch. 21. 33-47. Song. 8-11. <sup>c</sup> 1 Kings, 18. 12. 2 Tim. 3. 15. Prov. 8. 17. <sup>d</sup> Phil. 2. 12. 2 Peter, 1. 5-10. 1 Cor. 15. 58. <sup>e</sup> Exod. 19. 5, 6. Deut. iv-xxxii. If. 1. 16-20. <sup>f</sup> The Roman penny is seven pence three farthings. Ch. 18. 28. & 22. 19. Rev. 6. 6.

vernment of provinces, the command of armies, &c. would all be filled by their brethren the Jews, to whom, of right, they judged them to belong, rather than to the Gentiles. Nay, it was a prevailing opinion at this time, that every particular Jew whatever, the poorest not excepted, would enjoy some office or other in the vast empire which the Messiah was to erect over all nations. In this light Christ's meaning was, "Though you may imagine that you and your brethren have a peculiar title to the great and substantial blessings of my kingdom which I have been describing, yet the *Gentiles* shall have equal opportunities and advantages of obtaining them; because they shall be admitted to all the privileges of the Gospel, before your nation is converted." See Rom. xi. 25, 26. Jesus illustrated this doctrine by the *parable of the householder*, who hired labourers into his vineyard at different hours, and in the evening gave them all the same wages, beginning from the last to the first. See the first verse of the next chapter, which the subject, as well as the connective particle *for*, shews to be very improperly divided from the present verse and chapter.

*Inferences.*—What our Saviour says at the beginning of this chapter, with respect to the divorces in use among the Jews, teaches us in general, that many things which had been tolerated till that time, on account of the hardness of this people's hearts, would not be allowed among Christians: blessed with greater light, they are certainly called to a higher degree of holiness.

The union which is formed between man and woman by marriage is more intimate and inseparable than that between parents and children, ver. 5. It is honoured by being made the figure and representation of the union which subsists between Christ and his church; it is a partnership of soul and body, of life and fortune, comfort and support, and designs and inclinations. What a wickedness it is to sow divisions in a society so holy and so dear to God! But how much greater is it still, to violate it by a criminal and adulterous commerce!

That which is established by the wisdom of the Creator is one thing; that which is extorted from his condescension by the hardness of men's hearts is another; ver. 8. The former has nothing but what is worthy of the Creator; the latter is only a remedy for the imperfection of the creature: considering the indissoluble bond by which God

out <sup>c</sup> early in the morning to hire <sup>d</sup> labourers into his vineyard.

2 And, when <sup>e</sup> he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the <sup>\*</sup> third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place;

4 And said unto them, Go ye also into the

has joined them together, how much should those who are married, make it their constant care to promote each other's comfort and happiness! How cautiously should they guard against every degree of contention, or even of distaste, which might at length occasion an alienation in their affections, and render so close a bond proportionably grievous!

Before we enter into an engagement which nothing but death can intirely dissolve, prudence certainly obliges us to consider it on all sides; nor should we ever determine our choice by considerations of a low and transitory nature. There are inconveniencies in every state; but those of marriage are not sufficient to keep such persons from it as God thinks fit to call thereto. They must consult his will, and rely upon his grace. The state of voluntary and perpetual continence, undertaken for God's sake, is a gift of God himself, and the only kind of virginity which he has engaged to reward. Let those who prefer the freedom of a single life to a state, which, with its peculiar comforts, must necessarily have its peculiar cares and trials too, diligently improve that disengagement as an obligation to seek the kingdom of God with greater ardour, and to pursue its interests with more active zeal and application; ver. 10-12.

How delightful and instructive it is to see the compassionate Shepherd of Israel thus *gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom*, with all the tokens of tender regard; *rebuking his disciples* who forbade their coming, and laying his *gracious hands upon them to bless them!* How condescending and engaging a behaviour! How encouraging and amiable an image!

Let his ministers behold it, to teach them a becoming regard to *the lambs of their flock*, who should early be taken notice of and instructed, and for and with whom they should frequently pray; remembering how often divine grace takes possession of the heart in the years of infancy, and sanctifies the children of God almost from the womb. Every first impression made upon their tender minds should be carefully cherished; nor should those whom Christ himself is ready to receive be disregarded by his servants, who, upon all occasions, are bound to be *gentle unto all, and apt to teach.*

Behold this sight, ye *parents*, with pleasure and thankfulness; and let it encourage you to bring your children to Christ by faith, and to commit them to him in baptism and

vineyard, and <sup>s</sup> whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

<sup>s</sup> Phil. 1. 7. Col. 4. 1. 1 Pet. 1. 13. Heb. 6. 10.

5 Again, he went out <sup>\*</sup> about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

<sup>\*</sup> At different periods of time, and of men's life.

and by prayer. Should he, who has the keys of death and the unseen world, see fit to remove those objects of your tenderest care in their early days, let the recollection of this history comfort you, and teach you to hope and trust that he who so graciously received these children, has not forgotten yours; but that they are fallen asleep in him, and will be everlasting objects of his care and love: *For of such is the kingdom of God.*

Ye children too, observe this sight with gratitude and joy: the great and glorious Redeemer *did not despise these little ones*; nay, he was *displeas'd with those* who would have prevented their being brought to him. As kindly would he, no doubt, have received you; as kindly will he still receive you, if you go to him in the sincerity of your hearts, and ask his blessing in humble and earnest prayer. Though you see not Christ, he sees and hears you; he is ever present with you, to receive, to bless, and to save you. Happy the weakest of you, when lodged in the arms of Christ! nothing can ever harm you there.

Under this joyful persuasion let us all commit ourselves to him; studious to *become as little children*, if we desire to enter into his kingdom. Governed no more by the vain maxims of a corrupt and degenerate world, our minds no longer possessed, tormented, enslaved by pride, ambition, avarice, or lust—be it our care to put ourselves with the amiable simplicity of children, into the wise and kind hands of Jesus as our guardian, cheerfully referring ourselves to his pastoral and parental care, to be clothed and fed, to be guided and disposed of, as he shall see fit: for this purpose lay on us, O Lord, the invisible hand of thy Divinity, that it may take possession of our hearts and senses; that it may repress in us whatever is contrary to thy will, and so make us the children of God now, that we may at length be the happy children of the resurrection.

Respecting the unhappy youth falling short of the kingdom of heaven through the love of this world, we will speak on a future occasion. But who can fail to receive instruction from this example, and to be upon their guard against that specious harlot, the world, that most delusive and dangerous enemy of man, *who hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her?* Dangerous as they are to our eternal salvation, (ver. 23.) yet how universally are riches desired! how eagerly are they pursued by persons in all stations, and of all professions in life! But what do they generally prove?—Shining mischief, and gilded ruin. God, who well knows this, therefore, in fatherly mercy keeps or makes so many of his children poor. In this view they should be more than contented with their safer state; while those who are rich cannot too importunately intreat of God those influences of his grace, which can effect such things as are impossible with men, ver. 26.

Happy they who, truly following Christ, think not much of any thing that he demands; knowing that whatever they may lose, or whatever they may resign, they shall gain far

more by his favour. How little faith have we, to be unwilling to forsake for a moment, that which shall be restored with so much interest in heaven! He who possesses God regains every thing in him. This is that *hundred-fold*, which surpasses all expectation, all idea.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having finished his ministry in Galilee, Christ departed to return no more, till after his resurrection, unless for one passing visit, (Luke, xvii. 11.). When God's ministers have done their work in a place, Providence directs their removal; and till they have, none of their enemies in earth or hell, if they be faithful, can displace them. Christ was now advancing towards Jerusalem, the scene of his sufferings; and, in his way, took that part of Judæa where John had chiefly exercised his ministry. As was usual in every place through which he passed, great multitudes resorted to him, and, according to his wonted compassions, he healed them of all their diseases, in confirmation of the doctrines which he taught.

His ever-inveterate enemies the Pharisees failed not to attend him here also, using all their wiles to draw him into a snare, that they might prejudice the people against him. For which end we have,

1. The insidious question which they proposed to him concerning divorces: *Whether it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?* a question much debated in their schools; and, through the abuse of the permission granted in the law of Moses, they had done it on the most frivolous pretences. The Pharisees hoped, therefore, either to have matter of accusation against him, if he condemned divorces, as an opposer of the law of Moses; or, if he allowed them, thus generally, they would have treated him as licentious, the more serious Jews condemning those divorces which were made on trifling provocations.

2. In answer, Christ refers them to the original institution of marriage, as the best solution of the difficulty which they proposed. Let them consider that, and they might resolve their own question. It would thence appear that such arbitrary divorces were directly repugnant to the nature of the matrimonial bond. In the very creation of the first man and woman, the indissoluble union between them might be collected: Adam had none but Eve, nor could divorce her for another. This being of all relations the nearest, God ordained, that even a father or mother must be left for the sake of a wife: not that marriage vacates the obligation lying upon us to help and relieve them; no: but if all admit, that the reciprocal relation between parent and child may not be broken, much less can the nearer connection of husband and wife be dissolved. They are *one flesh*, near to each other as the members of the same body, which no one ever thought of parting with, but cherishes with tenderest care. Those therefore whom God has thus joined, it would be highly criminal and presumptuous in man to separate.

3. The Pharisees start an objection to this interpretation of Scripture, and flatter themselves that they have Moses on their

6 And about the <sup>h</sup> eleventh hour he went faith unto them, Why stand ye here all the out, and found others standing idle, and day idle?

<sup>a</sup> Time of calling the Gentiles. Rom. 16. 26. Eph. 1. 10. & 3. 5, 6. Col. 1. 26. Heb. 1. 1.

their side; *Why did Moses then, &c.*: very ready to seize the shadow of a plea, and, by representing Christ as an enemy to the institutions of Moses, to render him suspected, and prejudice the people against him. Thus do wicked men endeavour to pervert the blessed Scriptures, and make them militate against themselves.

4. Christ answers their objection, and in a way which did not a little reflect on their ill tempers and conduct. What they suppose a *command*, our Lord says was merely a *toleration*, and permitted as a judicial and political law, to prevent the greater evils which must ensue: such being their *hardness of heart*, that, rather than their helpless wives should be cruelly treated, perhaps murdered, to be rid of them, such being their malignity and obduracy, God was pleased for their sakes to dispense with his positive law, though *from the beginning it was not so*. Nor in the Gospel state should this be any longer suffered, Christ being come to restore this ordinance to its primitive institution, and to take away the hardness of men's hearts; therefore henceforward no divorces would be allowed, except in the case of unfaithfulness to the marriage-bed: and whosoever on any other cause should divorce his wife, and marry another, would be guilty of adultery, as he would be also who married her thus divorced.

5. The disciples, on hearing this determination of their Master, could not help, when they were alone, suggesting their apprehensions of the unhappiness of the married state, if divorces were so strictly prohibited; and that the experiment would be so dangerous, that it amounted to an injunction of celibacy: so apt are men to seek liberty for the indulgence of appetite, and to argue against the best institutions, because of some inconveniencies which may arise from them. If we possess the spirit of Christianity, of meekness, patience, and love, we shall learn to bear each other's burdens, compassionate each other's infirmities, and be thankful for the comforts that we enjoy, which far exceed the inconveniencies that divorce can be supposed to remedy.

6. Christ replies to their suggestion, that their reasoning in one view was right, and that a single state is preferable for those who have the gift of continence; especially in days of persecution and distress, and where the cares of a family, and the incumbrances thereto annexed, would make it more difficult for the first preachers of the Gospel to be travelling from place to place, or take up too much of their time and thoughts, instead of better things. But there are few, very few comparatively, who are possessed of this gift; and therefore marriage, with all its crosses, is far the most preferable, and to be chosen as a matter of duty; and, when entered upon in the fear and love of God, the comforts of that relation will be found to overpay us for all the crosses. But some there are from the birth by natural constitution formed for celibacy, strangers to the desire of women; some by the wickedness of men are incapacitated for the marriage state; and some, seeing powerful reasons to determine their choice, for the sake of

greater usefulness in the service of Jesus Christ, have such particular supplies of divine grace given them, as to be able to forego the delights of wedlock, and may laudably purpose to live a single life, though not under any vows, if afterwards they should see cause to change their sentiments: not as any thing meritorious, as the Papists suggest; but purely, that, being disengaged from the cares of life, they may be enabled to employ themselves more intirely in the work of God, than otherwise they could. *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

2dly, We have seen multitudes of others making their application to Christ: we behold, in the next place, some pious parents bringing their children to ask his divine benediction.

1. They brought their infants, that Jesus might lay his hands upon them, and pray for them, expecting in faith that he could impart to them spiritual blessings, and that his prayers would be attended with gracious effects. *Note*; They who have tasted the grace of Jesus themselves, cannot but earnestly desire, that all theirs may share with them the inestimable mercy, and therefore fail not to present their little ones to him for his blessing.

2. The disciples, apprehensive lest such a precedent should induce others to bring their children, and thereby occasion their Master much trouble; or supposing it beneath him to take notice of infants, or useless to bring them to him; rebuked those who brought the children, and wanted to prevent their application. But,

3. Christ expressed his displeasure against his disciples for obstructing so charitable a work, and bids them suffer these babes to be brought, seeing that *of such is the kingdom of heaven*: not only because the members of his church should be like these in spirit and temper; but also because the infants themselves, as well as grown persons, are capable of becoming subjects of the Gospel kingdom, and of having an interest in its spiritual blessings and privileges; and it so, then there can be no sufficient reason why they may not by baptism be admitted into the visible communion of the faithful. *And he laid his hands on them*, and blessed them: (Mark, x. 16.) though they cannot stretch out their infant hands to him in faith and prayer, he can confer on them his gifts of grace, and prepare them for his eternal kingdom. Thus, having confirmed the privileges of the lambs of his flock, *he departed thence*.

3dly, We have a conference between a promising young man who came with a question of the last importance, and our blessed Lord, whose answer is designed for his conviction and humiliation.

1. His address was most respectful, and his inquiry of the last consequence. Though Christ appeared outwardly mean and despicable, and he himself was a person of distinction, ye he humbly knelt before him, and with a title of uncommon veneration addressed him, desiring to be informed by him, as a prophet sent from God, by what works of righteousness he might assuredly attain that eternal life which he seemed above all things solicitous to secure.

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right *that* shall ye receive.

*Note;* (1.) Eternal life is the grand object, and most deserving our first concern. (2.) Youth and riches are dangerous snares, which too frequently divert the mind from the consideration of another world; but the more rare, the more commendable it is, when we see any person possessed of both, seeking in the first place the kingdom of God. (3.) They who would learn the way to eternal life, must be daily coming to Christ on their knees.

2. Our Lord replies both to his address and question. As the young ruler regarded him as a mere man, the title of *God*, in that emphatic sense was misapplied, since none is absolutely and perfectly good but God alone. As to the question—according to the views wherewith he came, expecting to obtain life by obedience to the law as a covenant of works, there was but one way: *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*, perfectly, universally, perpetually. Nothing short of this can secure a title to eternal life under the law, where every defect, failure, or omission, immediately incurs the penalty of the curse denounced, Deut. xxvii. 26. In which answer Christ appears designing to lead him to a view of the impossibility of obtaining righteousness and life eternal by any doings and duties of his own, and, by unhinging him from an opinion of his own goodness and abilities, to shew him the necessity of the atonement and prevalent intercession of the great Deliverer and Saviour. *Note;* There was once a way to life by personal perfect obedience; but, since the first man's sin, none ever went that way, he only excepted who was more than man.

3. Willing to know what these commandments were, and conceiving his abilities and inclinations equal to the task, the young ruler begs a distinct enumeration of them; and Jesus, to convince him how mistaken an idea he had formed of himself, instances only in the duties of the second table, which, if rightly understood, would minister to him abundant matter for humiliation, and shew him the impossibility of obtaining eternal life by his own obedience.

4. Ignorant of the spirituality of the law, and judging according to the wretched literal comments of the scribes, he thought that he might safely vouch for his obedience. From his youth up he had escaped from the grosser pollutions which are in the world, and made conscience of his ways. He was no adulterer, thief, murderer, or perjured person; and, having kept all these commandments, as he supposed, desired, with some shew of self-complacence, to know what farther was required, as if he only wanted to be informed, and was ready to obey. *Note;* (1.) Pride on our duties is as damnable as the indulgence of our sins. (2.) It may appear a strange, but it is a true assertion, that the fairest characters in the eyes of the world, are usually the farthest from the kingdom of God. (3.) We may be fully assured that we know neither God's law nor our own hearts, when we presume to say of the least of his commandments, All these have I kept from my youth. (4.) A humbling sight of our sins, not a vain conceit of ourselves, is the first step to the kingdom of God.

5. To convince him how mistaken his apprehensions were of his own goodness, Christ puts him on giving a proof of obedience to that leading precept of the law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; and he would presently see how much he wanted of the attainments which he boasted. He wished to be *perfect*: if he would be, as one step towards it, let him sell all his possessions, distribute them to the poor, have his affections taken off from earthly things, commence a constant attendant on Jesus, take up his cross, and follow his footsteps; and then he would secure the treasures of eternity, and be in the way to that eternal life which he sought. *Note;* (1.) A holy deadness to the world is at all times the duty of Christ's disciples; and there may be occasions still, where literally we are called on to part with all for his sake. (2.) Covetousness and inordinate love of the world are often seen in the fairest professors, and are among the worst symptoms of the insincerity and hypocrisy of their hearts. (3.) They who leave all for Christ, will be no losers in the end; the treasures of eternity will prove an ample recompense.

6. Unable to bear these hard sayings, and not at all inclined to part from his great possessions, though eternal life was at stake, the young man thought the way too narrow; yet, grieved to find that he had not reached the perfection which he fancied in himself, and loth to quit Christ and eternal life, *he went away sorrowful*, unwilling to lose the hopes of heaven, and yet resolved not to part with his great possessions on earth. *Note;* (1.) Riches are the rock on which innumerable souls are shipwrecked, and drowned thereby in perdition and destruction. (2.) The more we have of this world, in general the closer our affections cleave to it; and increasing wealth brings usually an increase of snares. (3.) Many are sorry to part with Christ, and submit with reluctance to the yoke of sin and the world, who yet perish under the bondage of corruption.

4thly, On occasion of so promising a youth's departure from him, through inordinate attachment to worldly wealth, our Lord, directing his discourse to his disciples,

1. Observes the vast obstructions which riches lay in the way of men's salvation. A rich man, whose heart is engaged with the care and love of his substance, can hardly ever become a subject of Christ's kingdom upon earth, or an inheritor of his kingdom in heaven. Things in their nature the most impracticable may be expected to happen, even, according to the proverbial expression, for a camel to go through a needle's eye sooner than for a man, whose heart is attached to his wealth, and seeks his happiness therein, to become a real disciple of Jesus, and an inheritor of glory. *Note;* (1.) The immense difficulties which riches put in our way to heaven, should make us thankful in a low condition, that God has not exposed us to this temptation; should suppress every rising of envy against our wealthy neighbours, and quench every inordinate desire of abundance. (2.) They who are rich have more duties to discharge; more temptations to struggle with; more self-denial to exercise; and a larger account of talents to settle than others; and therefore great grace is needful to sanctify great possessions.

2. The

8 So when <sup>1</sup> even was come the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

<sup>1</sup> Job, 19. 25. Acts, 17. 31. Ch. 13. 39, 40. & 24. 44. & 25. 6, 19, 31, 32. Heb. 9. 28. Rev. 20. 11, 12. 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.

2. The disciples express their astonishment at their Master's assertion: and if the case stood thus, they do not conceive it possible that the Messiah's kingdom could be supported, according to their mistaken ideas concerning it, if all the rich and great are excluded, who usually sway the world: or, if they understood him of the heavenly kingdom, they are ready to conclude, that few or none would ever attain thereunto, as many are possessed of wealth, and almost all desire it. *Note*; The more the hindrances in the way of salvation are, the greater diligence we need use to surmount them.

3. Christ, with concern observing their surprize and consternation, replied, that indeed with men, in their state of nature, considering their native corruption and worldly-mindedness, salvation was utterly out of their reach; they being unable of themselves to effect the needful change in their own hearts, or in each other's: more than human sufficiency was requisite. This is the work of God; impossibilities with us are possible with him: almighty grace can subdue the most inveterate corruptions, spiritualize the affections of the most worldly-minded, and enable the rich as well as the poor to overcome the temptations of their perilous state, and shew themselves rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. None therefore are to be despaired of: if they fly to God for pardon and salvation, they shall find it through the Beloved. Some refer this to the Messiah's kingdom upon earth, as if the answer implied, that though it appeared so impracticable to them to set up this kingdom, in opposition to all the wealth and greatness of the world; yet such supports should be ministered to them, poor and inconsiderable as they were, as should enable them to withstand all their enemies, and make their labours successful.

4. Peter, in the name of his brethren, thought this no unfavourable season to inquire what they should get, since they had left all and followed him. It is true, their all was not much; but such as it was, it was equally dear to them as if they had possessed greater wealth. *Note*; (1.) If our spirit be right, though our loss for Christ exceed not the widow's mite, he will accept it as if we had left greater possessions. (2.) Though it is not the mere motive of advantage which influences the faithful, we may notwithstanding with comfort look to the great recompense of reward.

5. Christ engages, that they who forsake all for him, shall be no losers in the issue. *They who have followed him in the regeneration*, shall be honoured with the most eminent seats in his kingdom, and sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

*In the regeneration*, either refers to the present state of the disciples who had followed Christ, and may spiritually describe the change which had passed on their souls by the renewing power of divine grace: or, it may signify their attendance upon him, and devoting themselves to his service in setting up that kingdom which was designed to effect a glorious reformation in the world. This phrase

may likewise be connected with the latter part of the clause, *when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory in the regeneration*, and then it has respect to the future state of the Redeemer's exaltation, when, after his ascension from the dead, they should be endued with power from on high, the former Mosaical dispensation should be abolished, and they commissioned to preach the Gospel, and erect the Christian church; in which *old things*, the Jewish ceremonials would pass away, and all things become new; new ordinances be administered, and new hearts and minds be given to the converts.

*Their sitting on thrones*, &c. may either imply the dignity of their apostleship, to which they should be advanced, to charge the Jews with their crimes, especially their rejection of the Messiah, and to denounce the vengeance ready to be executed upon them, which, in consequence of their predictions they should see accomplished: or, it refers to their distinguished place of honour, when, in the great day of the Redeemer's appearing and glory, they should be admitted to sit down as assessors with him, on thrones around his own, approving and applauding his judgement, dispensed according to the word which they had preached; and afterwards shall, in the eternal world, reign with Christ in glory everlasting.

And, while he thus promised the twelve this distinguished honour, he added also, for the encouragement of all who should tread in their steps to the end of time, that the like rewards should be the portion of the faithful. It is supposed, that, for Christ's sake, all his true disciples would be called upon to make very painful sacrifices, and often be forced to lose the affection of nearest and dearest relations, be separated from the greatest comforts of life, and deprived of all they possessed: but he engages to indemnify them for their losses; sometimes in *kind*, by his providence so ordering events, as that they shall in present advantages receive a *hundred fold*; or at least always *in comfort* shall have an abundant recompense, enjoying clearer and brighter manifestations of God's love and favour; and, for temporal losses, finding their souls enriched by spiritual graces—besides the glorious hope of *eternal life* in the world to come, which will infinitely overpay us for all the crosses and losses of this transitory life. We may learn from the whole of this discourse, (1.) To expect, if we are Christ's disciples, many a cross, and to be ready to part with whatever stands in competition with his honour and interest. (2.) To be thankful if we be not called to those severer exercises of discipleship which others before us have endured. (3.) To keep the promises in our eye when the day of trial comes, and then we shall think nothing too hard to suffer, or too dear to lose. A sense of the Redeemer's present love, and a prospect of the glory which shall be revealed, will make every present affliction light, and cause us to rejoice in the midst of our sorrows. (4.) The time in which the faithful suffer for Christ is momentary; but their reign with him shall be eternal.

6. He adds, by way of obviating any mistake which might

9 And, when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But, when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it* they murmured against the good man of the house,

12 Saying, These last \* have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us<sup>1</sup> which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 15. 28, 29. Acts, 11. 1, 2. & 22. 21, 22. 1 Theff. 2. 16. Rom. 11. 28. 1 Cor. 11. 23, 24. Luke, 15. 29. with Ru.h, 2. 19.

\* Or have continued one hour only.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 11.

might arise, as if eternal life was the reward of merit, not of grace; or as if priority of calling gave precedence in his kingdom; that *many who were first shall be last, and the last first*. Many of the Jews who were first called, refused the invitation; and many Gentiles through grace, though last invited, eagerly embraced the Gospel; and also many of those, both of the Jews and Gentiles, who were first converted and endured to the end, would be outstripped in attainments, and excelled in spirituality, zeal, and fidelity, by those who in order of time would afterwards come in, and be exalted to higher honours in his kingdom; which he elucidates by a parable in the succeeding chapter. *Note*; If we be called late we must work the faster, and give the greater diligence to redeem the time.

CHAP. XX.

*Ver. 1. For the kingdom of heaven, &c.*] The true scope of this parable is, to shew that the Jewish nation, who of all people were first in external privileges, and particularly in respect of the offer of the Gospel, would be last in accepting it; and that when they did receive it, they should enjoy no higher privileges under that dispensation, than the Gentiles, who were called at the eleventh hour. The application of the parable suggests this interpretation, ver. 16. So the *last shall be first, &c.* The *vineyard* signifies the dispensations of religion in general, which God gave to mankind in the different parts of the world. The *hiring of labourers early in the morning* represents that interposition of Providence by which the Jews were born members of God's visible church, and laid under obligations to obey the law of Moses; "for the *kingdom of heaven* (the *Master* of the kingdom of heaven) "is like unto a man, or may be fitly represented by the "similitude of a man, who is an householder, οικονομότης, "the *master of a family*." God's bestowing the Gospel dispensation upon mankind, and the preparations previous thereto, may be illustrated by a master of a family's sending labourers at different hours of the day to work in his vineyard. See Macknight, and Petavius, *Dogmat. Theolog.* vol. i. p. 305.

*Ver. 2. For a penny a-day*] A *denarius*, or Roman penny, in value about seven-pence halfpenny of our money,—which hence it seems was the usual price of a day's service among the Jews, as Tacitus tells us it was among the Romans, *Annal.* i. 17. It is therefore justly mentioned, *Rev.* vi. 6. as a proof of the great scarcity of provisions, when a *measure, or chænix of wheat*, which was the usual allowance to one man for a day, and was about an *English quart*, was sold at that price. See Doddridge.

*Ver. 3—7. He went out about the third hour, &c.*] The hiring of labourers at the subsequent third, sixth, and ninth hours, signifies the various interpositions of Providence, by which many of the Gentiles in the different ages of the world were converted, either in whole or in part, to the knowledge of the true God; becoming some *profelytes of righteousness*, others *profelytes of the gate*. The invitation given at the eleventh hour signifies God's calling the Gentiles to the Gospel dispensation, when the Gospel was preached in every civilized nation of the world.—The Jews were ready to look upon themselves with complacency, as a people who had for many ages adhered to the worship of the true God, and in some periods had endured great extremities out of a regard to it; and it seems natural to interpret what is said, ver. 12. of *bearing the burden and heat of the day*, with a reference to this, rather than to any peculiar hardship which the earlier converts among the Jews might have endured, more than the believing *Gentiles*, many of whom met with much the same treatment on their embracing Christianity. See 1 Theff. ii. 14. The hours are mentioned according to the ordinary division of the day among the Jews, the *third hour* being nine in the morning, and so on. The word δίκαιον, ver. 4. rendered *right*, signifies not only what a person may legally claim, but what he might equitably expect from a person of honour and humanity; whatsoever is reasonable. See Macknight, and Doddridge. The word ἀργούς, rendered *idle*, ver. 6. should rather be rendered *unemployed*; for they were willing to work.

*Ver. 8, 9. Call the labourers, &c.*] The equal reward bestowed on all,—the *penny* given to each labourer as his wages, signifies the Gospel, with its privileges and advantages, which they all enjoyed on an equal footing. The *steward* who called the labourers to receive this reward, represents the Apostles and first preachers, by whom the Gospel was offered both to Jews and Gentiles; and the rewards being first bestowed on the labourers who came at the eleventh hour, signifies, that the idolatrous Gentiles and profelytes would enjoy the Gospel with its privileges, before the Jewish nation would accept of it, the condition not of a few individuals, but of great bodies of men being represented in the parable.

*Ver. 11. They murmured against the good man, &c.*] The οικονομότης, or master of the family. That this was the case with the Jews, upon a general notion of the Gentiles being, according to the Christian scheme, intended to be partakers with them in the same church privileges, is plain from a variety of Scriptures; particularly Acts, xi. 2, 3. xiii. 45—50. xvii. 5, 13. xviii. 6, 13. xxii. 21, 22. xxviii.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, " Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny ?

14 Take *that* thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee.

15 " Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? ° is thine eye evil because I am good ?

16 <sup>p</sup> So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

17 ¶ <sup>q</sup> And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way,

and said unto them,

18 Behold, ' we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

20 ¶ <sup>r</sup> Then came to him the " mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt

<sup>m</sup> Gr. fellow. 1 Cor. 3. 9. with Rom. 9. 14. <sup>n</sup> Ch. 11. 25. Rom. 9. 15—21. Eph. 1. 3—11. & 2. 4—8. <sup>o</sup> Deut. 15. 9. Prov. 23. 6. Ch. 6. 23. Jonah, 4. 1—4. <sup>p</sup> Ch. 19. 30. Mark, 10. 31. Luke, 13. 30. & 7. 29. & 12. 32. Ch. 22. 14. & 7. 13. Acts, 13. 48. <sup>q</sup> Mark, 10. 32—34. Luke, 18. 31—34. <sup>r</sup> Ch. 5. 2. & 13. 11, 36. & 16. 13. Acts, 10. 41. Deut. 6. 7. Gen. 18. 19. <sup>s</sup> Ch. 16. 21. & 17. 9, 22, 23. & 26. 2. John, 2. 19. II. 53. 1—12. Pf. 2. 1—3. & 22. 1—21. & 69. 1—20. Ch. xxvi—xxviii. Mark, xiv—xvi. Luke, xxii—xxiv. John, xliii—xx. Acts, 4. 27, 28. & 2. 23. <sup>t</sup> Ch. 4. 21. Mark, 10. 35—45. Jer. 45. 5. <sup>u</sup> Salome. Mark, 15. 40. Ch. 27. 56.

29. 1 Thef. ii. 16. Since no murmurings can happen among the blessed, this must refer to the unbelieving Jews; but as it is certain they will have no place in the kingdom of heaven, we plainly see that it would be very absurd to pretend to draw doctrinal consequences from every incidental circumstance of the parable.

Ver. 13—15. Friend, I do thee no wrong] " Seeing I have given thee the hire which I promised thee, thou hast no reason of complaint; and if I choose to give unto those who came last into the vineyard as much hire as I have given to thee, who can find fault with it? I own it is an act of generosity; but am I not free to bestow what is mine own as I see proper? *Is thine eye evil, because I am good?* Because I am liberal and bountiful, art thou envious and covetous?" A malignant aspect is generally the attendant of a selfish envious temper, which was very characteristic of the Jews; this part of the parable, therefore, is a striking representation of God's goodness in bestowing upon the Gentiles the Gospel dispensation, without subjecting them to the grievous burden of the Mosaic yoke. In ver. 14. The original words Ἀρὸν τὸ σου, might be rendered, *take up that is thine*; and implies that they not only murmured, but in their passion threw down upon the ground the money which they had received.

Ver. 16. For many are called, &c.] A proverbial expression, which, as it is here stated, imports that the Jews should all be called by the Apostles and first preachers to receive the Gospel;—" They shall have the Gospel preached to them;" but that few of them, in comparison, would obey the call or become chosen servants, the generality of the nation wilfully remaining in infidelity and wickedness: wherefore, this branch of the parable very fitly represents the pride of the Jews in rejecting the Gospel, when they found the Gentiles admitted to its privileges without becoming subject to the institutions of Moses. In the mean time, we must not urge the circumstance of the reward so, as to fancy that either Jew or Gentile merited the blessings of the Gospel by their having laboured faithfully in the vineyard, or having behaved well

under their several dispensations. The Gospel, with its blessings, was bestowed of God's free grace, and without any thing in man meriting it: besides, it was offered promiscuously to all, whether good or bad, and was embraced by persons of all characters. See Macknight, Wetstein, and the Inferences.

Ver. 17. And Jesus going up to Jerusalem] See Mark, x. 32.

Ver. 18. Shall be betrayed unto the chief priests] The original word παραδοθήσονται, is the same both here and in St. Mark, x. 33. and plainly includes both our Saviour's being treacherously discovered by Judas, and given up into the hands of his enemies. He foretels that they should mock him, as if he was a fool, scourge him, as if he was a knave; spit on him, (Mark, x. 34.) to express their abhorrence of him, as a blasphemer; and crucify him, as a criminal slave. This prediction, being built upon the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, certainly contained matter of great encouragement to the disciples, had they understood and applied it in a proper manner; and it is a remarkable proof of the prophetic spirit which dwelt in Christ; for, humanly speaking, it was much more probable that he would have been privately assassinated, or stoned, as was once attempted, by some zealous transport of popular fury, than that he should have been thus solemnly condemned, and delivered up to crucifixion: a Roman punishment, with which we do not that find he had ever been threatened. Indeed, when the Jews condemned him for blasphemy, for which the punishment appointed in the law was stoning, and Pilate at last gave them a general permission to take him, and judge him according to their own law, (Matth. xxvi. 65, 66. John, xviii. 31. xix. 7. it is wonderful that they did not choose to stone him. But all this was done, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Compare Matth. xxvi. 56. and John, xix. 36.

Ver. 20, 21. Then came to him, &c.] Our Saviour's predictions respecting his sufferings were either not understood by his disciples, or at least they apprehended that whatever difficulties lay in the way, those sufferings certainly would end in his temporal triumph and glory. Upon



thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, \* the one on thy right hand and the other on the left † in thy kingdom.

22 But Jesus answered and said, † Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink † of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? they say unto him, † We are able.

23 And he saith unto them, † Ye shall

drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but to them † for whom it is prepared of my Father.

24 † And when the ten heard it they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gen-

† 1 Kings, 2. 19. & 22. 19. Pf. 45. 9. & 110. 1. i. e. be thy chief ministers of state. † Ch. 19. 28. & 16. 27, 28. Heb. 2. 8, 9. & 12. 2. † Rom. 8. 26. James, 4. 3. † Pf. 75. 8. Ch. 26. 39, 42. Mark, 14. 36. Luke, 12. 50. & 22. 42. John, 18. 11. If. 51. 17, 22. Pf. 60. 3. † Ch. 26. 56. John, 16. 32. † John, 16. 33. Ch. 10. 17—34. & 24. 9. Col. 1. 24. Acts, iv—xii. Rev. 1. 9. † Ch. 25. 34. Rom. 8. 17. † 1 Cor. 2. 9. Heb. 11. 16. John, 17. 2. Rev. 2. 7, 10, 17. & 3. 5, 12, 21. 2 Cor. 1. 7. Eph. 1. 3—14. † Luke, 22. 21, 25. Mark, 10. 41, 42. Prov. 13. 10. James, 4. 1.

Upon this presumption, the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons James and John, and at their instigation, came to Jesus with a peculiar request, which discovered in the clearest manner the temper of mind they were in: see Mark, x. 35. It seems Salome, for that was her name, (compare ch. xxvii. 56. with Mark, xv. 40.) was now in our Lord's train, having followed him from Galilee with other pious women, who attended him in his journey, and ministered unto him; that is, supplied him with money, and took care to have him accommodated with lodging and other necessaries. Salome could the more easily give this attendance, as her husband seems now to have been dead, and to have left her in good circumstances, according to his station; for we learn from the Gospels that he had a vessel of his own, and hired servants. Salome, therefore being particularly acquainted with our Lord, and having always shewn him great respect, thought herself entitled to distinguished favour, and on that account readily undertook, at the desire of her sons, to intercede with him in their behalf. Ever since Christ's transfiguration the two brothers had conceived very high notions of the glory of his kingdom, and, it may be, of their own merit also, because they had been admitted to behold that miracle. They formed the project, therefore, of securing to themselves the chief places by his particular promise, and embraced this as a fit opportunity of accomplishing their purpose. There is probably an allusion in the words of their request to a circumstance which the Talmudical writers relate concerning the Sanhedrim,—that there were two officers of distinction, who sat on each side of the *Nasi*, or president of the court;—the one called *Ab-betdin*, or, “the father of the justice,” who sat on the right hand of the president; the other *Chacham*, or the *sage*, who sat on the left. See Wittfus. Miscel. Sacra, vol. i. lib. ii. diff. 3. and Bishop Bull's works, vol. i. p. 286.

Ver. 22. *Ye know not what ye ask*] “You are ignorant of the nature of the honour that you are asking: however, since you desire to partake with me in my glory, I would know if you be willing to share with me in my sufferings, for the sake of the Gospel;” insinuating that the road to greatness in his kingdom lay through the depth of affliction and persecution on account of truth.

It was customary among the ancients to assign to each guest at a feast a particular *cup*, as well as *dish*, and by the kind and quantity of the liquor contained in it, the respect of the entertainer was expressed. Hence *cup* came in general to signify a *portion* assigned, whether of pleasure or sorrow; and many instances occur in which it refers to the latter. See ch. xxvi. 39, 42.

Ver. 23. *And be baptized with the baptism*] That is, “shall partake of my afflictions.” This metaphorical sense of the word *baptism*, is derived from the figurative expressions of the Old Testament, in which afflictions are represented under the notion of great waters passing over, and being ready to overwhelm a person. In this view of the matter James and John were *baptized with Christ's baptism*; for James was put to death by Herod, Acts, xii. 2. being the first of all the Apostles who suffered martyrdom for Christ; and though the account which some gave of John's being cast into a cauldron of boiling oil at Rome has been called in question by many, it is not to be doubted that he had his share in the persecutions, from which none of Christ's Apostles were exempted. He was imprisoned and scourged by order of the council at Jerusalem, Acts, v. 18, 40. and *banished to the isle of Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*, Rev. 1. 9. The last clause of this verse, *is not mine to give, &c.* should be translated, *is not mine to give, unless to them for whom it is prepared, &c.* ἄλλα being put here for εἰ μὴ, as it is Mark, ix. 8. See also ch. xvii. 8. Our Saviour meant that it was not in his power, consistently with his perfections, to give the chief places to any, but to those who were most eminent in their graces, particularly for their faith and fortitude; such only having a right to the chief places in the kingdom of heaven, according to the unalterable laws of the divine administration. “I can give the chief places of my kingdom to none, but to those, who, according to the immutable laws of my Father, are capable of enjoying them:” And in this view of the text, how poor a support does it afford to the Arian or Socinian cause!

Ver. 25. *The princes of the Gentiles*] *Of the nations around.* For God had prescribed to the children of Israel a just and equitable form of government. See Deut. xvii. 14., to the end. The word rendered, *have dominion over them,*

tiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 <sup>f</sup> But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ;

27 And whosoever will be chief among

you, let him be your servant :

28 <sup>g</sup> Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

29 ¶ <sup>h</sup> And as they departed from Jericho a great multitude followed him.

<sup>f</sup> Luke, 14. 11. & 18. 14. Ch. 18. 3, 4. & 23. 8—12. John, 13. 12—17. Ch. 11. 29. Heb. 5. 8. Phil. 2. 5—8. Rom. 15. 2. 1 Cor. 7. 19—21. <sup>g</sup> 11. 53. 10, 11. Dan. 9. 24, 26. Ch. 26. 28. Luke, 22. 27. John, 11. 51, 52. & 10. 11, 15. Rom. 5. 15—19. Phil. 2. 7, 8. 1 Tim. 2. 6. Tit. 2. 14. Heb. 9. 28. 1 Peter, 1. 18, 19. & 2. 24. & 3. 18. 2 Cor. 5. 21. Gal. 3. 13. & 4. 4. Rom. 8. 3, 4. & 3. 24—26. Eph. 1. 7. & 5. 2. <sup>h</sup> Mark, 10. 46—52. Luke, 18. 35—43.

κατακυριεύουσιν, signifies sometimes to use an immoderate and arbitrary power. See Mark, x. 42. It imports the abuse of royal authority (see 1 Sam. viii. 11., &c.) which God sometimes is pleased to permit for the punishment of men's iniquities. Jesus, solicitous to cure that pride, which made some of his disciples ambitious, and others jealous, called them unto him, and told them that his kingdom was not, as they imagined, of the same nature with the kingdoms of the world ; and that the greatness of his disciples was not the greatness of secular princes, which consists in reigning over others with absolute and despotic sway. See Grotius, and Beaufobre and Lenfant.

*Ver. 27. Let him be your servant*] There is a gradation here not commonly observed: the original word δούλος in the former verse, which, for want of a better word, we rendered *minister*, is a name which might be given to any who occasionally attended others, or were stately employed to render them any particular kind of service;—but δούλος, *servant*, signifies one, whose whole business it is to serve, and who is indeed the property of another. Our Lord appears to mean, that he who presides over others, ought to consider his station, not so much a noble and high post, as a charge and office, which indispensably obliges him to be always ready to defend and assist his subjects. This may be an allusion to what is said, Deut. xvii. 20. that the heart of the king of Israel ought not to be lifted up above his brethren ; and generally, indeed, true greatness consists in a man's humbling himself, and condescending to the meanest and lowest offices, if hereby he can at all advance the true happiness of his fellow-creatures.

*Ver. 28. Even as the Son of man*] “The greatness of my disciples consists in doing men all the good they possibly can, by a continual course of humble laborious services, in imitation of me your master, whose greatness consists not in being ministered to by men, but in ministering to them as a servant ; by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, instructing the ignorant, and laying down my life a ransom for the sins of many.” This being the highest dignity in Christ's kingdom, he might well tell the two brothers, that they did not know what they were asking, when they begged the honour of filling the highest stations in it. Instead of *not to be ministered unto, but to minister*, Dr. Heylin reads, *not to be served, but to serve* ; and instead of *let him be your servant*, ver. 27. *let him perform the meanest offices*. It does not follow, that because it is said *Christ gave his life a ransom for many*, that *Christ died not for all*. The word πᾶσι

being used in other places, where it most evidently signifies *all*. See Daniel, xii. 2. compared with John, v. 28, 29. Rom. v. 15. compared with 1 Cor. xv. 22.

*Ver. 29. And as they departed, &c.*] St. Luke says, that the blind man was cured as our Lord *draw nigh to Jericho*, ch. xviii. 35. and before he passed through the town, ch. xix. 1. The other Evangelists say, the miracle was performed as he *departed from Jericho*. But their accounts may be reconciled three different ways: *First*, Jesus arriving about mid-day entered Jericho, and having visited his acquaintance, or done any thing else that he had to do, returned in the evening by the gate through which he had gone in. As he was coming out, he passed by the beggars, and cured them. The next day he entered into and passed through Jericho in his way to Jerusalem. There is nothing improbable in this solution; for if our Lord was a night in that part of the country, he might spend it in some of the neighbouring villages, rather than in the city, where he had many enemies.—It may be objected, that St. Luke seems to say the miracle was performed as Jesus *went towards Jericho*, not as he was *coming away*, ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεριχὸν, but if the opinion of Grotius, Le Clerc, and others, may be relied upon, the phrase ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν, stands here for ἐν τῇ ἐγγύῃ εἶναι, *while he was near Jericho*. The *second* solution is as follows: the blind man, of whom St. Luke speaks, may have cried for a cure as Jesus went into Jericho about noon, though he did not obtain it then. The multitude rebuked him, and Jesus passed without giving him any answer, intending to make the miracle more illustrious. Towards evening, therefore, as he was returning, the blind beggar, who had cried after him in the morning, being joined by a companion in the same unhappy condition with himself, renewed his suit, beseeching the Son of David to have mercy on them. The multitude, as before, rebuked them for making such a noise ; but the season of the miracle being come, Jesus still called them to him and cured them: it may be objected, that St. Luke makes no distinction between the beggar's calling to Christ in the morning, and the cure performed in the evening as he came out, but connects the two events, as if they had happened in immediate succession.—The answer is, there are several undeniable examples of this kind of connection to be found in the Sacred History, particularly in St. Luke's Gospel, ch. xxiii. 25, 26. xxiv. 4, &c. The *third* solution of the difficulty is this: Jericho, having been a flourishing city before the Israelites entered Canaan, must, in the course of so many ages,

30 And, behold, <sup>1</sup> two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, <sup>2</sup> O Lord, *thou* Son of David!

31 <sup>1</sup> And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David!

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 9. 27. & 12. 22. & 11. 5. If. 35. 5, 6. & 42. 18. & 49. 10. Rom. 1. 3, 4. Rev. 22. 16. <sup>2</sup> Ch. 19. 13. & 15. 23. with Ch. 18. 19.

<sup>1</sup> If. 11. 1. Jer. 23. 5, 6. Ch. 1. 1. & 9. 27. & 12. 23. & 15. 22. Luke, 18. 1. & 11. 8. Ch. 7. 7. Phil. 4. 6. Pl. 50. 13.

ages, have undergone various changes from war and other accidents; we may therefore suppose that it consisted of an old and a new town, situated at a little distance from each other. On this supposition, the beggars sitting on the road between the two towns, might be said to have gained their cure either as Jesus departed from the one, or drew nigh to the other, according to the pleasure of the historians. The reader, however, must not look upon this as a mere supposition; for, on examination, he will find clear proof of it in the Sacred History. We are told (Josh. vi. 24, 26.) that after the Israelites had burned Jericho, Joshua, their general, interdicted by a curse the rebuilding of it. His curse struck such terror into the Israelites, that for the space of five hundred years no man attempted to rebuild Jericho, till Hiel the Beth-elite, in the days of Ahab, brought it upon himself, by venturing to raise the old city out of her ashes. 1 Kings, xvi. 34. But though the old city thus continued in ruins for many ages, there was a town very soon built not far from it, to which they gave its name: for so early as Eglon's time we read of *the city of Palm-trees*, Judges, iii. 13. a name peculiar to Jericho on account of the fine palm-trees with which it was environed. Deut. xxxiv. 3. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 15. Besides, we find Jericho, some time after this, expressly mentioned by name, it being the town where David ordered his messengers to abide till their beards, which Hanun king of Moab caused to be shaved, were grown. Wherefore, as there was a *Jericho* before Hiel rebuilt the ancient town, which Joshua destroyed, it cannot, I think, be doubted, that from Hiel's days there were two cities of this name, at no great distance from each other; perhaps a mile or so. Besides, Josephus intimates, that both of them subsisted in his time; expressly declaring, "that the spring which watered the territories of Jericho arose near the old town." See Bell. Jud. v. 4. Thus therefore we have an easy and perfect reconciliation of the seemingly contradictory accounts which the Evangelists have given of our Lord's miracle on the blind men in this part of the country. But although there had been no hint in antiquity, directing us to believe there were two cities of the name of Jericho, not far from each other, every reader must acknowledge, that to have supposed this, would have been sufficient to our purpose of reconciling the Evangelists, because there are such towns to be met with in every country; a thing which of itself must have rendered the supposition not only possible, but probable; and I may venture to say, that had two probable histories related any fact with the disagreeing circumstances found in the Evangelists, the critics would have thought them good reasons for such a supposition, especially if the historians were writers of character, and had been either eye-witnesses of the things which they related, or informed by the eye-witnesses of them. To

conclude, this instance may teach us never to despair of finding a proper and full solution of any imagined inconsistency that is to be met with in the Sacred History. The city of Jericho, for greatness and opulence, was inferior to none in Palestine; Jerusalem excepted. It was beautified with a palace for the reception of the governor, if he chose to go thither, with an amphitheatre for public shews, and a hippodrome for horse-races. The city was pleasantly situated, at the foot of that range of hills which bounded the Campus Magnus to the west. The country round was the most fertile spot in Canaan; yielding, besides the necessaries of life in great abundance, the best palms, also excellent honey, and the famed balsam-tree, the most precious production of the earth. The fruitfulness of this region was owing to various causes, and among the rest to a fine spring with which it was watered, and which anciently was sweetened by the prophet Elisha, who blessed the land likewise, by God's command, with perpetual and extraordinary fruitfulness. 2 Kings, ii. 18—22. The air was exceedingly mild; for when it snowed in the other provinces of Palestine, and was so cold that they were obliged to make use of the warmest clothing, the inhabitants of this place went about clad in linen only. Hence, as Josephus tells us, the territory of Jericho was called *θεσιον χωριον, a heavenly country*, resembling paradise for beauty and prospect, fertility of soil, and felicity of climate. The fountain which enriched this delightful spot was so large, as to deserve the name of a *water* or *river*, (Joshua, xvi. 1.) and refreshed a plain of seventy stadia long, and twenty broad; but the excellency of its quality is visible in its effects: for it gladdened the whole tract through which it glided, and made it look like a garden, affording a prospect more agreeable, as the neighbouring country was black and inhospitable. Jericho was a hundred and twenty stadia (that is, fifteen miles) from Jerusalem, almost due east, the country being mountainous; but thence to Jordan, which was at the distance of twenty stadia, or two miles and a half, and towards the Asphaltic lake, the land was flat and barren. See Macknight, and Reland's Palestine.

*Ver. 30. And, behold, two blind men]* St. Mark and St. Luke speak only of *one blind man* who was cured near Jericho. St. Augustin is of opinion, that one of these was more remarkable than the other, being *the son of Timeus*, who seems to have been a person of some distinction; and that, having fallen into poverty and blindness, he was forced to beg for his bread. He thinks this a good reason for his being mentioned particularly by one of the Evangelists. It may be added, that he might himself be remarkable by the extraordinary earnestness with which he cried. See Aug. de Consen. Evang. lib. 2.

*Ver. 31. Because they should hold their peace]* That they might, &c.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes

may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Ch. 7. 7. Ezek. 36. 37. Pf. 50. 15. & 97. 15. Feb. 4. 15. & 2. 17. Pf. 145. 8. Ch. 9. 36. & 14. 14. & 15. 32. Hof. 11. 8. If. 63. 7, 9, 15. Ch. 9. 29. & 12. 22. & 11. 5. If. 35. 5. Luke, 1. 79.

*Ver. 32. Jesus—said, What will ye, &c.]* It is observable, that we never find Jesus bestowing an alms of money on any poor person falling in his way; yet this is no objection against his charity: for if the person who addressed him was incapable of working for his own subsistence by reason of bodily infirmity, it was much more noble, and much more becoming the dignity of the Son of God, to remove the infirmity, and put the beggar in a condition of supporting himself, than by the gift of a small sum to relieve his present want, which would soon return; such an alms being at best but a trifling and indirect method of helping him. On the other hand, if the beggars who applied to him were not in real distress through want or disease, but, under the pretence of infirmity or poverty, followed begging, as they deserved no encouragement, so they met with none from Jesus, who knew perfectly the circumstances of every particular person with whom he conversed. Besides, to have bestowed money on the poor was not only beneath Christ's dignity, but, having occasion to perform great cures on several beggars, it might have afforded his enemies a plausible pretence for affirming, that he bribed such as feigned diseases, to feign cures likewise, of which they gave him the honour. See Macknight.

*Ver. 34. And they followed him]* The blind men travelled along with Jesus, perhaps all the way to Jerusalem, being deeply affected with a sense of his power and goodness, and earnestly desirous to shew their gratitude, by declaring openly to all the persons they met, what a great miracle Jesus had performed upon them. Besides, by following him in the road without any guide, they put the truth of the miracle beyond all suspicion. Accordingly St. Luke tells us, ch. xviii. 43. that the people, when they saw what was done, were thankful to God for the mercy of the cure, and acknowledged the divine mission of the prophet who had performed it, and who, before the cure, had been addressed by the blind men as the Son of David, or the Messiah. The allegorical reflection which Erasmus makes on this circumstance is beautiful: "Thus Jesus by his touch cures the mind, which is blinded by worldly lusts, and gives light for this end, that we may follow his footsteps."

*Inferences.—*Of what vast meaning and high importance are the concluding words of our Lord's awakening parable in this chapter! *Many are called, but few are chosen.* We ought often to meditate upon them, that we may not content ourselves with having the offers of the Gospel made to us, or even with being admitted into the visible church of God, but may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

We are summoned to a course of holy labour, even to work in our Lord's vineyard; or in every station, whether

public or private, to do our utmost to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind. With so many calls, and so many advantages, shall we stand all the day idle? No; rather let us be active and patient, and cheerfully willing to bear all the burden and heat of the day in so good a cause; knowing that ere long the evening will come, and that he who employs us, saith, *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.*

It is an encouraging thought to those who have long neglected the great business of life, that some were called at the eleventh hour; but it will be dangerous indeed for any to presume on their having such a call. It will be delusive and erroneous to strain the parable so far, as to imagine that an equal reward awaits all, without any regard to their characters or improvements; for this is most contrary, to the reason of things, to the word of God, and to the great intent of that day, which is to render to every man according to his works. The Gentiles are indeed now called to equal privileges with the Jews, to which this circumstance of the parable refers; and we all see how odious a temper it was in that favourite nation to be offended with the Gospel on that account, which should rather have recommended it to their most joyful acceptance. It should be our care to avoid every degree of envy, whoever may be put on a level with, or preferred to us; acknowledging the sovereign right of God to do what he will with his own, nor suffering our eye to be evil and malicious, because he is bountiful and good. To prevent this, we should labour after that unfeigned love to the brethren, which will never allow us to repine at their advancement, but will engage us to rejoice in their honour and happiness; so shall we exchange the basest and most uneasy passion of human nature, for that which is of all others the noblest and most delightful.

He, who had his own time and ours in his hand, foreknew and foretold the approach of his dissolution; ver. 17—19. When men are near their end, and ready to make their will, then is it reasonable to sue for legacies. Thus did the mother of Zebedee's children. It is an uncommon stile which is given to this woman. It had been as easy to have said *the wife of Zebedee*, or *the sister of Mary*, or of *Joseph*, or plain *Salome*; but now, by an unusual description, she is stiled the mother of Zebedee's children. Zebedee was an obscure man; she, as his wife, was no better: the greatest honour she ever had, or could have, was to have two such sons as James and John; those gave a title to both their parents. Honour ascends as well as descends; holy children dignify the loins whence they proceed, no less than they derive honour from their parents. Salome might be a good wife, a good woman, a good neighbour, but all these cannot ennoble her so much as being the mother of Zebedee's children.

The

CHAP. XXI.

*Christ rideth to Jerusalem, upon an ass; driveth the buyers and sellers out of the temple, curseth the fig-tree, putteth to silence the priests and elders, and rebuketh them by the similitude of the two sons, and the husbandmen who slew such as were sent unto them.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

AND <sup>a</sup> when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage,

unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

3 And, if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, <sup>b</sup> The Lord hath need of them;

<sup>a</sup> *Matt.* 11. 1—15. *Luke.* 19. 29—44. *John* 12. 12—16. <sup>b</sup> *Pf.* 24. 1. & 50. 10, 11. *Acts.* 10. 36. *Heb.* 1. 2. *John.* 3. 35. & 5. 22. & 7. 1. <sup>c</sup> *1 Cor.* 8. 9. *Zech.* 9. 9. to mark his debasement, and that he was the true king of Israel. *Deut.* 17. 16. *1 Kings.* 1. 33.

The suit was the sons'; but by the mouth of their mother. It is not discommendable in parents to seek the preferment of their children: why may not Abraham sue for an Ishmael? So it be by lawful means, in a moderate measure, and in due order, this endeavour cannot be amiss.

He, who knew all their thoughts afar off, yet, as if he had been a stranger to their purposes, asks, *What wouldst thou?* Our infirmities do then best shame us, when they are drawn out of our own mouths; like as our prayers also serve not to acquaint God with our wants, but to make us the more capable of his mercies.

Our Saviour had said, that his twelve followers should sit upon twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. This good woman would have her two sons next his person, the prime peers of his kingdom. Every one is apt to wish the best for his own: worldly honour is neither worth our suit, nor unworthy our acceptance: yes, Salome, had thy mind been in heaven; hadst thou intended this desired pre-eminence in that desired state of glory, yet I know not how to justify thine ambition.

The mother asks, the sons have the answer. To convince them of their unfitness for glory,—they are sent to their impotency in suffering, *Are ye able, &c.?* ver. 22. O Saviour! even thou, who art one with thy Father, hadst a cup of thine own; never portion was so bitter as that which was mixed for thee; it is not enough for thee to sip of this cup, thou must drink it up even to the very dregs. When the vinegar and gall were tendered to thee by men, thou didst but kiss the cup; but when thy Father gave into thine hands a portion infinitely more distasteful; thou for our health didst drink deep of it, even to the bottom; and saidst, *It is finished.* And can we repine at those unpleasing draughts of affliction which are tempered for us sinful men, when we see thee, the Son of thy Father's love, thus dieted? We pledge thee, O blessed Saviour! we pledge thee according to our weakness, who hast begun to us in thy powerful sufferings: only do thou enable us, after the natural struggles of reluctant nature are over, at last willingly to pledge thee in our constant sufferings for thee; for if thou hast not grudged thy precious blood to us, well mayst thou challenge some worthless drops from us; *through many tribulations must we enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Let who will hope to walk upon roses and violets thither, I will trace thee, O Saviour! by the track of thy blood, and by thy red steps follow thee to thine eternal rest.

The motion of the two disciples was not more full of infirmity than their answer:—*We are able;* out of an eager desire of the honour, they are ready to undertake the condition. The best men may be mistaken in their own powers: alas, how striking an instance have we in the case of our Lord's followers! when it came to the issue, *They all forsook him, and fled.* It is one thing to suffer in speculation, another in practice. There cannot be a worse sign than for a man in a carnal presumption to vaunt of his own abilities: how justly does God suffer that man to be foiled, on purpose that he may be ashamed of his own vain confidence! O God, let me ever be humbled in the sense of my own insufficiency; let me give all the glory to thee, and take nothing to myself but my infirmities.

Oh the wonderful mildness of the Son of God! He does not chide the two disciples, either for their ambition in suing, or their presumption in undertaking; but, leaving the worst, he takes the best of their answer; and, omitting their errors, encourages their good intentions. *Ye shall drink indeed, &c.* ver. 23. Were it not as high honour to drink of thy cup, O Saviour, thou hadst not promised it as a favour: I am deceived, if what thou grantedst was much less than that which thou deniedst. To pledge thee in thine own cup, is not much less dignity and familiarity than to sit by thee. If we suffer with thee, we shall also reign together with thee: what greater promotion can flesh and blood be capable of, than a conformity to the Lord of life and glory?—Enable thou me to drink of thy cup, and then seat me where thou wilt.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The parable with which this chapter opens, is a comment on the text which concluded the foregoing chapter, and represents to us the Gospel dispensation, and this with particular application to the Jews and Gentiles; the former of whom were ever for excluding the latter from all the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, and could never endure the thoughts of the heathen being admitted to equal privileges with themselves. But so God had ordained; and though for their fathers' sakes the first offers of the Gospel were to be made to them, yet the Gentiles were shortly to be admitted to the same high privileges and glorious dispensation. But I have enlarged so fully on this parable, in the critical notes and the Inferences, that I refer my reader to them for every thing which I judge it necessary to advance on this subject.

2dly, To prepare them for that scene of distress and sufferings on which he was about to enter, our Lord once more

and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be

fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,  
saying,

more took his disciples apart, as they went up together to Jerusalem, and repeated what he had said before, chap. xvi. 21. xvii. 22, 23. informing them now more particularly concerning the manner of his sufferings and death, which he had foretold: that he should not only be betrayed into his enemies' hands, but persecuted with unrelenting malice, and by a most unrighteous sentence condemned to die: that he should be delivered to the Gentiles, the Romans, who alone had then the power of life and death in Judæa; and, after enduring the most shocking and barbarous indignities, should suffer death—tidings that no doubt filled them with horror and dismay: but he adds, for their comfort and support, that on the third day he should rise again. *Note*; In all the troubles that we feel or fear, it is a comfort to look forward to a resurrection-day.

3dly, Far from being cured of their national prejudices by all the sufferings which our Lord had foretold them he should endure, they concluded that these would be only the prelude to the glorious manifestation of his temporal power at his rising again. And therefore,

1. Two of the disciples, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, with their mother Salome, who is supposed to have been nearly related to Joseph, and might therefore hope to have a strong interest in Jesus, came to their Master, and, through her preferring their request, with deep respect she besought him to grant her a favour; and being ordered to name it, she desired him to confer on her two sons the first honours of that temporal kingdom which they shortly expected would appear.

2. Pitying their ignorance and weakness, instead of upbraiding their pride and folly, our Lord turned to the two disciples, and gently admonished them, saying, *Ye know not what ye ask*: your notions of the nature of my kingdom are utterly mistaken: it is not an earthly throne to which I shall be exalted: and as mistaken are you in the means of attaining the honours that you seek. You are not aware of the sufferings and trials which must be endured by all those who would come to reign with me. Through much tribulation lies the entrance into heaven; and can you, think ye, drink of my bitter cup, or bear to be baptized in blood, as I must shortly be? Such sufferings as these they were not prepared for: their ambition looked so high, that they saw not the dangers which were before them, nor knew what manner of spirit they were of. *Note*; (1.) They who would reign with Christ, must first suffer with him; and every Christian should well count the cost, before he begins to take up his cross. (2.) In all our sufferings it should sweeten our cup to think that Christ has drunk of it before us, and all the bitterness of sin he has taken away.

3. Their self-confidence is a natural consequence of their pride; and therefore without hesitation they boldly engage for their own ability and fidelity; though, alas! they were sad strangers to themselves, and knew not what they said. *Note*; Young converts are often very forward, till sad experience has taught them their own weaknesses.

4. Christ replies, and assures them that they shall suffer for him, and in a manner which they probably at that time little apprehended. But though they did so, still he left their request in suspense. The honour they sought was not to be given, *unless to them for whom it is prepared of my Father*. See the notes.

5. The same ambitious spirit which spake in the request of John and James, equally appeared in the indignation of the other ten against them; who each thought himself as much entitled to the superiority which they desired. They did not grieve for the sin of their brethren, but were angry at what they conceived an affront to themselves; and, while they violently condemned the ambition of the other disciples, were, like too many, blind to the same spirit in their own hearts. *Note*; Desire of pre-eminence is among the most fruitful sources of disputes among brethren. Instead of being in his own eyes the last and the least, each is for assuming a superiority, which the proud heart of his fellow is very unwilling to admit.

6. To silence the dispute, and strike at the root of the evil, Jesus with the greatest tenderness called them to him; and, to beat down that spirit of ambition, so evil in itself, and so peculiarly unbecoming their holy and humble profession, he endeavours to undeceive them respecting the nature of his kingdom, which was purely spiritual. The kings and princes of the Gentiles indeed thirsted after dominion and despotic sway, and the more potent exercised unbounded authority over their weaker vassals and subjects; but utterly unlike them must their conduct be. Their greatness must consist, not in lording it over God's heritage, but in their abounding labours; not in aspiring desires to rule, but in humble endeavours to promote the salvation of men's souls. The only laudable ambition that Jesus can approve, is the holy strife who shall be most condescending, and the first in every work and labour of love to serve the meanest who bear the Christian name. Nor did he, their Master, recommend aught to them, of which himself had not set them an eminent example, who came not to take state upon himself, and be served with earthly pomp and grandeur; but humbled himself to the lowest offices in the service of men's souls and bodies; and, after living the life of a servant, was about to die the death of a slave; that by the sacrifice of himself he might give his life a ransom for many, even for the whole world, but especially for them that believe and endure to the end; in order to redeem them from the guilt and power of their sins, and from the wrath of God which they had provoked: having him therefore for such a pattern of humility, they were peculiarly obliged to copy after it. *Note*; (1.) The affectation of earthly pomp and splendor is utterly unbecoming those who pretend to be the ministers of the meek and humble Jesus. (2.) The church of Christ has never suffered greater injuries than from the tyranny and oppression of those, who, professing to be the successors of the Apostles, seem to have inherited nothing from them, but that lordly, ambitious, and domineering spirit, for which Jesus so justly reprimanded them.

(3.) The

5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

\* II. 62. 11. Zech. 9. 9. John, 12. 15. Ch. 11. 29. & 12. 19, 20. Pf. 45. 4. 2 Cor. 4. 7, 8. Song, 5. 11.

(3.) The only allowable ambition among the ministers of Christ is, who shall be most humble and serviceable to their brethren, and herein most conform to their blessed Master's image.

At this time, Advancing still towards Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples passed through Jericho, attended as usual by a vast multitude, whom curiosity to hear him or to see his miracles, desire to learn, or want of his healing influence, had drawn together; when behold a wondrous instance of his power and compassion appears.

1. Two blind men, beggars, sat by the way-side, and hearing from some of the multitude, that the famed prophet of Nazareth, who had wrought so many miracles, was passing by, they immediately concluded it a most providential circumstance, and with united and loud supplications cried out incessantly, *Have mercy on us, O Lord thou Son of David.* Note; (1.) In these blind beggars we may behold a lively emblem of our own souls in their natural state. Our understanding is darkness, and we are utterly destitute of all good, perishing inevitably in want and wretchedness, unless the divine mercy respect our misery and relieve us. (2.) They who feel their real state, will cry after Jesus, the only hope of the miserable and the destitute. (3.) Providential opportunities should be improved; if we neglect them now, they never may return.

2. They made so loud a noise, and cried so vehemently, that the multitude rebuked them as troublesome, and bade them be silent. But this only made them redouble their prayers, saying, *Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David: thou, who art so able to help us, whose tender mercies have been so often extended to others, let our pitiable case engage thy notice, and move thy wonted compassions.* And herein they have set us a noble example, (1.) Of fervent prayer. Their wants were great; they felt them with deep sensibility; therefore they cried so loud, so perseveringly: so should we do. We may meet with many discouragements in seeking Christ; but these, instead of silencing our prayer, should quicken our importunity. (2.) Of confident faith. They were fully persuaded, that what they asked, he was willing and able to grant them. His power as the Lord, his office as the Son of David, emboldened their trust in his mercy. It is by faith that we must thus in every distress honour Jesus by casting our care upon him, pleading his name as the ground of our confidence. (3.) Of deep humility. They ask for mercy alone, referring themselves intirely to him for the manner in which he pleases to dispense it to them. We have no merit; can claim nothing at God's hands; deserve nothing but wrath and hell: all our hope is in his boundless grace, to supply all our poverty and wretchedness, to pardon our guilt, and to bestow the graces of the spirit, and thereby all the great privileges of the gospel dispensation. This mercy grant, O Son of David!

3. Christ, who had heard their cries, and knew what rebukes they had met with, stood and called them to him;

for he delights to revive the spirit of the contrite, and to relieve the wants of the miserable. He bids them therefore prefer their request, intimating his readiness to grant the mercy they had so importunately sought. Note; The promises of Christ give an unlimited scope to our prayers; we can ask nothing really good for us, which Jesus is not willing to bestow.

4. The poor blind men have a ready answer: *Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* They ask not for silver or gold, but for a boon far more difficult to be granted, which yet they are assured he can easily bestow. We have need to prefer the same prayer every day; and would to God we were more deeply affected with our spiritual blindness, that our applications might be more frequent and fervent.

5. Their cure is immediate. The compassions of Jesus left them not in suspense: he touched their eyes; a flood of day instantly broke upon them; and joining the company, they joyfully followed him, testifying their gratitude, love, and praise. Note; They who are enlightened by the Redeemer's grace, will from that moment cleave to him in his holy ways, and gratefully labour to advance his glory.

CHAP. XXI.

Ver. 1. And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem] The multitude which attended our Lord in this journey, ch. xx. 29. having increased prodigiously as he advanced towards Jerusalem, he did not now shun them, and enter the city privately, as he had always done on former occasions. The people were to honour him with the title of the Messiah, publicly, that he might have an opportunity of accepting that august name in the most avowed manner, before he ascended into heaven. Moreover, the chief priests who had issued out a proclamation against him, John, xi. 57. were to be awed, at least for a while, and restrained from offering him violence; for, as he had doctrines to teach, rebukes to give, and other things to do, which could not fail to incense those proud rulers, without doubt they would have put him to death prematurely, had not the people appeared on his side, or he himself interfered with divine and irresistible power. Accordingly, after the parable of the husbandman was spoken, ver. 45, 46. the priests sought to lay hands on him, but feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet. Nay, the whole council was intimidated by them; for in their deliberation about putting Jesus to death, they said one to another, ch. xxvi. 5. *Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.* Our Lord's driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, his parables of the husbandmen and marriage-supper, representing the rejection of the Jewish nation, and the downfall of the state, with the woes denounced against the Pharisees in their own hearing, made part of the work that he had to do before he ascended, which would have brought instant destruction upon him, had not the great men's rage been restrained by the uncommon respect which the people generally;

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them;

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down

branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!

<sup>e</sup> Mark, 11. 4—6. Luke, 19, 32—34. Ver. 15. Pf. 24. 7—10.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Kings, 9. 13. Lev. 23. 40. John, 1. 14. & 12. 12—14.

<sup>g</sup> Pf. 118. 24—26. Cl.

generally shewed him: wherefore, the multitude being now very great, and Jesus having such good reasons not to shun them as formerly, he sent two of his disciples for an ass which never had been rode upon, but which by his simple volition he could tame; proposing according to the prophesy, Zech. ix. 9. to ride into the city amid the surrounding throng. Probably there were strait passes in the mount of Olives, through which the road lay, Luke, xix. 37. and, no doubt, narrow streets in the city also, by which he was to go to the temple. In these narrow passes and lanes Jesus might have been incommoded by the press, had he walked on foot; besides, the strangers who were now at Jerusalem would increase the crowd. It seems they knew of his coming, John, xii. 12. and perhaps expected that he was bringing Lazarus along with him, to shew him in public, as a trophy of his power. (Compare John, xii. 12. with ver. 18.) For the sight of Lazarus in Bethany having already induced many to believe, they might naturally suppose that his appearing openly would produce the same effect in Jerusalem; and as they were in full hopes that the Messiah's kingdom was to be erected at this passover, they could not but think it necessary, that all opposers should instantly be convinced, and obliged to acknowledge the Messiah's title to the throne of his illustrious ancestors.

St. Mark and St. Luke mention *Bethphage* and *Bethany*; whence it seems to follow, that travellers, in their way to Jerusalem from Jericho, arrived at Bethphage before they came to Bethany. These two villages were situated at the foot of the mount of Olives, and the road to the city lay between them; only it was nearer to Bethphage than to Bethany; therefore, when Jesus, in travelling from Jericho, came to the foot of the mountain, he was but a little way from Bethphage, nevertheless, intending to lodge at Bethany with Lazarus, he went thither. Next day, returning to the road from Jericho, he sent the two disciples to Bethphage, with orders to bring the ass, ver. 2. If the reader will view the several expressions used by the Evangelists in the light of this description, he will see the exact propriety of each of them. Jesus sent the disciples away, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, as St. Luke tells us; or as St. Mark expresses it, when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany; a phrase, which not only determines the place whence the disciples were sent away, but shews on what quarter Jesus and his train were approaching the town. Both the villages being situated at the foot of the mountain, and Jesus being between them, on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, he might very properly be said

to have been nigh to both, and nigh to Jerusalem. He was at the distance of about two miles only. All that is said, *come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives*, as St. Luke expresses it, because, as we before observed, the nearer *Bethphage* than *Bethany*. And as Jesus was from Bethany, when he sent the disciples away, we may suppose that the place where he sent them must have been directly opposite to the place where he was; and it is termed *the village over-against them*;—*κατιναντι*,—being a little off from the road of Jericho. See Luke, xix. 37. Macknight, Lightfoot, and others. See Mark, xi. 1.

Ver. 3. *And straightway he will send them*] *And straightway* (Lord) will quickly send them back again. See B. Macknight, &c.

Ver. 4. *All this was done, &c.*] See the same in Zech. ix. 9.

Ver. 7. *And brought the ass*] The exactness of the particulars, which our Lord shewed of so many minute fortuitous particulars, must surely impress the minds of these messengers greatly, and establish the faith of the multitudes. It is observable, that many such things happened before his death, which, considered in this light, shew a peculiar beauty. Compare Matth. xxvi. 31—34. Luke, xiv. 15, 16. and Luke, xxii. 10—13. The particle *van* in the Hebrew, is frequently used, to signify *even*, or *that is*,—*uppon*, as in *a colt, &c.* They set him thereon, means that they set him upon which they had placed upon the ass. All that is said, except St. Matthew, speak expressly of his colt.

Ver. 8, 9. *And a very great multitude spread their garments*] When the multitude saw Jesus mounting the ass, they immediately bethought themselves of the honours which kings and conquerors obtain in their triumphal entries; for, as they all firmly believed that Jesus would take the reins of government into his hands at this passover, they had a mind to make Jerusalem have the air of a triumph. As they saw him spread their garments in the way, (See ver. 8.) and others cut down branches of the trees, and strewed them in the way, carrying a larger sort on high, in imitation of the Messiah, as demonstrations of their faith in him, Mat. xxiii. 40. 2 Macc. x. 7. This seems to be the feast of tabernacles, which was celebrated at this time in expectation of the Messiah's coming in human flesh; and these Jews testified their faith in Jesus as that Messiah. Their acclamations were the same thing. *Hosanna* signifies, *save us*, and, applied to Jesus on this occasion, it



10 <sup>1</sup> And, when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is <sup>1</sup> Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

12 ¶ And Jesus went into the temple of God, and <sup>k</sup> cast out all them that sold and

bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, <sup>1</sup> My house shall be called the house of prayer; <sup>m</sup> but ye have made it a den of thieves.

<sup>1</sup> Il. 63. 1. & 9. 6. & 49. 9—11. & 62. 11. Zech. 9. 9. <sup>1</sup> Deut. 18. 15—18. Acts, 3. 22, 23. Ch. 2. 23. & 16. 14. Luke, 4. 16—29. & 24. 29. John, 1. 45. & 7. 41. & 6. 14. & 9. 17. <sup>k</sup> John, 2. 13—16. Deut. 14. 25, 26. Mark, 11. 25. Luke, 19. 45. <sup>1</sup> Is. 56. 7. & 60. 7. Pl. 93. 5. <sup>m</sup> Jer. 7. 11. Mark, 11. 17. Luke, 19. 46. Hof. 12. 7.

import with our acclamation, *God save the king!* and in our language would have been expressed thus: *God save the king Messiah!* The next clause, *Blessed is he that cometh,* &c. contains nearly the words of Psalm cxviii. 26. St. Mark says, they cried likewise, *Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, which cometh,* or which is to be erected now, in the name of the Lord—the Messiah. *Hosannah* in, or rather among the highest, means, “Let the highest orders of angels join us in praying for the prosperity of the king Messiah.” We need not observe how similar the words in St. Luke, *Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest,* ch. xix. 38. are to those of the angels on the birth of Christ, ch. ii. 14. Some would render the clause, *Blessed is he that cometh,* &c.—*Blessed in the name of the Lord is he that cometh.* See the “*Observations on passages of Scripture,*” p. 281.

Ver. 11. *And the multitude said, This is Jesus, &c.]* The multitude is the appellation which the sacred historians commonly give to Christ’s friends; wherefore, as they are here said to have called him *the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee,* we may suppose that they did it with a view to mortify his enemies; as if they had said, “You have always affirmed that *no prophet, no Messiah, can arise out of Galilee: what is your opinion now?*”—Jesus rode directly to the temple, but did not drive the buyers and sellers out this first day; for St. Mark expressly tells us, ch. xi. 11. that it was evening by the time he got thither, and *had looked round on all things:* whence we learn, that the market in the temple, which he intended to prohibit, was over. It seems he stayed in Jerusalem but a little while. Having made his public appearance in the metropolis, received the title of Messiah openly from the multitude, and surveyed the temple, he left the city without doing any thing, to the great discouragement of the throng who had come in with him, expecting that he was immediately to have laid hold on the reins of government.

Ver. 12. *And Jesus went into the temple]* See the notes on John, ii. 14, &c.

Ver. 13. *But ye have made it a den of thieves.]* The Jews, reckoning the lower and outer court of the temple as a place of no sanctity, because it was designed for accommodating the Gentile proselytes in their worship, not only kept the daily market there, of such things as were necessary in offering sacrifices, but suffered the common porters, in going from one part of the city to another, to pass through it with their burdens, for the sake of shortening their way: but as these abuses occasioned great disturbances to the proselytes, Jesus reformed them a second

time, see John, ii. 14. telling the people around him that the Gentiles worshipped there by divine appointment as well as the Jews; *the temple* being ordained of God to be *the house of prayer for all nations,* Mark, xi. 17. and to prove this, he cited Isaiah, lvi. 7. from which the inference was plain, that they were guilty of a gross profanation of the temple, who carried on any traffick even in the courts of the Gentiles; much more they, who made gain, committed frauds and extortions in the prosecution of their traffick; because thus they turned God’s *house of prayer* into a *den of thieves.* The expression of a *den of thieves* may allude to those gangs of robbers which at that time infested Judea, and used to hide themselves in the holes and dens of the mountains, as appears from several passages in Josephus’s history; not but that our blessed Saviour here plainly refers to Jeremiah, vii. 11. St. Jerome, who thinks this one of our Lord’s greatest miracles, in his commentary on the place, gives a lively description of several artifices whereby the avaricious priests endeavoured to extort money. “In the temple of Jerusalem, (says he) the finest and most spacious of any in the world, where the Jews from almost all the countries of the earth assembled, sacrifices of different kinds, some for the rich, and others for the poorer sort, were offered according to the law; but, because those who came from distant countries often wanted such sacrifices, the priests took the advantage of buying up all the beasts appointed for that purpose, sold them to those who wanted them, and received them again at their hands; and because some who came to worship were so very poor that they could not even purchase the lesser sacrifices, namely *birds,* the priests placed bankers in the courts of the temple, to lend money upon security; but finding that they could not do this without transgressing the law, they had recourse to another device, namely, to appoint a kind of pawn-brokers, instead of bankers; that is to say, men, who for the advancing a small sum, took fruits, herbs, and other commodities, instead of interest-money. Our Lord, therefore, having observed this method of traffick carried on by the priests in his Father’s house, not only expelled their agents, but arraigned them also as a band of thieves; for he is really a robber who makes lucre of religion, and whose worship is not so much for the veneration he has for God, as the opportunity of making his own interest and advantage.” See Jerome on the place, and bishop Smallbrooke’s Vindication of our Saviour’s Miracles, vol. i. ch. iv. p. 130.



23 ¶ And, when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by

what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people: for all hold John as a prophet.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said,

Mark, 11. 27—33. Luke, 20. 1—8.

Ad. 7. 27. & 2. 7. Ch. 7. 29.

Ch. 10. 16, 17. Eph. 5. 15. Job, 5. 13.

Ch. 14. 5. Mark, 6. 20. Luke, 20. 6. John, 5. 35.

1 Chron. xxiv. Exod. 19. 7. Num. 11. 16. Ruth, 4. 4. 1 Sam. 15. 30.

Exod. 2. 14.

Ch. iii. Luke, i. iii. Mark, 1. 1—11. John, 1. 6—36.

Ch. 14. 5. Mark, 6. 20. Luke, 20. 6. John, 5. 35.

ing of the day following, as is commonly supposed—in the morning, as he returned into the city, he had hungered (πεινῶν, Aorist.) ver. 19. and seeing a single fig-tree (ἕνα μίμον) in the way, he came to it, and found nothing there but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever; and ἐξηράθη παράχρημα—(Exaruit illico, Beza,) it withered forthwith; that is, began to wither from that time forth, though the disciples did not then observe it, because they passed by while Jesus was pronouncing the curse; neither did they observe it as they came out in the evening, because in all probability it was dark, ver. 20. And when the disciples saw it,—saw the fig-tree withered from the roots, that is to say, next morning, as they were returning to the city from Bethany;—for so we are expressly told in the more particular account which Mark has given of this miracle—They marvelled, saying, how soon is the fig-tree withered away! The solution arising from the translation of the passage here offered seems the most natural which can be given. For, as Matthew chose to relate the cursing of the fig-tree and the effect of the curse together, it was proper to speak of the curse after relating the other transaction of the next day to be mentioned in the history. The sacred volume furnishes several examples of incidental histories introduced in this manner. For instance; the history of John the Baptist's death, ch. xiv. 3, &c. See also Mark, xvi. 7. and Luke, ix. 46. where it is said, Now there had arisen a dispute among them, viz. on the road to Capernaum, for St. Mark says expressly that the dispute happened there.

Ver. 23—26. And, when he was come, &c.] The rulers, much alarmed at the proceedings of Jesus, were very desirous of putting him to death; but they wished to do it under the pretext of law. See ver. 46. and Mark, xi. 18. In consequence of their intentions to do so, the chief priests, scribes and elders, that is to say, some of the first men of the nation, came by appointment of the Sanhedrim to Jesus, as he was teaching in the temple, and before all the people put two questions to him. The first was, concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted, whether as a prophet, a priest, or a king. The second question was, that if he claimed the authority of any, or all these characters, they desired to know whence he derived it, ver. 23. Jesus, that he might at once reprove the impropriety of the question in those circumstances, and, in

fact, return an unexceptionable, though oblique answer to it, said to them in reply, I also will ask, &c. ver. 24, 25. This question reduced the priests to an inextricable dilemma. They considered on the one hand, that if they should acknowledge John's mission to be from God, it would oblige them to acknowledge Christ's authority; John having more than once borne testimony to him as the Messiah. On the other hand, if they denied John's authority, they did not know but the people who stood round them listening to Jesus might stone them, for they generally believed John to have been a prophet: many of them had submitted to his baptism, and his reputation by no means ended with his life; not a few then holding him in high esteem, both on Christ's account and his own. See Luke, xx. 6. and the note on ch. xiv. 10. Wherefore, as matters stood, they judged it safest to answer, that they could not tell whence John's baptism was. By returning this answer, the priests left Jesus at liberty to decline giving the Sanhedrim that satisfaction which they were demanding. That court whose prerogative it was to judge of prophets, required our Lord to make good his pretensions to the character that he assumed: but by the question which he put, he obliged them to confess, that they had not been able to pass any judgment upon John the Baptist, notwithstanding he claimed the character of a messenger from God, and they had sent to examine his pretensions: this, in effect, was to acknowledge themselves incapable of judging of any prophet whatever. "Ye are come," said he, "to inquire into the proofs of my mission. I agree to submit myself to your examination, on condition that you will tell me what your determination was concerning John. Was he a true, or a false prophet? You say, you cannot tell. If then you are not able to form a judgment concerning John, how can you take upon you to judge of me?" In this light our Lord's question, in answer to theirs, appears to have been formed with the greatest wisdom and address; because whether the priests replied in the affirmative or negative, or gave no reply at all, they absolutely condemned themselves. See Macknight, Grotius, Calmet.

Ver. 27. Neither tell I you] "I do not think it at all necessary to tell you by what authority I do these things; for the other question concerning John, naturally requires to be determined first; and when you think proper to decide that, you may easily perceive that the

M m 2

same

' We cannot tell. And he said unto them,  
' Neither tell I you by what authority I do  
these things.

28 ¶ But what think ye? <sup>h</sup> A certain man  
had two sons; and he came to the first, and  
said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

29 <sup>i</sup> He answered and said, I will not:  
<sup>k</sup> but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And <sup>l</sup> he came to the second, and said  
likewise. And he answered and said, I go,  
sir; and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will  
of *his* father? <sup>m</sup> They say unto him, The first.  
Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you,  
<sup>n</sup> that the publicans and the harlots go into

the kingdom of God before you.

32 For <sup>o</sup> John came unto you in the way  
of righteousness, and ye believed him not;  
but the publicans and the harlots believed  
him: and <sup>p</sup> ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented  
not afterward, that ye might believe him.

33 ¶ Hear another parable: There was a  
certain householder, <sup>q</sup> which planted a vine-  
yard, and hedged it round about, and digged  
a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let  
it out to <sup>r</sup> husbandmen, and went into a far  
country:

34 And, when the time of the fruit drew  
near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen  
<sup>s</sup> that they might receive the fruits of it.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. 1. 18, 21, 22, 28. 2 Cor. 2. 15. & 4. 3, 4. 2 Theff. 2. 9, 10.  
Gen. ix. <sup>g</sup> Rom. 1. 18—32. Eph. 2. 2, 3, 11, 12. & 4. 17—19.  
19, 20. Ch. 23. 3. Luke, 18. 11, 12. Exod. 19. 8. Deut. 5. 27.  
29, 30. <sup>h</sup> Ch. 3. 8. Luke, 3. 12, 13. & 7. 29—50. Ch. 11. 18.  
12. Pf. 87. 11, 12. <sup>i</sup> Pf. 80. 8—15. Song, 8. 11, 12. If. 5. 1—4.  
Deut. 1. 15. & 16. 18. & 17. 9—15. <sup>k</sup> Pf. 1. 3. Song, 8. 11, 12.

<sup>l</sup> Luke, 15. 11—31. Ch. 20.  
<sup>m</sup> Luke, 15. 17, 18. Acts, 17. 30. Eph. 2. 1—8, 12, 19. <sup>n</sup> Pf.  
2 Sam. 12. 5—7. Job, 15. 6. Luke, 19. 22. <sup>o</sup> Ch. 9. 9. Luke  
Luke, 18. 13. & 19. 1—10. <sup>p</sup> Pf. 10. 4. John, 5. 40. Zech. 7.  
Jer. 2. 21. Mark, 12. 1—12. Luke, 20. 9—18. <sup>q</sup> Num. iii. iv.

“same answer will serve both:” which was plainly the  
case; for, as on the one hand, the express testimony which  
John bore to Christ must be a sufficient proof of his di-  
vine mission, if that of John was allowed, (since according  
to the Jewish maxim, the testimony of one prophet was  
sufficient to confirm the authority of another); so Christ  
had spoken in such an honourable manner of John, that to  
condemn John as an impostor, would imply a like censure  
on the character of Jesus.

*Ver. 28—30. But what think ye? A certain man, &c.]*  
Because the chief priests and elders had said that they did  
not know whence John's baptism was, Jesus sharply re-  
buked them for disbelieving him: he conveyed his reproof  
under the parable of two sons, who were commanded to  
work in their father's vineyard; and by asking their opi-  
nion of the behaviour of these sons, he made them con-  
demn themselves. See on ch. xiii. 3. The temper and  
behaviour of the second son was an exact picture of the  
temper and behaviour of the Pharisees; for, in their  
prayers and praises, they gave God the most honourable  
titles, and professed the utmost zeal to serve him; but at  
the same time would do no part of the work which he  
enjoined them, and particularly would not hearken to the  
Baptist's exhortations. In the character of the other son,  
the disposition of the tax-gatherers and harlots is well  
described: they neither professed nor promised to do the  
will of God; yet, when they came to think seriously, they  
submitted themselves first to John, then to Christ, and, in  
consequence of their faith, were admitted to partake of  
the privileges of the Gospel. See Macknight and Chem-  
nitz.

*Ver. 31—32. They say unto him, The first.]* It seems that  
the Pharisees did not perceive that by this answer they con-  
demned themselves, till Jesus made a direct application of  
the parable in that sharp, but just reproof, *Verily, I say  
unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the king-*

*dom of God before you. For, ver. 32. though you pre-*  
that you do not know whence the baptism of John  
*John came unto you in the way of righteousness;* he e-  
proved his mission from God, and ye believed him  
gave no credit to the testimony he bare to me; and  
sequently would not go into the vineyard; *but the pu-*  
*and the harlots believed him;* they received his testi-  
and obeyed the Gospel; and ye, when ye had seen  
*repented not afterward, that ye might believe him;* who  
had persons of the most abandoned characters re-  
by his sermons, (which doubtless was a strong p-  
his mission from God,) you did not repent of y-  
position to that holy man; nor of your disobed-  
his instructions; at least, your remorse was not  
a kind as to make you afterwards believe his  
Heylin renders the last clause, *And though you*  
*yet you did not repent, so as to believe him.*

The moral reflection suggested by this passa-  
history is, that the openly profane are more apt  
than hypocrites; which experience shews also t-  
The reason is, persons openly profane have nothing  
they can defend themselves against the terror  
when once they begin to fasten upon their co-  
whereas hypocrites, having a form of godlin-  
themselves therewith from all the attacks wh-  
made upon them by the strongest arguments,  
ther from reason or from the word of God.

*Ver. 33. Hear another parable.]* Not satisfied  
ing the rulers the heinousness of their sin, in  
Baptist, Jesus judged it proper likewise pu-  
present the crime of the nation, in rejecting  
sengers of God, from first to last; and ann-  
his only-begotten Son: at the same time he  
plainly of their danger, by reason of the  
which they incurred on account of such a cont-  
of rebellion. The outward œconomy of relig-

35 ' And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 ' But, when the husbandmen saw the

son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

<sup>1</sup> Kings, 22. 24. 2 Chr. 16. 10. & 23. 19, 21. & 36. 15, 16. Neh. 9. 26. Jer. xx. xxvi. xxxvi. xxxvii. xxxviii. Ch. 23. 34, 37. Acts, 7. 52, 53. 1 Thess. 2. 15. Heb. 11. 36. <sup>u</sup> Rom. 8. 3. Gal. 4. 4. Luke, i. ii. iv. &c. Ch. i. iv. John, ii. &c. <sup>x</sup> Heb. 1. 2. Ch. 26. 3, 4. & 27. 1. John, 11. 53. Ch. xxvi. xxvii. Mark, xiv. xv. Luke, xxii. xxiii. John, v. vii. viii. x. xviii. xix. Acts, 3. 14, 15. 1 Cor. 2. 8. Heb. 11. 12.

they gloried, was to be taken from them; their relation to God, as his people, cancelled; and their national constitution destroyed: but, because these were topics extremely disagreeable, he couched them under the veil of a parable, which he formed upon one made use of long before by the prophet Isaiah, ch. v. 1, &c. where see the notes. This *vineyard*, with its appurtenances, represents the Mosaical dispensation, a dispensation attended with great present advantages, and many promises of future blessings: the other circumstances of the parable are extremely clear. St. Matthew uses the word *ἀρνίον* for a *wine-press*, and St. Mark, *ὄπωληνόν*; the former signifies the wine-press, the other the cavity under it, wherein the vessel was fixed which received the liquor pressed from the grapes. The one of these naturally implies the other; but our Lord chose to mention both.

*Ver. 37. Last of all, he sent unto them his son*] That no means might be left untried, God sent unto them his own Son; whose authority, clearly established by undeniable miracles, ought to have been acknowledged with cheerfulness and joy by those wicked men. The question is not here, how prudent it would have been in a human father to venture his son in such a case as this; for the power which God had of raising Christ from the dead, and making all his sufferings redound to his glory and happiness, quite alters the case. The design is, to shew the patience of God, and the wickedness of the Jews by this emblem; than which nothing can be more expressive. See the note on Luke, xx. 13.

*Ver. 38, 39. When the husbandmen saw the son*] It would hence seem, that the Jews knew Jesus to be the Son of God. Yet Peter says both of the rulers and the people, that they crucified the Lord ignorantly, Acts, iii. 17. and our Lord himself prays for them as not knowing what they did. It is evident indeed, that the rulers, for very malice, caused him to be crucified; yet it is not at all improbable, that though they could not but confess him to be some great person or prophet, yet they might be far from being convinced that he was the Messiah. The Apostles themselves, notwithstanding they had been eyewitnesses of all his miracles, and had the advantage of hearing all his discourses, doubted whether he was the Messiah, while he lay in the grave; there can therefore be no impropriety, in supposing that the unbelieving Jews were in the same state of mind. And, if so, where is the inconsistency in saying, that though they put him to death

as a prophet, they did not crucify him as the Messiah? That this was really their opinion is evident both from Sacred History, and from the general sentiments of their descendants, even to this day. Our Lord's words may bear another sense, and imply, that though it be granted they acknowledged his being the Messiah, and thought that in putting him to death, they were answerable for the death of a mere mortal only, yet they were ignorant of his essential dignity, and the near relation in which he stood to his heavenly Father. Yet after all, this, like the other circumstance of their *seizing upon the inheritance*, may be added to heighten and complete the parable, without being intended to convey any particular and independent truth. For it is the nature of a parable, as well as of a fable, or an historical picture, to convey some general truth to the mind, resulting from the whole assemblage of circumstances or figures taken collectively; but not to convey particular truths from any single circumstance or figure considered as separate, detached from, or independent of the rest. St. Matthew and St. Luke say, *That the husbandmen cast the son out of the vineyard, and killed him*, (ver. 39.) St. Mark says, *They first killed him, and then cast him out*: but his meaning may have been this; they so beat and bruised him, before they cast him out, that he could not live; and, after having cast him out, they completed the murder, killing him outright. The manner in which St. Mark has expressed it, insinuates, that after they had killed him, they threw out his body, without burial, to the dogs; a circumstance which does not seem to have any particular reference, but is formed to shew in a general point of view, the greatness of the rebellion of these husbandmen. If such a proposal as that before us, *come, let us kill him*, &c. would have been the height of folly as well as wickedness in these *husbandmen*, it was so much the more proper to represent the part that the *Jewish rulers* acted in the *murder of Christ*, which they were now projecting, and which they accomplished within three days. The admonition was most graciously given; but served only, in an astonishing manner, to illustrate that degree of hardness to which a sinful heart is capable of arriving. See Mac-knight, Doddridge, and Chemnitz.

*Ver. 40—42. When the Lord therefore—cometh*] According to St. Mark and St. Luke, Jesus answered this question himself; which, according to St. Matthew, the priests answered: this apparent inconsistency may be reconciled by supposing, that after they had said to him, *God forbid!*

41 They say unto him, <sup>1</sup> He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and <sup>2</sup> will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, <sup>3</sup> Did ye never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is <sup>4</sup> marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore I say unto you, <sup>5</sup> The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and

given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 <sup>6</sup> And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And, when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, <sup>7</sup> they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But, when they sought to lay hands on him, they <sup>8</sup> feared the multitude, because they <sup>9</sup> took him for a prophet.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 19. 27, 42—44. & 20. 15, 16. Mark, 12. 9. Deut. 4. 26, 27. & 28. 15—68. & 29. 18—28. & 31. 17, 18. & 32. 15—35. Lev. 26. 1—39. Ch. 8. 11, 12. & 3. 12. & 12. 43—45. & 23. 35—38. & 22. 7. & 24. 2—34. Luke, 17. 22—37. & 21. 6—33. Prov. 1. 21—32. John, 39—41. Acts, 28. 23—28. <sup>2</sup> Ch. 8. 11. Acts, 13. 45, 47. & 18. 6. Rom. 11. 11—19. Pf. 47. 9. Dan. 2. 41. Ver. 43. <sup>3</sup> Pf. 118. 22. Acts, 4. 11. Luke, 20. 17. Rom. 9. 33. <sup>4</sup> 1 Peter, 2. 7. II. 28. 16. Eph. 2. 14—22. Ch. 16. 18. Zech. 3. 9. <sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. 3. 16. Rom. 1. 26, 27. Col. 1. 25—27. Eph. 3. 3—9. <sup>6</sup> See on ver. 41. <sup>7</sup> II. 8. 14, 15. Rom. 9. 33. <sup>8</sup> 1 Peter, 2. 7. Luke, 20. 18. II. 60. 12. Zech. 12. 3. Pf. 2. 9. <sup>9</sup> 1 Thess. 2. 16. See ver. 41. <sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. 3. 14. & 4. 3, 4. Dan. 2. 43, 44. Pf. 110. 5, 6. <sup>11</sup> Luke, 11. 45. <sup>12</sup> 2 Tim. 4. 17. Ver. 26. Ch. 14. 5. Luke, 20. 6. Mark, 12. 12. <sup>13</sup> Luke, 7. 16. John, 7. 40. See ver. 11.

as St. Luke tells us, they repeated his words *ironically*,—*he will miserably destroy these wicked men*, &c. speaking with a tone of voice expressive of the disposition of their mind, and then added contemptuously, “*which will render him the fruits in their seasons*, which will behave better, no doubt, than we have done.” for they understood his parables, and designed to affront him by ridiculing what he said. Besides, unless we suppose that the priests spoke these words ironically, the answer which St. Matthew tells us Jesus returned to them, will lose much of its force, because it implies that the priests had denied that the vineyard was to be taken from them, and given to others. *Jesus saith*, ver. 42. *did ye never read*, &c. “If the vineyard is not to be taken away from you, and given to others, what is the meaning of Pf. cxviii. 22.? Doth not that passage of Scripture foretel, that the Messiah shall be rejected by the Jewish great men, and that though they crucify him, He shall become the *head of the corner*, or of the church? Now what else is this, but that he shall be believed on by the Gentiles, and unite them to the church of God, as a head corner-stone unites the two sides of a building?” Accordingly St. Luke expresses the connection of our Lord’s answer with their denial more clearly, ch. xx. 17. See the note on Pf. cxviii. 21, 22. Jeffery’s Review, p. 119. and Macknight. Dr. Campbell reads, ver. 42. “*A stone which the builders rejected, is made the head of the corner. This the Lord hath effected, and we beheld it with admiration.*” Ver. 43, 44. *Therefore I say unto you*, &c.] “For the reason that God has expressly foretold this judgement shall happen to you, and because it is a most righteous and equitable judgement, I assure you it will fall upon you, however you may despise or disbelieve it. The theocracy,—the outward œconomy of religion, which you have long enjoyed very unprofitably, shall be taken from you, and given to the Gentiles; who, whatever you may think of them, will improve it far better than you have done.” These words seem to confirm the first method of solving the difficulties mentioned in the last note: for had the priests spoken *seriously*, our Lord need

not have been at the pains to produce texts of Scripture to prove what they had so fully acknowledged. “*Whoever shall fall on this stone*, continues our Lord, *shall be broken*,” the builders have rejected, but which God will make the head of the corner, *shall be broken*. See Rom. ix. 31. “Whoever ignorantly opposes the Messiah, shall therefore receive great harm to himself,—in allusion to the stumbling at a stone thrown aside as useless; but *whomsoever it shall fall*, it will grind him to powder. Our Saviour seems to have had in view Dan. ii. 35. where the destruction of all the opposers of the Messiah’s kingdom is described thus: “*Thou sawest, till that the image was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon its feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to powder. ver. 35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind scattered them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”* Our Lord’s meaning is, the opposers of the Messiah’s kingdom, called *ver. 46. the kingdom of God*, and by Daniel *the kingdom of heaven*, ch. ii. 44. shall be utterly destroyed, as to Daniel’s vision of the image. The first clause, *shall fall*, &c. seems to describe the sin and punishment of the great men, who being chief in the rebellion way to the rest, and had an active hand in the authority of the Messiah. See Macknight. Dr. Campbell explains it, “Whoever shall stumble at my doctrine, while I am here on earth in this kingdom, he shall be broken and damaged by it: but whoever shall oppose me after my exaltation to glory, pouring out of my Spirit for the full revelation of the Gospel, and proof of my mission; he will be broken, and himself aggravated guilt, and unavoidable punishment.” See Wetstein.

Ver. 45. *They perceived that he spake of them*, they think they could have been at no loss for the solution of the parable, considering how nearly it tallies with that in Isaiah, v. 1., &c. with which they were

CHAP. XXII.

*The parable of the marriage of the king's son. The vocation of the Gentiles. The punishment of him that wanted the wedding-garment. Tribute ought to be paid to Caesar. Christ confuteth the Sadducees about the resurrection, answereth the lawyer which is the first and great commandment, and embarraseth the Pharisees about the Messias.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

AND Jesus answered <sup>a</sup> and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 9. 15—17. & 12. 43—45. & xiii. & 20. 1—14. & 21. 28—44. Luke, xiii—xix. Ch. 24. 43—51. & 25. 1—29. & xiii. & 20. 1. & 21. 31, 43. with Luke, 14. 16—24. Rev. 19. 7, 9. Song, i—viii. Pf. xlv. <sup>b</sup> Ch. iii. x. Mark, i. iii. Luke, i. iii. vi. x. Prov. 9. 1—5. & 1. 20—25. Hof. 11. 2, 7. <sup>c</sup> Luke, 24. 47. Acts, i—ix. Prov. 9. 1—5. & 1. 20—23. If. 25. 6. Ch. xxvi—xxviii. Mark, iii—vii. Luke, xxii—xxiv. John, xviii.—xx. & 6. 27—57.

2 <sup>b</sup> The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son,

3 And sent forth <sup>c</sup> his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

4 Again, he sent forth <sup>d</sup> other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen

well acquainted: only it is to be observed, that there *Israel* is the *vineyard*; here the true religion is represented under that figure. Accordingly it is there threatened, that the vineyard should be destroyed; but here, that it should be let out to other husbandmen, each event suiting its connection. See Doddridge and Calmet.

*Inferences on Christ's Procession to the Temple.*—Never did our Saviour take so much state upon him as now that he was going to his passion. Other journeys he measured on foot, without train or tumult; this with a princely equipage, and loud acclamations. O Saviour, whether shall we most admire thy majesty, or thy humility?—that divine Majesty, which lay hid under so lowly an appearance, or that sincere humility, which veiled so great a glory? Thou, O Lord, whose chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, wouldst choose one of the meanest of animals to carry thee in thy last, thy royal progress. How well is thy birth suited with thy triumphs! Even that very *ass* whereon thou didst ride, was the subject of prophecy; neither couldst thou have completed those vatical predictions without this conveyance. O glorious and yet homely pomp!

Jesus would not lose aught of his right. He who was a king, would be so proclaimed: but, that it might appear his kingdom was not of this world, he who could have demanded all worldly magnificence, thought fit to relinquish it. Instead of the kings of the earth, who, reigning by thee, thou King of kings, and Lord of lords, might have been employed among thine attendants;—the people are thine heralds, their homely garments thy carpets, their green boughs the strewings of thy way. Those palms, which were wont to be borne in the hands of them who triumph, are strewed under the feet of thy beast; it was thy greatness and honour to contemn the glories which worldly hearts are apt so much to admire.

Justly did thy followers hold the best ornaments of the earth worthy of no better claim than to be trod upon by thee: how happily did they think their backs disrobed for thy honour! How gladly did they employ their breath in *hosannas* to thee, the Son of David! Where now are the greatest masters of the synagogue, who had enacted the ejection of whosoever should confess Jesus to be the Christ? Lo here, bold and undaunted clients of the Messias, who dare proclaim him in the public road,

in the open streets! In vain shall the impotent enemies of Christ hope to suppress his glory: as soon may they hide with the palm of their hand the face of the sun, as withhold the beams of his divine truth from the eyes of men by their envious opposition. In spite of all the Jewish malignity, his kingdom is avowed, applauded, blessed.

O thou fairer than the children of men, in thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth, of meekness, and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things!

In this princely, yet poor and despicable pomp, does our Saviour enter into the famous city of Jerusalem—Jerusalem noted of old for the seat of kings, priests, and prophets. Thither would Jesus come as a king, as a priest, as a prophet; acclaimed as a king; teaching the people, and foretelling the woeful devastation of the city, as a prophet; and as a priest, taking possession of his temple, and vindicating it from the foul profanations of Jewish sacrilege.

As all the world was bound to the Redeemer for his incarnation and residence on the earth, so especially Judea, to whose limits he confined himself. But those places and persons which have the greatest helps and privileges afforded to them, are not always the most answerable in the return of their thankfulness. Christ's being amongst us does not make us happy, but his welcome: every day we may hear him in our streets, and yet be as much to seek concerning him as those citizens of Jerusalem,—*Who is this?*

The attending disciples could not be at a loss for an answer; which of the prophets have not put it into their mouths:—*Who is this? Ask Moses, and he shall tell you; the seed of the woman, who shall bruise the serpent's head. Ask your father Jacob, and he shall tell you,—the Shiloh of the tribe of Judah. Ask David, and he shall tell you,—the King of glory. Ask Isaiah, and he shall tell you,—Emmanuel, wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace! Ask Jeremiah, and he shall tell you,—the righteous Branch. Ask Daniel, he shall tell you,—the Messias. Ask John the Baptist, he shall tell you,—the LAMB OF GOD.*—If you ask the God of the prophets, he hath told you,—*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Yea, if all these be too good for you to consult with, the very devils themselves have been forced to confess, *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.* On no side

and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready : come unto the marriage.

5 ° But they made light of *it*, and went

their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise :

6 ° And the remnant took his servants, and

° Gen. 19. 14. Acts, 2. 13. Prov. 1. 24, 25. Pl. 81. 11. Heb. 2. 3. Ch. 13. 22. 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. 2 Chron. 36. 16. Ch. 21. 35. & 23. 34, 37. Acts, iv—viii. & xii. & 13. 45. & 14. 4, 5, 19. & 17. 5, 13. & 18. 12. & 20. 3. & 21. 30. & xxii—xxv. 1 Thess. 2. 14, 15.

side has Christ left himself without a testimony ; and, accordingly the multitude have their answer ready, *This is JESUS, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee.*

With this humble pomp and just acclamation, O Saviour, dost thou pass through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple, as a good son, when he comes from far, alights first at his father's house. Neither would he think it otherwise than preposterous to visit strangers before his friends, or friends before his father. Besides, the temple had more need of thy presence ; there was the most disorder, and thence, as from a corrupt spring, it issued forth into all the channels of Jerusalem. A wise physician inquires into the state of the chief and vital parts ; surely all good or evil begins at the temple. If God have his due there ; if men find there nothing but wholesome instruction and holy example, the commonwealth cannot want some happy tincture of piety, devotion, sanctimony,—as that fragrant perfume from Aaron's head sweetens the utmost skirts of his garments. On the contrary, the distempers of the temple cannot but affect the whole body of the people. As therefore the good husbandman, when he sees the leaves grow yellow, and the branches unthriving, looks presently to the roots, so didst thou, O holy Saviour, upon sight of the disorder spread over Jerusalem, address thyself to the rectifying of the temple.

No sooner is Christ alighted at the gate of the outer court of his Father's house, than he sets about the great work of reformation, which was his errand into the world. With what fear and astonishment did the repining offenders look upon so unexpected a character ; while their conscience lashed them more than *those cords*, and the terror of that meek chastiser more affrighted them than his blows ? Is this that mild and gentle Saviour, who came to take upon him our stripes, and to undergo the chastisement of our peace ? Is this that quiet lamb, which *before his shearers openeth not his mouth* ? See now how his radiant eyes sparkle with holy anger, and dart forth beams of indignation in the faces of these guilty money-changers ! Yea thus, thus it became thee, O thou glorious Redeemer of men, to let the world see that thou hast not lost thy justice in thy mercy ; that there is not more lenity in thy forbearances, than rigour in thy just severity ; that thou canst thunder as well as *sbine*.

But why did not the priests and Levites, to whom the gain principally belonged, abet the money-changers, and make head against so apparently weak an agent ? Why did not those multitudes of men stand upon their defence, and wrest the scourge out of the hand of an almost unarmed prophet ;—instead of running away like sheep before him, not daring to abide his presence, though his hand had been still ?—Surely had these men been so many armies, so many legions of devils, when God will astonish and chase them, they cannot have the power to stand and resist ! How easy is it for him who made the heart, to

put either terror or courage into it at pleasure ! It was none of thy least miracles, Almighty Saviour, that thou didst thus drive out a multitude of able offenders in spite of their gains and resentful resolutions. The profit had no power to stay them against thy frowns.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Being about to offer himself as the true paschal Lamb, our blessed Lord determined to make his triumphant entry first into Jerusalem, as a prelude to those more exalted honours, to which, on his resurrection from the dead, he should be advanced. We are told on approaching the suburbs, where he halted,

1. The preparations that he ordered to be made. He sent no heralds sent to clear the way ; no guards surround his glittering car ; no music fills the air with harmony. No officers of state with gorgeous robes attend their monarch, Sovereign. The lowly Jesus despised this worldly pomp ; it fitted not his state of humiliation ; and therefore, though he could in an instant have commanded down clouds of legions to attend his steps, and made the clouds his attendants, he chose his poor disciples to be with him ; he seated on an ass's colt, and not even that his own ; he terminates thus to make his public entry. Yet even here he takes occasion to display his divine omniscience, his influence over the spirits of men ; sending his disciples to the village over against them, directing them to find the ass tied with her foal ; and assuring them that any man offered to question them for loosing the ass from the colt, it would be sufficient to say their Master sent them, and he would immediately let them go.

2. The fulfilment of the Scripture herein is particularly remarked. Long before had the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted this event ; *Tell ye the daughter of Jerusalem tidings of great joy : Behold, admire and adore the King, the long-expected Messiah, cometh unto thee bringing salvation ; meek as a lamb, to bear every injury for Zion's sake, and gentle to rule with a sceptre over the hearts of his believing people ; sitting upon a colt the foal of an ass ; like one of the ancient kings of Israel, and in such humility as was best suited to the character which he bore.* Note ; Christ is Zion's King ; his happy subjects may well rejoice in his power, but let his enemies tremble ; though he come as a lamb, he will shortly roar against them as a lion.

3. The disciples having obeyed their Master's command, and brought the ass with her colt, they spread mats on them, and seated him thereon ; and their loud expression of exultation and joy, which they could not contain to human view, despicable multitude could not contain ; they ushered him into the city, spreading their garments on the ground, or hanging them on the sides of the road ; cutting down boughs of trees, and carrying palm-branches in their hands (John, xii. 13.) as in the feast of tabernacles



entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*.  
 7<sup>s</sup> But when the king heard *thereof* he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and

destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.  
 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wed-

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 21. 34—39. & 24. 2—34. Luke, 17. 22—37. & 19. 41—44. & 21. 6—33. Heb. 6. 4—8. & 10. 26—31. 1 Thess. 2. 16. 1 Peter, 4. 17, 18. Dan. 9. 26, 27. Luke, 13. 14. See ch. 21. 41.

with loud hosannahs their triumphant songs of praise; welcoming their adored Messiah, the Son of David, who came with divine authority from on high; wishing him all prosperity, honour, happiness, and glory; praying for the appearing of his kingdom, and that his throne might be exalted over all; and calling on the heavenly hosts to join in their blessings, praise, and adoration. *Note*; (1.) The coming of Jesus into the sinner's heart is still matter of greater exultation, and deserves louder shouts of praise. (2.) They who have tasted the preciousness of a Redeemer's grace in their own souls, cannot but long to see his kingdom established in the hearts of others; and fervently pray for its more abundant manifestation in the world.

4. Such an uncommon scene excited great emotion in the inhabitants of Jerusalem, according as they were differently affected with wonder, envy, contempt, or exultation; and the general inquiry was, *Who is this*; that comes with such a train and such exclamations? To which the multitude replied, *This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee*, whose doctrines and miracles have rendered him so famed, and confirmed his divine mission. *Note*; (1.) Christ is often little known, where the greatest profession of his religion is made. (2.) The poor despised multitude in general judge more rightly concerning Jesus, his character, and Gospel, than the wise and noble, who often affect to despise them.

2dly, The Son of God, the King in Zion, regards his temple as his palace, and thitherward directs his steps.

1. He purges it of intruders, the buyers and sellers, who in the courts carried on their traffic; exchanging bills to purchase sheep and doves for sacrifice, or money to pay the annual half shekel; and, under pretence that this was in order to assist the temple-service, the priests, through avarice, connived at it, enriching themselves by the extortion practised on these occasions. But the Lord overthrew their stalls, and drove them out before him, confounded and unable to bear his frowns, or resist his arm; vindicating his conduct and condemning their wickedness by a quotation from Isa. lvi. 7. and Jer. vii. 11. saying, *It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer*, to which men should resort, and where God had promised to hear their supplications; *but ye have made it a den of thieves*, perverting it to the vilest purposes, dishonouring God, and plundering the people. *Note*; (1.) The vilest corruptions have been introduced into the church by those who, making advantage the end of their profession, counterfeit godliness in order to make gain. (2.) The eyes of Christ's peculiar jealousy are upon his church, and nothing can more offend the blessed Head of it, than to behold an avaricious spirit in those, who, by their very calling, profess themselves crucified to the world.

2. When he had ejected the intruders, he sat as a king upon his throne to dispense his royal favours, healing the

blind and lame who came to him in the temple: and thither the spiritually blind and lame are invited still to come to him; and by his word and Spirit he continues to manifest there his healing power and grace.

3. He rebukes the envy of the chief priests and scribes. They could not bear to see such incontestable miracles wrought by him; and when the very children, struck with the works of Jesus, joined their feeble voices to the acclamations of the multitude, and cried, *Hosannah to the Son of David*, they were stung with malignant envy, and intimated to Jesus, that to hear without silencing such silly little creatures, proved him weak, vain, and ostentatious. But Jesus vindicates these infant praises which he heard; he approved their lisplings; and, had these cavillers known the Scriptures, they might have herein observed their fulfilment, where it was written, *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength*. Pf. viii. 2. God's strength was now made perfect in their weakness; and the Messiah's praise was advanced by these feeble instruments, to the confusion and condemnation of those who rejected and denied him. *Note*; (1.) Greatness and goodness are ever the objects of envy; and the proud cannot bear to hear the tribute of commendation paid to superior excellence. (2.) It is happy when children learn betimes to list the Redeemer's praises. Though education cannot bestow grace, yet example and instruction in the way of godliness are means that we may humbly hope God will effectually bless. (3.) The prayers and services of little children are pleasing to the adorable Saviour, and he will graciously accept their feeble efforts to express their gratitude.

4. Leaving them to reflect on what had passed, he departed to Bethany, where he lodged, about two miles from Jerusalem; thus for a while withdrawing himself from their malice and fury, and depriving them of the blessing of his presence which they had so justly forfeited.

3dly, In the morning early Jesus returned to Jerusalem, and, having probably come out fasting, he was hungry; being, as man, subject to all our sinful infirmities. Seeing a fig-tree remarkably flourishing, he came up to it; and, finding no fruit upon it, he denounced a curse upon it for its barrenness; and the tree immediately began to wither. And herein Christ seems to have particularly in his view the Jewish people, of whom this fig-tree was a lively emblem. They were, in their profession of religion, zealous and plausible, but barren of all true fruits of righteousness, and therefore were now given up to the curse, to be destroyed without remedy. See the Critical Notes. *Note*; (1.) Christ requires of his disciples not merely leaves of profession, but the fruit of grace; though too many deceive his expectations, and rest in the form, while they continue strangers to the power of godliness. (2.) The curse will light upon the barren trees: often in this world the hypocrite's hope perisheth; they discover their insincerity, and wither in the eyes of man; but at

ding is ready, but <sup>a</sup> they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 <sup>1</sup> Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.

<sup>a</sup> Acts, 3. 26. & 13. 46. Ch. 10. 17, 13. Pf. 81. 11. <sup>1</sup> Prov. 1. 20—22. & 8. 1—4. Ch. 8. 11. & 13. 47. & 21. 41, 43. & 28. 18—20. Mark, 16. 15, 16. Luke, 24. 47. Acts, 1. 7, 8. & 13. 46, 47. Rom. 10. 18. Eph. 3. 8. Rev. 22. 17. If. 42. 6, 7. & 45. 22. & 55. 1.

farthest, the day of recompense will blast their confidences.

The disciples in the next morning passing with their Master the same way, Mark, xi. 20. observed with wonder how soon the fig-tree was withered away which Jesus had cursed the preceding day: and so terrible are his comminations, and so sure to light down upon the impenitent sinner's head. In answer to which observation, Jesus replied, that this was little, compared with the power with which they should be endued, if they exercised unshaken and unwavering faith in God; not hesitating or reasoning how the miracle could be performed, but trusting God's power and promises: in which case they would be enabled, not merely to dry up a fig-tree with a word, but to say *to this mountain, on which they now stood, be thou removed, and cast into the sea, and it shall be done.* Such astonishing miracles should they be enabled to work; and whatever other thing they should find needful in the execution of their ministry, for the honour of God and the furtherance of his Gospel, they need only ask it in prayer, nothing doubting, and it should assuredly be granted them. *Note*; The prayer of faith is sure to prevail; to this God denies nothing. If ever we be unhappy, to this source it may be traced, to the distrust of his promises, his power, or his love.

4thly, We have,

1. The insolent demand made upon our Lord, and the interruption given him in his blessed work, by the chief priests and elders; who, unable any longer to contain themselves, and, filled with indignation at what they had seen and heard the preceding day, insisted upon his producing authority for what he did, and shewing the commission under which he acted; presuming that his answer would infallibly lay him open to some accusation, which they had so long wished to find against him. *Note*; When we are faithfully labouring for Christ, we need not wonder, if Satan and his instruments labour to interrupt us.

2. Christ answers their demand by another. He knew how to confound them, while they thought to silence him; and is ready out of their own mouths to condemn them. *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?* Was he commissioned from heaven, or went he forth at his own will, or under merely human authority? The question was short, but the dilemma to which it reduced them was inextricable. They plainly saw, if they should say, that John acted under a divine commission, then Christ would have an immediate proof of his own, and they would be inexcusable for not receiving him as the Messiah, to whom John bore witness. On the other hand, their own honour, lives, and safety, were at stake, the people being fully persuaded of John's prophetic character; which should they deny, they justly apprehended lest they should be stoned like blasphemers; and therefore, contrary to their own convictions, they chose to confess ignorance, and tell a lie, rather than own the divine mission of the messenger, which

would in its consequence involve the divine authority of Jesus. But if they thus wilfully chose to appear ignorant in one case, our Lord was fully vindicated in refusing to give them farther satisfaction about himself, seeing it was in vain to talk with those who had first resolved not to be convinced. *Note*; (1.) Worldly minds are unspeakably more influenced by the fear of men, than by the fear of God. (2.) Many are more afraid of shame than sin, and therefore hesitate not at a lie concerning their thoughts and apprehensions, their affections and intentions, their remembering or forgetting things, &c. because they flatter themselves that no one can disprove them; but there is a Searcher of hearts, from whom no secret are hid. (3.) If men wilfully shut their eyes against truth, it is in vain to reason with them any farther.

5thly, Having silenced their cavils, he makes an appeal upon their conscience, in a parable, with an application to them.

1. We have the parable itself. A certain man had sons, whom he sent into his vineyard to work: the first appeared at first refractory, undutiful, and refused to obey his father's commands; but afterwards, reflecting on his ill conduct, he was sorry, repented, and went to his father; the other no sooner was bid to go, than with perfect respect he promised immediate obedience, but never appeared. The question which did his father's will was too late to admit of hesitation, and they allow the penitent to be a dutiful son. *Note*; (1.) God is our Father; he calls his children to serve and glorify him: by our obedience to him obedience is our duty, and should be our glory. The day of life is the day of labour, and should be diligently improved by us. But, (2.) Such is our nature, that we are rebellious children, refuse to obey, dare to say, *We will not serve him, but our own pleasures, and insolently turn from him, even to his own way.* (3.) Whenever through divine grace we repent and return, God in Christ is graciously pleased to receive us, and to forgive our wickedness and sin; again he permits us to be employed in his service, and restores us to his regard. (4.) While some profess more than they promise, others prove the very contrary to their fair professions of love to Christ and his service; they go farther; Christians in word and in tongue profess in deed and in truth.

2. Christ applies the parable to those who were then present; the Pharisees and scribes, and harlots, repenting, would enter the kingdom of heaven rather than they: and probably he has an eye to the Gentiles, who would repent and be converted by the preaching of the Jewish nation, for their impenitence would be rejected. And this had evidently been the effects of John's ministry, who came in the way of righteousness; his life remarkably exemplary, and directly tending to lead men to repentance and obedience to the Messiah; whereby he proved his mission

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

\* Acts, x—xix. Rom. 10. 18. & 15. 19. Col. 1. 6, 23. Rev. 7. 9. & 5. 9. Ch. 13. 38. 47.

but notwithstanding *ye believed him not*: though you pretend such respect for God, as the second son did for his father, you did not receive John's testimony, nor believe the doctrines that he preached; but *the publicans and harlots believed him*, were convinced of their guilt and danger, received his testimony concerning Jesus, repented and were baptized: *and*, notwithstanding these remarkable fruits of his ministry, which served to evince the divine power and authority which accompanied his word, *Ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him*, but continued obstinately hardened against every method of conviction. *Note*; (1.) The success of our ministry is one of the best testimonials of our mission from God. (2.) Formal professors are wrought upon with much more difficulty, and seldomer converted, than careless sinners. Strictness in the ceremonials of religion, and the pride of duties, when trusted upon for righteousness, are among the strongest holds of Satan in the human heart. (3.) Wherever the Gospel comes in power, converting publicans and harlots, there will it leave those inexcusable who, beholding its efficacy on others, still contradict, and blaspheme, and reject the counsel of God against their own souls.

6thly, Another parable, nearly of the same import as the former, is delivered. We have,  
1. The privileges which the Jewish church had long enjoyed, represented by a vineyard let out to husbandmen. They had been planted in a pleasant land, fenced round by God's peculiar care, blessed with the means of grace; in the midst of them he had set up his altar, manifested his presence, deposited his lively oracles, instituted divine ordinances, and appointed a holy ministry: nothing which could conduce to their fruitfulness or defence was wanting: and therefore, having settled their constitution at Sinai, or at the dedication of the temple, retiring between the cherubim, he committed to the chief priests and elders the care of his church, for the edification of which they were required, as husbandmen in a vineyard, to labour. *Note*; (1.) Christ's church is his vineyard, and under his especial care. (2.) Ministers in the church must labour in the word and doctrine: a life of ease, indolence, and self-gratification, is inconsistent with his sacred employment.

2. Enjoying such means and mercies, God justly expected that their profiting should appear; and sent accordingly his prophets to remind them of their obligations, and stir them up and direct them to the discharge of them, that they might, in the fruits of grace and righteousness, render that tribute to God which was so much his due.

3. The baseness and cruelty of the husbandmen to these divine messengers was astonishing. They abused, insulted, and persecuted the prophets, and even went so far as to imbrue their hands in their blood, Jer. xx. 2. Neh. ix. 26. and when the Lord, in his patience and pity, sent others in succession, to see if at last some change might be wrought, the rising generation repeated all the wickedness of their forefathers. *Note*; (1.) It has been the lot of all God's faithful ministers from the be-

ginning to suffer persecution; and none have been deeper in this transgression than those, who by office and profession filled the most distinguished places in his church. (2.) God's patience with sinners is astonishing. Though provoked and insulted in the person of his ambassadors, he still sends them with proffers of peace and pardon.

4. When, in infinite condescension and love, God sent to them his Son, to whom they might well be expected to pay reverence and attention; and from whose ministry and miracles at least, if they rejected others, some blessed change might have been hoped for; so far were they from receiving and submitting to him, that, to fill up the measure of their iniquities, they immediately began to plot against him; and what these husbandmen had done, they were now about to repeat, to cast him out and slay him; as if, when they had crucified him without the walls of Jerusalem, they might then lord it without controul in the church, and, by the murder of the heir, seize the inheritance without opposition.

5. Christ appeals to them for what they thought must be the consequence, when the Lord of the vineyard came; for come he surely will, to reckon with the persecutors of his prophets and the murderers of his Son. And they, not yet understanding the meaning couched under these parabolic expressions, readily replied, no doubt the case of these wicked husbandmen will be terrible; they have nothing to expect but condign punishment for their crimes, and that the vineyard should be committed to more trusty servants—thus unknowingly pronouncing their own doom, and justifying God's procedure in rejecting them, and in calling the Gentiles into his church, who would render him more abundant honour, love, and service. *Note*; (1.) Even those who perish shall be made to confess God's righteousness, and shall out of their own mouths be condemned. (2.) The end of all the ungodly, and of the persecutors of Christ and his people, is, to be miserably destroyed under the confounding wrath of an offended God.

6. When, on our Lord's intimating how much they were concerned in this parable, they had testified their abhorrence of the thought he suggested of murdering God's Son, Luke, xx. 16—19. he assures them this would be the case, and they had, no doubt, often read the Scripture which foretold it, Ps. cxviii. 22. *The stone* was himself, the rock on which his church should be built up; *the builders* were the chief priests and elders, who rejected him, and refused to own him as the Messiah; yet, notwithstanding their malice and infidelity, he must become *the head-stone of the corner*, exalted to be the head of all principalities and powers, and of his church in particular, both of Jews and Gentiles united in one glorious body. And *this is the Lord's doing*, who permitted and overruled their wickedness for good, and would, at the resurrection and ascension of Christ, thus advance his only-begotten Son, and give him a name above every name: and *it is marvellous in our eyes*; the obduracy of the Jews, the calling of the Gen-

11 And, when the king<sup>1</sup> came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on<sup>m</sup> a wedding garment :

12 And he saith unto him, Friend<sup>n</sup> how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was<sup>o</sup> speechless.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 10. 15. Rev. 2. 23. <sup>m</sup> Rom. 13. 14. Rev. 19. 8. & 3. 4, 13. & 16. 15. If. 61. 10. Luke, 15. 22. Ch. 6. 31. 2 Cor. 5. 21. Rom. 5. 19. & 3. 22. Pf. 45. 13, 14. Eph. 4. 24. Col. 3. 10, 12. <sup>n</sup> John, 3. 3, 5. Ch. 5. 20. Phil. 3. 3, 8, 9. <sup>o</sup> Rom. 3. 19. Titus, 3. 11.

tiles, the rejection of the Messiah and his exaltation, are all marvellously ordered to advance the divine glory, to pour confusion on the enemies of the Redeemer, and to secure the salvation of his faithful people.

7. Christ, particularly addressing himself to the chief priests, elders, and people before him, makes a direct application of all that he had spoken to their case. The Gospel which they had rejected should shortly be taken from them, and they should be abandoned of God, because of their infidelity and impenitence; while this word of salvation should be sent to the Gentiles, who would thankfully embrace it, be admitted into the Messiah's kingdom, and approve themselves faithful subjects of it in all holy conversation and godliness. Whosoever therefore among them, offended at the humiliation of Jesus, through wilful ignorance or prejudice rejected him as the Messiah, *shall be broken*, as a man that stumbles against a stone: but whosoever, in his state of exaltation, obstinately persist in their malice against him, shall be crushed in pieces by him as under the fall of a mighty rock. *Note*; They who will not bow to the sceptre of the Redeemer's grace, must miserably perish under the iron rod of his judgments.

*Lastly*, The chief priests and Pharisees could not mistake his meaning: they plainly perceived the design of his parables and discourse, and saw them expressly levelled against themselves, out of their own mouths drawing their condemnation, and confirming the sentence of wrath against them; but so hardened were they, that, instead of instantly humbling their souls that they might avert the threatened vengeance, they were so enraged that they would instantly have laid violent hands upon him, and probably have murdered him on the spot; but the fear of the people restrained them, who, taking Jesus for a prophet, would at present have interposed for his rescue: they were therefore constrained to defer their revenge to a more convenient season. *Note*; (1.) The word of God is powerful and penetrating, and conscience will make the application, Thou art the man. (2.) They who are not corrected by reproof, must be exasperated thereby. (3.) It is a mercy that God has many ways of restraining men's wickedness, though they have cast off his fear: he can bind them with human fetters, when they refuse to be governed by his divine law.

#### CHAP. XXII.

*Ver. 1, 2. And Jesus answered, &c.*] The rulers being afraid to apprehend Jesus, he was at liberty to proceed in the duties of his ministry. Accordingly he delivered another parable, wherein he described, on one hand, the bad success which the preaching of the Gospel was to have among the Jews, who for that reason were to be destroyed; and, on the other, the cheerful reception which it was to meet with among the Gentiles, who thereupon were to be admitted to the participation of the privileges of the Gospel-

dispensation. *The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who made a marriage-feast for his son*; *ἑστίασις* signifies not only a marriage, but the feast at a marriage, or any great entertainment whatever: in which latter sense it seems evidently to be used here. "God's gracious design in giving the Gospel to men, and the success with which the preaching of it will be attended, may be illustrated by the behaviour of a certain king, who, in honour of his son, made a great feast, to which he invited many guests." This *marriage-supper*, or *great feast*, signifies the joys of heaven, (see Rev. xix. 9.) which are fitly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquisiteness, fulness, and duration; and they are here *to be prepared in honour of the Son of God*, because they are bestowed on men as the reward of his obedience to death of the cross. Our Lord is frequently represented in Scripture under the character of a *bridegroom*. See ix. 15. Luke, v. 34. John, iii. 29. the notes on Luke, xiv. 16. &c. Macknight and Wolfius.

*Ver. 3. And sent forth his servants*] It was formerly customary to send two messengers, as in the case here proposed, which represented the condescension the king made and suited the repeated invitations given to the Jews, Christ himself during his life, and by the Apostles after his death. The invitation which preceded the call to the hour of supper, may signify the vocation of the Jews, which they became in a peculiar sense the visible church, and, in consequence whereof, they had the call given at that hour; that is, when the fulness of time appeared, they had the Gospel, the call to the great feast of life preached to them, first by John the Baptist, and afterwards by Jesus himself: *But they would not come*. Though invited and invited to enter into the kingdom of heaven, they would not obey, but rejected the Gospel.

*Ver. 4. Again he sent forth other servants*] After his resurrection and ascension, the Apostles were sent to inform the Jews, that the Gospel covenant was now in force, and that the mansions in heaven were prepared, and nothing was wanting, but that they should cheerfully accept of the offer designed them. It was agreeable to the simplicity of the ancient ages to mention *oxen* and *swine* as the invited guests of a royal entertainment. Thus, in Homer and other ancient writers, we see princes of the first rank feasting each other with nothing but the ill-favoured sheep, and swine. Compare Isai. xxv. 6.

*Ver. 5, 6. But they made light of it, &c.*] The Jews, undervaluing the favour offered them, mocked and made light of the offer, and went about their ordinary business of them, more rude than the rest, insulted, and despised the servants who had come to call them. The invitation, the call, and the treatment which the king's guests, who were designed to represent the ill success of the Gospel and its ministers might expect among the Jews, who being, in a national point of view, God's

13 Then said the king to the servants, and cast *him* into outer darkness: there shall Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Ch. 3. 12. & 8. 12. & 12. 45. & 21. 41. Ver. 7. & 24. 51. & 13. 42. & 25. 30. 2 Pet. 2. 17. Jude, 6. 13. 2 Theff. 1. 9.

ple, were on that account to have the first offers of the Gospel made to them. They would generally reject it, preferring the world and its pursuits to the practice of piety, the favour of God, and the enjoyment of heaven. Nay, to obstinacy they would add insults and cruelty, persecuting unto death the ministers who exhorted them to believe.

Ver. 7. *When the king heard thereof, he was wroth*] The invitation to the marriage-supper of his son, sent by this king to his supposed friends, was the highest expression of his regard for them, and the greatest honour which could be shown them; therefore, when they refused it for such trifling reasons, and were so savagely ungrateful as to beat, wound, and kill the servants who came with it, it was a most outrageous affront; an injury deserving of the severest punishment. Accordingly the king, in great wrath, sent forth his armies, to destroy those murderers, and burn their city. This branch of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called *God's armies*, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance upon that once favoured, but now rebellious people. The present clause must be supposed to come in by way of *prolepsis*, or anticipation; for it is plain that there could not be time before the feast already prepared was served up, to attempt an execution of this kind. It is needless to object, that the circumstances of this parable are improbable, "as it was never heard of in the world that subjects refused the invitation of the sovereign to the marriage of his son;" for, allowing this to be so, it only aggravates the crime of the Jews the more, with respect to whom it was literally true—the honour which God offered them in the Gospel, and which they rejected, being far greater than the honour which is conferred on a subject by the invitation of his prince. Moreover, the joys of heaven to which they were called, and which they refused, do infinitely transcend the pleasures of any royal banquet. And, to carry our reflections from them to ourselves,—how much will this consideration condemn those, who, calling themselves by the name of Christ, refuse all the gracious offers and invitations of the King of glory to the heavenly feast; while, quick to the call of earthly honour, they are forward and zealous to accept distinguished invitations to temporary feasts and pleasures!

Ver. 8—10. *The wedding is ready, &c.*] The 8th verse is well explained by Acts, xiii. 46, 47. which was an accomplishment of this part of the parable. In the next verse, the calling of the Gentiles is represented by the king's servants going forth, and compelling all that they met to come in, (see Luke, xiv. 23.) whether they were maimed or halt, worthy or unworthy, good or bad; for they were to make no distinction. The phrase, *διεξέδους τὰς ὁδούς*, signifies the ways most frequented, the places where several streets and roads met. This intimates that the Gentiles had a little reason to expect the call of the Gospel, as common passengers and travellers to expect an invitation to a royal banquet.

Ver. 11. *He saw there a man, &c.*] It may seem strange, that, in such a number of men gathered to this feast, there was only one found who had not on a wedding-garment, and that he should be punished with such severity for wanting what he could not be expected to have, while he was performing a journey perhaps, or sitting begging under the hedges, as appears from Luke, xiv. 23. Nevertheless the heinousness of the offence, and the equity of the sentence which was passed upon him, will fully appear, if we call to mind a circumstance, which, because it was common at that time, is not mentioned in the parable. The Easterns, among whom the fashion of clothes was not changeable as with us, reckoned it a principal part of their magnificence to have their wardrobes stored with rich habits. Thus Job, speaking of the wicked, (ch. xxvii. 16.) says, *Though they heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay.* Accordingly, in Scripture, when the uncertainty of earthly treasures is spoken of, they are represented as subject not only to rust, but to moths, Matth. vi. 19. James, v. 2. The matter is evident likewise from Horace, who tells us, that when Lucullus, the Roman general, who had enriched himself with the spoils of the East, was asked, if he could furnish a hundred habits for the theatre? He replied, he had five thousand in his house, of which they were welcome to take part, or all. See Epist. vi. lib. 1. ver. 40. We may therefore naturally suppose, that this king, having invited his guests to his feast from the highways and hedges, would order his servants to make each of them a present of splendid apparel, as a farther mark of his respect, and that they might be all clothed in a manner becoming the magnificence of the solemnity. For it cannot otherwise be understood how, among such a number collected in such a manner, only one should have been found wanting a *wedding-garment*, especially as we are told that they gathered together all, as many as they found, both good and bad. Besides, that the great men in the East were accustomed to make ostentation of their grandeur, and to express their respect for their peculiar friends by gifts of this kind, is evident from the presents which Joseph bestowed on his brethren in Egypt, Gen. xlv. 22. and from the agreement which Samson entered into with the guests at his marriage-feast, Judges, xiv. 12, 13. To conclude, in the 4th Odyssy, ver. 47—51. Homer tells us, that Telemachus and Pisistratus happening to arrive at Menelaüs's house in Lacedæmon, while he was solemnizing the nuptials of his son and daughter, the maids of the house washed the strangers, anointed them, dressed them, and set them down by their master at table. Without all doubt, therefore, the man who was sentenced to be bound and cast out of doors, had been offered a wedding-garment, or sumptuous apparel, along with the rest, but would not receive it; and so haughtily came in, dirty and ragged as he was. The king, looking on this as a great insult, inflicted upon the person who was guilty of it a punishment suitable to the demerit of his offence. What Dr. Calvin says concerning the wedding-

14 <sup>9</sup> For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

15 ¶ Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master,

we know that thou art true, and <sup>8</sup> teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*; for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 <sup>7</sup> Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not?

<sup>9</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 19. 30. Mark, 10. 31. Luke, 7. 29. & 12. 32. & 13. 24—30. Ch. 7. 17, 14. & 8. 11, 12. <sup>8</sup> Mark, 12. 13—17. Luke, 20. 20—26. & 11. 53. Pf. 2. 2. Jer. 18. 18. Ecclef. 4. 4. Job, 5. 2. Micah, 2. 1. <sup>7</sup> Ch. 16. 6. Mark, 3. 15. <sup>6</sup> Ch. 26. 49, 50. Pf. 12. 1. & 55. 21. <sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. 2. 17. 1 Thess. 2. 4. Gal. 1. 10. Acts, 10. 34, 35. <sup>4</sup> Ezra, 4. 13. Acts, 5. 37. Jer. 42. 2, 3.

wedding-garment in the parable deserves a place here. "It is useless to dispute about the wedding-garment, whether it be faith or a pious holy life; for neither can faith be separated from good works, nor can good works proceed except from faith. Christ's meaning is only that we are called in order that we may be renewed in our minds after his image; and therefore, that we may remain always in his house, the old man with his filthiness must be put off, and a new life designed, that our life may be such as is suitable to so honourable an invitation." Dr. Doddridge observes, that this circumstance of the parable is admirably adapted to the method of God's dealing with us. For he requires repentance indeed and holiness, in order to our partaking of the happiness of heaven; but at the same time he graciously offers to work it in us by his Holy Spirit, and therefore may justly punish our neglect of so great a favour.

Ver. 12. *And he was speechless*] *And he was struck speechless.* This is the true import of the original word ἐπιμωβή, which is more expressive than the phrase in our translation, *he was speechless*; as an English reader might be led by our translation to conceive that the man was dumb, and so could not speak; whereas he was made dumb only by self-condemnation and conviction, even as Christ made dumb—ἐπιμωβή, —put to silence the Sadducees, ver. 34. and as Peter would have us *make speechless*, —put to silence, the ignorance of foolish men. See Gerhard's Continuation of Chemnitz's Harmony, on the place. This latter part of the parable represents the last judgment; teaching us, that, though the Gentiles obeyed the call of the Gospel with more alacrity than the Jews, they would not all be saved by it: *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

Ver. 14. *For many are called, &c.*] These words are proverbial, and must be referred first to the Jews, who, though they were called in great numbers by the preaching of the Gospel, few were chosen; for they did not believe. See on ch. xx. 16. They must be referred also to the Gentiles, too many of whom, though they embraced the Gospel in speculation, rejected the wedding-garment when it was offered to them, and refused the gracious inspiration of God's good Spirit to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. The parable is concluded in this manner, to shew us, that the profession of the Christian religion will avail a man nothing, unless he lives in a manner worthy of that religion; that not they who say Lord, Lord! but they who do the will of that Lord, shall enter into the joys of his kingdom. See the Inferences.

Ver. 15. *Entangle him*] *Ensnare him.*

Ver. 16. *With the Herodians*] These, in the Syriac version, are termed the *domestics*, or *courtiers* of Herod. "Origen and St. Jerome have, in my opinion," says Beza, "sobre, rightly supposed that they were men (probably of the sect of the Sadducees) who sided with Herod Antipas, who, to ingratiate himself with the emperor, was very busy and earnest in raising the taxes." They seem to have been men who distinguished themselves by their zeal for the family of Herod; and, on that account they would be naturally zealous for the authority of the Romans, by whose means Herod was made and continued king; and it is probable, as Dr. Prideaux conjectures, that they might incline to conform to them in some particulars, which the law would not allow of; and especially in the admission of images, though not in the religious rather idolatrous use of them. Herod's attempt to erect a golden eagle over the eastern gate of the temple is well known: these complaisant courtiers would, no doubt, defend it; and the same temper might discover itself in other instances. On all these accounts, they were diametrically opposite to the Pharisees; so that their junction of their counsels against Christ is a very remarkable proof of the keenness of that malice, which thus cause them to forget so deep a quarrel with each other. Thus united, they resolved to send certain of their disciples to ensnare Jesus in his words; whom they directed to say, *themselvs just men*, Luke, xx. 20. men who had a high veneration for the divine law, and a dread of doing anything inconsistent therewith; and, under that mask, to question him, for the ease of their consciences, and to express their opinion whether they might pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, consistently with their regard for their religion. This question was much debated in our Lord's time, and the Jews of Galilee having taught the unlawfulness of paying taxes, and gathered a numerous faction, especially among the common people. The priests, therefore, in order to get the question decided, it was not in our Lord's power to decide the matter without making himself obnoxious to some of the Pharisees, who were divided upon it. If he should say it was lawful to pay the taxes, they believed that the people, in whose favour the question was proposed, (see Luke, xx. 20.) would be incensed against him, not only as a base profligate, but on being attacked publicly, renounced the claim of the Messiah, which he had assumed among his friends, as a flatterer of princes also, and a betrayer of the liberties and privileges of his country. For the notion of the universality of the Jews formed of the Messiah would deliver them from foreign servitude, and he, who called himself the Messiah, recomme

18 But <sup>7</sup> Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why <sup>2</sup> tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and \* superscription?

21 They say unto him, Cesar's. Then saith he unto them, <sup>b</sup> Render therefore unto

Cesar the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

22 When they had heard *these words* they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

23 ¶ <sup>d</sup> The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

24 Saying, Master, <sup>c</sup> Moses said, If a man

<sup>7</sup> See Ch. 16. 8. John, 2. 25. <sup>2</sup> Ch. 12. 38. & 19. 3. Luke, 11. 16, 54. <sup>a</sup> In value seven-pence three farthings. Ch. 20. 2. & 18. 28. Rev. 6. 6. <sup>b</sup> *Oriscription.* <sup>c</sup> Ch. 17. 25. Rom. 13. 7. Prov. 24. 21. <sup>d</sup> Peter, 2. 17. <sup>e</sup> Ver. 33. 46. <sup>f</sup> Cor. 1. 19, 20. Job, 5. 12, 13. <sup>g</sup> Mark, 12. 18—27. Luke, 20. 27—39. with Acts, 23. 6, 8. <sup>h</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 12. <sup>i</sup> 2 Tim. 2. 17. <sup>j</sup> Deut. 25. 5, 6. Gen. 38. 8.

ing of taxes to the Romans, they could not but think this inconsistent with his pretensions, nay, an entire renunciation of them. But, if he should affirm that it was *unlawful* to pay, the Herodians resolved to inform the governor of it, who they hoped would punish him as a fomentor of sedition. Highly elated, therefore, with their project, they came and proposed their question, after having first passed an encomium on the truth of his mission, and upon his courage, integrity, and impartiality, with a design, no doubt, to make him believe that they were his friends, and that he ought boldly to declare what the will of God was in this matter. See Beaufobre, Prideaux, Macknight, and Calmet.

*Ver. 18—21. Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?*] Our Saviour called them *hypocrites*, to signify, that though they made conscience, and a regard to the divine will, their pretence for asking the question, he saw through their design, and knew that they were come to ensnare him. The Jews were so tenacious of the customs of their country, and had so high an opinion of their own holiness, that they were extremely reluctant to make use of heathen money, as appears from the business of the money-changers mentioned in the Gospels. Probably it was for this reason that the Romans insisted on having the taxes paid in their own coin, because, by making it current, they taught the Jews that they were their masters. Hence the force of our Lord's argument appears: "Since this money bears Cesar's image, it is his; and, by making use of it, ye acknowledge his authority. If so, I leave it to yourselves to judge, whether tribute ought to be paid toward the support of that government which ye have acknowledged, which ye cannot shake off, and by which your tranquillity is preserved." That this was our Lord's meaning, appears from the illative particle *therefore*, by which his answer is connected with the Pharisees' opinion; *They say unto him, Cesar's: Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar, &c.* Having thus declared the lawfulness of paying taxes to the civil powers, he ordered them at the same time to be careful to pay to God what was his due, as their Maker and Preserver; *Render therefore to Cesar—and unto God the things that are God's.* "In discharging your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never depart from the duty which you owe to God; but should remember, that as you bear the image of the great God omnipotent, you are his subjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of yourselves; that is, ought to yield yourselves to him, soul and body, serving

"him with both to the utmost of your power." The Pharisees and their adherents, under pretence of religion, often justified sedition; but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themselves with the reigning powers, made them a compliment of their consciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, though directly contrary to the divine law. Our Lord, therefore, when he returned this answer, had both in his view; exhorting them in their regards to God and the magistrate to give each his due; because there is no inconsistency between their rights, when nothing but their rights are insisted on. Dr. Lightfoot tells us, that the Jews have a tradition among them, that, to admit of the title of any prince on their current coin, was an acknowledgment of subjection to him. It is certain that their not daring to refuse this coin, when offered them in payment, was in effect a confession that they were conquered by the Romans, and consequently that the emperor had a right to their tribute.

*Ver. 22. They marvelled, and left him]* The unexpected and most wise answer of our Lord, in which he clearly confuted them on their own principles, and shewed that the rights of God and the magistrate do not interfere in the least, because magistrates are God's deputies, and rule by his authority, quite disconcerted and silenced his crafty enemies. They were astonished at his having perceived their design, as well as at the wisdom by which he avoided the snare; and went off inwardly vexed and greatly ashamed. *Ἐθαύμασαν, they marvelled,* might be rendered, *they were struck with admiration and surprise.*

*Ver. 23. The same day came to him the Sadducees]* It is generally known that Sadoc, the master of this sect, and from whom the Sadducees took their name, thought that God was not to be served from mercenary principles; that is to say, as he crudely explained it, from the hope of reward, or fear of punishment. His followers interpreted this as an implicit denial of a future state, and so imbibed that pernicious notion of the utter destruction of the soul at death;—equally uncomfortable and absurd. The story which they mention here seems to have been a kind of common-place objection, as we meet with it in the old Jewish writers. Some are of opinion, that by the *resurrection* which the Sadducees denied, is to be understood the resurrection of the body; others contend, that it signifies simply the existence of men in a future state: properly speaking, however, the two notions coincide, for as the Sadducees denied the immateriality of the soul, a future state, according to their conceptions of it, could mean nothing

die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye

do err, <sup>f</sup> not knowing the scriptures, <sup>g</sup> nor the power of God.

30 For <sup>h</sup> in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven.

31 But, as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 <sup>i</sup> I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

33 And, <sup>k</sup> when the multitude heard *this* they were astonished at his doctrine.

<sup>f</sup> If. 8. 20. & 27. 11. & 28. 9, 10. Hosea, 4. 4, 6. & 8. 12. John, 20. 31. Rom. 15. 4. 2 Tim. 3. 15—17. with Job, 19. 25, 26. Ezek. 37. 5—Dan. 12. 2. <sup>g</sup> Gen. 18. 14. Jer. 32. 17. Ch. 18. 26. Luke, 1. 37. Phil. 3. 21. Acts, 26. 8. <sup>h</sup> Luke, 20. 31. 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30. & 15. 44, 49, 52. 1 John, 3. 2. John, 5. 29. <sup>i</sup> Exod. 3. 6, 16. Gen. 17. 7. & 28. 21. & 32. 9. Lev. 26. 12. Acts, 7. 32. Heb. 11. 16. Mark, 12. Luke, 20. 37, 38. <sup>k</sup> Ch. 7. 28, 29. Mark, 6. 2. Luke, 4. 22.

thing else but the resurrection of the body; and their denying the resurrection of the body, was the same thing with their denying a future state. Farther, as they had no idea of spirit, they were obliged to make use of terms relative to the body; when they spoke of a future life. Hence came the familiar use of the word *resurrection* in their disputes, to denote a future state simply; and this sense is not more unusual than the meaning which they affixed to the word *dead*, when they made it to signify persons *annihilated*, or who have no existence at all. See Luke, xx. 38. Our Lord's reasoning in behalf of a future state, placed in this view, is clear and conclusive. See Drusus, and Lightfoot on the place.

*Ver. 24—28. Master, Moses said, &c.]* The argument by which the Sadducees endeavoured to confute the notion of a future state, was taken from the Jewish law of marriage, which, to give their objection the better colour, they observed was God's law delivered by Moses. As they believed the soul to be nothing but a more refined kind of matter, they thought if there was any future state it must resemble the present; and that men being in that state material and mortal, the human race could not be continued, nor the individuals made happy, without marriage. Hence they affirmed it to be a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection or future state, that every man's wife should be restored to him. See the next note.

*Ver. 29, 30. Jesus answered and said, &c.]* Jesus confuted their argument, by telling the Sadducees that they were ignorant of the power of God, who has created spirit as well as matter, and who can make man completely happy in the enjoyment of himself. He observed further, that the nature of the life obtained in the future state, makes marriage altogether superfluous; because in the world to come, men being immortal, *like the angels, ἰσάγγελοι*, there is no need of an increase of mankind. See on Luke, xx. 36.

*Ver. 31, 32. But, as touching, &c.]* Our Lord, having demonstrated that the Sadducees were ignorant of the

*power of God*, proceeded to shew that they were ignorant of the *Scriptures* likewise; and particularly of the writings of Moses, whence they had drawn their objection. out of the law itself he demonstrated the certainty of resurrection, at least of just men, and thereby quite turned the opinion of the Sadducees, who, believing the materiality of the soul, affirmed that men were annihilated at death, and that the writings of Moses supported the contrary opinion. His argument was this: "As a man cannot properly be a father without children, or a king without subjects, so God cannot properly be called this sense God or Lord, unless he has his people." "Lord of the living. Since, therefore, in the law God called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after these patriarchs were dead, the relation was not by the word *God* still subsisted between them; for they reason they were not annihilated, as the Sadducees pretended, when they affirmed that they were still in being, God's subjects and glorified." Others choose to explain the argument thus: to be the father of any person is to be his *exceeding great reward*. xv. 1. Wherefore, as the patriarchs died without having obtained the promises, Heb. xi. 39. they must be in some other state to enjoy them, that the veracity of the law may remain sure. Besides, the Apostle tells us, that the patriarchs were not ashamed to be called their God, because he had prepared for them a city: Heb. xi. 16. which is a relation he would have reckoned it infinitely beneath his relation as God to any one to whom he had conferred a state of permanent happiness. Taken either way is conclusive; for which we may suppose, that both the senses were intended, and full of demonstration: accordingly, the people were agreeably surprized, when they heard such a solid confutation of the sect which they abhorred that too in an argument where they had attacked themselves impregnable. See the next verses and Doddridge. Bishop Sherlock observes, that from hence that our Saviour thought the



34 ¶ But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 Then one of them; *which was* a lawyer, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying,

36 <sup>m</sup> Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, <sup>n</sup> Thou shalt love

the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second *is* like unto it, ° Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

<sup>l</sup> Mark, 12. 28—34. Luke, 10. 25—28. See. ver. 15. <sup>m</sup> Ch. 7. 21. Pf. 12. 2. & 55. 21. Ch. 26. 49, 50. Ver. 16. <sup>n</sup> Deut. 6. 5. & 10. 12. & 30. 6. Luke, 10. 27. Prov. 23. 26. Mark, 12. 30, 33. 1 Tim. 1. 5. <sup>o</sup> Lev. 19. 18. Rom. 13. 9. Gal. 5. 14. 1 Tim. 1. 5. James, 2. 8. Luke, 10. 27, 36, 37. 1 John, 3. 18. Ch. 7. 12.

afforded good proof of a future state; which is inconsistent with the supposition that there was no evidence for life and immortality till the publication of the Gospel. See his Discourses, vol. i. serm. 6. Beaufobre and Lefant observe very well upon this subject, that, “as the calamities and misfortunes which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob underwent in this life could not well be reconciled with the extraordinary favours that are included in the expression, *I will be thy God*: it thence follows, that, when God declared himself to be their God, he consequently bound himself to reward and make them happy after this life, if faithful to his grace.” See Heb. ch. xi. 16. This argument was then already very conclusive against the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body: but it proves at the same time the resurrection, because the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not being Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, themselves, it thence follows, that God could not properly be stiled *their God*, unless they were to rise again from the dead. There are in the Jewish writings some arguments, much like this, used to prove the resurrection. See also Grotius, and Archbishop Tillotson.

Ver. 35. *Then—a lawyer asked, &c.*] A scribe, or public teacher. See Luke, xi. 44. *Tempting or trying him*, here, does not mean that he did this with an insidious design; and indeed St. Mark’s account, ch. xii. 28. forbids such an interpretation; but he proposed the question with a view to make a farther trial of our Lord’s skill in the sacred volume. Some of the doctors declared, that the law of sacrifices was the great commandment, because sacrifices, say they, are both the expiations of sin, and thanksgivings for mercies. Others bestowed this honour on the law of circumcision, because it was the sign of the covenant established between God and the nation. A third part yielded to the law of the sabbath, because by that appointment both the knowledge and the practice of the institutions of Moses were preserved; and, to name no more, there were some who affirmed the law of meats and washings to be of the greatest importance, because thereby the people of God were effectually separated from the company and conversation of the heathens. But Jesus, with infinitely better reason, decided in favour of the beauties of piety and holiness; mentioning particularly that comprehensive summary of both found in Deut. vi. 4, 5. which was one of the sentences written on their phylacteries, and Lev. xix. 18. See Lightfoot’s Hor. Heb. on Mark, xii. 28.

words *heart, soul, &c.* though used promiscuously, yet, when thus put together, seem intended to express, after a more distinct manner, the requisite circumstances of that obedience which is the proper evidence of our love towards God. The words *with all thy heart* imply, that our love and obedience should be sincere, consisting not in the external act only, but likewise in the inward affections of the mind. The words *with all thy soul* shew, that our obedience must be universal; for he does not love God in the Scripture sense, who obeys him in some instances only, and not in all. Lastly, the words *with all thy mind* teach, that our obedience to God ought to be willing and cheerful.

Ver. 38, 39. *This is the first and great commandment, &c.*] From this head are to be deduced all the service, worship, and honour, which we owe and pay to our Creator and Redeemer. Of the love of God, our Saviour says, that it *is the first and great commandment*; and the love of our neighbour he stiles *the second, like unto it*. Now perhaps it may hence be inferred, that the love of God, which is the first and great commandment, is a law of superior obligation to that which is only the second, and may therefore, in some instances, controul and overrule it. Whence it should follow, that we might lawfully overlook the love of our neighbour, in obedience to the superior obligation that we are under to love God: but our Saviour’s saying the love of God is the first commandment, is no manner of reason to think, that it ever is or ever can be inconsistent with the second. The love of God is properly stiled *the first commandment*, in respect to God, who is the object of the love, and because it is indeed the fountain of all religion, and the ground even of that commandment which is stiled the second. But this is so far from shewing that the love of God may ever clash with the love of our neighbour, that it proves the contrary; for if the love of our neighbour is deducible from the love of God, it must ever be consistent with it. No man who thinks himself bound to love and obey God, can think himself at liberty to hurt or oppress those whom God has taken under his protection. No man who believes it his interest as well as his duty to please God, but must likewise believe it is his interest and duty to be kind and tender to those who are the children of God, and in whose happiness he is not an unconcerned spectator. For this reason the love of God is called the *first* commandment, and for this reason it never can be inconsistent with the love of our neighbour, which is the second.

Ver. 40. *On these two commandments, &c.*] The meaning

41 ¶ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David.*

43 He saith unto them, How then doth

David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

¶ Mark, 12. 35—37. Luke, 19. 41—44. Ver. 15. 34.  
 \* 2 Sam. 23. 2. 2 Peter, 1. 21. Acts, 1. 16. & 2. 30.

22. with Rev. 22. 16. Rom. 1. 3. & 9. 5.

¶ Ps. 7. 14. & 9. 6, 7. & 11. 1—4. Jer. 29. 5, 6. Ezek. 34. 23, 24. & 37. 24.  
 \* Pf. 110. 1. Acts, 2. 34. 1 Cor. 15. 25. Heb. 1. 3, 13. & 10. 12, 13. Eph. 1. 20.

ing is, that the whole reason of religion (which, in the Jewish dispensation, was included in the law and the prophets) lies in these two general commandments; that in these all particular precepts and duties are comprized: that nothing can be of any obligation in religion, but as it relates either to the love we owe to God, or the love we owe to our neighbour. The relation between God and man being once known, the first conclusion is, that we ought to *love the Lord our God with all, &c.* that is, with all our power; and, till this general principle be established, the particular duties owing to God cannot fall under consideration. There is no room to inquire after the proper instances of expressing our love to God, till the general obligation of loving God be known and admitted. The same reason holds likewise as to the other general head of religion,—*the love of our neighbour.* But these general principles being once established, the particular duties flow from them of course. The love of God, and the love of our neighbour, if carefully attended to, will easily grow into a complete system of experimental and practical religion. The duties of religion are all relative, regarding either God or man; and there is no relative duty which love does not readily transform itself into, upon the mere view of the different circumstances of the person concerned. Love, with regard to a superior, becomes honour and respect. With respect to equals, it is friendship and benevolence; towards inferiors, it is courtesy and condescension: if it regards the happy and prosperous, it is joy and pleasure; if it looks towards the miserable, it is pity and compassion; it is a tenderness which will discover itself in all the acts of mercy and humanity. In negative duties, this principle is no less effectual than in positive. Love will not permit us to injure, oppress, or offend our brother; it will not give us leave to neglect our superiors, or despise our inferiors; it will restrain every inordinate passion, and will not suffer us to gratify our envy at the expence of our neighbour's credit or reputation. The same may be said of our *love to God*; for the duties which we owe to God are founded in the relation between God and us. Were there no such relation, the perfections of God might be matter of admiration, but could not be the ground of duty and obedience. I have observed that love naturally transforms itself into all relative duties which arise from the circumstances of the persons related. Thus, in the present case, if we love God, and consider him as the Lord and governor of the world, our love will soon become obedience; if we consider him as wise, good, and gracious, our love will become honour and admira-

tion; if we add to these our own weakness and infirmity, love will teach us dependence, and prompt us in all wants to fly for refuge to our great Protector; and that in all other instances may the particular duties be derived from this general principle. Prayer and praise, and other parts of divine worship which are the acts of these duties are so clearly connected to them, that there is no need of shewing distinctly concerning them, how they flow from this general commandment.

Ver. 42—45. *What think ye of Christ?* The Pharisees, having, in the course of our Lord's ministry, proposed sundry difficult questions to him, with a view to his prophetic gifts; he, in his turn, now that a body of his disciples was gathered together, thought fit to make trial of their skill in the sacred writings. For this purpose, he asked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Messiah's pedigree, arising from Ps. cx. The doctors, indeed, did not in general look for any thing in their Messias excellent than the most exalted perfections of humanity, though they called him the Son of God, and the notion that he was God, and so could offer no solution of the difficulty. Yet the latter question manifested to them their error: for, if Messiah was to be a secular prince, as they supposed, ruling the world in his own time, he never could have been called *Lord*, who died before he was born; far less would he have been called king as David, who also was his progenitor, and called him *Lord*. Wherefore, since he rules over the world, and is not dead only of former ages, but even of those from whom he was himself descended, and comprehends the men of all countries and ages, present, and to come, the doctors, if they were accurately upon the subject, should have expected Messiah a king different from all other kings. Besides, he is to *sit at God's right hand, till he have made the footstool of his feet*; made thoroughly acquainted with him. Numbers of Christ's enemies are full of malice in this life; and they who will not bow to him shall, like the rebellious subjects of other kings, be reduced by punishment. Being constituted a tribunal, where, by the highest exercise of his authority, he shall doom each to his unchangeable state. We may observe, that our Lord, in his arguments for granted, in his arguments with the Pharisees, and the writers of the Old Testament were under the ordinary guidance of the Holy Spirit, as to themselves with the strictest propriety on all occasions.

46 ' And no man was able to answer him forth ask him any more questions. a word, neither durst any man from that day

† Mark, 12. 34. Luke, 14. 6. & 20. 40.

deb David in spirit, &c. ver. 43. comp. John, x. 35. And I look upon this, says Dr. Doddridge, as no contemptible argument for the inspiration of the New Testament; for we can never think the apostles of Christ to have been less assisted by the Divine Spirit in their writings, when they were in other respects so much more powerfully endued with it.

Ver. 46. And no man was able to answer him a word] None of them could offer the least shadow of a solution of the difficulty which he had proposed. Neither durst any man from that day forth, &c. The repeated proofs which they had received of the prodigious depth of his understanding, impressed them with such an opinion of his wisdom, that they judged it impossible to entangle him in his talk; for which reason they left off attempting it, and from that day forth troubled him no more with their captious and insidious questions.

Inferences.—How rich are the provisions of the Gospel! ver. 2.—A feast indeed, becoming the dignity and majesty of the King of heaven, and proportionable to the love which he bears to his own Son, in honour of whom it is made! How wonderful is the grace which calls us to the participation of those provisions! (ver. 9, 10.)—Us, who were originally sinners of the Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise! Ephes. ii. 12. Yet has he graciously sent his messengers to us and invited us to his house, and his table, with the additional hope of yet nobler entertainments in reserve. May none of us reject so condescending a call; —lest we turn his goodness into righteous indignation, and treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath!

It is not every one who professes to accept the entertainment; not every one who talks of Gospel blessings, and seems to desire a share in them, who will be admitted to it. In order to our partaking of an inheritance among the saints in light, it is necessary that we be made meet for it, by the holiness both of our hearts and lives. This is the wedding-garment (ver. 11.) wrought by the Spirit of God himself, and offered to us by the freedom of his grace. And it is so necessary, that without it we must be separated from the number of his guests and friends, and, even though we had eaten and drank in his presence, must be cast into outer darkness.

How highly does it behove us frequently to think of that awful day, when the king will come in to see his guests; when God will take a most exact survey of every soul under a Christian profession; to think of that speechless confusion which will seize such as have not on the wedding-garment, and of that inexorable severity with which they will be consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth! To have seen for a while the light of the Gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will but add deeper and more sensible horror to those gloomy caverns. To have heard those glad tidings of great joy, and then to hear them as it were echoed back in accents of final despair, how will it wound the ear, and pierce the heart! May God pre-

vent it, by fulfilling in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him; when the marriage supper of the Lamb shall be celebrated, and all the harmony, pomp, and beauty of heaven shall aid its solemnity, its magnificence, and its joy!

Our Lord was indeed the person whom the artful hypocrites before him described (ver. 16.); and was in that respect an excellent pattern to all his followers, and especially to his ministers. He knew no man in the discharge of his office; but, without regarding the persons of any, neither seeking their favour, nor fearing their resentment, he taught the way of God in truth, and declared the whole of his counsel.

From our Lord's decision in the present case, we may learn with readiness to render to all their dues, ver. 21. Our civil magistrates, by virtue of their office, justly claim our reverent regard; and tribute is most reasonably due to those who attend continually on the service of the public, and are, under God, the pillars of our common tranquility. Let that tribute therefore be duly rendered with honour and with cheerfulness; for he, surely, is unworthy to share in the benefits of government, who will not contribute his part towards its necessary expence. But let it also be remembered, that the Rights of GOD are sacred and inviolable. He alone is the Lord of conscience; and, when that is invaded, it is easy to judge, whether man or God is to be obeyed, Acts, iv. 19.

With what satisfaction should we read our Lord's vindication of the resurrection, that important article of our faith and hope! How easily was the boasted argument of these Sadducees unravelled and exposed, and all their pride of valuing themselves so much on that imaginary penetration which laid men almost on a level with the brutes, covered with just confusion! Indeed, objections much more plausible than theirs against the resurrection, may be answered in that one saying of our Lord's, Ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God. Were the Scripture doctrine of the resurrection considered on the one hand, and the omnipotence of the Creator on the other, it could not seem incredible to any that God should raise the dead. Acts, xxvi. 8. How sublime an idea does our Lord give us of the happiness of those who shall be thought worthy to attain it! They shall be equal to the angels! ver. 30. Adored be the riches of that grace which redeems us from this degenerate and miserable state, in which we had made ourselves so much like the beasts that perish, to raise us to so high a dignity, and marshal us with the armies of heaven. O may we be found faithful!

Christ, we see, argues a very important point of doctrine from premises in which, perhaps, we might not have been able to have discovered it, without such a hint. Let us learn to judge of Scripture arguments, not merely by the sound, but by the sense of the words. And as our Lord chose a passage from the Pentateuch, (see Mark, xii. 19.) rather than from the prophets, for the conviction

## C H A P. XXIII.

*Christ admitteth the people to follow the good doctrine, not the evil example of the scribes and Pharisees: his disciples must beware of their ambition; he denounceth eight woes against their hypocrisy and blindness: and prophesieth the destruction of Jerusalem.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**T**HEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 2. 4. Ver. 13, 15, 23, 27, 29. Neh. 8. 4. Deut. 31. 6. Perhaps it means, that they were civil governors, as Moses was. <sup>b</sup> Rom. 13. 1. Titus 3. 1. 11. 8. 20. John, 5. 39. <sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. 3. 5. Titus, 1. 16. Rom. 2. 1, 2, 17—25. <sup>d</sup> Luke, 11. 46. 11. 10. 1. Acts, 15. 10. Gal. 6. 1.

of the Sadducees, be it our care to study the tempers, and even the prejudices, of those with whom we converse; that so we may, if possible, let in the light of divine truth on their hearts, on that side by which they seem most capable of receiving it.

Whatever might be the design of the scribe in putting his question to Christ, ver. 28. we have reason to rejoice in the important answer that he received. O that it might be inscribed on every heart as with the point of a diamond!

The great commandments are the entire *love of God*, and of *our neighbour as ourselves*. But alas! what reason have we to complain of our own deficiency on both these heads? Can we say that the blessed God has the whole of our hearts? Is the utmost vigour of our faculties exerted in his service? And do we make him the end of all our actions, of all our wishes, of all our pursuits?—Do we so equitably judge *ourselves and others* as to seek our own particular interests no farther than they may be subservient to, or consistent with the good of the whole? And do we make all those allowances for others, which we expect, or desire they should make for us?—But if this be not, in the main, the prevailing temper of our minds, in vain are our burnt-offerings and our sacrifices; in vain are all the solemnities of public worship, or forms of secret devotion; and by all our most pathetic expressions of duty to God, and friendship to *men*, we do but add one degree of guilt to another.

The Gospel of Christ has given us a key to that question of his, (ver. 41, &c.) with which the Pharisees were so perplexed. Well might *David in spirit call him Lord*, who, according to the *flesh*, was to descend from his loins; inasmuch as *before David or Abrahams was, He is*.—Let us adore this mysterious union of the divine and human natures, in the person of our glorious Emmanuel; and be very careful that we do not oppose him, if we would not be *found fighters against God*.

It is remarkable, that our Lord's summary of piety (ver. 37—40. compare Mark, xii. 29, &c.) begins with an emphatical and strong assertion of the unity of God. The reason is, it is necessary that men should be deeply impressed with just notions of the object of their worship—particularly, that he is the only true God, the maker of heaven and earth, and the possessor of all perfection, to whom there is not any being equal, or like, or second;—in order that they may apply themselves, with the utmost diligence, to obey his precepts, the first and chief of which is, that they *give him their heart*.

2 Saying, <sup>a</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

3 <sup>b</sup> All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; <sup>c</sup> but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

4 <sup>d</sup> For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

The divine Being is so transcendently amiable in himself, and, by the benefits he has conferred upon us, has such a title to our utmost affection, that, in respect to the object, there is no obligation which bears any proportion to that of loving him. The honour assigned to this precept proves, that piety is the noblest act of the human mind, and that the chief ingredient in piety is a permanent sense of his benefits, and a deep conviction of his being the sovereign good, our portion, our happiness. But it is essential to love, that there be a delight in contemplating the beauty of the object beloved, whether the duty be matter of sensation or reflection; that we frequently, and with pleasure, reflect on the benefits the object of our affection has conferred upon us. We have a strong desire of pleasing him, and a joy in the thought of being beloved in return. Hence duties of devotion, prayer, and praise, are the natural and genuine exercises of the love of God. However, this virtue is not so much any single affection, as a continual bent of all the affections and powers of the soul. In which light, to love God, is as much as possible to direct the whole soul towards God, and to exert all our faculties on him as its chief object. Accordingly, the love of God is described in Scripture by the several operations of the mind, *the knowledge of God*, John, xviii. *following hard after God*, Ps. lxxiii. 8. namely, by contemplation;—a sense of his perfections, gratitude for his benefits, trust in his goodness, attachment to his will, resignation to his providence, the obeying of his commandments, admiration, hope, fear, joy, &c. None of these consists in any one of these singly, but in all of them together. For to content ourselves with partial views of the Supreme Being, is not to be affected towards him in the manner we ought to be, and which the perfection of his nature claim. Hence the words of the psalmist, *Thou shalt love—with all thine heart*, &c. that is, with the joint force of all thy faculties; and that all things which are due to God.

But the beauty and excellency of this state of the soul is best seen in its effects; for the worship arising from such an universal bent of the soul towards God, is as much superior to the worship arising from partial considerations, as the light of the sun is to any picture of it which can be drawn. Hence, if we look on God only as a stern lawgiver,

5. But all their works they do for to be lazier, and enlarge the borders of their  
 seen of men: they make broad their \* phy- garments,

\* Ch. 6. 1, 2, 5, 16. They impose troublesome rites on others, while they neglect them themselves. † Numb. 15. 38, 39. Deut. 22. 12. & 6. 8. Prov. 3. 3. \* Scraps of parchment, with some sentences of the law written on them, fastened to their forehead or hand.

will punish our rebellion, it may indeed force an awe and dread of him, and as much obedience to his laws as we think will satisfy him; but can never produce that constancy in our duty, that delight in it and that earnestness to do it in its utmost extent, which are produced and maintained in the mind by the sacred fire of divine love, or by the bent of the whole soul turned towards God; a frame the most excellent which can be conceived, and the most to be desired, because it constitutes the highest perfection and happiness of the creature.

The precept enjoining the love of our neighbour, is similar to that which enjoins the love of God, because charity is the sister of piety, equally the offspring of God, founded on the same authority, and produced by the influence of the same Spirit. Piety and charity consist in the like motions and dispositions of soul; and are kept alive by the same kind of nourishment. They have the same happy tendency to make those in whom they reside like God, who is God by being good and doing good; like him also in his felicity, which arises not only from the possession, but from the communication of his goodness. They are like to each other in their sublime and important nature, and of like use in the conduct of life; the one being the principle from which the whole duty we owe to God must spring, the other, that from which the whole duty we owe to man must flow. These are the features by which piety and charity are strongly marked, by which their affinity to each other is clearly proved, and by which they are rendered sister graces, and inseparable companions.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The parable contained in the first part of this chapter, is in import much the same as the foregoing, shewing the rejection of the Jewish people for their obstinate infidelity, and the calling of the Gentiles consequent thereupon.

The Gospel dispensation is compared to a magnificent entertainment made by a king on the marriage of his son; which represents the rich provision made for poor sinners, and the gracious invitation sent to them by the great Bridegroom of his church, Christ Jesus, the Son of the eternal King. We have,

1. The rich provision made on this occasion. The oxen and fatlings are killed, with all that vast abundance which became the royal table; signifying those spiritual blessings which a poor and perishing sinner needs, such as the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, a sense of his love, the comforts and graces of the Holy Spirit, spiritual supports to carry him through the journey of time, and the glorious hope of the enjoyment of God in eternity. And these afford the richest feast for a sinful soul.

2. The repeated calls sent to those who had been invited, urging their attendance. Thus in particular the Lord sent out the seventy disciples to call the Jewish people; and, when they refused to hearken, he again, after his resurrection, sent forth his apostles and evangelists,

to urge with greater vehemence their coming in, having now perfected his great plan of atonement by the one oblation of himself, and obtained for every faithful soul all spiritual blessings in heavenly things. He invited them therefore once more to join themselves to the Lord, and take him as their covenant-head and glorious bridegroom. And thus in general by his ministers to the end of time, does the Lord send forth his gracious invitations to miserable sinners, entreating them to come and secure their own happiness, be reconciled to God, and partake of the Gospel feast, where all things are ready which they can wish or need; where Jesus is ready to receive them, the Father to pardon and bless them, the Spirit to comfort and strengthen them. Well therefore may we with earnestness beseech men, as they value all that is dear to them to, *Come unto the marriage.*

3. The folly and wickedness of those who were invited appear in striking colours; at first in a careless and insolent refusal of the favour done them; and afterwards, when expostulated with, and again intreated to comply, by a contemptuous treatment of the message, and a more cruel treatment of the messengers: some slighted and despised the offer, preferring their worldly avocations, and pretending more necessary engagements; whilst others, provoked with the importunity of the servants, not only insulted and reviled them, but even in a rage imbrued their hands in their blood. Thus it happened to the first preachers of the Gospel: the Jewish people slighted their admonitions, and, instead of hearkening to the word of salvation, were the bitter persecutors and murderers of those who preached it. Nor were they singular herein. The same invitation has ever since, to this very day, met with very much of the like treatment. Many continue to make light of Christ: negligent about the concerns of their immortal souls, their pleasures, their gains, their worldly engagements, occupy all their hearts, and they have neither leisure nor inclination to mind the concerns of religion. They are engrossed with the cares of life, and anxious about so many other things, that they pretend they cannot pursue the one thing needful. Thus thousands turn their backs on Christ; their farm and their merchandise occupy them wholly, and the calls of the Gospel find no entrance into their deaf ears. Whilst others, exasperated at being disturbed in their sinful pursuits by the zealous ministers of God, hate and revile them, and would, but for human restraints, renew the former persecutions. They who preach the Gospel must expect to suffer for it.

4. The offended monarch, in righteous wrath, to vindicate his honour, and avenge his servants' wrongs, sent forth his armies, destroyed these murderers, and burnt up their cities. The Roman armies, at God's command, thus destroyed the Jewish nation and burnt up Jerusalem, as the punishment due to them for rejecting and murdering their Messiah and his ministers. And the like vengeance awaits all

6 <sup>5</sup> And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, \* Rabbi, Rabbi.

\* Mark, 12. 38, 39. Luke, 11. 43. & 20. 46. 3 John, 9. Prov. 16. 18. & 29. 23. Hab. 2. 4. \* My master, or great one.

all that obey not the Gospel, and persecute the preachers of it: wrath will shortly come upon them to the uttermost.

5. The calling of the Gentiles into the Gospel-church was a consequence of the rejection of the Jews. God's feast shall not be prepared in vain. When they therefore who were first bidden, were, by their refusal, judged unworthy a place in his kingdom, he sent forth his servants into the heathen world, with a general invitation, to preach the Gospel to every creature: which commission they readily executed, inviting all of every rank and station, and sinners of every degree, to come to Jesus Christ, with assurances of a ready reception from him. And thus the Christian church was filled with an innumerable multitude of converts or profelytes; some who really and truly turned to God, others but false-hearted and hypocritical professors. *Note*; (1.) Christ will have a church and people in the world, however many reject his Gospel. (2.) The invitation is general: we therefore must preach the Gospel to every creature. (3.) Under the dispensation of grace by Jesus Christ, and in respect to the offers of mercy and pardon, all distinctions between one sinner and another are in some sense abolished; as the least sinner must eternally perish without Christ, the greatest have a full and free redemption offered in him: but the final reward of the faithful will be according to their works.

6. The discovery, conviction, and condemnation of hypocrites in the church, are represented by the king's visit to his guests; where observing one without a wedding-garment, (which was provided for each of the guests on these occasions; and therefore the neglect was highly criminal, especially if he preferred his rags of natural depravity before the bright garments of Gospel-holiness which lay ready for him) he addressed him with a startling inquiry, how he dared intrude himself there without the wedding-garment: and, struck speechless at the question, his silence confessed his guilt. Shackled therefore as a malefactor, the king commands him to be dragged from the room illuminated for the bridal feast, and thrust into the darkness without, to bewail, with unavailing expressions of bitter anguish, his presumption, sin, and folly. Where we may observe, (1.) The particular notice which the Lord takes of those who profess to believe in him: he trieth the heart. Hypocrisy may deceive men, but not God. The day will come when the false-hearted shall be detected, either by sitting providences in this world, or at the appearing of the King upon his throne. May we now so judge ourselves, that we may not then be judged of the Lord! (2.) They must needs be speechless in the day of God, who in profession have joined in the outward ordinances, while their faith has never laid hold of Christ, nor their hearts been conformed to his image. (3.) Hypocrites in the church will receive the greatest damnation in eternal torments, doomed to suffer agonies unutterable and inconceivable, and filled with the most excruciating rage, horror, and despair.

7. The parable concludes with the repetition of the observation which Christ had made before, that *many are called but few chosen*: an alarming notice, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith; how we came in to the Lord's table; what garments we are clothed with; and how we can bear the Master's piercing eye.

2dly, Ceaseless in their designs of malice, the Pharisees associated with the Herodians, endeavoured to entangle him in his talk, and, by some captious subject of dispute to draw from him expressions whereon to found an accusation against him. So little can the purest innocence or the most faultless integrity, screen us from the malignance of wicked men.

The Herodians are thought to be a sect of the Jews who were the partizans of Herod, and were zealous for the Roman government and the payment of the tribute, while the Pharisees and the rest of the nation abhorred the yoke, and hardly could brook this ignominious bondage of servitude. They were therefore proper instruments for the present occasion. See the Critical Notes.

1. The question they put to our Lord was, *was it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not*; and he concluded this would necessarily involve him in a dilemma. Should he deny the lawfulness of paying tribute to the Herodians would immediately accuse him to the Jews as a rebel and incendiary: should he affirm it, they thought he would immediately exasperate the people and give them the wished-for opportunity to demand a *Note*; It has been the invariable practice of Satan to lay snares for God's servants, and, by an unguarded expression, by wilful mistake or misrepresentation, to blacken and abuse them, and make one who heareth and judgeth.

2. To cover this insidious design, they used expressions of respect; as if, conscientiously following the path of duty, and highly venerated for wisdom and piety, they desired his direction in their conduct, persuaded that, being a teacher of the truth, no frowns nor fear of man would sway his judgment. *Note*; (1.) The fairest professions often cover the most wicked designs. (2.) Their character of Christ was a pattern for all his ministers. Faithful ministers must conceal themselves, no fear nor flattery must tempt them to conceal any thing of the whole counsel of God, but, regardless of men's persons, with a steady eye they must discharge their commission, as it is in Jesus.

3. Christ baffles their craft and designs. He knew the secret wickedness which they had in their hearts, and, by his question, which shewed his knowledge of their hearts, reproved their hypocrisy: *Why do ye condemn the tribute-money? Shew me the tribute-money.* Christ knew their own confessions: for, producing to him a Roman coin, he demanded whose image it bore: and, they replying *Caesar's*, he

8 <sup>a</sup> But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no *man* your father upon the earth: <sup>1</sup> for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

<sup>a</sup> James, 3. 1. 1 Cor. 3. 4. with ch. 17. 5. 2 Cor. 1. 24. 1 Peter, 5. 3, 4. 26, 32. & 7. 11. & 13. 43. & 19. 17.

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 1. 6. John, 6. 45. Ch. 5. 16, 48. & 6. 1, 4, 6, 9, 14, 18,

therefore unto *Cæsar* the things which are *Cæsar's*. As the coining of money was the royal prerogative, the circulation of such coin implied subjection to the person whose image it bore: there could be no doubt therefore but that, if *Cæsar's* money was regarded as the current coin of the land, there could be no unlawfulness in rendering him the tribute which bore his image, in return for the protection and administration of the civil government, which they received from him. And this interfered not with their religious duties: they must render also *unto God* the things that are *God's*. Thus neither could the civil government have cause to be offended, nor the Pharisees be able to accuse him without condemning themselves. *Note*; (1.) When we have to deal with crafty adversaries, we need be wise as serpents, while we are harmless as doves. (2.) The mask of hypocrites, however naturally painted, cannot impose upon him who trieth the heart. Their hope of concealment is delusion; and while they tempt him, they destroy themselves. (3.) Captious questions should have a cautious answer, that, if possible, they who came to ensnare us may be confounded themselves. (4.) It is reasonable that we should pay tribute to the government from which we receive protection. Christ's servants must on principle be loyal subjects. But, though *Cæsar* has our tribute, God must have our hearts.

4. Though confounded with his reply, they could not but admire his wisdom; and, defeated in their purpose, they retired with shame as baffled foes, unable to find the least ground for accusation against him. May the Lord ever endue his ministers with the like wisdom, and enable them to disappoint the malice of those who lie in wait for an occasion against them!

3dly, The Pharisees and Herodians being foiled, the Sadducees next resolved to take the field of controversy against him. They utterly denied a future state, the existence of angels or spirits, and the resurrection of the dead, and thought they could propose a question to our Lord which it would puzzle him to decide.

1. They stated a case, (whether real or imaginary was not material) founded on the Mosaic institutions concerning the widow of a man who died childless, whose brother, according to the law, Deut. xxv. 5. was obliged to marry her, and raise up an heir to the inheritance of the deceased. The question they proposed therefore was, if a woman successively married seven brothers, and, having no children by any of them, at last died herself,—whose wife shall she be at the resurrection, since all could claim the same title to her? They thought thus to lead our Lord to join them in denying a resurrection, or to reduce him to own his ignorance, or to make a decision which they could prove to be absurd, and unsupported by reason or Scripture.

2. Christ rectifies their mistake, reproves their ignorance, and shews their objection against a resurrection to

be fallacious: they erred, *not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*. The Scriptures declare that there shall be a resurrection, Job, xix. 26., Ezek. xxxvii., Dan. xii. 2.; and though the collection of the scattered atoms of the human body appears never so difficult, it is not beyond the almighty power of God to effect. Besides, their ideas of a future state were false and carnal. There will be no occasion there for marriage, to perpetuate inheritances, or to keep up a succession of names, or to minister to our comforts, or alleviate our cares; but all will be in heaven as the angels of God, perfectly pure and spiritual, and happy as those glorious ministers who surround the throne of God. But our Lord rests not in confuting their mistakes: he supports the truth by unanswerable arguments, drawn even from the Pentateuch, the sacred authority of which books they themselves admitted. Now, concerning the resurrection of the dead, they must needs remember what God himself declared at that memorable occasion when he appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Exod. iii. 6. where he said, *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, though these patriarchs were long before dead. He saith not *I was*, but *I am*, he standing towards them still in the same relation; and as his being their God implies some peculiarly great and glorious advantages thence accruing, but these holy men, during all their lives, were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, exercised with various troubles and afflictions, therefore it follows that there must be a future state, where their eternal reward awaits them. Besides, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. Had these patriarchs ceased to be when their bodies died, God could not with any propriety be said to continue in the same covenant relation to them as before. He being *their God* proves them still alive; and the existence therefore of their souls as immortal is evident: but he was not only the God of their souls, but of the men in their whole persons. As therefore their souls now live, their bodies will be quickened also; else would he be still the God of the dead: the resurrection of the body, as well as the immortality of the soul, therefore is here supposed, and the argument conclusive against the tenets of the Sadducees. *Note*; (1.) The cause of all our grand errors is our ignorance of the Scriptures. (2.) Many things to the eye of sense impossible, the eye of faith, which looks to the promises and power of God, sees not only possible, but sure and certain. (3.) They who have the Lord for their God, need not wish for more, but that he may be their increasing and eternal portion and exceeding great reward.

3. The Sadducees were silenced; but the multitude were astonished: they had never before heard the eternal happiness of the righteous, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection from the dead, so nobly defended and proved.

4thly, The Pharisees again return to the charge; and, grieved probably that he should be able to silence those whom

10 Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, *even* Christ.

11 \* But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

\* Ch. 20. 26, 27. & 18. 3, 4. & 11. 29. John, 13. 12—17. Phil. 2. 4—8. Heb. 5. 8.

whom they could not, consulted together how to put a stop to his increasing reputation, which so eclipsed their own. They who greatly shine, must expect to be greatly envied. One of their lawyers then proposed a question, probably with a good intention. See the Critical Notes on this chapter, and Mark, xii. 28—34.

1. The question was, *which is the great commandment in the law?* some esteeming it to be circumcision, others the observance of the sabbath, others the wearing the phylacteries, washings, &c. And should he determine the question in favour of any one party of disputants, the rest would probably have been offended with the decision.

2. His answer carries evidence and conviction along with it : the first and great commandment is the perfect love of God, and the next the loving of our neighbour as ourselves : these two commandments comprize the whole moral law, with all the duties enforced by the prophets ; and to be obedient to these, this divine principle of love can alone engage us. These commandments still continue in full force ; and in the practical exercise of these consists all vital religion : for though we are not under the law, that we should expect life from our obedience : yet are we bound to set them before us as our rule of duty and law of life, and by the Gospel-faith, which worketh by love, shall be enabled in our measure to walk as Christ also walked, humbly following his bright example. *Note ;* (1.) We must love the Lord our God, and labour through grace to love him with all our hearts. We must first believe that he is *our God*, our reconciled God in Jesus Christ, and then love will be the immediate effect : this will produce a hearty obedience to his commands, and unreserved submission to his providence. The love of God will make us count none of his commandments grievous, and reckon every dispensation righteous, just, and good. (2.) The love of our neighbours follows. They must be dear to us as we are to ourselves : their persons, property, characters, be regarded as our own ; and we should be ready in every good word and work to do them service, wish them every blessing, and desire to act towards them, in every situation, as we could reasonably expect they should behave to us, if they were in our circumstances. The more we appear under the influence of these divine precepts, the more we shall shew of the spirit and power of true Christianity.

5thly, Having thus silenced all his opponents, our Lord is now pleased to put a question in his turn to those who had so often tempted him. And he did it when they were gathered together to consult how to ensnare him, that his triumph over them might be more distinguished.

1. The question seemed so plain that a child might answer it. *What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he?* And they have their reply ready, little imagining in what difficulties it would involve them. *They say unto him, The Son of David.* So far they were right, the Scripture had thus determined, Pf. lxxxix. 35, 36., Isa. ix. 7., xi. 1. It is a question that we should be seriously concerned to answer,

What we think of his person, offices, undertaking ; and whether he is a *Christ* to us, a Saviour to the uttermost?

2. From their answer our Lord proposes to them another question of more difficult solution. How is the Messiah's being David's Son reconcileable with his being David's Lord? for such the Psalmist acknowledges him, when, speaking under divine inspiration, Pf. cx. 1. he saith, *The Lord, God the Father, said unto my Lord, the divine Messiah, Sit thou at my right hand, exalted to the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, till I make thine enemies thy footstool ;* for so long will he reign in his mediatorial kingdom, till every foe is destroyed, and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and death itself be banished from his church for ever. *If David then call him Lord, acknowledging him his superior, and a divine Person, how is he his son, and to descend from him as man?*

3. This question quite puzzled them. They seem to have been ignorant of the divine character of the Messiah ; they regarded him as a mere man, and understood not the union of God and man in one Christ ; or, if they knew it, they were not willing to acknowledge his Deity, and chose to be silent, rather than reply. Perceiving now how unequal a match they all together were for his superior wisdom, they durst not encounter him with any more ensnaring questions, and avoided any farther disputes which they found must issue in their shame. *Note ;* Many are silenced, without being convinced ; and have their arguments confuted, while their hearts still remain unconverted.

#### C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then spake Jesus, &c.]* Because our Saviour had mentioned the final conquest and destruction of his enemies, who were to be made his footstool, he turned towards his disciples, and in the hearing of all the people solemnly cautioned them to beware of the Scribes and Pharisees ; by which he insinuated, and that not obscurely, who the *enemies* were, whose end he had hinted at. The name of *Pharisees* being the appellation of a sect, it cannot be supposed that our Lord meant to say of all the party, that *they sat in Moses' chair* ; such a character was applicable to none but the doctors of the sect ; for which reason we may suppose that the phrase *Scribes and Pharisees*, is a Hebraism for the *Pharisean Scribes*. Some think there is an allusion, *ver. 2.* to those pulpits which Ezra made for the expounders of the law, Neh. viii. 4. and which were afterwards continued in the synagogue, from which the rabbies delivered their discourses sitting. It is probably called *Moses' Chair*, because it was that from which the books of Moses were read and explained ; so that he seemed to dictate from thence. It is strange that Lightfoot and others should explain this of a legislative authority, since the Scribes and Pharisees, as such, had no peculiar authority of that kind. See Doddridge, and Lightfoot.

*Ver.*



12 <sup>1</sup> And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

13 ¶ But <sup>m</sup> wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 14. 11. & 18. 14. Dan. 4. 37. Job, 22. 29. Prov. 29. 23. Luke, 1. 51, 52. James, 4. 6. 1 Peter, 5. 5. Prov. 15. 33. <sup>m</sup> Luke, 11. 51. Ezek. 22. 25. <sup>a</sup> Tim. 3. 6. Titus, 1. 11. ye hinder men from believing the Gospel, as well as reject it yourselves.

Ver. 3. *All therefore, &c.*] The morality of the Pharisees, as appears from many examples mentioned in the Gospel, was of a very loose kind; and as for the traditions which they taught, they often made void the law of God altogether. It is not therefore to be thought, that Jesus would recommend the doctrines and precepts of the Pharisees without exception; and for this reason we must limit the general expressions here made use of, by what goes before in this discourse; thus, "While these men sit in Moses' seat, while they rightly explain the doctrines and precepts of the law, be sure to obey them; but by no means imitate their practices."

Ver. 4. *For they bind heavy burdens*] It is well known that the Pharisees gloried in the exactness with which they obeyed the ceremonial part of the law. Nay, they carried matters so high, that, not content with the commandments which God had enjoined, they took upon them to prescribe a variety of traditional precepts of their own invention. Therefore, if it was this kind of duties that our Lord meant, when he said *they bind heavy burdens, &c.* their zeal must have shewn itself chiefly in public: or, by the grievous burdens which the Pharisees bound up, may be understood the ceremonial precepts of the law; which are called grievous, not because they were reckoned so by the Pharisees. This interpretation agrees well with the character given of the precepts in question. They were delivered from Moses' seat, that is to say, were taken out of the book of Moses; and the disciples were to observe and do them, which our Lord would by no means have ordained, had he been speaking of the traditional precepts of the elders. Besides, in this light the character given of the Scribes and Pharisees is palpably just, namely, that they *bound up heavy burdens, &c.* For while they themselves neglected both the moral and ceremonial precepts of the divine law, as often as they could do it with secrecy, they wreathed the ceremonial precepts of it fast about the necks of the people, and would not give them the smallest respite from its most burdensome ceremonies on any occasion whatsoever. The words of our Lord allude to the practice of those who load and drive beasts of burden: they first make, or bind up their loads, then lay them on their backs, and, in driving them through bad roads, support the loads, and keep them steady by taking hold of them. Our Lord's meaning, therefore, was, "They will neither bear these loads themselves, nor will they give the people the least respite from them, even in cases where it is due." See Macknight.

Ver. 5-7. *All their works they do, &c.*] "Any good action which they happen to perform, is vitiated by the principle from which it proceeds. They do it with a view to popular applause, and not from a regard to God, or from a love of goodness. They are proud and arrogant, as is plain from their affected gravity of dress, from the anxiety which they discover to get the

principal seats at feasts and all public meetings, as being longed to them on account of their superior worth, and from their courting to be saluted in the streets with particular marks of respect, and to be addressed with pompous and high sounding titles of *rabbi, father, and master*, thinking such public acknowledgement of their merit due from all who meet them." Concerning the *Phylacteries*, see the note on Deut. vi. 8. What the *borders of their garments, or fringes* (*καταπετά*) were, may be gathered from Deut. xxii. 12. From this use of the garment on which the fringes were to be put, it is supposed to have been the *veil*, which they then wore on their heads; and the fringes are thought to have been tufts of twined thread, fastened to the four corners of it with a ribbon, in a manner, that each tuft hung at a little distance from the corner of the veil to which it was fastened. Hence we see the propriety of the expression, *they make the fringes of their garments great, or large*; hence also we learn that these fringes were considered as badges of holiness, and that the Pharisees wore a larger kind of them than ordinary, to give themselves the appearance of uncommon gravity, piety, and wisdom. The doctors had seats by themselves, with their backs towards the pulpit in which the law was read, and their faces towards the people. These were accounted the most honourable, and therefore these ambitious Scribes and Pharisees contended for them. The word *rabbi* properly signifies *great*, and was prefixed to the names of those doctors who had rendered themselves remarkable by the extent of their learning; or who were the authors of new schemes in divinity, heads of sects, whose fame had gained them many followers. The Jewish doctors were particularly fond of this title, because it was a high compliment paid to their understanding, gave them vast authority with their disciples, and a very significant appearance in the eyes of the world. See Macknight, and Gale's Sermons, vol. i. p. 80.

Ver. 8-11. *But be not ye called Rabbi*] The Apostles of Christ were to be very different, both in temper and conduct, from the Jewish teachers. They were to decline being called *Rabbi*, because the thing signified by it belonged solely to their Master, in whom all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom are hid; and who for that reason is the only infallible director of men's consciences; also because they owed none of their knowledge to themselves, but derived it entirely from him; in which respect they were all brethren, and on a level. Further the Jewish doctors were accustomed to inculcate on their disciples, that existence, except it was improved and ripened by knowledge, was in a manner no existence at all; and boasted that they who formed men's minds by erudition, gave them a real being; and for that reason were to be considered as their true parents. Hence they arrogantly assumed to themselves the name of *fathers*, to intimate the peculiar obligations which their disciples, but especially

P p

the

*yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

14 Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! <sup>a</sup> for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer:

therefore ye shall receive the <sup>o</sup> greater damnation.

15 Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye <sup>p</sup> compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and, when he is made,

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 12. 40. Luke, 20. 47. 2 Tim. 1. 5, 6. Titus, 1. 11. Job, 22. 9. i. e. rob them of their property.

<sup>o</sup> Ch. 11. 22. 24. Luke, 11. 47.

the proselytes from idolatry, were under to them for their existence, and for the advantages which accompanied it: the title of *father* in this sense our Lord absolutely prohibited his Apostles either from taking or giving, because it belongs only to God; for *one is your Father who is in heaven*. Life, with all its blessings, comes from God; and men wholly depend upon him: for which cause, all praise and thanksgiving should ultimately be referred to him. So that if any one teaches rightly, not the teacher, but the wisdom of God is to be praised, which exerts and communicates itself by him: and with respect to the title of *master* or *leader*, *μαθητῆς*, which the Jewish doctors courted, the Apostles of Christ were not to accept, far less to solicit it; because in point of commission and inspiration they were all upon an equality. Neither had they any title to rule the consciences of men, except by virtue of the inspiration which they received from their Master, to whom alone the prerogative of infallibility originally belonged. Nevertheless, our Lord did not mean to say, that it is sinful to name men by the stations which they hold, or the relations that they bear in the world. He only designed to reprove the simplicity of the people, who offered high praises to their teachers, as if they owed all to them, and nothing to God; and to root out of the minds of the Apostles the pharisaical vanity, which decked itself with honours properly belonging to God; but especially to keep them all on a level among themselves, that the whole glory of the Christian scheme might redound to him whose right it was. Withal he shewed them what that greatness was, whereof they were capable, and after which only they should aspire: it was a greatness arising from love and humility; a greatness diametrically opposite to that of the Scribes, ver. 11. *He that is greatest*, or *desires to be greatest*, *μικτῶν*, alludes to the signification of the word *rabbi*. See Macknight, Heylin, and Wetstein.

*Ver. 12. Whosoever shall exalt himself*] Dr. Doddridge observes, that our Saviour, by the frequent repetition of this maxim, seems to intimate, that he intended it not only for those who were to be the teachers of others, but for all his disciples without exception; and it is well worthy of our observation, that no one sentence of our Lord's is so frequently repeated as this, which occurs at least ten times in the Evangelists.

*Ver. 13. But wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*] The above discourse against the Scribes and Pharisees was pronounced in the hearing of many of the order; they were therefore greatly incensed, and watched for an opportunity to destroy Jesus: but it was not a time for him now to conceal from them any necessary reproof, this being the last sermon that he was ever to preach in public. It was necessary to use violent remedies, especially as gentle

medicines had hitherto proved ineffectual; wherefore, with a kind of severity he threatened them in the most awful and solemn manner, denouncing dreadful woes against them, not on account of the personal injuries they had done him, although they were many, but on account of their excessive wickedness. They were public teachers of religion, who abused every mark and character of goodness to all the purposes of villany. Under the grimace of a severe and sanctified air, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious; in a word, instead of being reformers, they were corrupters of mankind; so that their wickedness being of the very worst sort, it deserved the sharpest rebuke that could be given. Our Lord pronounced *eight blessings* upon the mount; here he pronounced *eight woes*; not as imprecations, but solemn compassionate declarations of the misery which these stubborn sinners were bringing upon themselves. The reasons, why these woes were denounced against the Scribes, are set forth in the subsequent verses, 1. *The first* is, because they shut up the kingdom of heaven from men, by taking away the *key of knowledge*, (Luke, xi. 52.) or the right interpretation of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, by their example and authority; for they both rejected Jesus themselves, and excommunicated those who believed in him; in short, by doing all they could to hinder the people from repenting of their sins and believing the Gospel. Dr. Moore, with great propriety, observes, that the word *hypocrites*, *ὑποκριται*, in its most exact application, signifies *players*, who, according to the unnatural custom of the ancients, acted a part under a mask. See his *Theological Works*, p. 293. Vitringas' *Observ. Sacr.* and the note on chap. vi. 16.

*Ver. 14. For ye devour widows' houses*] 2. This verse contains the second reason of the woes; because they committed the grossest iniquities, being covetous and rapacious under a cloke of religion; they *devoured widows' houses*, and at the same time *made long prayers* in order to hide their villany. "This," says Calvin, "was as if, pretending to kiss the feet of Christ, one should rise up, and audaciously spit in his face." See Mark, xii. 40.

*Ver. 15. Ye compass sea and land, &c.*] 3. *The third* wo is denounced, because they expressed the greatest zeal imaginable in making proselytes, compassing sea and land that is to say, using the most indefatigable pains and arduous, and leaving no art unpractised for that end; while at the same time their intention in all this was, not that the Gentiles might become better men through the knowledge of true religion, but more friendly to them; yielding them the direction of their purses, as well as of their consciences. Accordingly, in the heathen countries the worldlings accommodated religion to the humours of men

ye make him \* two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.

16 Wo unto you, ye blind guides, which say, ' Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 'Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, ' or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is † guilty.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that " sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it and by \* him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by ' him that sitteth thereon.

23 Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! " for ye pay tithe of mint and

\* More furiously mad against the gospel. 9 If. 56. 10, 11. Ch. 15. 14. † Ch. 5. 33, 34. James, 5. 12. Jer. 5. 7. Ezek. 21. 23. They pretended that a man's oath by the temple did not bind him, unless he swore by the consecrated treasures of the temple. † Ch. 3. 7. & 12. 34. John, 8. 44. Acts, 13. 10. & 23. 3. with Ch. 5. 22. † Exod. 30. 29. & 29. 37. Ver. 19. † Or debtor, or bound. † Ver. 17. Exod. 29. 37. † 1 King, 8. 13. † Chr. 7. 2. & 6. 2. Pf. 26. 8. & 132. 13, 14. † Ch. 5. 34. If. 57. 15. & 65. 1. Rev. 4. 2, 3. Dan. 7. 9. Acts, 7. 49. † Luke, 11. 42. with Ch. 9. 13. & 12. 7. † Sam. 15. 22. Hof. 6. 6. Prov. 21. 3. Mic. 6. 8. Gal. 5. 22, 23.

placing it, not in the eternal and immutable rules of righteousness, but in ceremonial observances; the effect of which was, either that the profelytes became more superstitious, more immoral, and more presumptuous than their teachers; or that, taking them for impostors, they relapsed again into their old state of heathenism; and in both cases became two-fold more the children of hell than even the Pharisees themselves; that is to say, more openly and unlimitedly wicked than they. The zeal of the Jews in making profelytes was so remarkable, that it was taken notice of by the heathens, and turned into a proverb:

Ac veluti te  
Judæi, cogamus in hunc concedere turbam.  
HOR. Lib. i. Sat. 4. ver. 142.

We'll force you, like the profelyting Jews,  
To be like us.

FRANCIS.

Upon which St. Ambrose observes, that " this plea-  
"antry of the poet arises from the profelyting spirit of  
"the Jews, who insinuated themselves into families, en-  
"tered into the courts of justice, disturbed the judges,  
"and were always more successful in proportion as they  
"were more impudent." To the same purpose is what  
Justin Martyr said to Trypho the Jew: " Your profelytes  
"not only disbelieve Christ's doctrine, but blaspheme his  
"name as much again as yourselves." Child of hell, and  
son of perdition, were terms of reproach made use of among  
the Jews.

Ver. 16. Ye blind guides] 4. The fourth woe is de-  
nounced for their false doctrine. Our Saviour had before  
stiled them hypocrites from their personal character; now he  
gives them another title, blind guides, respecting their in-  
fluence upon others. Both these appellations are severely  
put together in ver. 23—25. and this holy severity rises  
to the height in the 33d verse. Our Saviour mentions  
particularly their doctrine concerning oaths, and declares,  
in contradiction to their execrable tenets, that every oath  
is obligatory, the matter of which is lawful; because  
when men swear by the creature, if their oath has any

meaning, it is an appeal to the Creator himself: in any  
other light, an oath by the creature is absolutely ridiculous,  
because the creature neither has knowledge with respect  
to the matter of the oath, nor power to punish the perjury.  
See on ch. v. 33., &c. It is nothing, means, " it constitutes  
"no obligation to tell the truth, or, to perform one's vow."  
He is a debtor, means, " he is bound to speak the truth,  
"or, to perform his vow." And in like manner he is  
guilty, ver. 18. means, he is bound by his oath. The Pha-  
risees taught, that oaths by the creature might be used on  
trifling occasions, and violated without any great guilt;  
but they excepted oaths by the corban, and by sacrifices:  
in which it is plain, that, without any regard to common  
sense or decency, they were influenced merely by a view  
to their own interest, and therefore represented these to  
the people, as things of more eminent sanctity than even  
the temple or altar itself. The gold of the temple means  
the treasure kept in the temple, otherwise called corban.  
See ch. xxvii. 6.

Ver. 17—22. Ye fools and blind] The Apostle's words,  
Heb. vi. 16. are a proper comment on the 17th verse, for  
men verily swear by the greater. Whoso shall swear by the  
altar, says our Saviour (ver. 20.) sweareth by it, and by all  
things thereon; consequently the oath is an invocation of  
his wrath, to whom the altar, and the gifts on the altar,  
are sacred, in case of falsehood or breach of vows. The  
particular species of wrath invoked in this oath, is God's  
rejecting the swearer's sacrifice, and denying him the par-  
don of sin.—He adds, ver. 21. Whoso shall swear by the  
temple, sweareth by it and by him that dwelleth therein; con-  
sequently the oath is a solemn wishing that he who  
dwelleth in the temple may hinder the person from ever  
worshipping there, if he is telling a falsehood, or neglects  
his vow. And lastly, ver. 22. He that shall swear by hea-  
ven, sweareth by the throne of God, &c. and therefore his  
oath is a solemn wishing, that God who dwells in heaven  
may exclude him from that blessed place for ever, if he  
falsifies his oath.

Ver. 23, 24. Ye pay tithe, &c.] 5. The fifth woe is de-  
nounced for their superstition. They observed the cere-

anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law; judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 <sup>a</sup> *Ye blind guides, which* <sup>b</sup> *strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.*

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! <sup>c</sup> for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 *Thou* blind Pharisee, <sup>d</sup> *cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are <sup>e</sup> like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because <sup>f</sup> ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

30 And say, If we had been in the days

<sup>a</sup> See ver. 15, 17. <sup>b</sup> Ver. 23. Ch. 15. 2—6. John, 18. 28, 40. they scrupled to commit lesser sins, and indulged themselves in greater. <sup>c</sup> Luke, 11. 39. Mark, 7. 4. Ch. 15. 19, 20. <sup>d</sup> Get your hearts sanctified, that your life may be holy. Luke, 11. 41. Jer. 4. 14. & 13. 27. James, 4. 8. 1 Cor. 6. 11, 20. Tit. 1. 15. Heb. 10. 22. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 11. 44. Acts, 23. 3. Ch. 7. 15, 21. Il. 58. 2. Ezek. 33. 31. 2 Tim. 3. 5. Tit. 1. 16. <sup>f</sup> Luke, 11. 47—51.

monial precepts of the law with all possible exactness, while they utterly neglected the eternal, immutable, and indispensable rules of righteousness,—*justice, mercy, or charity, and fidelity.* Besides the reproof of their superstition in the performance of positive duties, our Saviour condemned it also in the obedience which they gave to the negative precepts of the law; for there likewise this evil root shewed itself, ver. 24. *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat,*—or rather, *who strain out a gnat,* (namely, from your drink,) and *swallow a camel.* The expression is proverbial, and was made use of by our Lord on this occasion to signify, that the Pharisees pretended to be exceedingly afraid of the smallest faults, as if sin had been bitter to them like death, while they indulged themselves secretly in the unrestrained commission of the grossest immoralities. Serrarius observes, that in those hot countries *gnats* were apt to fall into wine, if it were not carefully covered; and passing the liquor through a *strainer*, that no gnat or part of one might remain, grew into a proverb for exactness about little matters. See Wetstein. “Could any authority be produced, in which *καμηλον* signifies “a large insect, I would with great pleasure (says Dr. Doddridge) follow the translation of 1729, in rendering “the latter clause, *swallow a beetle.*” See on Chap. xix. 24.

Ver. 25, 26. *Ye make clean the outside, &c.]* 6. The *sixth* woe is denounced for their hypocrisy: they were at great pains to appear virtuous, and to have a decent external conduct, while they neglected to beautify their inward man with goodness, which, in the sight of God, is an ornament of great price, and renders men dear and valuable to all who know them. *Within, they*—means the *cup and platter*;—are full of *extortion and excess*; which you swallow down without the least scruple: instead of *extortion and excess*, some would read, *rapine and intemperance, ἀρπαγῆς, και ἀκρασίας.* The last word takes in not only all kinds of outward *intemperance*, particularly in eating and drinking, but all intemperate or immoderate desires, whether of honour, gain, or sensual pleasures. Dr. Heylin observes well, that the censure here is doubled, taking

intemperance in the common sense. These miserable men, procured unjustly what they used intemperately: no wonder tables so furnished prove a snare, as many find by sad experience. Luxury punishes fraud, and feeds disease with the fruits of injustice. *Thou blind Pharisee,* continues our Lord, ver. 26. *Cleanse first, &c.* that is, “Take care that what is within the cup, and not so much exposed to view, be clean; and then thou mayest with propriety bestow pains in cleansing the outside of the cup.” But though in this clause our Lord still makes use of the metaphor, he reasons according to the thing intended by it, thus, “Cleanse first thy mind, thy inward man from evil dispositions and affections, and of course thy outward behaviour will be virtuous and good.”

Ver. 27, 28. *Ye are like unto whited sepulchres]* 7. The *seventh* woe is denounced for the excess of their hypocrisy. By their care of external appearances, the Pharisees and Scribes made a fair shew, and deceived the simple. Like fine whited sepulchres, they looked beautiful without, but within were full of uncleanness, and defiled every one that touched them. This was a severe rebuke to men, who would not keep company with publicans and sinners, for fear they should have been polluted by them. The truth is, these hypocrites were publicly decent, but privately dissolute: they put on a saint-like look, but in reality were the very worst of men. A French commentator observes, that the Jews used to paint or whiten their sepulchres or tombs at certain seasons of the year; that people might discern that they were polluted places. See Luke, xi. 44.

Ver. 29—31. *Ye build the tombs, &c.]* 8. The *eighth* woe is denounced, because by the pains they took in adorning the sepulchres of the prophets, they pretended a great veneration for their memory; and as often as they happened to be mentioned, condemned their fathers, who had killed them; declaring, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have opposed their wickedness; while in the mean time they still cherished the

of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them <sup>s</sup> in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore <sup>h</sup> ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are <sup>i</sup> the children of them which killed the prophets.

32 <sup>k</sup> Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 <sup>l</sup> Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

34 ¶ Wherefore, behold, <sup>m</sup> I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify, and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city:

<sup>s</sup> Ver. 34, 37. <sup>a</sup> Chr. 36. 15, 16. See Ch. 21. 35, 36. & 22. 6. <sup>b</sup> Josh. 24. 22. Luke, 19. 22. Job, 15. 5, 6. Pl. 61. 8. <sup>i</sup> Acts, 7. 51, 52. <sup>h</sup> 1 Thef. 2. 10. <sup>c</sup> Chr. 36. 15. <sup>k</sup> 1 Thef. 2. 16. Gen. 15, 16. Num. 32. 14. Pl. 69. 27. <sup>l</sup> Ch. 3. 7. & 12. 34. John, 8. 14. <sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. 36. 15, 16. <sup>n</sup> Neh. 9. 26. Luke, 11. 49. Ch. 10. 17. Acts, 5. 40. & 7. 51, 52, 59. & 22. 19. & 8. 4. & 12. 2. & xxi—xxv. <sup>o</sup> 1 Thef. 2. 15, 16. <sup>p</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 24, 25. Rev. 13. 24.

the spirit of their fathers, persecuting the messengers of God, and particularly his divine Son, on whose destruction they were resolutely bent. The meaning of the 31st verse is, "By affirming, that if you had lived in the days of your fathers, you would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets, you acknowledge that you are the children of them who murdered the prophets;—their children, I must give you to know, in other respects than by natural generation; for though you pretend to be more holy than they were, you are like them in all respects; particularly you possess their wicked persecuting spirit, and testify it by all your actions." See Luke, xi. 48. and 1 Macc. xiii. 27, 29. What Vitringia tells us, (de Synagog. p. 221.) of the extraordinary honour paid to the sepulchre of Mordecai, is an agreeable illustration of these words. Josephus also, from Nicolaus Damascenus, mentions Herod's repairing in a very splendid manner the sepulchre of David. See his *Antiq.* lib. xvi. cap. 7. and compare Acts, ii. 29. From the 3d to the 30th verse of this chapter is exposed every thing that commonly passes in the world for religion; whereby the pretenders to it keep both themselves and others from entering into the kingdom of God; from attaining, or even seeking after those tempers, in which alone Christianity consists; as, *first*, punctuality in attending on public and private prayers merely for the sake of shew; ver. 4—14. *Secondly*, zeal to make proselytes to our opinion or communion, though they have less of the spirit of religion than before; ver. 15. *Thirdly*, a superstitious reverence for consecrated places or things, without any regard for him to whom they were consecrated, ver. 16—22. *Fourthly*, a scrupulous exactness in little observances, though with the neglect of justice, mercy, and fidelity, ver. 23, 24. *Fifthly*, a cautiousness to cleanse the outward behaviour, without any regard to inward purity; ver. 25, 26. *Sixthly*, a specious face of virtue and piety, covering the deepest hypocrisy and villany, ver. 27, 28. *Seventhly*, a professed veneration for all good men, except those among whom they live, ver. 29, 30: See Bengelius. All, from ver. 29. to ver. 32., Grotius has very justly observed, should make one sentence; *ori, because*, referring to each member of it; and ver. 31. should be in a parenthesis: *woe to you Scribes, because you build—and lay—and fill up, &c.*

Ver. 32. Fill ye up *the measure, &c.*] That is, the measure of your fathers' sin, (the measure fixed upon by God

for punishment.) See John, xiii. 27. This expression implies, that there is a certain measure fixed for every nation to which its iniquity is allowed to rise; and that before decisive punishment, amounting to excision, or to the entire overturn of their polity, is inflicted on nations, the measure of their iniquity, or of that of their rulers, must be filled up, by the succeeding generations adding to the iniquity of the preceding, till the measure is full; an idea which receives great countenance from Gen. xv. 16. According to Galsius, and other critics,—*καὶ πληρωσάτε*, is here the imperative for the future,—*you will fill up*; but it may be understood as a word of permission, not of command. As if our Lord had said, "I contend with you no longer; I leave you to yourselves; you have conquered; you may now follow the devices of your own hearts."

Ver. 33. *Ye serpents, &c.*] See Luke, iii. 7. Men of warm tempers are apt to mistake this part of Christ's discourse; they fancy that his giving the Pharisees names expressive of their characters, and his denouncing woes against them, justifies those censorious judgments, which, without reason, or, it may be, contrary to reason, they pass on persons who happen to be at variance with them. It is very true that Jesus pronounced the Scribes and Pharisees *hypocrites, blind guides, serpents, &c.* and declared that they could not escape the damnation of hell; but it is equally true, that they were hypocrites and fools, as wicked as he has painted them, and that he knew them certainly to be such. Wherefore, till we can make it evident that we have the faculty of knowing men's hearts, which Christ possessed, we have no pretensions to imitate him in an action not designed for our imitation, being done by him as a prophet and in virtue of his prophetic gifts, or as God over all, not as an ordinary man. Instead of making free with the characters of others, as too many do, it is far safer, and in every respect better, both for ourselves and for society, that we keep close to the precept forbidding rash judgments, evil surmisings, and all backbitings. See ch. vii. 1—5. The phrase *Απορρηγειν κριμα*, which is the same in sense with the original, rendered *to escape the damnation*, properly signifies, to evade conviction in a court of judicature; which is often done by the artifice of the criminal. See Raphaelius and Macknight.

Ver. 34. *Wherefore*] *Διὰ τὸτο*, "for this cause—that ye are serpents, and a brood of vipers, who will fill up the measure of your fathers' iniquities." Our Saviour's meaning

35 That <sup>a</sup> upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36 Verily I say unto you, <sup>o</sup> All these things shall come upon this generation.

37 <sup>p</sup> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which

are sent unto thee, <sup>q</sup> how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and <sup>r</sup> ye would not!

38 Behold, your house <sup>s</sup> is left unto you desolate.

39 For I say unto you, <sup>t</sup> Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, <sup>u</sup> Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

<sup>a</sup> Exod. 20. 5. Mich. 6. 16. Gen. 9. 5, 6. Pf. 9. 12. Gen. 4. 8. 2 Chr. 24. 21, 22. Zech. 1. 1. Rev. 18. 24. <sup>o</sup> Ezek. 7. 2—12. & 11. 21—28. Ch. 24. 34. 1 Peter, 4. 17, 18. <sup>p</sup> Luke, 19. 42. & 13. 34. See ver. 30, 31, 34. Ch. 21. 35, 36. & 22. 6. 2 Chr. 36. 15, 16. & 24. 21, 22. Neh. 9. 26. Acts, 7. 52, 59. <sup>q</sup> Deut. 32. 29. Pf. 81. 10. & 50. 7. Luke, 19. 42. with Deut. 32. 11, 12. Pf. 17. 8. & 91. 4. <sup>r</sup> Pf. 69. 26. If. 1. 7. Mic. 3. 12. Pf. 81. 11, 12. Hof. 11. 2, 7. Prov. 1. 24, 25. <sup>s</sup> Temple. Ch. 24. 2. Luke, 19. 44. 2 Chr. 7. 20—22. <sup>t</sup> Prov. 1. 26—30. John, 8. 21, 24. & 7. 31. Luke, 21. 24. Hof. 3. 4, 5. <sup>u</sup> Ch. 21. 9. Pf. 118. 26.

meaning was, not that he would send them prophets to be killed, that they might escape the damnation of hell; but that every possible method might be tried for their conversion, though he well knew that they would make light of all, and, by so doing, pull down upon themselves such terrible vengeance, as should be a standing monument of the divine displeasure against all the murders committed on the face of the earth from the beginning of time. For, "even as Sodom and Gomorrah anciently, and the cities about them, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire;" just so the Jewish nation was singled out, and that generation of the nation pitched upon to be the subjects of God's vengeance against murder, and an example of punishment to all generations, as they were the most atrocious body of murderers that ever lived. The titles mentioned by our Lord in this verse, *prophets, wise men, Scribes*, correspond with that *diversity of gifts* mentioned in the first epistle to the Corinthians: they are stiled *prophets*, because inspired to foretell things to come; *wise men*, because they were enlightened with the knowledge of heavenly mysteries; and *Scribes*, from their superior knowledge of the law. Among the first martyrs, whose death verified this prophecy, were Stephen, who was stoned; Paul, who was scourged and killed; and Peter, who was crucified. See Macknight and Hammond. Instead of *ye shall kill, shall scourge, we may read, ye will kill, &c.*

*Ver. 35, 36. That upon you may come all the righteous blood, &c.]* The meaning is, "As by your cruel and persecuting temper you seem to approve of all the murders which have been committed since the beginning of the world, you shall be as severely punished as if you yourselves had been the authors of them." This refers to temporal punishment, because in the life to come men will not be punished for the sins of others to which they were not accessory. But Dr. Campbell makes the following observation on this passage: "As I understand it, this expression must not be interpreted as implying that those individual crimes, which happened before the time of the people then living, would be laid to their charge; but that, with every species of cruelty, oppression, and murder, which had been exemplified in former ages, they of that age would be found chargeable; inasmuch

"as they had permitted no kind of wickedness to be peculiar to those who had preceded them; but had carefully imitated, and even exceeded, all the most atrocious deeds of their ancestors from the beginning of the world. There is no hyperbole in the representation. The account given of them by Josephus, who was no Christian, but one of themselves, shews, in the strongest light, how justly they are here characterized by our Lord." The Zechariah here spoken of, is thought by many learned commentators to be that *Zechariah* who is expressly said to have been slain in so remarkable a manner, between the temple and the altar, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

*Ver. 37, 38. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!]* Our Lord having laid before the Pharisees and the nation their heinous guilt and grievous punishment, the thought of the calamities which were coming upon them moved him exceedingly: his bowels were turned within him, and his breast was filled with the gracious meltings of pity to such a degree, that, unable to contain himself, he broke forth into tears; bewailing Jerusalem particularly, on account of the peculiar severity of its lot. For, as its inhabitants had their hands more deeply imbrued in the blood of the prophets, they were to drink more deeply of the punishment due to such crimes. His lamentation for the city was most moving, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! &c.* These tender exclamations, which can hardly be read without tears, convey a strong idea of Christ's love to that ungrateful nation. The words, *how often*, mark his unwearied endeavours to cherish and protect them from the time they were first called to be his people; and the opposition which is stated between his will and theirs, *How often would I—but ye would not*, very emphatically shews their unconquerable obstinacy in resisting the most winning and most substantial expressions of the divine love. The clause, *Behold, &c.* is a prediction of the punishment which was to be inflicted upon them for their sin in rejecting Christ. *Their house*, (the temple of God, see 2 Kings, xxiii. 27.) was from that time to be *desolate*. The *glory of the Lord*, which Haggai had foretold should fill the second house, was departing. Our Lord spoke this as he was going out of his house for the last time. See Howe's Tears of the Redeemer.

*Ver. 39. Henceforth]* *Απ' αἰῶνι, hereafter.* "Because you have killed the prophets, and endeavoured to stone me,

C H A P. XXIV.

*Christ foretelleth the destruction of the temple: what and how great calamities shall precede it. The signs of his coming to judgement: because that day and hour is unknown, we ought to watch like good servants, expecting every moment our Master's coming.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**A**ND<sup>a</sup> Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to

*him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, <sup>b</sup> There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

3 ¶ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives the disciples came unto him privately,

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 13. 1-8. Luke, 21. 5-11. with Ch. 23. 38, 39.

<sup>b</sup> Luke, 19. 44. Jer. 5. 10. & 26. 18. Mic. 3. 12. 1 Kings, 9. 7. Ezek. 7.

“me, whom the Father hath sent unto you; because your great men are at this moment plotting against me, who am the Lord of the temple; and because you will assist them in putting me to death; your temple shall be desolate: it shall never be favoured with my presence any more. Nay, your nation shall be deserted by me; *For you shall not see me henceforth, &c.*” In the capacity of a teacher, Jesus had often filled the temple with the glory of his doctrine and miracles; and, as a kind friend, had tried with unwearied application to gather the nation under his wings, that he might protect them from the impending judgments of God. Therefore, by their not seeing him from that time forth, we are to understand their not enjoying his presence and care as a teacher, guardian, and friend. This was the last discourse that Jesus pronounced in public; with it his ministry ended. From that moment he abandoned the Jewish nation, gave them over to walk in their own counsels, and devoted them to destruction; nor were they ever after, as a nation, to be the objects of his care, till the period of their conversion to Christianity should come, which he now foretold: *ye shall not see me, till ye shall say, Blessed, &c.* that is, till your nation is converted; for the state of the nation, and not of a few individuals, is here spoken of, as it is also in the parables of the vineyard and the marriage-supper. *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord* was the cry of the believing multitude, when Jesus made his public entry into Jerusalem a few days before this. Hence, in predicting their future conversion, he alludes in a very striking manner to that exclamation, by which they had expressed their faith in him as the Messiah. This is by far the most spirited of all our Lord’s discourses, and being pronounced no doubt with an elevation of voice, and vehemence of gesture, suitable to the sentiments which it expressed, it could not but astonish the people, who had always looked upon their teachers as the holiest of men. Even the persons themselves, against whom it was levelled, were confounded; their consciences witnessing the truth of what was laid to their charge. They knew not what course to take; and so, in the midst of their hesitation, they let Jesus go away quietly, without attempting to lay hands on him, or stone him, as they had sometimes done before upon less provocation. See Grotius, Macknight, and Olearius. Thus did our Lord pull the mask of hypocrisy from off the teachers of his own times, condemning it in all its forms. He treated hypocrisy with severity, because it is a most enormous sin, rendering men criminal before God, by things which in their own nature are

calculated to please him; such as prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and other religious duties. The sharpness with which our Lord spoke now, and on other occasions, against hypocrites, plainly and strongly intimates to us, that we should strive more to be good, than to appear so. But on this subject, I will speak more, when I come to Luke, xi.

*Inferences.*—With what humility, integrity, and contempt of this world, should the ministers of Christ behave! and how should they live the doctrines they preach; and not lord it over their hearers! but if any of his servants act unfuitable to their character, their doctrine is nevertheless to be regarded, as far as it agrees with the word of God; though their disorderly lives are not to be imitated. And woe unto them, who either pervert the sacred oracles, or, under a pretence of piety, are guilty of the vilest abominations; who aim at dominion over mens’ faith and consciences, and neither embrace the Gospel themselves, nor cease from hindering others, that seem to be well affected towards it; who are fond of specious appearances of external sanctity, but whose hearts are full of all impurity; who are superstitiously scrupulous about trifles, and neglect the most important things of Christianity; and who make light of oaths, and manage all their religion with secular views. How can such as these escape the damnation of hell? Christ will find out every hypocrite, and take vengeance upon them another day. In the mean while, with what faithfulness and compassion, condescension and grace, does he deal with all sorts of sinners in the gospel! but what a deplorable condition are they in, who nevertheless go on in their trespasses, and reject him by unbelief; and especially who indulge a persecuting spirit, which will one time or other bring down the heaviest vengeance upon their own heads! let them that condemn this or any iniquity in others, take heed of practically approving it, by doing the same themselves: for a time is coming, when the iniquity of impenitent sinners will be full, and God will heap upon them the measures of wrath, which they have been treasuring up to themselves against the day of wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment. Oh that we might all know the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes! and that when Christ appears again, we may be glad with exceeding joy!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Among all the Jewish sects the Pharisees maintained the most distinguished rank for their reputed wisdom and piety. Yet none ever fell under more censures from Christ than these reputed patterns of sanctity.

saying, ' Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, ' Take heed that no man deceive you.

<sup>c</sup> Mark, 13. 3, 4. Luke, 21. 7. Dan. 12. 6, 8. John, 21. 21. 1 Thes. 5. 1. Eph. 5. 6. Col. 2. 8, 18. 2 Thess. 2. 3. Gal. 6. 7. 1 John, 3. 7. & 4. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Jer. 29. 8. Luke, 21. 8. 1 Cor. 6. 9. & 15. 33. & 3. 18.

tity, because indeed they were the most inveterate enemies of him and his gospel: as those of a like stamp ever have been and will be. Their religion was all show, their hearts enmity against God, filled with pride, self-righteousness, love of esteem, worldly-mindedness, and hatred to the power of internal vital godliness. Whom the world therefore admired as the best sort of people in it, God abhorred as the worst, as the farthest from his kingdom and righteousness. And the case is the same to this very day. Against these whited sepulchres Christ therefore cautions his disciples.

1. He honours the office which they bore as expositors of the law, who sat in Moses' seat, and read and interpreted in the synagogues the sacred oracles to the people. And so far as they spoke agreeably to the Scriptures, they were to be attended to, and their word to be observed and done. *Note;* (1.) The most sacred and honourable offices in the church have often been filled by the worst of men. Yet ought not this to bring any dishonour upon the ministry itself, or prejudice us against the order—that many, who are a scandal to the name they bear, have thrust themselves into it. (2.) When wicked men preach sound truth, their word is to be received, while their works are abhorred; though example is most forcible to persuade, and it can hardly be expected that they should convince others, who do not themselves appear to believe the very doctrines they preach.

2. He brands the men who lived so unsuitably to the word they taught, and cautions the people to beware of imitating them. *Do not after their works: for they say, and do not.* They boasted indeed of the purity of their morals, as well as the orthodoxy of their sentiments; but the one was as corrupt as the other was culpable. Several things our Lord charges upon them.

[1.] Their hypocrisy. They were very strict preachers of the law, and rigid also in enforcing their vain traditions, laying upon men's consciences burdens intolerable, while they themselves dispensed with their own observance of them, and their practice gave the lie to their preaching. *Note;* Many preachers pretend the greatest zeal for morality, whose lives shew the laxest morals; and who must therefore be damned upon their own shewing.

[2.] Their formality, and desire of human applause. Their religion was all outside; and to make a fair shew before men was their great ambition. Instead of internal spirituality, and meditation on God's word, *they made broad their phylacteries*, which were scrolls of parchment, on which select portions of the law were written, sewed up in the skin of a clean beast, and hung at their arms and over their foreheads; and by their uncommon breadth they meant to insinuate their uncommon zeal for the law. *And they enlarge the borders of their garments:* not only conforming to the precept, Numb. xv. 38—40. but affecting, by the width of their fringes, to shew their dis-

tinguished sanctity, and observance of the command. So true it is even to the present day, that the most zealous contenders for the *form* of godliness, are sometimes the greatest strangers to the *power* of it.

[3.] Their pride and affectation of pre-eminence. They coveted always the most distinguished place at an entertainment; and even in the synagogues, where they assembled for religious worship, the same desire of precedency appeared in their choice of the chief seats, as if their business there was more to make a figure themselves, than to pay their humble adorations. In like manner they affected sounding titles of respect, and, when they appeared in public, they loved to have deep homage paid them, and to be addressed with, Rabbi, Rabbi! that others might hear and observe their importance and dignity. *Note;* (1.) There is no harm in receiving or giving titles of honour to whom honour is due: but to take a pleasure in hearing the sound, to be puffed up with the title, and to be offended at the omission of it, these mark detestable pride. (2.) Nothing can shew a stronger tincture of Pharisaism than coming to God's house to seek our own glory, and to be more anxious in what pew we are placed, than with what spirit we worship.

3. He forbids his disciples to challenge for themselves, or ascribe to others, any such pompous names as the scribes assumed. They must not be called *Rabbi*, affecting human honour, or any title importing dominion over the faith or consciences of their brethren: nor must they be styled *Master*, as if upon their own authority they sat up for guides and leaders; but must own *one Master* only, that is *Christ*, whose word alone must be their rule; while they, as brethren, arrogated no supremacy over each other, alike submissive to their common head. Nor may they give flattering titles to any; calling *no man Father upon the earth*. Not that this forbids us honouring our natural parents, or those who have begotten us in the Gospel, or paying due reverence to age or dignity; but we must regard no man as the founder of our religion, or as the head of the church, to whom, in matters of conscience, we owe implicit obedience, this being the sole prerogative of our God and Father, whose throne is in the heavens: but if any man among them excelled in gifts or graces, or was esteemed and preferred to a more honourable place in the church than others, far from being puffed up with his eminence, he is required to be the more condescending and laborious, employing himself the more zealously and humbly for the benefit of his fellow-Christians. And our Lord subjoins the most forcible argument to support what he had advanced: *whosoever shall exalt himself, grow proud, imperious, and assuming over his brethren, shall be abased;* either in penitent humiliation, when brought to a sight of his sin, in this world; or be covered with confusion in the more awful day of Christ's appearing: while *he that humbly himself* in every work and labour of love, and in a

lowly



5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for

<sup>c</sup> Jer. 23. 21, 25. & 14. 14. John, 5. 43. Acts, 5. 36, 37. Rev. 13. 3. Ver. 21, 24.

<sup>f</sup> Jer. 4. 19. & 5. 10, 11. <sup>g</sup> Pf. 46. 2, 3. & 27. 1-3. & 112. 7. 1f. 8. 12-14.

lowly sense of his own deep unworthiness, *he shall be exalted* in the eyes of God and all good men.

adly, Like Ezekiel's bitter roll, we have repeated fearful woes, like so many bolts of thunder, levelled against these proud self-righteous Pharisees. The general charge against them is their being *hypocrites*, proved in a variety of particulars; and this being the character which God especially abhors, we should be the more jealous over our own souls, that this rank weed of bitterness spring not up under the profession of godliness, and mar the whole.

1. Pretending to be teachers of the law, and possessed of the key of knowledge, instead of explaining the spiritual meaning of all the typical rites, as pointing to Christ; or the purport of the prophecies which related to him; they studiously sought to pervert both; commenting upon them in such a way as most intirely to overturn the true nature of the Messiah's office and kingdom, and leading the people to rest on the shadows instead of the substance. Invenomed enemies to the Gospel, they turned a deaf ear to all that Christ advanced in proof of his own divine character and mission, and not only rejected him themselves, but used their utmost efforts, employing all their influence, their examples, and their cunning, to prejudice the people against him and his Gospel; reviling his person, doctrine, and miracles, and thundering out their anathemas against those who should profess to receive him as the Messiah.

2. They made the cloak of religion subservient to the basest purposes of gain and avarice, insinuating themselves into the confidence of helpless widows, on whom, by their long prayers and affected shew of devotion, they imposed; and who, supposing their piety as great as the appearances of it, entrusted them with the management of their affairs, and were directed by their advice; by which means, taking advantage of their superstition and credulity, they sinned them of their substance, and enriched themselves with the spoil of the most cruel inhumanity, as well as basest injustice; for which, though they might escape the censures of men, God, the all-seeing Judge, would surely give them *greater damnation* in the day of recompense.

Note; (1.) The vilest wickedness may sometimes be so shaded by craft, as to elude the eye of human observation.

(2.) The appearance of godliness put on to cover worldly designs, is in God's account the most atrocious of crimes.

(3.) Long prayers are not always culpable; it is only when they are for a pretence, that they become an abomination.

(4.) There are degrees of misery in hell: some shall receive greater damnation than others; and the most dreadful vengeance of all shall light on the hypocrite's head.

3. They exerted the greatest zeal to make profelytes from the Gentiles, in order to heighten their own reputation, and strengthen their party; and omitted no pains to succeed in their attempts; and then abused the ascendancy which they obtained over the consciences of their converts, to instil the most virulent prejudices into them against Christ and his Gospel; making them more

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bigotted than themselves to the vain traditions of the elders, and more bitter persecutors of the disciples of Jesus even than their masters. See Acts, xiii. 45. xiv. 2-19. xvii. 5. xviii. 6. Thus their pretended conversion served to render them but *two-fold more the children of hell than themselves*. Note; (1.) Every impenitent sinner and hypocrite is a child of hell, of his father the devil, and doomed to dwell with him eternally. (2.) The industry which these Pharisees used to gain profelytes in so bad a cause, should condemn our negligence and want of zeal, who take so little pains to make converts to Christ and his Gospel.

4. They were *blind guides*, erring through greediness after gain, and deceiving others, misleading them into the most dangerous errors respecting the obligation of oaths; distinguishing between the temple and the gold, the altar and the gift; as if they might swear by the former, and break the oath with impunity; but an oath by the latter was conscientiously obligatory: and the reason was clear, because these blind guides made gain of the gold vowed to the temple-service, and of the gifts offered on the altar. But how absurd and foolish this distinction? the temple which sanctified the gold, and the altar which sanctified the gift, must needs be more holy than the gold and gift, which received all their sanctity from being offered there. Indeed these kinds of oaths were in themselves evil and profane; but if a man once made them, he was bound to fulfil them. An oath by the altar included all the gifts thereon; as also to swear by the temple, or by heaven, implied an appeal to him who dwelleth there, manifesting his presence between the cherubim, or sitting on his throne most high; and therefore every breach of such oath was direct perjury. Note; (1.) It is a dreadful thing for the poor people, when they who undertake to shew them the way to heaven are blind and ignorant; and it is still more terrible for the blind guides themselves, who will perish under the guilt of those souls which they have misled and ruined. (2.) Oaths are sacred; they are an appeal to the heart-searching God: by him alone we may swear; but if any profanely swear by other things, their profaneness will be no plea for their perjury; they are still in conscience bound to fulfil their oath as to the Lord.

5. They were scrupulous about trifles, and negligent of the essential duties of religion. They were most exact in the payment of their tythes, even to the small herbs of their garden, to the mint, and anise, and cummin; but they omitted the weightier matters of the law, such as judgement, the due administration of justice, and protecting the weak and helpless against their oppressors; mercy, the kind relief which they should have shewn to the distressed; and faith, a dependance upon God's care and love, and the grateful return due in consequence thereof. These they should have practised, as the most important and momentous; while matters comparatively trivial deserved but a subordinate regard: but they were such *blind guides*, corrupt in practice

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all *these things* must come to pass, but <sup>h</sup> the end is not yet.

7 <sup>i</sup> For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there

<sup>a</sup> Jer. 4. 27. & 5. 10, 18. Ver. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Hag. 2. 22. Zech. 14. 13.

Heb. 12. 27. Dan. 2. 44. 2 Chr. 15. 6. Acts, 17. 28. Joel, 2. 30.

practice as well as doctrine, *they strained at a gnat, or strained out a gnat* from their liquors, as if it would choke them; pretended such a scrupulous attention to avoid the least sin, and practise the nicest morality; while they could *swallow a camel*, making no conscience in secret of the most enormous crimes, to gratify their pride, their covetousness, and their malice. See ver. 14. chap. xxvii. 6. John, xviii. 28. *Note*; (1.) The practice of one duty can never be pleaded as a compensation for the neglect of another; and much less can observances merely ceremonial excuse the neglect of those weightier moral precepts, *judgement, mercy, and faith*. (2.) Many pretend a scrupulous conscience in trifles, who, when any thing important to them is at stake, hesitate not at committing the most flagrant immoralities.

6. Their religion consisted in mere externals, while their hearts continued utterly corrupt and defiled. They were very curious about washing their cups and platters, and placed much purity in this; while they cared little by what oppression they obtained the provision that they ate out of them: at least, their inward parts were very wickedness, whatever specious cloak they threw over their ways. Justly therefore does the Lord Jesus upbraid them, *Thou blind Pharisee!* dark to the pollution of thy soul; cleanse first thy inmost thoughts, principles, and designs; begin within; be pure in heart, and then you may, with consistency, contend for an exact conformity to the external rites and ceremonies enjoined by the law. But in their present state they were the very reverse of real purity; like whited sepulchres, garnished and glittering without, but within full of pollution and putrefaction; the lively emblem of their hypocrisy and iniquity, lurking under the splendid guise of uncommon piety. *Note*; (1.) Our hearts are our grand concern; all our services in religion will be acceptable or abominable, as they are truly purified by the blood of Jesus, or left polluted with native guilt and corruption. (2.) They who have never seen, felt, and lamented the plague of their own hearts, must necessarily be blind to all spiritual concerns, since here all vital godliness begins. (3.) The world abounds with whited sepulchres; we need be warned of them, lest, mistaking shew for reality, we esteem those patterns of piety, who are in fact but sinks of pollution, full of pride, worldly-mindedness, and enmity to the power of experimental religion.

7. They pretended a high veneration for the prophets of old, and, in honour of their memories, built sumptuous monuments for them, and kept them with the nicest care. They made great professions of the respect they would have paid them, had they been so happy as to have lived in their days; and condemned bitterly the wickedness of their forefathers in persecuting and murdering them; protesting against such violence, and that they would have never joined in shedding such innocent blood. Thus by their own confession they acknowledged themselves the descendants of those who had murdered the prophets; and how much of their spirit they had imbibed, their behaviour

towards John the Baptist, and their past and present malicious designs against Jesus, plainly evinced. Therefore he justly abandons them to the ruin that they have deserved, leaving them to fill up the measure of their iniquities, by crucifying him, the Lord of life and glory, and persecuting, even to death, his Apostles and ministers, till wrath should come upon them to the uttermost. *Ye serpents, subtle and poisonous; ye generation of vipers, fierce and malignant; how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* In their present temper and conduct, it was impossible but that the eternal wrath of God must abide upon them. *Note*; (1.) Many pretend respect for past reformers and good men, who persecute with the greatest virulence those who tread in their steps. (2.) The deceitfulness of the heart is great: we are strangely apt to flatter ourselves, how well we should have done and acted, if we had been in other persons' circumstances. Many think that the hard-hearted Jews, who heard the doctrines of the Son of God, and saw his miracles, and yet crucified him, were sinners of a peculiar dye; and had they lived then, they should have welcomed him with rapture to their houses and their hearts; who yet treat his word, his ministers, his people, with the same contempt and enmity. (3.) God's patience waits long with offenders; but their measure of sin will be full, and then shall wrath come upon them to the uttermost. (4.) The damnation of hell is to be freely denounced against the impenitent and hypocrites, how unwilling soever they may be to hear it, or ready to mock at these terrors of the Lord.

3dly. Their fathers, they allowed, had persecuted and slain the prophets of the Lord, and they would soon prove themselves genuine descendants from them.

1. Christ foretels what would be their behaviour towards his Apostles and Evangelists. Once more he would give them a trial, by sending to them his ministers, invested with divine authority from him their God and king, who in gifts and graces should be no ways inferior to the prophets, wise men, and scribes who went before them. But instead of obedience to their word, or respect for their persons, they would just do as their fathers before them had done, or worse; persecuting them from city to city, scourging them in their synagogues, and putting them to the most ignominious and cruel deaths. See Acts, vii. 59. xii. 2. xxvi. 11.

2. The measure of all their fathers' sins, which thus they imitated, approved, and exceeded, being full, God would not fail to require at their hands all the blood which had been shed for righteousness' sake, from the blood of righteous Abel, the first martyr, to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, or Jchoiada, see 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21. whom they slew between the porch and the altar, and who was the last martyr for the truth recorded in the Old Testament. On this generation Christ assures them shall all *these things come*; all the heavy wrath threatened for their forefathers' guilt and their own. *Note*; (1.) Every insult and injury shewn to God's righteous ones, shall, sooner or later,

shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

later, be severely avenged. (2.) The nearer judgements approach, the louder they call for repentance.

3. Christ pathetically laments over the wickedness of Jerusalem, and denounces her doom.

[1.] He laments over her wickedness, upbraiding her with ingratitude and impenitence under all the means and mercies that she had enjoyed: *Thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee*, as blasphemers. Such had been, and would be again her practice; and the great truths of God have been often thus loaded with the severest censures, and the most faithful and zealous advocates for them persecuted under the specious pretence of vindicating God's honour, and punishing those whom these pretended zealots are pleased to brand as enthusiasts. Yet, says Christ, *How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?* As a man, and a minister of the circumcision, Christ peculiarly regarded Israel for their fathers' sake; he wished therefore to engage them to attend his ministry, that by acknowledging him as the Messiah, they might prevent the doom with which their rejecting him would be attended. But ye, the Scribes and Pharisees, who prejudiced the people against him, would not; effectually preventing the people from receiving Christ as the Messiah, to do which they in general seem to have been disposed; and thus these false guides brought ruin upon themselves and their deluded followers. *Note*; (1.) They who have fled to Christ for refuge, will find a sure covert from the storm of divine wrath; whilst all who refuse his salvation will be left exposed to deserved vengeance. (2.) Christ will visit for all the means and mercies that men have abused; and a despised and rejected Gospel will bring down the heaviest condemnation.

[2.] He reads her doom. *Your house is left unto you desolate.* God was now about to abandon them as incorrigible; to leave his temple; and his presence withdrawn, the gold became dim, the fine gold was changed. Nothing but desolation remained within those once sacred walls, when the divine inhabitant was fled; nor would it be long ere one stone should not be left upon another. When God departed, their glory and defence forsook them: their city and nation with their temple were now devoted to utter destruction.

4. He takes his sad farewell of that temple which he never more would enter; nor would they ever see him after his departure to heaven, till that great day of his appearing and glory, when too late they would be convinced of his being the Messiah. Many suppose this refers to the conversion of the Jews in the latter day, when they shall welcome that Redeemer, whom their fathers crucified, with Hosannas, blessing, and praise. See the critical notes.

*Note*; (1.) The day is near, when every eye shall behold the once crucified Jesus on a throne of judgment; and then woe to those who pierced him and repented not. (2.) Those who will not see, are justly given up to the blindness of their hearts; and since they would not bow to the sceptre of a Redeemer's grace, they must perish

under the rod of his judgment. (3.) If we welcome Jesus now to our hearts, and he is pleased to make them his temple, and by his spirit to take up his constant residence therein, then shall the day of his appearing and glory be our exceeding great joy, and we shall rise up to welcome and call him blessed that *cometh in the name of the Lord*, to be glorified in his saints and admired of all that believe.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*Ver. 1. And Jesus—departed, &c.]* Our Saviour was in the temple, speaking to a mixed audience of his disciples and the multitude, when he uttered that pathetic lamentation at the close of the preceding chapter; wherein he has left to his disciples a generous and amiable pattern of a patriot spirit; and whence we see how contrary to truth is the insinuation of a noble writer, that there is nothing in the Gospels to recommend and encourage the love of one's country. Such a resolution as that mentioned by our Lord, ver. 38, 39. appeared very strange to his disciples, and affected them much; for which reason they stopped him, as he was *departing out of the temple*, and desired him to observe what a magnificent structure it was; insinuating, that they were surprized to hear him talk of leaving it desolate; that so rich and glorious a fabric was not to be deserted rashly; and that they should all be very happy when he, as Messiah, took possession of it, with the other palaces which of right belonged to him. They were going to the mount of Olives, which stood eastward from the city. It was the eastern wall, therefore, of the temple, fronting that mountain, which the disciples desired their Master to look at, and which being built from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height with stones of an incredible bulk, firmly compacted together, made a very grand appearance at a distance. The stones employed in the foundations were in magnitude forty cubits, that is to say, sixty feet; and the superstructure was worthy of such foundations. There were some stones of the whitest marble, forty-five cubits long, five cubits high, and six cubits broad, as a priest of the temple has described them. In Mr. Mede's opinion, the eastern wall was the only part of Solomon's structure which remained after the Chaldeans burned the temple. Hence the portico built on the top of it, obtained the name of Solomon's porch or portico. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xv. c. 14. War, lib. vi. c. 6. The magnificence of the fabric, however, was not the only topic they descanted upon. They spake also of the precious utensils with which it was furnished, and of the gifts wherewith the treasury was enriched; for there the gifts of ages were deposited, the presents of kings and emperors, as well as the offerings of the Jews. Hanging up such *ααβραζα*, or consecrated gifts, was common in most of the ancient temples. Tacitus, Histor. lib. 5. speaks of the immense opulence of the temple at Jerusalem. Amongst other of its treasures there was a golden table given by Pompey, and several golden vines of exquisite workmanship, as well as immense size; for Jo-

9 \* Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

\* Ch. 10. 17—22. Mark, 13. 9—23. Luke, 21. 12—24. John, 16. 2. & 15. 20. Ch. 23. 34. & 22. 6. & 13. 28. & 11. 6. Rev. 2. 10. Acts, iv—xii. xxi—xxv.

Josephus tells us, that they had clusters as tall as a man, which some have thought referred to God's representing the Jewish nation under the emblem of a *vine*. Josephus likewise asserts, in the place above quoted, that the marble of the temple was so white that it appeared at a distance like a mountain of snow; and the gilding of several of its external parts, which he there mentions, must, especially when the sun shone upon it, render it a most splendid and beautiful spectacle. See Luke, xxi. 5. and Mark, xiii. chapters which the reader will please to keep in view while we go through the present; and we would refer him by all means to Josephus's History of this event. Christian writers have always, with great reason, represented his History of the Jewish War as the best commentary on this chapter; and many have justly remarked it, as a wonderful instance of the care of Providence for the Christian church, that this writer, an eye-witness, and in these things of so great credit, should be preserved, and especially in so extraordinary a manner preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important traçts, which so exactly illustrate this noble prophecy in almost every circumstance.

*Ver. 2. There shall not be left here one stone*] No impostor, Bishop Chandler very justly observes, would have attempted to foretel an event at once so disagreeable, and so improbable as it seemed at present, considering the peace of the Jews with the Romans, and the strength of their citadel; which forced Titus himself to acknowledge, that it was the singular hand of God which compelled them to relinquish fortifications unconquerable by human power. The worthy Bishop of Bristol (to whose accuracy and learning we shall be particularly obliged in the course of our annotations on this chapter, as we have already enriched a former part of this commentary from his valuable *Dissertations on the Prophecies*) observes, that our Saviour in his prophecies frequently alludes to phrases and expressions used by the ancient prophets; and as Haggai, ii. 15. expresses the building of the temple, by a *stone being laid upon a stone*, so Christ expresses the destruction of it by *one stone not being left upon another*. See Luke, xix. 44. It is a proverbial expression to denote an utter destruction; and the prophecy would have been amply fulfilled, if the city and temple had been entirely ruined, though every single stone had not been overturned. But it happened in this case that the words were almost literally fulfilled, and scarcely one stone was left upon another. For when the Romans had taken Jerusalem, Titus ordered his soldiers to dig up the foundations both of all the city, and also of the temple, after it was burnt. The temple was a building of such strength and grandeur, of such splendor and beauty, that it was likely to be preserved for a monument of the victory and glory of the Roman empire: Titus was accordingly very desirous of preserving it; and protested to the Jews who had fortified themselves within it, that he would pre-

serve it even against their will. He had expressed the like desire of preserving the city too, and sent Josephus and other Jews, again and again, to their countrymen, to persuade them to surrender; but one greater than Titus had determined it otherwise. The *Jews* themselves first set fire to the *porticos* of the temple, and then the Romans. One of the soldiers neither waiting for any command, nor trembling at such an attempt, but urged by a certain divine impulse, says Josephus, mounted the shoulder of his companion, thrust a burning brand in at the golden window, and thereby set fire to the building of the temple itself. Titus ran immediately to the temple, and commanded his soldiers to extinguish the flame; but neither exhortations nor threatenings could restrain their violence; they either could not or would not hear; those behind encouraging those before to set fire to the temple. Titus was still for preserving the *holy place*: he commanded his soldiers even to be beaten for disobeying him. But their anger and hatred of the Jews, and a certain warlike vehement fury, overcame their reverence for their general, and their dread of his commands. A soldier in the dark set fire to the doors; and thus, as Josephus says, the temple was burned against the will of Cæsar. Afterwards, as we read in the Jewish Talmud, and in Maimonides, Terentius Rufus, who was left to command the army at Jerusalem, did with a ploughshare tear up the foundation of the temple, and thereby signally fulfilled Micah, iii. 12. Eusebius too affirms that it was ploughed up by the Romans, and that he saw it lying in ruins. The city also shared the same fate, and was burned and destroyed as well as the temple. The Romans burned the extremest parts of the city, and demolished the walls. Three towers only, and some part of the wall were left standing, for the better encamping of the soldiers, and to shew to posterity what a city, and how fortified, the valour of the Romans had taken. All the rest of the city was so demolished and levelled with the ground, that they who came to see it, could not believe that it was ever inhabited. After the city was thus taken and destroyed, great riches were found among the ruins; and the Romans dug them up, in search of the treasures which had been concealed and buried in the earth. So literally were our Saviour's words accomplished, in the ruin both of the city and of the temple; and well might Eleazer say, "That God had delivered his most holy city to be burned and subverted by their enemies;"—and "with that they had all died, before they saw that he city demolished by the hands of their enemies, and the sacred temple so wickedly dug up from the foundations." See Bishop Newton's 18th Dissertation, and Josephus War, lib. vi. and vii.

*Ver. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives*] When the disciples heard their Master affirm, that not so much as one of those stones, which had mocked the fury of Nebuchadnezzar's army, and survived the envy of time, was

11 <sup>1</sup> And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And, <sup>m</sup> because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 7. 15. - Acts, 20. 29, 30. 1 Cor. 11. 19. 2 Cor. 11. 13. 2 Tim. 2. 17. 2 Peter, 2. 1. Jude, 4. 18. 1 Tim. 4. 1. <sup>m</sup> 2 Tim. 1. 15. & 4. 10, 16. Heb. 10. 25.

be left upon another, but that they were all to be thrown down, they perceived that the temple was to be demolished; but at this time none of our Lord's followers had the least apprehension that he was to take away the sacrifice, and make such a change in religion as would render the temple of no use: and therefore, hearing him speak of its demolition, they no doubt supposed, that the fabric then standing was too small for the numerous worshippers who should come, when all nations were subjected to Messiah; and that it was for that reason to be pulled down, in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan, suitable to the idea which they had conceived of the greatness of his future kingdom. Entertaining these imaginations, they received the news with pleasure, and fancied to themselves very glorious things as they travelled along.—Accordingly, when Jesus was come to the mount of Olives, and had taken a seat on some eminence, whence the temple and part of the city were to be seen, they drew near, and expressed their joy by desiring to know when the demolition of the old structure was to happen, and what were to be the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. *The sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world, are only different expressions to denote the same period with the destruction of Jerusalem; for they conceived, that when Jerusalem should be destroyed, then would be the coming of Christ; and when the coming of Christ, then the end of the world; or rather, as it should be rendered, the conclusion of the age, ΣΥΝΤΕΛΙΑ ΤΩ ΑΙΩΝΙ.* The conclusion of the age is the same period with the destruction of Jerusalem; for there being two ages, as they were called among the Jews, the one under the law, the other under the Messiah, when the city and temple were destroyed, and the Jewish polity in church and state was dissolved, the former age must of course be concluded, and the age under the Messiah commence. The phrase appears to be used in the same manner as in Hebrews, ix. 26. *But now once, in the end of the world—[ἐπι ΣΥΝΤΕΛΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΙΩΝΩΝ, —in the conclusion of the Jewish age or ages] hath he appeared, to put away sin.* See Ephes. ii. 7. 1 Cor. x. 11. *The coming of Christ is also the same period with the destruction of Jerusalem, as may appear from several places in the Gospel, but particularly from ch. xvi. 28. and John, xxi. 22.* The latter part of the question our Saviour answers first, treating of the signs of his coming, and of the destruction of Jerusalem, from the 4th to the 31st verse, and then passes on to the other part of the question, concerning the time of his coming. By signs are meant the circumstances and incidents which should forerun, usher in, and attend this great event; and we may venture to affirm, that the whole compass of history cannot furnish us with a prophecy more exactly fulfilled in all points than this has been, “Our Lord (says Dr. Doddrige upon this subject) with perfect integrity and consummate wisdom, answers the question of the disciples by giving them an account of the prognosticating and concomitant signs of the destruction of Jerusalem; and

“ then, without saying one word of any temporal kingdom to be erected, which was the strongest idea then in their minds, raises their thoughts to the final judgment, to which the figures used in the former description might many of them be literally applied; and sets before them a heavenly kingdom, and eternal life, as the great object of their pursuit.” See ch. xxv. 34—46. This I take to be the key to this whole discourse. As the things which beset the Jewish nation, says Dr. Macknight,—their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance from that bondage, their passage through the Red Sea, abode in the wilderness, entrance into Canaan, &c. &c. were all typical, representing the methods by which God delivers mankind from the bondage of sin, and conducts them to heaven; so the destruction of the nations here set forth may prefigure the destruction of the world, though the prophecy certainly cannot be interpreted primarily of that destruction.

*Ver. 4, 5. Take heed that no man deceive you]* Our Saviour mentions false Christs as the first sign of his coming. He begins with this in all the evangelists, and in all uses almost the same words: only in St. Luke, xxi. 8. he adds, *the time draweth near*; and indeed within a little time this part of the prophecy began to be fulfilled. Very soon after our Saviour's decease, appeared *Simon Magus*, who boasted himself among the Jews as the son of God, and gave out among the Samaritans, that he was *some great one*, Acts, viii. 9, 10. Of the same stamp and character was *Desitheus* the Samaritan, who pretended that he was the Christ foretold by Moses. In the reign of Claudius, about twelve years after the death of our Saviour, an impostor, named *Theudas*, persuaded a great multitude to follow him, with their best effects, to the river Jordan; for he said that he was a prophet, and promised to divide the river for their passage; and saying these things, he deceived many, says Josephus: but Fadus sent a troop of horse against them, who, falling unexpectedly upon them, killed many, and made many prisoners; and, having taken Theudas himself alive, they cut off his head, and brought it to Jerusalem. A few years afterwards, in the reign of Nero, these impostors rose so frequently, that many of them were apprehended and killed every day. They seduced great numbers of the people, still expecting the Messiah. Our Saviour therefore might well caution his disciples against them. See the note on ver. 24. Bishop Newton, and Archbishop Tillotson's Discourse on this subject.

*Ver. 6. And ye shall hear of wars, &c.]* To relate the particulars of wars and rumours of wars, which happened at the period here referred to, would be to transcribe a great part of Josephus's History. There were more especially rumours of wars, when Caligula the Roman emperor ordered his statue to be set up in the temple at Jerusalem, which the Jews refused to suffer, and persisted in their refusal; and, having therefore reason to apprehend a war from the Romans, were in such a consternation, that they omitted even the tilling of their lands. But this storm was soon blown

13 <sup>a</sup> But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And <sup>o</sup> this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness

<sup>a</sup> Dan. 12. 12. Ch. 10. 22. Rev. 2. 10. Mark, 13. 13. Heb. 3. 6. & 10. 39.

<sup>o</sup> Ch. 4. 23. & 9. 35. Acts, 2. 5. Rom. 1. 8. & 10. 18. & 15. 19. Col. 1. 6, 23. Mark, 1. 15.

blown over, and their fear dissipated by the timely death of that emperor. *But be ye not troubled*, says our Lord, at the prospect of these calamities, *for all these things must first come to pass*: they must come to pass a considerable time before the destruction of the nation; *but the end is not yet*. The end of the age, or Jewish dispensation, and the demolition of the temple, will not be immediately on the back of these things. See on ver. 8.

*Ver. 7. For nation shall rise, &c.*] Here, as Grotius observes, Christ declares, that greater disturbances than those which happened under Caligula should fall out in the latter times of Claudius, and in the reign of Nero. The rising of *nation against nation* portended the dissensions, insurrections, and mutual slaughters of the Jews, and those of other nations, who dwelt in the same cities together; as particularly at Cæsarea, where the Jews and Syrians contended about the right of the city; which contention at length proceeded so far, that above twenty thousand Jews were slain, and the city was cleared of the inhabitants. At this blow the whole nation of the Jews was exasperated, and, dividing themselves into parties, they burned and plundered the neighbouring cities and villages of the Syrians, and made an immense slaughter of the people. The Syrians, in revenge, destroyed not a less number of Jews; and every city, as Josephus expresses it, was "divided into two armies." At Scythopolis the inhabitants compelled the Jews who resided among them to fight against their own countrymen, and after the victory, basely setting upon them by night, murdered above thirteen thousand of them, and spoiled their goods. At Ascalon, they killed two thousand five hundred; at Ptolemais, two thousand, and made not a few prisoners. The Tyrians put many to death, and imprisoned more. The people of Gadara did likewise, and all the other cities of Syria, in proportion as they hated or feared the Jews. At Alexandria the old enmity was revived between the Jews and Heathens, and many fell on both sides, but of the Jews to the number of fifty thousand. The people of Damascus too conspired against the Jews of the same city, and, assaulting them unarmed, killed ten thousand of them. The rising of *kingdom against kingdom* portended the open wars of different tetrarchies and provinces against one another; as that of the Jews who dwelt in Peræa against the people of Philadelphia concerning their bounds, while Caspius Fadus was procurator; that of the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, for the murder of some Galileans going up to the feast at Jerusalem, while Cumanus was procurator; and that of the whole nation of the Jews against the Romans and Agrippa, and other allies of the Roman empire, which began while Gessius Florus was procurator. But, as Josephus says, there was not only sedition and civil war throughout Judea, but likewise in Italy, Otho and Vitellius contending for the empire. It is farther added, *and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places*. There were *famines*, as particularly that prophesied

of by Agabus, and mentioned, Acts, xi. 28. and by Suetonius, and other prophane historians referred to by Eusebius, *which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar*, and was so severe at Jerusalem, that, as Josephus says, many perished for want of victuals:—and *pestilences*, for these are the usual attendants upon famines. Scarcity and badness of provisions almost always end in some epidemical distemper. We see that many died by reason of the famine in the reign of Claudius; and Josephus farther informs us, that when Niger was killed by the Jewish zealots, he imprecated, besides other cruelties, famine and pestilence upon them (*λιμοιτε και λοιμοι*, the very words used by the Evangelist,) all which, says he, God ratified and brought to pass against the ungodly:—*And earthquakes in divers places*; as particularly that in Crete, in the reign of Claudius, mentioned by Philostratus in the life of Apollonius; those also mentioned by Philostratus at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, in all which places some Jews inhabited; those at Rome mentioned by Tacitus; that at Laodicea, in the reign of Nero, mentioned also by Tacitus; which city was overwhelmed, as were likewise Hierapolis and Colosse; that in Campania, mentioned by Seneca; that at Rome, in the reign of Galba, mentioned by Suetonius; and that in Judea, mentioned by Josephus: for by night there broke out a most dreadful tempest, and violent strong winds, with the most vehement showers, and continual lightnings, and horrid thunderings, and prodigious bellowings of the shaken earth; so that it was manifest, as he observes, that the constitution of the universe was confounded for the destruction of men; and any one might easily conjecture, that these things portended no common calamity.

*Ver. 8. All these are the beginning of sorrows*] *ἀρχὴ ὀδύων*, the beginning of throes, or pangs. Great troubles and calamities are often expressed in Scripture language metaphorically, by the pangs of travailing women: "All these are only the first pangs and throes, and are nothing to that hard labour which shall succeed." See on ver. 6.

*Ver. 9. Then shall they deliver you up, &c.*] Had Jesus been an impostor, he would, like all other impostors, have fed his followers with fair hopes and promises; but on the contrary, we see that he denounces persecution to be the lot of his disciples; he pointeth out to them the difficulties they must encounter, the fiery trials they must undergo, and yet they did not stagger in their faith; did not therefore, like faint-hearted soldiers, forsake their colours, and desert his service. One hardly knows whom to admire most, him for dealing so plainly, or them for adhering so steadily to him.

*Ver. 10. Then shall many be offended, &c.*] By reason of persecution and of the universal hatred which all nations bore against the Christian name, *many were indeed offended*, and apostatized from the faith; as particularly *Phygellus and Hermogenes*, and *many others* in Asia, 2 Tim. ii. 15. and Demas,—iv. 10. But they would not only apostatize from the

unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

15<sup>p</sup> When ye therefore shall see the \* abomination of desolation, spoken of by

<sup>p</sup> Mark, 13. 14. Luke, 21. 20. Dan. 9. 25, 27. & 12. 11. Luke, 19. 43.

\* Roman armies.

the faith, but also *betray and hate one another*. To illustrate which point, we need only cite a sentence out of Tacitus, speaking of the persecution under Nero: "At first, (says he) several were seized, who confessed, and then, by their discovery, a great multitude of others were convicted and executed."

*Ver. 11. Many false prophets shall rise*] Such particularly were *Simon Magus*, and his very numerous followers, the Gnostics. Such also were the Judaizing teachers, mentioned 2 Cor. xi. 13. Such also were *Hymeneus and Philetus*, of whom the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 17. complains, that they affirmed *the resurrection to be past already, and overthrew the faith of some*.

*Ver. 12. Because iniquity, &c.*] The genuine fruit and effect of all these evils was the lukewarmness and coolness among Christians. By reason of these trials and persecutions from without, and these apostasies and false prophets from within, the love of many to Christ and his doctrine, and also their love to each other, shall wax cold. Some shall openly desert the faith; some shall corrupt it, as *ver. 11.* and others again, as here, shall grow indifferent to it; and not to mention other instances, who can hear St. Paul complaining at Rome, 2 Tim. iv. 16. *that at his first answer all men forsook him*; who can hear the divine author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorting them, ch. x. 25. *not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is*, and not conclude the event to have sufficiently justified our Saviour's prediction?

*Ver. 13. But he that shall endure*] "He who shall not be terrified by these trials and persecutions; he who shall neither apostatize from the faith of himself, nor be seduced by others; he who shall not be ashamed to profess his faith in Christ, and his love to the brethren; *the same shall be saved, both here and hereafter.*" And indeed it is very remarkable, and was certainly a most signal act of Providence, that none of the Christians perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. See Luke, xxi. 18. 2 Pet. ii. 9. and Bishop Newton.

*Ver. 14. This Gospel—shall be preached in all the world—and then, &c.*] Then shall the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish polity, come to pass; when all nations shall be, or may be, convinced of the crying sin of the Jews in crucifying the Lord of glory, and of the justice of God's judgments upon them. Some imagine that by *all the world* is meant only the whole land of Judea, the very words of the text being used by the Septuagint and by Josephus himself in this sense. But that something more than this must be meant will appear, if we consider, that though the Acts of the Apostles contains only a small part of the history of a few of the apostles, yet even in that history we see the Gospel was disseminated, and had taken root in the most considerable parts of the Roman empire. As early as the reign of Nero the Christians were grown so numerous at Rome, as to raise the jealousy of the government; and the first general persecution commenced against them under pretence of their

having set the city on fire. The Gospel was preached by St. Paul in Arabia, and through the vast tract from Jerusalem to Iconium, in Lycaonia, and in Galatia, through all Asia Minor, in Greece, round about to Illyricum, in Crete, Italy, Spain, and Gaul. Clement, who was his cotemporary and fellow-labourer, says of him in particular, "that he was a preacher both in the East and West; and that he taught the whole world righteousness, and travelled as far as the utmost borders of the West." And if such were the labours of one apostle, what must have been the united labours of them all? We have still remaining the Epistles of St. Peter to the converted Jews in Pontus, Asia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. The Ethiopian eunuch converted by Philip probably carried the Gospel into his own country. It appears, indeed, from the writers of the history of the church, that before the destruction of Jerusalem the Gospel was not only preached in the Lesser Asia, and Greece, and Italy, the great theatres of action then in the world, but was likewise propagated as far northward as Scythia, as far southward as Ethiopia, as far eastward as Parthia and India, and as far westward as Spain and Britain. Our ancestors of this Island, though as remote from the scene of our Saviour's actions as almost any nation, probably heard the preaching of St. Simon: there is indeed much more probability that the Gospel was preached here by St. Paul; and there is absolute certainty that Christianity was planted in this country in the days of the apostles, before the destruction of Jerusalem. The evidence of Eusebius and Theodoret abundantly prove it to have been a fact; and St. Paul himself, Col. i. 6, 23. speaks of the Gospel's *being come into all the world, and preached to every creature under heaven*. See also Rom. x. 18. Though the success of the apostles was so great, yet the difficulties which they had to encounter were no less than the superstition, the prejudices, and the vices of the whole world. From a view of the Jewish and Gentile world it is evident, that every thing which most strongly influences and tyrannizes over the mind of man, religion, custom, law, policy, pride, interest, vice, and even philosophy, was united against the Gospel; enemies in their own nature very formidable and difficult to be subdued, had they even suffered themselves to be attacked upon even ground, and come to a fair engagement; but, not relying upon their own strength only, they entrenched themselves behind that power of which they were in possession, and rendered themselves inaccessible, as they imagined, to Christianity, by planting round them, not only all kinds of civil discouragements, but even torments, chains, and death. These were the difficulties which Christianity had to struggle with, and over which she at length so prevailed, as to change the whole scene of things, overturn the temples and altars of the gods, silence the oracles, humble the impious pride of the emperors, confound the presumptuous wisdom of the philosophers, and introduce into the greatest part of the known world a new principle of religion, holiness, and virtue. But what were the instruments of so stupendous a work! a few illiterate persons,

Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)

16 Then let them which be in Judea flee into <sup>9</sup> the mountains :

17 Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house :

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And wo unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days !

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the <sup>1</sup> sabbath-day :

<sup>9</sup> Gal. 1. 17. Gen. 36. 8. Prov. 22. 3. Heb. 11. 7. <sup>1</sup> Job, 2. 4. Ch. 6. 25. Luke, 17. 31. Mark, 13. 14—16. <sup>1</sup> Luke, 23. 29. Hofe, 13. 16. 2 Kings, 15. 16. 2 Sam. 4. 4. <sup>1</sup> Exod. 16. 29. Acts, 1. 12. i. e. the Jewish Sabbath.

persons, many of whom were fishermen ! The state of the first preachers of the Gospel, and of their opposers, was this : the latter were possessed of all the wisdom, authority, and power of the world ; the former were ignorant of human science, contemptible, and weak. Which of them then, according to the natural course of human affairs, ought to have prevailed ? The latter, without all doubt ! and yet not St. Paul only, but all history, and our own experience assure us, that the ignorant, the contemptible, and the weak, gained the victory over the wise, the mighty, and the noble. See Bishop Newton, *West on the Resurrection*, and Dr. Young on *Idolatry*, vol. 2.

*Ver. 15, 16. When ye therefore shall see, &c.]* Whatever difficulty there be in these words, it may be cleared up by the parallel place, Luke, xxi. 20, 21. Whence it appears, that the *abomination of desolation* is the Roman army ; and the *abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*, is that army besieging Jerusalem. This, says our Saviour, is the *abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet*, ch. ix. and xii. and so let every one who reads these prophecies understand them. The Roman army is called the *abomination*, because its ensigns and images were fo to the Jews, among whom every image of a man, and every idol, was called an *abomination*. After the city was taken, the Romans brought their ensigns into the temple, and placed them over against the eastern gate, and sacrificed to them there. The Roman army therefore is fitly called the *abomination*, and the *abomination of desolation*, as it was to desolate and lay waste Jerusalem : and this army's besieging Jerusalem, is called *standing in the holy place* ; the city, and such a compass of ground about it, being accounted *holy*. "When therefore the Roman army shall approach to besiege Jerusalem, then let them who are in Judea consult their own safety, and fly into the mountains." This counsel was wisely remembered, and put in practice by the Christians afterwards. When Cestius Gallus came with his army against Jerusalem, many fled from the city : After his retreat, many of the noble Jews departed from it ; and when Vespasian was approaching it with great forces, a vast multitude, says Josephus, fled from Jericho into the mountainous country for their security. At this juncture all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem, and removed to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan ; so that they all marvellously escaped ; and we do not read any where that so much as any one perished in the destruction of Jerusalem : of such signal service was this caution of our Saviour to the believers ! See Bishop Newton, and Bullock's *Vindication*, book, i. ch. 4. Dr. Heylin reads the last words, *Let him that reads consider it well*.

*Ver. 17. Let him which is on the house-top]* The houses of

the Jews, and of the present inhabitants of the East, as well as those of the ancient Greeks and Romans, were flat on the top for them to walk on, and had usually two pair of stairs, one on the inside, and the other on the out, by the latter of which they could ascend and descend, without coming into the house. In the Eastern walled cities these flat-roofed houses usually formed continued terraces from one end of the city to the other, which terraces terminated at the gates. He, therefore, who is walking and regaling himself upon the house-top, let him not come down to take any thing out of his house ; but let him instantly pursue his course along the tops of the houses, and escape out at the city-gate as fast as he possibly can. See Bishop Newton.

*Ver. 18. Neither let him which is in the field return]* Our Saviour makes use of these expressions to intimate, that their flight must be as sudden and hasty as Lot's was out of Sodom ; and the Christians escaping just as they did, was the more providential, because afterwards all egress out of the city was prevented. These are as strong expressions as one can imagine, to urge the speediest retreat. It is indeed observable that this whole discourse abounds with very lively figures of oratory, and is heightened with the noblest beauties of description. See Bishop Newton, and Elmsler's *Observations*, vol. 1.

*Ver. 19. Woe unto them that are with child, &c.]* For neither will such persons be in a condition to fly, nor will they be able to endure the distress and hardships of a siege. This woe was sufficiently fulfilled in the cruel slaughters which were made both of the women and children, and particularly in that grievous famine which so miserably afflicted Jerusalem during the siege. For mothers, as Josephus reports, snatched the food from the very mouths of their infants ; and the houses were full of women and children who perished by famine. See the note on Deut. xxviii. 53—56. and Bishop Newton.

*Ver. 20. But pray ye that your flight be not, &c.]* "Pray that these evils be not further aggravated by the concurrence of other natural and moral evils, such as the inclemencies of the seasons, and your own scruples : Pray that your flight be not in the winter ; for the hardness of the season, the badness of the roads, and the shortness of the days, will all be great impediments to your flight ; neither on the Sabbath-day ; that you may not raise the indignation of the Jews by travelling on that day, nor be hindered from doing it by your own scruples." This seems to be spoken a good deal in condescension to the Jewish scruples, a Sabbath-day's journey among the Jews being but about a mile ; and consequently insufficient for the security of their lives who fled. It has been observed,



21 \* For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 \* And, except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

\* Dan. 12. 1. Joel, 2. 2. Lev. 25. 14—39. Deut. 28. 15—68. & 29. 18—28. & 31. 17, 18. & 32. 21—35. Prov. 1. 2:—12. Pl. 71. 8—12. & 69. 30—38. If. 65. 12—15. Zech. 11. 9. & 14. 2. Mal. 4. 1. Luke, 21. 23, 24. & 19. 43, 44. 1 Thess. 2. 16. Heb. 6. 8. & 10. 26, 27, 29. 1 Pet. 4. 17, 18. Ch. 8. 12. \* If. 1. 9. & 6. 13. & 65. 8. Zech. 13. 8, 9. & 14. 2.

observed, (on Pl. cxlvii. 16. and Ezra, x. 9.) that the winters are very cold in the Holy Land. St. Jerome speaks of the cold of that country, as frequently too severe to be borne by those who might be glad to secrete themselves for fear of their lives; and, in his letter to Algasia, he thus understands, as to the literal sense, the direction of our Lord here given to his disciples; the severity of the cold being such, as would not permit them to conceal themselves in the deserts. Agreeable to this, and at the same time a lively comment on these words of our Lord, is the account which William of Tyre gives of the state of Saladin's troops after their defeat in the neighbourhood of Ascalon. "They for haste threw away their armour and cloaths, [vestium genera quaelibet; that is to say, their bytes and burnoses, described by Dr. Shaw, p. 226. which they found entangled them, and retarded their flight] but so sunk under the cold, with want of food, tediousness of the ways, and greatness of the fatigue, that they were daily taken captives in the woods, mountains, and wilderness; and sometimes threw themselves in the way of their enemies, rather than perish with cold and hunger." See the Observations on Sacred Scripture, p. 15. As our Saviour cautioned his disciples to fly when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies; so was it very providentially ordered that Jerusalem should be compassed with armies, and yet that they should have such favourable opportunities of making their escape. In the 12th year of Nero, Cestius Gallus came against Jerusalem with a powerful army; and though, if he had assaulted the city, he might have taken it, and have put an end to the war; yet, without any apparent reason, and contrary to every one's expectation, he raised the siege. Vespasian, who succeeded him in the command, invested the city on all sides; but the news of Nero's death, and soon after of Galba's, caused him to suspend his operations against Jerusalem; and the city was not actually besieged in form, till Vespasian was confirmed in the empire, and Titus was sent to command the forces in Judea. These incidental delays were very opportune for the Christians, and those who had thoughts of retreating and providing for their safety. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 21. Then shall be great tribulation] In the preceding verses our Saviour warned his disciples to fly as soon as ever they saw Jerusalem besieged by the Romans, and now he assigns a reason for his giving them this caution. The words used in this verse seem to be a proverbial form of expression, as in Exod. x. 14. Joel, ii. 2. 1 Macc. ix. 27. Our Lord, therefore, might fitly apply the same manner of speaking upon the present occasion: but he does not make use of proverbial expressions without a proper meaning; and this may be understood even literally. For indeed all history cannot furnish us with a parallel to the calamities and miseries of the Jews; rapine and murder,

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famine and pestilence within, fire and sword, and all the terrors of war without. Our Saviour wept at the foresight of these calamities; and it is almost impossible for persons of any humanity to read the relation of them without weeping too. The Jewish historian might well say, as he does in the preface to his history: "If the misfortunes of all, from the beginning of the world, were compared with those of the Jews, they would appear much inferior upon comparison. In short, no other city ever suffered such things, as no other generation from the beginning of the world was ever more fruitful of wickedness." See Luke, xxi. 22, &c. and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 22. Except those days should be shortened] "If those wars and desolations were to continue, no flesh—none of the Jews, would escape destruction." The number of those who perished in the siege were about eleven hundred thousand, besides those who were slain in other places; and, if the Romans had gone on destroying in this manner, the whole nation of the Jews would certainly, in a little time, have been extirpated. But, for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened. The elect is a well-known appellation in Scripture and antiquity for the Christians; and the Christian Jews, partly through the fury of the zealots on the one hand, and the hatred of the Romans on the other, and partly through the difficulty of subsisting in the mountains, without houses or provisions, would, in all probability, have been almost all destroyed either by the sword or by famine, if the days had not been shortened; but providentially the days were shortened. Vespasian, who was advanced in years, and therefore could not carry on the siege with that vigour which might cause the city soon to fall into his hands, transferred the command to Titus; who, having Rome, and the riches and pleasures there, before his eyes, took every measure which might render his expedition successful, and contribute to his glory, by the shortness of the time which he employed to effect it. The besieged too helped to shorten the days by their divisions and mutual slaughters, by burning their provisions, which would have sufficed for many years, and by fatally destroying their strong-holds, where they could never have been taken by force, but by famine alone. By these means the days were shortened; and indeed otherwise Jerusalem could never have been taken in so short a time, so well fortified as it was, and so well fitted to sustain a longer siege. The enemy could hardly ever have prevailed, but for the factions and seditions within. Titus himself could not but ascribe his success to God, as he was viewing the fortifications after the city was taken. His words to his friends are very remarkable: "We have fought with God on our side, and it is God who has pulled the Jews out of their strong-holds; for what could the hands of men or machines do against these towers!" God, therefore,

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23<sup>y</sup> Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not.

24<sup>z</sup> For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if *it* were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

25<sup>b</sup> Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore, if they shall say unto you,

Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers, believe *it* not.

27<sup>d</sup> For, as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28<sup>e</sup> For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

<sup>y</sup> Mark, 13. 21. Luke, 17. 23. & 21. 8. <sup>z</sup> See ver. 5. 11. Deut. 13. 1, 2. 2 Theff. 2. 9—11. Rev. 13. 13. John, 5. 41. Ch. 7. 15. 2 Per. 3. 17. <sup>a</sup> John, 6. 37. & 10. 20, 28, 29. Rom. 8. 28—39. 1 Pet. 1. 5. 2 Tim. 2. 19. <sup>b</sup> John, 16. 1. If. 44. 7, 8. & 46. 10. & 48. 5, 6. <sup>c</sup> Jude, 19. Rom. 16. 17, 18. <sup>d</sup> Luke, 17. 24. If. 30. 13, 14. & 24. 1—6. & 10. 22, 23. & 26. 21. <sup>e</sup> Luke, 17. 37. Job, 39. 29, 30. Jer. 16. 16. Dan. 9. 26, 27. Amos, 9. 1—4. 1 Theff. 2. 16.

in the opinion of Titus, *shortened these days*. After the destruction of Jerusalem too, God inclined the heart of Titus to take some pity upon the remnant of the Jews, and to restrain the nations from effecting the cruelty that they would have exercised against them. At Antioch particularly, the senate importuned him to expel the Jews from the city; but he answered, that their country being laid waste, there was no place to receive them. They then requested him to deprive the Jews of their former privileges; but those he permitted them to enjoy as before. See Bishop Newton, and Dr. Jackson's Credibility of the Scriptures.

Ver. 23, 24. *Lo, here is Christ, or there*] In fact, many such impostors did arise about that time, and promised deliverance from God; but as it was to little purpose for a man to take upon him the character of the Christ, or even of a prophet, without miracles to vouch his divine mission, so it was the common artifice and pretence of these impostors to shew *signs* and *wonders*. Simon Magus performed wonders, according to the account given of him, Acts, viii. 9—11. Dositheus likewise was reputed to do so; and Barchochebas is said to have pretended to vomit flames. Such also were the Jews of whom St. Paul speaks, 2 Tim. iii. 8. 13. There is a strange propensity in mankind to believe things marvellous and astonishing; and no wonder that weak and wicked men, Jews and Samaritans, were deceived by such impostors, where, *if it had been possible*, they would have *deceived the very elect*,—even the Christians themselves. See Bishop Newton. This is not a mere repetition of what was said before, ver. 5. but relates more particularly to those impostors who appeared during the time of the siege; concerning whom, see Josephus's War, b. vi. c. 5. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. b. iv. ch. 6. and Grotius on the place.

Ver. 25, 26. *Behold, &c.*] “Behold, I have given you sufficient warning.” It is remarkable, that our Saviour should not only foretel the appearance of these impostors, but also the manner and circumstances of their conduct; for some he mentions as appearing *in the desert*, and some in *secret chambers*, and the event has in all points answered to the prediction. Several of the false Christs and false prophets conducted their followers into deserts, where they promised to shew *wonders* and *signs*; and many, being persuaded, suffered the punishments of their folly; some of them being brought back by Felix, and chastised or slain by him. The Egyptian false prophet, mentioned Acts,

xxi. 38. *led out into the wilderness, four thousand men that were murderers*; but being engaged by Felix, the Egyptian himself with others fled away, and most of those who had been with him were slain or taken prisoners. These things happened before the destruction of Jerusalem. And a little after, one Jonathan, a weaver, persuaded many indigent men to follow him *into the desert*, promising to shew them signs; but most of his followers were also slain, some made prisoners, and he himself was afterwards taken, and burned alive, by order of Vespasian. As several of those impostors conducted their followers *into the desert*, so did others of them into the *secret chambers*, or places of security; particularly the false prophet mentioned by Josephus, who declared, that God commanded the people to go up into the temple, where they should receive the signs of deliverance. A multitude of men, women, and children went up accordingly; but, instead of deliverance, the place was set on fire by the Romans, and six thousand perished miserably in the flames, or by throwing themselves down to escape them. We may here observe, that the Messiah was particularly expected about the time of our Saviour, and consequently that the prophets had beforehand marked out that very time for his coming. We read not of any false Messiahs before the age of our Saviour, nor of so many in any age after; and why did they rise in that age particularly, if the Messiah was not at that time particularly expected? And why did the Jews expect their Messiah at that time more than at any other, if that was not the time before appointed for his coming? See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 27. *As the lightning—shall also the coming of the Son of man be*] His coming will not be in this or that particular place, but, like the lightning, sudden and universal. The appearance of the true Christ will be as distinguishable from that of the false Christ, as lightning, which shineth all round the hemisphere, is from a blaze of straw: it is very remarkable, “That the Roman army entered into Judea on the east side of it, and carried on their conquests westward; as if not only the extensiveness of the ruin, but the very route which the army should take, was intended in the comparison of the lightning coming out of the east and shining even unto the west.” See Pearce's Dissert. on the Destruction of Jerusalem, and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 28. *Wheresoever the carcase is, &c.*] By the word *carcase* is meant the Jewish nation, which was morally and judicially

29 ' Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken :

30 ' And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall all the

tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 <sup>h</sup> And he shall send his angels \* with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

<sup>f</sup> 11. 13. 10. Ezek. 32. 7. Zeph. 1. 14—18. Joel, 2. 30, 31. & 3. 15. 11—17. <sup>g</sup> Dan. 7. 13. Ch. 16. 27, 28. & 26. 64. Rev. 1. 7.

Amos, 5. 20. Mark, 13. 24—37. Luke, 21. 25—33. Acts, 2. 19, 20. Rev. <sup>h</sup> Mark, 16. 15, 16. Ch. 28. 18—20. or 13. 41. Acts, 26. 19. & 13. 46.

1 Cor. 15. 51. 1 Thess. 4. 16. Ch. 25. 32, 33. \* Or with a trumpet and a great voice.

judicially dead, and whose destruction was pronounced in the decrees of heaven. Our Saviour, after his usual manner, applies a proverbial expression with a particular meaning: for as, according to the old proverb, *wheresoever, &c.* so wheresoever the Jews are, there will Christ be taking vengeance upon them by the Romans, who are properly compared to eagles, as the fiercest beasts of prey, and whose ensign was an eagle, to which also probably our Saviour in this passage alluded. And as it was said, so it was done; for the victories of the Romans were not confined to this or that place, but, like a flood, over-ran the whole land. There was no part of Judea that did not partake of the calamities of the captivity. At Antioch many were burnt in the theatre, and others were slain; the Romans slew them every where; at Jarden not fewer than three thousand were put to death. Being on the point of being taken at Masade, they first murdered their wives and children, and then themselves, to the number of nine hundred and sixty, to avoid falling into the enemies' hands. In Cyrene, the followers of Jonathan the weaver were most of them slain; he himself was taken prisoner, and, by his accusation, three thousand of the richest Jews were put to death. See Bishop Newton.

*Ver. 29. Immediately after the tribulation, &c.]* Commentators generally understand this and what follows, of the end of the world, and of Christ's coming to judgment; but the words evidently shew that he is not speaking of any distant event, but of something consequent upon the tribulation before-mentioned, and that must be the destruction of Jerusalem. It is true, his figures are very strong; but no stronger than are used by the ancient prophets on similar occasions. See Isai. xiii. Bishop Warburton observes upon the subject, that this prophecy of Jesus concerning the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, is conceived in such high and swelling terms, that not only the modern interpreters, but the ancient likewise, have supposed, that our Lord interweaves into it a direct prediction of his coming to judgment: but if we consider the nature of the two dispensations, and the necessity of abolishing the former before the introduction of the latter, it will then appear, that this prophecy does not respect Christ's second coming to judgment, but his first, in the abolition of the Jewish polity, and the establishment of the Christian; that kingdom of Christ which commenced on the total ceasing of the theocracy. This was the true establishment of Christianity, not that effected by the donations or conversions of Constantine. This therefore being one of the most important eras in the economy of grace,

and the most awful revolution in all God's religious dispensations, we see the elegance and propriety of the terms in question, to denote so great an event, together with the destruction of Jerusalem, by which it was effected: for in the old prophetic language, the change and fall of principalities and powers, whether spiritual or civil, are signified by the shaking of heaven and earth,—the darkening the sun,—and moon,—and the falling of the stars; as the rise and establishment of new ones are by processions in the clouds of heaven, by the sound of trumpets, and the assembling together of hosts and congregations. See Bishop Newton, Bishop Warburton's Julian, b. i. ch. i. p. 21. and the next note.

*Ver. 30. And then shall appear the sign, &c.]* The plain meaning of this is, that the destruction of Jerusalem will be such a remarkable instance of divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the Jewish tribes shall mourn, and many will be thence led to acknowledge Christ and the Christian religion. In the ancient prophets God is frequently described as coming in the clouds, upon any remarkable interposition and manifestation of his power; and the same description is here applied to Christ. See Bishop Newton, and Gerhard's Dissertations, p. 200, &c. and John, vi. 30. Dr. Clarke says, that the sign here mentioned means the figure given by the prophet Daniel, the signal of that Son of man there described. Instead of the tribes of the earth, some read the tribes of the land.

*Ver. 31. And he shall send his angels]* This is all in the style and phraseology of the prophets, and, stripped of its figures, means, that after the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ, by his angels or ministers, will gather to himself a glorious church out of all the nations under heaven. No one ever so little versed in history needs to be told, that the Christian religion spread and prevailed mightily after this period, and hardly any one thing contributed more to this success of the Gospel than the destruction of Jerusalem falling out in the very manner, and in the very circumstances so particularly foretold by our blessed Saviour. See Bishop Newton. Most translations, as well as our own, have greatly obscured this text, by rendering the word *αγγελος*, angels; for though it generally signifies those celestial spirits who are on great occasions the messengers of God to our world, it is well known that the word refers not to their nature, but to their office, and it is often applied to men, and rendered messengers. See Mark, i. 2. Luke, vii. 24. ix. 52. 2 Cor. viii. 23. Philip. ii. 25. and James, ii. 25. in some of which places it signifies, as here, preachers of the Gospel, who were sent forth to carry on

32 ¶ Now learn a parable of the fig-tree : When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh :

33 <sup>1</sup> So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This genera-

tion shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.

35 \* Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36 ¶ <sup>1</sup> But of \* that day and hour knoweth no man, *no* not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, 21. 29—33. Mark, 13. 28—30. James, 5. 9. 1 Pet. 4. 17, 18. Ezek. 7. 2—13. & 12. 22—28. Ch. 11. 16. & 16. 28. & 23. 36. Heb. 10. 37. It took place within forty years after Christ's death. \* Mark, 13. 31. Ch. 5. 18. 2 Pet. 3. 10. Pl. 102. 26. If. 40. 8. & 51. 6. Heb. 1. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 25. Titus, 1. 2. <sup>1</sup> Ver. 42, 44. Ch. 25. 6, 19, 31. Mark, 13. 32. John, 5. 28. Acts, 17. 31. & 1. 7. 1 Thes. 5. 2. 2 Pet. 3. 10. \* i. e. day of the last judgment.

God's great designs of uniting all his believing people in one society, under Christ under their common head. See Ephes. i. 10.

*Ver. 32, 33. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree*] Our Lord, having answered the latter part of the question proposed ver. 3. proceeds in these verses to answer the former part, as to the *time* of his coming, and the destruction of Jerusalem. And he begins by observing, that the signs which he had given would be as certain an indication of the time of his coming, as the fig-tree's putting forth its leaves is of the approach of summer.

*Ver. 34. This generation shall not pass, &c.*] Our Lord proceeds to declare, that the time of his coming was at no very great distance; and to shew that he has been speaking all the while of the destruction of Jerusalem, he affirms with his usual asseveration, *Verily, I say unto you, &c.* It is therefore matter of wonder how any man can refer part of the foregoing discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and part of it to the end of the world, or any other distant event, when it is said so positively here, *all these things shall be fulfilled in this generation.* See Bishop Newton, and Mark, ix. 1.

*Ver. 35. Heaven and earth shall pass away*] It seems as if our Saviour had been aware of some such misapplication of his words, as is intimated in the preceding note, by adding yet greater force and emphasis to his affirmation; *heaven and earth shall pass, &c.* It is a common figure of speech in the oriental languages, to say of two things, that the one *shall be*, and the other *shall not be*, when the meaning is only, that the one shall happen sooner or more early than the other,—as in this instance of our Saviour: the meaning therefore is, “Heaven and earth shall sooner or more easily pass away, than my words shall pass away:” the frame of the universe shall sooner or more easily “be dissolved, than my words shall fail of being fulfilled.” See Luke, xvi. 17.

One would be ready to think it next to impossible, that any man should duly consider these prophecies, and the exact completion of them; and if he be a believer, not be still more confirmed in the faith; or if he be an infidel, not be converted to the faith. Can any stronger proof be given of a divine revelation than the spirit of prophecy? And can any stronger proof be given of the spirit of prophecy, than the example now before us? in which so many contingencies, and we might say improbabilities, which human wisdom or prudence could never foresee, are so particularly foretold, and so punctually accomplish-

ed! At the time when Christ pronounced these prophecies, the Roman governor resided at Jerusalem, and had a force sufficient to keep the people in obedience; and could human prudence foresee, that the city as well as the country would revolt and rebel against the Romans? Could any human prudence foresee *famines*, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places? Could human prudence foresee the speedy propagation of the Gospel, so contrary to all human probability? Could human prudence foresee such an utter destruction of Jerusalem, with all the circumstances preceding and following it? It was never the custom of the Romans absolutely to ruin any of their provinces; it was improbable therefore that such a thing should happen at all, and still more improbable that it should happen under the humane and generous Titus, who was indeed, as he was called, *the love and delight of mankind.* Yet, however improbable this was, it has happened, and it was foreseen and foretold by Christ. But how was it possible for him to do it, unless his foresight was divine, and his prediction the infallible oracle of God? See Bishop Newton, and Dr. Macknight.—Eusebius observes well upon this place, that whoever shall compare the words of our Saviour with the history of the war which Josephus has written, cannot but admire the wisdom of Christ, and acknowledge his prediction to be divine.

*Ver. 36. But of that day and hour knoweth no man*] The word *Ωρα*, is of a larger signification than *hour*; and besides, it seems somewhat improper to say, *of that day and hour knoweth no man*; for if the *day* was not known, certainly the *hour* was not; and it was superfluous to make such an addition. The passage therefore might be rendered, “of the *day* and *season*,” &c. as the word is frequently used in the best authors, both sacred and profane. It is true our Saviour declares, *all these things shall be fulfilled in this generation*; it is true, the prophet Daniel has given some intimation of the time in his famous prophecy of the seventy weeks: but though this great revolution was to happen in that generation; though it was to happen at the conclusion of seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, to be computed from a certain date that is not easy to be fixed; yet the particular day, the particular season in which it was to happen, might still remain a secret to men and angels: and our Saviour had before (ver. 20.) advised his disciples to pray, that their flight might not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day. The *DAY* not being known, they might pray that their flight might not be on the *Sabbath day*; the *season* not being known,

37 <sup>m</sup> But, as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For, as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40 <sup>n</sup> Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 ¶ <sup>o</sup> Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 <sup>p</sup> But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

44 <sup>q</sup> Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

45 <sup>r</sup> Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

<sup>m</sup> Luke, 17. 26—36. Gen. vi. vii. Job, 22. 16. 2 Peter, 2. 5. & 3. 6. 1 Peter, 3. 19, 20. Heb. 11. 7. 1 Theff. 5. 2, 3. <sup>n</sup> Luke, 17. 34—36. 1 Cor. 4. 7. <sup>o</sup> Ch. 25. 13. Rom. 13. 11. 1 Cor. 16. 13. 1 Theff. 5. 6. 1 Peter, 5. 8. Rev. 16. 15. Mark, 13. 33—37. Luke, 21. 34—36. <sup>p</sup> Luke, 12. 39. 1 Theff. 5. 2. Rev. 16. 15. & 3. 3. 2 Peter, 3. 10, 11. <sup>q</sup> Ch. 25. 10. Luke, 12. 40. Rev. 21. 2. & 19. 7. 1 Theff. 5. 6. 2 Peter, 3. 11, 12. Phil. 4. 4. James, 5. 9. 1 Peter, 4. 7. <sup>r</sup> Luke, 12. 42. & 19. 17. Ch. 25. 21. 1 Cor. 4. 2. John, 21. 15—17. Act, 20. 28. Gal. 6. 10. Eph. 4. 11—13. Heb. 3. 5. 2 Tim. 2. 2.

known, they might pray that their flight might not be in the winter. We shall enlarge on this subject, when we come to Mark, xiii. 32. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 37—39. *But as the days of Noe, &c.*] The *days of Noe* signify the days in which he preached to the old world that righteousness which they ought to have practised, and denounced the judgments of God to fall on them, if they did not repent of their wickedness. By parity of reason, the *days of the Son of Man* signify the days in which Christ and his Apostles preached to the Jewish nation, whose behaviour here is said to have been the same with that of the old world, and of the Sodomites, under the preaching of Noah and Lot. See Luke, xvii. 28. They went on secure, and wholly intent upon their worldly affairs, without being in the least moved by the repeated warnings of the divine judgments, which Jesus and his Apostles gave them; for which cause these judgments fell on them, and destroyed them. Dr. Woodward, in his *Theory of the Earth*, thinks, that the phrases *eating and drinking, &c.* were modest expressions to signify their giving themselves up to all the extravagances of riot and lust. And Wolffius upon the place has fully proved, that *γρῦναι*, is often used in a very criminal sense: but how great reason soever there may be to believe, that the antediluvian sinners did so, the words may be intended to express no more than the security and gaiety with which they pursued the usual employments and amusements of life, when they were on the very brink of utter destruction. See Doddridge.

Ver. 40, 41. *There shall two be in the field, &c.*] Providence will then make a distinction between such as are not at all distinguished now. Some shall be rescued from the destruction of Jerusalem, like Lot out of the burning of Sodom; while others, no ways perhaps different in outward circumstances, shall be left to perish in it. See Bishop Newton's *Dissertations*, and Luke, xvii. 31. Dr. Doddridge is of opinion, that the grand transition from the description of the destruction of Jerusalem to that of

the day of judgment, is made precisely after these two verses. For after them there is not a word peculiar to that destruction, but many circumstances are introduced which refer to the day of judgment, and of death as transmitting to it, and which can only be thus understood. Our Lord, in the following verses of St. Matthew and St. Mark, directs their thoughts to that final solemnity in which they are so highly concerned, by repeating, almost in the same words, the cautions and advices which he had formerly given, Luke, xii. 35, &c. In which whole context there is no reference to the temporal calamities coming on the Jews, which have been the subject of almost the whole preceding discourse; and the remembrance of what had passed on the former occasion, might the more easily lead them to the distinct understanding of what was now added; though it may not be improper to recollect, that the same pious care through grace in the temper and conduct, which would be a preparative against national judgments, and obtain for them the special protection of Providence in them, would also, through the alone merit of the great Atonement, secure them from any unwelcome surprise by a call to the tribunal of God.

Ver. 43. *But know this, that, &c.*] *But consider that if, &c.* Heylin.

Ver. 44. *Therefore, be ye also ready*] As the miseries which men were to undergo at the destruction of Jerusalem, the reasons of that destruction, the passions which its approach would raise in their minds, together with the suddenness and unexpectedness of it, nearly resembled what shall happen at the destruction of the world and the general judgment; it was natural for our Lord, on this occasion, to put the disciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful discharge of their duty, from the uncertainty of the time of his coming to call every particular person to an account at death. Concerning the form and structure of the parable in the next verses, we shall enlarge, when we come to Luke, xii. 42., &c.

Ver. 46,

46 ' Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 ' Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 " But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin \* to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the

drunken;

50 ' The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall \* cut him afunder, <sup>2</sup> and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

\* Rev. 16. 15. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. See ver. 42. <sup>1</sup> Ch. 25. 21. Luke, 19. 17. & 22. 29, 30. & 12. 44. <sup>1</sup> Peter, 5. 4. Dan. 12. 2, 3. <sup>1</sup> Luke, 12. 45. <sup>2</sup> Peter, 2. 3, 4. Ezek. 12. 22—28. <sup>2</sup> If. 65. 5, 13. John, 9. 10. <sup>2</sup> Cor. 11. 26. <sup>3</sup> Ver. 42, 44. <sup>1</sup> Theff. 5. 2, 3. Rev. 16. 15. John, 5. 28, 29. <sup>4</sup> Or cut him off. <sup>2</sup> Job, 20. 29. Pl. 11. 6. Ch. 8. 12. & 22. 13. & 13. 42, 50. & 25. 30.

Ver. 46, 47. *Blessed is that servant*] " You, the ministers of religion, ought to be particularly faithful in the discharge of your duty; for it is not an ordinary trust which is committed to your charge; you are stewards, whose business it is to take care of the whole family; and who, because of the influence which your example may have upon the rest, ought to be remarkably diligent, that you may provoke your fellows to be frugal, active, and sober. Your duty is, to be well acquainted with the stores of evangelical truths, and to understand how they may be best applied. You should know likewise the characters of the various persons under your charge; that you may be able to give every one of them their portion of meat in due season: and if when I come, I find you thus employed, you are blessed; for I will highly reward you with the joys of my kingdom; even as an earthly master bestows particular marks of respect on such servants as have been remarkably faithful in any important trust." We may just observe, that as no peculiar rewards were conferred on any of the Apostles, or other faithful ministers, at the time of Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, this clause sufficiently proves a reference to the final judgment; and will not permit us, with Dr. Hammond, to understand the *Gnostics*, or with Dr. Whitby, the *apostate Jews*, as particularly intended by the subsequent mention of the *wicked servant*; which seems plainly to refer to a debauched and persecuting clergy, hypocritically pretending to a distinguished zeal for Christian forms and institutions. See Hammond, Whitby, and Doddridge.

Ver. 48—51. *But, &c.*] *But if that servant, being evil, shall say, &c.* Heylin. " If on the other hand you behave like wicked stewards, who, because their Lord delays his coming, beat their fellow-servants, and get drunk with sots and epicures: if you tyrannize over the consciences of your brethren, neglect the duties of your function, and give yourselves up to sensual pleasures; I will come when you little think of it, and make you dreadful examples of my indignation, by the severe punishments which I will inflict upon you." It is remarkable, that in this parable the crime of the unfaithful stewards is said to have been sensuality; particularly drunkenness, than which a more abominable vice can hardly be named. A drunkard,—one who employs himself in erasing the illustrious signature of reason, which God stamped upon him in creation, as the prerogative of his nature; and who makes himself incapable of his duty,

while he is ready to commit every sin to which a temptation offers; what a monster is this, and how unlikely to lead others in the way of eternal life! See Macknight.

Ver. 51. *Shall cut him afunder*] This was one of the heaviest kinds of punishment anciently used: see 1 Sam. xv. 33. 2 Sam. xii. 31. Dan. ii. 5. iii. 29. A. Gellius, lib. xx. c. 1. In the passage first cited we are told that Samuel *beaved Agag in pieces*; wherefore, as that action proceeded from the greatness of the prophet's indignation, or rather from a knowledge of the divine will, the same punishment inflicted on the slothful, sensual, merciless steward, fitly expresses the greatness of his Lord's indignation. In ancient times the stewards of great families were slaves, as well as the servants of the lower class, being raised to that trust on account of their fidelity, wisdom, sobriety, and other good qualities: If any steward, therefore, in the absence of his lord, behaved as is represented in the parable, it was a plain proof that the virtues on account of which he was raised were counterfeit, and by consequence that he was a hypocrite. Slaves of this character, among other chastisements, were sometimes condemned to work in the mines; and as this was one of the most grievous punishments, when they first entered, nothing was heard among them but weeping and gnashing of teeth, on account of the intolerable fatigue to which they were subjected in these hideous caverns, without hope of release:—*there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. But, because the immediate effect of being cut afunder is death, and not a state of bitter lamentation, the Greek particle of connection may be understood in this verse disjunctively;—*shall cut him afunder, or appoint him, &c.*] unless we can suppose that in the latter clause our Lord speaks not according to the form, but the meaning of his parable. The truth is, as *cutting afunder* gives us a lively idea of the torment of an awakened conscience, the portion of hypocrites is a proper emblem to represent the melancholy state of the damned; who are shut up for ever in the dreadful dungeon of hell, never more to see the light of God's countenance, whereby the whole spiritual creation is enlightened, and made unspeakably happy. The Prussian editors, after several learned critics, render the word *διχοτομήσει*, which literally signifies *shall cut afunder*—by *shall separate him*, which it signifies metaphorically; (see ch. xxv. 32.) This interpretation they observe is proved from hence, that it is immediately added, *and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites*; which plainly expresses his separation from the company of faithful servants. See Stockius

CHAP. XXV.

The parable of the ten virgins, and of the talents. Also the description of the last judgment.

[Anno Domini 33.]

THEN <sup>a</sup> shall <sup>b</sup> the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten <sup>c</sup> virgins, which took

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 24. 27, 36, 42. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. & xiii. Dan. 2. 41. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 13. 20—23, 47. & 22. 10. Rom. 9. 6. <sup>d</sup> Gen. 19. 1. & 46. 29. Numb. 23. 15. Eph. 5. 31. Rev. 19. 7. <sup>e</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 13. 20—23, 47. & 22. 10. Rom. 9. 6. <sup>f</sup> 2 Tim. 3. 5. Tit. 1. 16.

their lamps, and went forth <sup>d</sup> to meet the bridegroom.

2 <sup>e</sup> And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3 They that were foolish <sup>f</sup> took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 24. 27, 36, 42. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. & xiii. Dan. 2. 41. <sup>c</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 13. 20—23, 47. & 22. 10. Rom. 9. 6. <sup>d</sup> Gen. 19. 1. & 46. 29. Numb. 23. 15. Eph. 5. 31. Rev. 19. 7. <sup>e</sup> Ch. 20. 16. & 13. 20—23, 47. & 22. 10. Rom. 9. 6. <sup>f</sup> 2 Tim. 3. 5. Tit. 1. 16.

Stockius on the word. Dr. Doddridge paraphrases it, "Will scourge him with that severity, that he will even cut him *afunder*?" (Compare Luke, xii. 46.) As to this, and other circumstances here mentioned, it is to be observed, that as rich mines sometimes grow up even to the surface of the earth, so in the parable of our Lord, the spiritual sense sometimes breaks through the literal, which it interrupts with a sudden transition to the application. It has been observed upon this last verse, that if ministers are the persons here primarily intended, there is a peculiar propriety in the expression, *shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites*; for no hypocrisy can be greater, than to call ourselves ministers of Christ, while we are the slaves of ambition, avarice, and intemperance. Wherever such are found, under whatever mark or form, may God reform them by his grace; or disarm them of that power and influence which they continually abuse, to his dishonour, and to their own aggravated damnation!

*Inferences.*—The first Inference which naturally occurs to the thinking mind on reading this remarkable chapter, is the strange and surprising manner in which the prophecies recorded in it have been fulfilled, and the unanswerable arguments which may thence be drawn for the truth of our Saviour's divine mission; as hath been urged at large in the note on ver. 35.

What is usually objected to the other predictions of holy writ, cannot with any pretence be objected to these prophecies of our Saviour,—that they are figurative and obscure; for nothing can be conveyed in plainer, simpler terms, except where he affected some obscurity for particular reasons, as has been hinted in the course of the notes. It is allowed, indeed, that some of these prophecies are taken from Moses and Daniel; our Saviour, prophesying of the same events, has borrowed and applied some of the same images and expressions; but this is a commendation, rather than any discredit to his predictions: he has built upon the foundations of the inspired writers before him; but what a superstructure did he raise! he has acted in this case, as in every other, like one who came *not to destroy* the law and the prophets, but to *fulfil* them. He has manifested himself to be a true prophet, by his exact interpretation and application of other prophecies. He is also much more particular and circumstantial than either Moses or Daniel: in several instances his prophecies are entirely *new*, and properly his own; and besides, he uses greater precision in fixing and confining the time to that very generation.

The sincerity and ingenuity of Christ, and the courage

and constancy of his disciples, strike us also strongly, from a review of these prophecies. See the note on ver. 9.

The sudden and amazing progress of the Gospel, which spread so far and so wide before the destruction of Jerusalem, and which our Saviour here so minutely foretold, cannot fail to strike us. The greatness of the work which was wrought, the meanness of the instruments who wrought it, and the short time in which it was wrought, must force all considering men to say, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.* The Mahometan religion, indeed, in less than a century over-ran a great part of the world; but then it was propagated by the sword, and owed its success to arms and violence: but the Christian religion was diffused over the face of the earth in the space of forty years, and prevailed, not only without the sword, but against the sword; not only without the powers civil and military to support it, but against them all united to oppress it: and what but the Spirit of God could bid it thus go forth conquering, and to conquer? *Had this counsel or this work been of men, as Gamaliel argued, it would have come to nought*; but being of God nothing could overthrow it.

Observe we again, that for the completion of those prophecies, the persons seem to have been wonderfully raised up and preserved by divine Providence. Vespasian was promoted from obscurity; and though feared and hated by Nero, was yet preferred by him, and singled out as the only general among the Romans, who was equal to such a war; God, as Josephus intimates, so disposing and ordering affairs. Titus was wonderfully preserved in some of the most critical circumstances of danger; upon which Josephus observes, remarkably enough, that hence it is obvious to understand, that the turns of war, and the dangers of princes, are under the peculiar care of God; and indeed Josephus himself was no less wonderfully preserved than Titus, the one to destroy the city, the other to record its destruction, in a history which was most particularly authenticated. As a general in the wars, he must have had an exact knowledge of all transactions; and as a Jewish priest, he would not relate them with any favour or partiality to the Christian cause. His history was approved by Vespasian and Titus, who ordered it to be published; and by king Agrippa, and many others, both Jews and Romans, who were present in those wars. He had likewise many enemies, who would readily have convicted him of falsification, if he had been guilty of any. He designed nothing less;—and yet his history of the Jewish wars may serve as a larger comment on our Saviour's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem.

As these prophecies are the clearest and the most minutely

4 <sup>s</sup> But the wife took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 <sup>h</sup> While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

<sup>s</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15. Zech. 4. 2, 3. John, 1. 16. Phil. 3. 3. 2 Cor. 1. 12. <sup>h</sup> Ch. 24. 48. 2 Pet. 3. 4. Rom. 2. 4. Rev. 2. 21. Song, 5. 2. & 3. 1. Eph. 5. 14. 1 Thess. 5. 6, 7. Ch. 26. 43. Rom. 13. 11. James, 3. 2. Ch. 26. 40, 43.

nutely fulfilled, so were the calamities the greatest which the world ever saw; and what heinous sin was it which could bring down such heavy judgments on the Jewish church and nation? Can any other be assigned with half so much probability as what the Scripture assigns,—their crucifying the Lord of Glory? This is always objected as the capital crime of the nation: and upon reflection we shall find some correspondence between their crime and their punishment, as every reader may have remarked from what has gone before.—They put Jesus to death, when the nation was assembled to celebrate the passover: and when the nation was assembled also to celebrate the passover, Titus shut them up within the walls of Jerusalem. The rejection of the true Messiah was their crime; and the following of false Messiahs to their destruction was their punishment. They sold and bought Jesus as a slave; and they were themselves afterwards sold and bought as slaves at the lowest prices. They preferred a robber and a murderer to Jesus, whom they crucified between two thieves; and they themselves were afterwards infested and over-run with robbers and murderers. They put Jesus to death, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation; the Romans did come, and take away their place and nation. They crucified Jesus before the walls of Jerusalem; and before the walls of Jerusalem, they themselves were crucified in such numbers, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies. One would think it hardly possible for any man to lay these things together, and not conclude the Jews' own imprecation to be remarkably fulfilled: *His blood be upon us, and upon our children!*

We Christians indeed cannot be guilty of the same offence in crucifying the Lord of Glory; but it behoves us to consider, whether we may not be guilty in the same kind, and by our sins and iniquities crucify afresh the Son of God, and put him to an open shame; and therefore, whether, being like them in their crime, we may not also resemble them in their punishment.—They rejected Christ; and we indeed have received him: but have our lives been agreeable to our holy profession? or rather, as we have had opportunities of knowing Christ more, have we not obeyed him less than other Christian professors, and trodden under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace?

The flagrant crimes of the Jews, and the principal sources of their calamities, in the opinion of Josephus, were, their trampling upon all human laws, deriding divine things, and making a jest of the oracles of the prophets, as so many dreams and fables: and how has the same spirit of licentiousness and infidelity prevailed likewise in our land! how have the laws and lawful authority been insulted, with equal insolence and impunity!—how have the holy Scriptures, those treasures of divine wisdom not only been rejected, but despised, derided, and abused to

the very worst purposes! How have the principal articles of our faith been denied, the prophecies and miracles of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the Apostles, been ridiculed, and impiety and blasphemy not only been whispered in the ear, but proclaimed from the press! how have all public worship and religion, and the administration of the sacraments, been slighted and contemned!—Alas, how much are they still slighted, and the sabbath profaned! and that too by those who ought to have set a better example, to whom much is given, and of whom therefore much will be required! and how few comparatively serve God with a loving, willing spirit, desirous to advance in holiness, influenced by the powerful love of their Master.—On the contrary, they seek only how little is necessary to be done, and with how small a portion of religion a man may be supposed to save his future interests; as if they were unwilling to serve God, who gives them all, more than needs must. Surely nothing can be more abominable to the great God of love! and if for their sins and provocations God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee: because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith!—Be not high-minded, but fear. God bore long with the Jews, and has he not borne long with us also?—but at length the fearful day came:—It may come to us also.

Whatever may be the case with particular states and people, this we know assuredly, that as Jerusalem perished in sore destruction, so shall destruction, utter and terrible, one day overwhelm this world, and with it all our worldly hopes, and all our earthly pleasures! the sun shall then indeed be darkened, the moon shall then indeed withhold her light, and all the stars shall withdraw their shining:—and then in all his glory shall the Son of man himself appear—appear to judge,—to judge and fix irrevocably the doom of all mankind!

When reflection casts her eye on that great, that important hour, how astonishing does it seem, that poor weak worms, like us, should dare to defy such omnipotence, and arm such a power, by our bold offences, in wrath against us! how amazing does it seem, that any thing in this life should captivate our hearts, and make us wretched slaves to things so soon to perish, and be utterly dissolved! how amazing does it seem, that pride and arrogance, vanity and self-conceit, should ever swell our bosoms, when the remembrance of Omnipotence seated in glory to judge us and our fellow-sinners, should sink us into the deepest humility, and most perfect self-renunciation.

Let us think ourselves happy, that the great Lord of love vouchsafes to us this season of mercy; and let us, if we would act as reasonable creatures, endeavour duly to use this blessed season, and to prepare for that solemn appearance, which we must all assuredly make. Let us only ask our own hearts, in what state we would wish to be found on that day when eternal rewards and eternal punishments shall be awefully dispensed. And as we find

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6<sup>1</sup> And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7<sup>k</sup> Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 24. 37, 44. 1 Theff. 4. 16. & 5. 2. Rev. 16. 15. Luke, 12. 46. Prov. 1. 24. Mic. 6. 9. Phil. 4. 5. Mark, 13. 35. Luke, 12. 20. Heb. 10. 25. Jam. 5. 8, 9. <sup>k</sup> Ch. 5. 16. Luke, 12. 35. 2 Pet. 3. 14. Ch. 13. 6, 12, 21. & 7. 27.

our hearts with, so let us act by all means, nor suffer our better reason and our conscience to condemn us. Trifle as we may, neglect it as we will, put it off as we can, truth it is, that this great day will come. We may disbelieve it, as the Jews did the destruction of their city; but as assuredly as their destruction came to them, so assuredly will Christ come in judgment upon the world. The day of death is indeed, in effect, that day to all of us: this day we know will come, and it is hastening on the wing; and this night perchance may bring it nearer to some of us, and for ever preclude our further preparations. Boast we not then of our reason and our sense, if we live in neglect of so awful an hour. Man is created only for eternity; and he sadly inverts the great Creator's designs, who lives only for the present time, and neglects the time eternal! If the compassionate Jesus wept over Jerusalem, think how contrary it is to his benevolent purpose, that any of those who are baptized into his faith, should forfeit his favour, and have the things concerning their peace, hid from their eyes: and therefore, in pleasing reliance on his mercy and love, in constant expectation of the future day approaching, and with sincere desire to be accepted on that day, let us unite all our efforts, and so live to, and so serve him here below, that he may welcome us to his right hand, and say,—*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* Amen.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having foretold the desolations of Zion, Christ took his last farewell of the temple's devoted walls, and went out, to return no more. On his departing, we are told the conversation which passed between Jesus and his disciples. They were astonished probably at his prediction, perhaps incredulous of its fulfilment, and begged him a moment to behold the magnificent structure, and view the strength and beauty of the fabric. Tinctured with national prejudices, they seem to have been over-pleased with the outward glory of the building, and thought with regret of its desolations; but Christ, so far from reversing the sentence, more awfully confirms it, decreeing its utter and irrecoverable ruin; so that not even one stone should be left upon another; which, by the concurring testimony of historians, was literally fulfilled, and the very ground ploughed up where the temple stood. *Note*; We are too apt to look upon outward grandeur with the eye of sense, and to be influenced by the pomp and glory of the world; but the eye of faith sees the vanity of every thing below the sun, and looks above it for all that is truly great, and permanently glorious.

2dly, Ascending the mount of Olives, opposite to which the temple stood full in view, the disciples, as he sat there, came privately to him, saying, *Tell us, when shall these things be? the destruction of the city and temple: and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* According to their rooted prejudices, they seem

still to have expected him to appear as a glorious temporal Messiah; and by his coming, meant not his appearing in the day of judgment; or, *by the end of the world*, the final consummation of all things; but rather the end of the present age; supposing it probable that the destruction of the temple would pave the way for the erection of another far more magnificent, when in all the pomp of earthly majesty he would appear, and they should be highly advanced in that universal kingdom which they expected him to establish. They were very solicitous therefore to be informed of the signs which should usher him to the throne; and Jesus, to caution them against delusion, to rectify their mistakes, and to confirm them in the faith when they should see the predictions accomplished, answers their questions.

1. He cautions his disciples against deceivers. Having rejected the true Messiah, yet impatient for the temporal deliverance which they expected from him, the Jews were open to receive every pretender who set up in his name; and to the false Christs and false prophets who should arise, were they justly to be given up, who so obstinately and wickedly had rejected the true. The disciples must pay no regard to the pretensions of these deluders, but turn a deaf ear to their emissaries, who say, Christ is in the desert, or hid in some secret chamber, and ready to appear. Nor are they to be believed, though they may do strange feats, and pretend to work miracles, which will impose upon the credulous. So powerfully indeed would the great Seducer play off his illusions, that nothing but the grace of God, with a firm trust in his promises, could preserve them from being deceived; but Christ would defend his faithful ones, who would own him and obey him as the true Messiah: and therefore they must remember these cautions now given them in the day of temptation, which would set them on their guard, and preserve them from seduction. *Note*; (1.) The devil and his instruments may do strange things to support the credit of his falling cause, and lying wonders may be wrought that may stagger the incautious; but whatever would draw us from Christ must be rejected with abhorrence. (2.) Novel pretensions and opinions in matters of religion are ever to be suspected: there cannot be a new, or another Gospel.

2. Wars and rumours of wars will precede the threatened destruction. By insurrections and seditions against the Roman government in Judæa, thousands miserably perished; whilst intestine commotions and slaughter among themselves prepared the way for their final destruction, when, on their last revolt, the Romans marched their armies to besiege and utterly ruin their city and nation. Yet Christ warns his disciples not to be discouraged by these things, so as to discontinue their preaching, or be terrified in their minds; *for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet*; the Jews shall be spared a little longer, to experience other judgments. *Note*; The ravages

Sf

vages

us of your oil; for<sup>1</sup> our lamps are \* gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; left there be not enough for us and you: but

<sup>1</sup> Job, 8. 13, 14. & 18. 5. & 21. 17. & 11. 20.

\* Or going out.

vages of war make dreadful work; we cannot but tremble at the alarm; though where the heart is fixed on the rock of ages, we shall not be troubled. Nature will shudder, but faith can raise us above our fears.

3. Another sign he gives them of the approaching desolation. *Nation shall rise against nation*, &c. great commotions being in the Roman empire between the contenders for sovereignty; and there shall be *famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places*; all which came to pass before the destruction of Jerusalem; and are called *the beginning of sorrows*; being but the prelude to the pangs in which the should expire; as all the temporal judgments which light upon the heads of sinners, are but the beginnings of sorrows inconceivably bitter as they are endless.

4. He bids them expect a fiery persecution. Far from standing high in that earthly kingdom with which they flattered themselves, nothing but bonds, imprisonment, and death in all its most terrible forms, awaited them; hated both of Jews and Gentiles for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel which they preached. And these trying seasons would have awful effects on many who before professed the faith of Jesus, but now, when the cross lay so heavy, would be offended, and apostatize; for suffering times are the sieve for hypocrites and unfaithful Christians, whose fair profession then is quickly blasted. Such are content to be Christians only as long as it costs them neither the loss of ease, interest, nor honour; and as apostates usually turn the bitterest persecutors, by such false brethren they should be betrayed, and hated with uncommon malignity. Through the concurrence of such unfaithfulness among professors, such enmity in their persecutors, and such deluding and seducing teachers as would arise, *iniquity would peculiarly abound*; and, as the consequence of it, *the love of many would wax cold*. Though persecution would make the flame of love burn fiercer in some, many would be glad to seek a shelter from the storm by concealing their profession, or, falling into decays, would lose the vital warmth and power of godliness: but for the comfort of those who approve themselves faithful in these trying times, *they shall be saved*.

5. Notwithstanding all their sufferings, *this Gospel of the kingdom*, which points the way to the kingdom of grace and of glory, *shall be preached in all the world*, to which their very persecutions eminently contributed, (Acts, viii. 1—4.) the Apostles and others carrying the glad tidings into all the kingdoms under the Roman empire, and probably beyond its limits, (Col. i. 6. 23.) *for a witness unto all nations*, of pardon and peace to those who believed, and as a testimony against those who persisted in their infidelity. And all this was done within forty years after our Lord's ascension, and before Jerusalem was destroyed, and is mentioned as the last sign of its approaching ruin.

6. Having foretold the signs of the times, our Lord proceeds to inform them of the immediate causes of the destruction, and to direct them how to act when the de-

solation came up as a flood. They would *see the abomination of desolation*; the Roman armies compassing their city and the holy place, with standards flying, on which they bore the images of their gods, so hateful to the Jewish nation; and then whoever read the prophet Daniel would see by the event his prediction verified. When this was the case, then it was high time for them to flee, and leave the devoted city and country; betaking themselves to the mountains for concealment from the ravages of the invaders. And when the danger was so near and urgent, not a moment was to be lost: they must not go into their house, if walking on its roof, to pack up their goods; nor return from the field to carry off their cloaths; but, as they were, instantly fly for their lives to some place of safety, as we are told the Christians immediately did to Pella, on the approach of the Roman army. In this season of distress some will be found in circumstances peculiarly melancholy and grievous; even *such as are with child, and give suck*, whose flight will be hereby greatly retarded, and it will be more difficult for them to escape. Also they had need pray, *that their flight might not be in the winter*, when the inclemency of the weather and depth of the roads would increase their calamity; *nor on the sabbath day*, when many, who still were attached to the rigid Mosaic observance of that day, would be scrupulous of travelling, or when the Jews would prevent their journey as contrary to the law. But fly they must; for in the city of Jerusalem during the siege there would be such a scene of misery, horror, and distress, as never before was known, nor ever shall be, till the time of the consummation of all things; so that, should these calamities continue, not one of the Jewish nation would be left. But God would preserve a remnant among them, designing in some future day, by a remarkable out-pouring of his spirit, to raise up a numerous people for himself out of the descendants of those who should escape from the sword; he therefore hath shortened these calamitous days, not dealing with them in that rigour which they deserved, but sparing them from an utter extirpation. *Note*; (1.) In days of tribulation, when God opens a door of escape, we must thankfully embrace the opportunity. Though we may never fly from duty, we must not expose ourselves to unnecessary danger. (2.) Delays are dangerous; especially where our souls are at stake. The present moment only is allotted us to fly for refuge to the mountain of a Saviour's grace. (3.) At the worst of times, and in the worst of places, God has had a few faithful ones; and for their sakes he is graciously pleased to shorten the days of calamity. The men of this wicked world little think how much they are indebted to those whom they often despise and abhor.

7. He adds a repeated caution against deceivers, whose fallacious promises in these calamitous times would be more easily credited; and pretending to come as the Messiah to rescue the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, would find many ready to receive them, and willing to be deluded with the least shadow of hope: and their pre-

tended

go ye rather to <sup>a</sup> them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, <sup>a</sup> the bridegroom came; <sup>o</sup> and they that were ready went

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. 12. 28. Ecb. 4. 11—13. Mark, 16. 15. Eph. 3. 8.

<sup>o</sup> Ch. 24. 36, 44. Rev. 1. 7. & 23. 12, 20.

<sup>o</sup> 2 Tim. 4. 8. Eph. 4. 13.

tended signs and wonders would have a great effect on multitudes; but they must remember this warning, and reject all those impostors.

8. He assures them, that the ruin of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation should be sudden, irresistible, and awful, as when the blast of lightning darts from the cloud. And as eagles by their quick scent discover and seize the carcase, so should the Romans, bearing the figures of eagles on their standards, surround the city as a corpse to be devoured by them, and through the land hunt out, seize, and destroy this devoted people.

Some suppose there is a reference here to the swift spreading of the Gospel through the world, as a light from heaven illuminating the earth, breaking through the clouds of darkness and superstition, seen far and wide, and attended with most amazing success; when innumerable converts eagerly flocked to Christ, as eagles to the carcase, which was indeed the case; but the former sense seems to be principally intended.

9. The utter ruin of the ecclesiastical and civil state of the Jewish nation will then *immediately* ensue. All their glory will depart, all their temple service cease, and their entire dispersion be accomplished; metaphorically represented by a total dire eclipse of all the luminaries of heaven, and by a dissolution of the very frame of nature. Then will the Messiah, whom they have rejected, appear, to execute the threatened vengeance upon them; and all their tribes with deepest anguish and distress will feel the weight of that blood which they imprecated on their heads.

Lastly, On this final ruin of Jerusalem, the angels of the churches, Christ's ministers, shall blow the Gospel-trumpet, and spread its awful pleasing sound throughout the earth, which, accompanied with the demonstration of the spirit and power, will be made effectual to the conversion of multitudes through the whole earth: and this Gospel will continue to be preached till the end of time: and then shall he be revealed from heaven with majesty and great power, of which this is the type and figure. Though to this event of the destruction of the Jewish people and nation, this prophecy primarily and most immediately is applicable; yet there are several things contained in it, which have a strong reference to the more awful appearance of the great Judge of quick and dead in the last day; whose coming will be ushered in with infinite pomp and dread; whose Gospel will be first spread through all lands; and whose appearance will be sudden, unexpected, and terrible as the lightning. Then with horror the guilty world, startled from their slumbers and security, will behold the terrible Judge seated on his throne, surrounded by angelic hosts, the ministers of flame, who wait his orders, and execute his sentence. Too late, with tears of anguish and despair, they will bewail their inevitable misery, who had before refused to mourn in penitence their provocations. With power irresistible, and glory inconceivable, shall the Son of Man be revealed in clouds,

burning with vengeance against his foes; but bright with refreshing beams of cheering light to gladden the hearts of his faints. Then every eye shall see him, and from his lips expect their irrevocable doom. Awakened from the dust by the last trumpet's blast, around his throne shall his elect, his faithful ones, be gathered, conducted by ministering angels; whilst every bosom glows with hope, delight, and joy unspeakable and full of glory; and welcomed by their Lord, their glory shall commence never to end, whilst they in wonder, love, and adoration, bow before him, with thankfulness unutterable own the infinite favour, and ascribe to him alone the everlasting praise. Thruit from his presence, speechless with guilt, covered with shame, the unbelievers, the impenitent, the hypocrite, shall then be consigned to their mansions of eternal horror, torment, and despair, and find the just but terrible reward of their deeds. Consider, sinful soul, ere that day comes, *who can dwell with devouring fire? who can dwell in everlasting burnings?*

3dly, As the events predicted would speedily have their accomplishment, they must prepare for them.

1. They may judge of the approach of Jerusalem's ruin by the signs mentioned, as easily and as surely as they would conclude summer at hand, when the fig-tree begins to bud, and put forth leaves. The things that Christ had spoken would certainly and speedily have their fulfilment: heaven and earth should pass, sooner than one jot or tittle of his word could fail; and they of that generation would behold it, though the very day or hour fixed for Jerusalem's fall, no man nor angel knew, that being a secret in the divine bosom.

2. He describes the sensuality and security in which the Jewish people would be surpris'd, like the men of the old world, who slighted Noah's warnings, persisted in the service of their lusts and pleasures, and, drowned in carnal gratifications, would not believe the threatened judgment, till wrath came upon them, and the flood swept them away. In such a state of false peace and worldly pursuits would the Jews be found when their destroyers came, notwithstanding all the warnings of Christ and his Apostles; and then, by wondrous turns of Providence, where two persons were found at the same employments in the field or at the mill, one shall be taken, either a captive, or slain, and the other shall be left, escaping from the hands of the enemy.

And this may represent the world of the ungodly before the great day of the Lord comes. They will be surpris'd in the midst of sensual and earthly gratifications; refusing to hear the voice of God's ministers calling them to repentance, he will give them up to the spirit of slumber. Their indulgences drive them to infidelity, and their unbelief hardens them in their sins; so reciprocally do the love of pleasure and infidelity operate. Thus they will put far away the evil day, though they only impose upon themselves; and will be more terribly astonished at its sudden arrival: and then an awful and eternal separation

in with him to the marriage: <sup>8</sup> and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, <sup>9</sup> Lord, Lord, open to us.

<sup>8</sup> Pf. 95. 11. Luke, 13. 25. <sup>9</sup> Heb. 12. 17. Ch. 7. 21—23. Luke, 13. 25. Pf. 1. 6. & 5. 5. & 6. 8. Hab. 1. 13. 1 Cor. 8. 3. Gal. 4. 9. 2 Tim. 2. 19.

shall be made between the children of men who were before of the same occupation, engaged in the same labours, dwelling perhaps under one roof, or partners of the same bed. These shall now be for ever separated; the faints shall be caught up to the Saviour's bosom, the impenitent left to the eternal misery and ruin which they have chosen.

3. He admonishes them, in the view of these things, to be always ready, faithfully discharging their trust, and, as uncertain of the time, ever wakeful and watchful, that when these judgments come, they may be found on their guard. And what is here said, was not peculiarly directed to them, but is spoken to all, who being in jeopardy every hour, and not knowing whether the very next they may not be called to meet their Lord by death, if not at the throne of judgment, have continual need to be expecting and preparing for their great change. Two things we know; that Christ will come; but when is uncertain, and therefore left uncertain that we might be always ready; unless we act more foolishly respecting our souls, than any man of common prudence does with regard to his person or substance; for if he be admonished of danger from the approach of a thief by night, he will watch to prevent the robber's entrance; and how much more then are we called to watch, that we may not be surprised at midnight with the coming of the great Judge, and perish in a fatal security, body and soul for ever? Our Lord enforces this great duty of watchfulness by the case of a master and his two servants, the one negligent, the other diligent and watchful; recommending it to us to copy the example of the wise and faithful servant, that we may receive his reward, and escape the misery which neglect and carelessness about the concerns of our souls must necessarily be attended with.

[1.] The wise and faithful servant represents every gracious soul, and especially the ministers of Christ, who are sent by him, the great ruler of his family, the church, to serve in their several departments, according to their several capacities. Their business is to *serve*, not themselves, but the church of God; studying to render the souls under their care every kind office, and to give them that meat of the sound, savoury, and strengthening doctrines of truth, which they need; and this regularly in due season, and as shall best suit the state of every one of their people. Herein the faithful minister must approve, (1.) His *wisdom*, in studying and consulting their wants, and how to supply them. (2.) His *faithfulness*, in discharging his trust, with a constant regard to his Master's honour, and an eye to the real good of those committed to his care; willing to approve himself to their consciences; and, when both cannot be done, more solicitous to profit them than to please them. (3.) His *diligence*, always employed in the blessed work, that when his Master comes, he may be *found so doing*. (Note; Love of idleness and ease in a minister is doubly criminal.)

Where such a faithful servant thus perseveringly labours, he shall not lose his reward. The blessing of Jesus shall rest upon him in life, in death, for ever: he will have the comfort of his work when he lives, will feel satisfaction in it when he dies, and the blessing shall follow him into the eternal world, where he shall be advanced to the highest honours, and shine forth in the kingdom of Jesus, as the sun for ever and ever. May such a prospect animate our zeal, and quicken our diligence.

[2.] The very reverse is the conduct and end of the wicked servant; under which character every minister and professor of religion is represented, whose practice and principles contradict his pretensions. (1.) His *practice* is described as bad, very bad; quarrelsome, insolent, and oppressive to his fellow-servants, and abusing the power that he is entrusted with over them. Instead of studying their good, and labouring for their service, he is wholly taken up with the indulgence of his own appetites. If he can find good eating and drinking for himself, he cares nothing for his Master's interests; and his company are those with whom he can feast to the full, in luxury, excess, and drunkenness. Note; The Lord observes the conduct of those who falsely call themselves his ministers and servants. He marks their pride and insolence; smiting with words of reproach, or, under pretence of vindicating their Master's honour, abusing with the exercise of oppressive authority, their more faithful fellow-servants, usually because they are faithful. The Lord sees their carnal lives, their unbecoming associates, their compliances with a world lying in wickedness, and their partaking in other men's sins, perhaps lost in excess themselves: *ministers!* yet, horrid to tell, drunkards, or companions with them! will he not visit for these things? (2.) His *principles* are as infidel, as his practice is immoral. Far from living in a constant expectation of his Master's coming, he puts far off the evil day, and flatters himself there is no danger yet. And thus his heart is emboldened to live after the fashion of the world, and to neglect the awful charge committed to him. Note; There is much more infidelity in many, both ministers and people, professing godliness, than they themselves are aware of; yet such a one would be shocked and affronted to be charged as an infidel, whose practice, notwithstanding, every day evinces the infidelity of his heart, and demonstrates, that it is impossible he can believe the solemn account he must shortly make, when he so seldom or so carelessly thinks of it, and takes so little pains to prepare for it. (3.) His *dorm* is fearful. Surprised by his Master's coming in death or judgment, his negligence and guilt will stare him in the face, when it is too late for repentance or amendment. He shall be cut off from all his sensual pursuits, in the midst of his iniquities; and, separated for ever from the Lord, his portion shall be appointed him with hypocrites in the deepest abyss of misery, where eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth bespeak the unutterable torments of the damned.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither 14 ¶ For the kingdom of heaven is as a

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 24. 42. Mark, 13. 33, 36, 37. Luke, 21. 34, 36. 1 Cor. 16. 13. 1 Peter, 5. 8. Rev. 16. 15. <sup>2</sup> Luke, 19. 12—27. Rom. 12. 6. 1 Cor. 12. 7, 11, 28. Eph. 4. 11. Ch. 21. 33. 2 Cor. 3. 5.

CHAP. XXV.

damned. Let every careless finner, and, above all, every negligent, faithless, worldly-minded minister, read this awful sentence and tremble, while yet there is hope. They shall assuredly receive greater damnation than any others, who, under the guise of a pretended commission from Christ, have deluded and destroyed the people committed to their charge, and by their errors, negligence, or ill examples, lie down with the blood of lost souls upon their heads crying for vengeance.

*Ver. 1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened, &c.]* The particle *then* evidently points out the connection of the present parable with the latter part of the preceding chapter. Our Lord having mentioned the rewards and punishments of a future state, in order to animate his disciples to the rigorous discharge of their duty, it was easy and elegant to pass from that subject to the consideration of the general judgment, at which these rewards will be distributed in their utmost extent. And therefore, to rouse men in every age, he has given a striking representation of the last judgment, with its consequences, in three excellent parables. He had before frequently declared what would be the portion of all the *workers of iniquity*: but what will become of those who *do no harm*, though they do no good? Inoffensive, good sort of people? We have in the present chapter a clear and full answer to this important question. The first parable is that of the *ten virgins*, who waited to meet the bridegroom: *Then shall the kingdom of heaven, &c.* that is to say, "At the general judgment, the character, conduct, and lot of the subjects of the kingdom of heaven, (of the professors of the Gospel) may be represented by the character, conduct, and lot of virgins at a wedding." It seems, in those countries the bridegroom commonly brought home his bride in the evening; and that she might be received at his house in a suitable manner, his female friends, of the younger sort, were invited to come and wait with lamps, till some of his retinue, dispatched before the rest, brought word that he was at hand; on this they went forth with their lamps trimmed to welcome him, and conduct him with his bride into the house. And for this service they had the honour of being guests at the marriage-feast. Mr. Wynne conjectures that probably a wedding procession passing by, gave occasion to this parable; and the following account of the marriage ceremony at Aleppo, the capital of Syria, by a person who lately resided there, may possibly throw some light on the parable, as it alludes to the customs of those countries on that occasion. "On the appointed day in the afternoon, the bridegroom's relations go to the bride's house; and having supped there, they return to that of the bridegroom, who is by custom obliged to hide himself, or, at least, is not to be found without a seemingly strict search: when he

" is brought out dressed in his best cloaths, great noise and rejoicings are made upon finding him; and he and the bridefmen, being led several times round the court-yard in a noisy procession, are carried into a room. There he is dressed in his wedding cloaths, and led back into the court-yard. At midnight, or a few hours later, the relations, accompanied by all who are invited to the wedding, both men and women, return again to the bride's house in procession, each carrying a candle, and music playing before them. When they come to the door, it is shut against them. Then they knock and demand the bride, but are refused admittance: upon this ensues a mock fight, in which the bridegroom's party always prevails. The women then go to the bride's chamber, leading her out veiled; and in the like procession as above described, carry her to the bridegroom's house." See the notes on Psalm xlv. Solomon's Song, and the *Customs of the Jews and Indians compared*, p. 41- &c.

*Ver. 3, 4. They that were foolish, &c.]* Five of the virgins that waited for the bridegroom were so foolish, as to take only a little oil in their lamps, to serve their present occasion: but the other five, being more wise, knew that the coming of the bridegroom was uncertain; for which reason, besides filling their lamps at first, they prudently took a quantity of oil in their vessels to supply their lamps, that they might be in readiness to go forth at a moment's warning. See ver. 12. for an explanation of the parable.

*Ver. 6. And at midnight there was a cry]* Perhaps the tradition which St. Jerome mentions, wherein it was asserted that Christ would come to judgment at midnight, might be borrowed from this passage; though certainly it is absurd enough, since that can be the case only under one meridian.

*Ver. 9. Saying, Not so, &c.]* This, says Dr. Doddridge, seems merely an ornamental circumstance; and it is strange, that any popish writer should consider it as favouring their doctrine of a stock of *merits* in the church, founded on works of supererogation; since if it referred to them at all (which there is no reason to imagine) it would rather expose than encourage any dependance upon them.

*Ver. 12. Verily—I know you not]* This circumstance in the parable is perfectly consistent with the rest; for nothing intimated a personal acquaintance with them; and guests asking admittance with such a pretence, might have been multiplied beyond all reason and convenience: at least its significance and application are very apparent and important. In this parable, by the *kingdom of heaven* is meant the Gospel kingdom—the kingdom of grace in its last dispensation, when it is about to be swallowed up in glory. By the *ten virgins* are meant the complete and general number of all Christian professors; the visible church

man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five \* talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents <sup>1</sup> went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents.

17 And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and <sup>2</sup> digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 <sup>3</sup> After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents

came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: <sup>4</sup> behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 His lord said unto him, <sup>5</sup> Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, <sup>6</sup> I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received <sup>7</sup> two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 His lord said unto him, <sup>8</sup> Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

\* A talent is 342l. 3s. 9d. and denotes here gifts, offices, and opportunities. 14, 15. <sup>1</sup> Phil. 2. 21. & 3. 19. Pf. 17. 14. <sup>2</sup> Luke, 16. 2. <sup>3</sup> 1 Peter, 4. 10. 2 Peter, 3. 18. Job, 17. 9. Prov. 4. 18. & 3. 10. 1 Cor. 15. 10. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. James, 2. 18. Rom. 15. 19. Acts, 20. 24. 2 Tim. 4. 2. <sup>4</sup> Eccles. 12. 14. 2 Cor. 6. 10. 1 Cor. 3. 12—15. & 4. 5. Rom. 14. 12. 10. 1 Peter, 1. 7. Ch. 24. 47. <sup>5</sup> Pf. 49. 14. <sup>6</sup> Rev. 2. 26, 27. Luke, 22. 29, 30. John, 17. 26. & 17. 24. 2 Tim. 2. 12. 1 Pet. 1. 8. Pf. 16. 11. Heb. 12. 2. Acts, 2. 28. with Gen. 39. 4. <sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. 8. 12. Rom. 12. 6—8. 1 Peter, 4. 10. 2 Tim. 2. 2. 1 Cor. 4. 2. <sup>8</sup> See on ver. 21.

church of God upon earth, mixed with good and bad. By their taking the lamps, and going forth to meet the bridegroom, is meant their taking upon them by baptism, and their leading their lives in, the outward profession of the Christian faith. By the bridegroom is meant the Lord Jesus, the divine and glorious bridegroom of his spouse, the church. By the *foolish virgins* are meant mere professors; Christians only in name, who have a lamp without oil, faith without love. By the wise virgins are meant real Christians, who to an outward profession join inward holiness; who have not only the form, but the power of godliness; faith which works by love; a life beautified by the fruits of the Holy Spirit, whose gifts and graces particularly are figured out to us by the oil. By the slumber and sleep of them all, wise as well as foolish, is meant death, the common lot of good and bad. By the midnight cry to go forth and meet the bridegroom, is meant the last awful summons to judgment, the archangel's trumpet, and the voice of God: by the solicitude of the foolish virgins, the discovery which nominal professors will make, too late, of their want of holiness. By the reproof of the wise is shewn, the impossibility of transferring good works from one to another; and of consequence the absurdity of the popish doctrine of supererogation; since no man at that day will be found to have more than enough for himself. By the admission of the wise to the marriage-feast, is meant the happy entrance of faithful Christians into bliss eternal with their all-glorious bridegroom; and by the exclusion of the foolish, the everlasting banishment of the strangers to true holiness from that bliss. And as the parable represents the suddenness of Christ's coming, it shews both the folly and danger of delaying repentance

to a death-bed, and powerfully enforces habitual watchfulness, both in the acquisition and exercise of grace, upon all men in every age, from the uncertainty of life;—for the day of death is to each of us as the day of judgment. Accordingly, the application of the parable is, *watch therefore*, &c. ver. 13.

Ver. 14. *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling* For He [the Son, ver. 13.] is as a man, &c. The kingdom of heaven, added by our translators, appears to be repeated from the first verse; but the connection seems to require the version here given. See Luke, xix. 12. Instead of his goods, Dr. Heylin reads his effects.

Ver. 15. *Unto one he gave five talents*] See the note on ver. 30. and Prideaux's preface to his Connection, p. 20.

Ver. 21. *Well done!*] The original word *Eὖ*, has a peculiar force and energy, far beyond what we can express in English. It was used by auditors or spectators in any public exercise, to express the highest applause, when any part had been excellently performed. By *joy* is here meant the place appointed for festivals and rejoicings, as is evident from ver. 30. where we read, that the wicked servant is cast into outer darkness, in opposition to the lights which illuminated the banqueting-room. *Enter thou into the joy*, &c. means, "share with me in the pleasures of my palace, and by sitting down at the entertainment which I have prepared, rejoice with me on account of my safe return." Grotius well observes upon the words *over a few things*, that even the obedience of Apostles and martyrs which they have manifested through grace, must appear trifling indeed, when compared with the exceeding weight of glory wherewith it shall be rewarded.

Ver. 24.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, ' Lord, ° I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed :

25 And I was <sup>f</sup> afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed :

27 <sup>e</sup> Thou oughtest therefore to have put

my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 <sup>b</sup> Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.

29 <sup>i</sup> For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance : but from him that hath not <sup>k</sup> shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 <sup>l</sup> And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 7. 21. Luke, 6. 46. <sup>c</sup> Tit. 1. 16. <sup>1</sup> Cor. 8. 1. Ezek. 18. 25, 29. <sup>f</sup> Rev. 21. 8. Luke, 19. 20, 27. <sup>g</sup> Luke, 19. 22, 23. <sup>h</sup> Luke, 15. 6. <sup>2</sup> Sam. 12. 6, 7. Ch. 12. 37. Tit. 3. 11. <sup>h</sup> Luke, 19. 24. Ezek. 46. 17. <sup>i</sup> Ch. 13. 12. Mark, 4. 25. Luke, 8. 18. & 19. <sup>25</sup> John, 15. 2. Rev. 22. 11. Pf. 27. 14. <sup>1</sup> Cor. 15. 10. <sup>2</sup> Cor. 6. 1. <sup>k</sup> Ezek. 33. 13. <sup>2</sup> John, 8. Gal. 3. 4. <sup>l</sup> Ch. 3. 12. & 8. 12. & 13. 42. & 22. 13. & 24. 51. Luke, 17. 10. <sup>2</sup> Theil. 1. 9. Rev. 14. 10, 11. & 21. 8. & 22. 15.

Ver. 24. *Then he which had received the one talent came,* &c.] This circumstance may intimate, probably, that we are accountable for the smallest advantages with which we are entrusted ; but it cannot imply that they who have received much, will in general pass their accounts best ; for it is too plain in fact, that most of those whose dignity, wealth, and genius give them the greatest opportunities of service, seem to forget they have either any Master in heaven to serve, or any future reckoning to expect ; and many of them render themselves much more criminal than this wicked and slothful servant, who hid his talent in the earth. See Grotius and Doddridge. *Where thou hast not strowed,* might be rendered, *where thou hast not scattered* ; that is to say, where thou hast not sown, by scattering the grain.

Ver. 25. *Lo, there thou hast that is thine*] Dr. Heylin renders this, *see, you have your own,* and it comes nearer to the emphatical beauty of the original, which strongly expresses the morose fairly brevity of the slothful servant. The language is a lively picture of the mind, and an echo to the sense: ' *ὐδὲ, ἔχεις τὸ σου. Lo, thou hast that—thine.* This is one instance among a thousand of the excellency of the sacred Scripture in this respect also. The next verse might be rendered more properly by interrogation, *Knewest thou that, &c.* ? Dr. Whitby well observes, that when he said, *Thou knewest,* or *knewest thou that I was an hard man,* &c. this is no concession that the master was truly so, but an argument out of his own mouth to condemn him, for not acting suitably to his own hard conceptions of his lord. See Luke, xix. 22. Nor do these words *thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers,* &c. shew that Christ approved of usury ; but only that he who thought so sordidly of his master, should have used his talent agreeably, that *so he might have had his own with interest.*

Ver. 28, 29. *Take therefore the talent from him*] Thus Christ will strip graceless persons, whether ministers or people, of all the good things he bestowed upon them ; and will confer signal blessings on them who are eminently faithful and diligent in the exercise of their gifts and graces,

for his glory, and the good of his church. By *having,* ver. 29. is meant *improving,* or making a right use of a thing. See ch. xiii. 10—13. A man is said not to *have* what he does not make use of: *Avaro tam deest quod habet, quam quod non habet: a covetous man is as destitute of what he has, as of what he has not.* St. Chrysostome observes, that it availed not this slothful servant that he wasted not his Lord's talent ; but *this* ruined him—that he returned it not improved with increase. See the *Inferences.*

Ver. 30. *And cast ye the unprofitable servant,* &c.] This punishment must have been greatly embittered to him by the happier lot of his fellow-servants, who were highly applauded for their diligence, and gladdened with the prospect of their reward. See on ch. viii. 12.

In this parable, by the man travelling into a far country, is represented to us our Saviour, who is said to do so, either in reference to his ascent into heaven, or to that long-sufferance of his, whereby he waiteth for the fruit of our works. By *his own servants* are meant the subjects of his gospel kingdom, who are entrusted with his spiritual gifts and graces ; and of necessity, by the *goods or talents* intrusted to them, must be meant, not only the gifts of *nature,* but of *grace.* By the *servants* who *improved* their lord's talents, are meant those who diligently labour to improve all the gifts of God, natural and spiritual, agreeable to the will of their heavenly Master, *perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord* ; while by the *slothful servant,* such are pictured out to us as live solely to themselves, without regard to the glory of God, or the good of mankind. " He who lives not solely to his own profit, (says Theophylact,) but whether he have prudence or riches, or power and authority with the great ; or whatever influence and heart he hath, endeavours thereby to serve and be useful to others, this is the man who *doubles* that which is given him ; but he who *hides his talent,* is the man who has regard solely to his own advantage, and not to that of others ; and therefore is condemned. And whenever you see a man of good understanding and industrious, using his parts in the pursuit of worldly things, and earthly devices, of

31 ¶ "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory :

32 And before him <sup>a</sup> shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats :

33 ° And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 <sup>p</sup> Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :

35 <sup>a</sup> For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :

36 Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

<sup>a</sup> Job, 19. 25. Zech. 14. 5. Ch. 16. 27. & 19. 28. Acts, 1. 11. & 3. 21. & 17. 13. Jude, 14. 1 Thess. 4. 16. 2 Thess. 1. 7, 8. Heb. 9. 28. Phil. 2. 9, 10. Rev. 1. 7. & 3. 21. & 20. 11. & 22. 12, 20. <sup>p</sup> Joel, 3. 11—14. Rom. 14. 10, 12. 2 Cor. 5. 10. Rev. 20. 12. Ch. 13. 49. Ezek. 20. 38. & 34. 17, 22. Mal. 3. 18. <sup>a</sup> Pf. 110. 1. Heb. 1. 3. Rev. 3. 21. Ch. 24. 51. Ezek. 34. 17—22. 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17. 1 Heb. 9. 28. 2 Tim. 4. 8. Eph. 1. 3—5. John, 14. 2. Ch. 20. 23. Rom. 8. 17. 1 Cor. 2. 9. Mark, 10. 40. Heb. 11. 16. 1 Peter, 1. 3, 9. Rev. 21. 7. <sup>a</sup> 11. 38. 7. Ezek. 18. 7. Heb. 13. 1—3. & 6. 10. 1 Tim. 5. 10. James, 1. 27. & 2. 15, 16. 2 Tim. 1. 16.

" him you may say, that he hides his talent in the earth ;  
 " to take an account whereof, the Master will one day  
 " come—the eternal judge of heaven and earth, whose  
 " future coming for that great purpose is figured out to us  
 " by the *return* of the lord of those servants, after a *long*  
 " *absence*, to reckon with them. And as by the *reward* of  
 " the good and faithful servant the blessedness of all true  
 " Christians is shewn; so by the punishment of the wicked  
 " and slothful one, is declared to us the misery of all nominal and merely outward professors of the faith and  
 " religion of Christ, who, on the day when, veiled in terrible majesty, *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven*, &c. (2 Thess. i. 7, &c.) *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.*"

Ver. 31—33. *When the Son of man shall come, &c.*] Our Saviour begins here his *third* parable, which is agreeable to the language of the Old Testament, in which good men are compared to *sheep*, on account of their harmlessness and usefulness, (See Psalm xxiii.) and the wicked men to *goats*, for the exorbitancy of their lusts. The allusion however is dropped almost at the entrance of the parable, the greatest part of this representation being expressed in terms perfectly simple; so that though the sense be profound, it is obvious: here the judgment of all nations, Gentiles as well as Christians, is described, and the points on which their trials are to proceed are known: they shall be acquitted or condemned, according as it shall then appear that they have performed or neglected works of love;—the duties which in Christians necessarily spring from the great principles of faith and piety, and which the heathens themselves were invited, through the blood of the covenant, to perform by the smaller measures of the secret influences of the spirit of God offered to them in that inferior dispensation under which they lived. But then we are not to understand this, as if such works were meritorious in either; for all who are acquitted at that day, whether under the Christian or Heathen dispensation, shall be acquitted solely on account of that redemption which is in Christ, as the meritorious cause. If we observe the correspondence between these words and chap. xxiv. 30, 31. it will seem probable, that Christ intended to teach his disciples to conceive of his first coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, as a kind of emblem of his

final appearance to judgment; and consequently we may be authorized in using some of the texts in the former chapter, when discoursing of that great and important day. Every reader must remark with what majesty and grandeur our Lord speaks of himself in this portion of Scripture, which is a noble instance of the true sublimity, and paints the solemnities of the great and final audit in the strongest manner. Instead of *divideth*, we may read *separateth*.

Ver. 34. *Then shall the king say*] The sentence passed upon the righteous, affords a noble motive to patience and continuance in well-doing. In the beginning of the parable our Lord calls himself the *Son of Man* only: but he now changes the appellation, taking the title of *king* with great propriety, when he is speaking of himself as exercising the highest act of kingly power; in passing final sentence upon all men as his subjects, whereby their state will be unalterably fixed for ever. And this title adds unutterable beauty to the condescending words that he is represented as speaking on this great occasion. One cannot imagine a more magnificent image than this before us—the assembled world, distinguished with such unerring penetration, and distributed into two grand classes, with as much ease as sheep and goats are ranged by a shepherd in different companies;—that assembled world waiting to receive their everlasting doom from the lips of Almighty and impartial justice! The present state of good men is at best but a banishment from their native country; an exile in which they are frequently exposed to manifold temptations, to persecutions, to poverty, to reproach, and to innumerable other evils. But that they may bear all with unfainting courage and constancy, they are given to know by this sentence, that they are beloved and blessed of God, as his own children; and that there is no less than an eternal kingdom prepared for the faithful saints of God from the *foundation* or *formation* of the world, through that infinite prescience of Deity, whereby he foresees who will be faithful, and who will not. Well may such bear with the violence of their oppressors, knowing what an exceeding and eternal weight of glory awaits them.

Ver. 35, 36. *For I was an hungered, &c.*] Or, *I was hungry*: and so ver. 42. In ver. 36. instead of, *And ye visited*



37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

42 For I was an hungered, and ye gave

me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Ch. 10. 42. Mark, 9. 41. Prov. 14. 21. 31. & 19. 17. Heb. 6. 10. Pl. 6. 8. & 1. 5. & 109. 17. Ch. 7. 21. Luke, 13. 27. Ch. 7. 12. & 8. 12. & 13. 42, co. 2 Thess. 1. 9. If. 66. 24. Rev. 14. 10, 11. & 20. 10, 15. Mark, 9. 44. 46, 28. 2 Peter, 2. 4. Jude, 6. James, 2. 13. Deut. 23. 4. Judges, 1. 7. Ch. 7. 2. Pl. 18. 26. James, 2. 13—16. 1 John, 3. 17. Amos, 6. 6. Prov. 14. 31. & 17. 5. & 21. 13. Ad. 9. 5. Zech. 2. 8. Pl. 105. 15. Dan. 12. 2. John, 5. 2. Rev. 13. 11. & 20. 10, 15. & 3. 21. & 7. 13—17. & 21. 7. & 22. 14. 1 John, 3. 2. & 2. 23. Pl. 16. 10, 11. & 17. 15. & 13. 24, 25.

sted me, Heylin and Doddridge read, *And ye looked after me: επιμεψασθε με*, which signifies in general to take the oversight and care of any thing; an office which requires diligent inspection and attendance. Compare James, i. 27. And it strongly intimates, that such an attendance on the poor in their illness, is a very acceptable charity, and is what many may have an opportunity of doing, who have very little money to spare. Our Lord's words may be thus paraphrased: "In the whole of your conduct you have imitated the goodness and benevolence of my Father; and therefore I now declare you blessed and beloved of him, and appoint you to inherit his kingdom. Moreover, that you may know how acceptable acts of kindness and charity, flowing from genuine love, (for the motive must be good,) are to me, I assure you that I reckon every thing of this sort as done to myself. It was I who was hungry and thirsty; a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison. It was I whom you clothed, and lodged and visited, and comforted; coming to condole with me in my sufferings, and to relieve my necessities in confinement and afflictions." See the next note.

Ver. 40. *Verily I say—in as much, &c.*] This is unspeakably astonishing! The united wisdom of angels could not have thought of any thing more proper to convey an idea of the warmth and strength of the divine benevolence to man, or offered a more constraining motive to charity, than that the Son of God should declare from the judgment-seat, in the presence of the whole assembled universe, that such good offices as are done to the afflicted through genuine love, are done to him. Having in the day of his flesh suffered injuries and afflictions unspeakable, he considers all the holy distressed members of his body, loves them tenderly, and is so much interested in their welfare, that when they are happy, he rejoices; when they are

distressed he is grieved. *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Wonderful condescension of the Son of God! Astonishing stupidity of men! who neglect altogether or are persuaded with difficulty, to do good to Christ. What wonderful condescension, that the Son of God should call any of us his brethren! This happy relation arises from the manhood, which he still possesses in common with us. The faithful are with him, but in an infinitely inferior sense, sons of the same Father, after whose image they are formed through the influence of his Spirit working faith in them. It is this conformity of nature human and divine, which makes men Christ's brethren; for which reason, in whatever person it is to be found, he will acknowledge the relation, without regard to any circumstance whatever, that is out of the person's power. See Macknight. By these my brethren, Dr. Heylin also understands, the saints, who should come in Christ's train to judgment. See Mede's Works, p. 81. and Wetstein.

Ver. 41—46. *Depart from me, ye cursed*] What the wicked are here represented as answering, ver. 44. perhaps may only intimate that such will be the language of their hearts; which Christ perceiving, will reply to it, as in ver. 45. But there is no necessity for supposing that they will actually plead thus; multitudes, no doubt, will remember, that they have only heard what reply will be made to such a plea. God grant that none who read it here, may be in the number of those to whom it will be made! in this parable the absolution of the righteous is represented as happening before the condemnation of the wicked, to shew that God takes greater delight in rewarding, than in punishing mankind. Moreover it is remarkable, that the fire of hell is here said to be prepared, not for the wicked, but for the devil and his angels; whereas the kingdom of heaven is said to be prepared expressly for

## C H A P. XXVI.

*The rulers conspire against Christ. The woman anointeth his head. Judas selleth him. Christ eateth the passover: institutes his holy supper: prayeth in the garden: and being betrayed with a kiss, is carried to Caiaphas, and denied by Peter.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

<sup>a</sup> John, 11. 1. with 17. 4. 53. 2, 3. Ft. 2. 1, 2. & 64. 4. & 41. 7. & 56. 6. & 22. 12, 13.

<sup>b</sup> Mark 14. 1, 2. Luke, 22. 1, 2. John, 13. 13.

<sup>c</sup> John, 11. 47—53. Acts, 4. 25—28. Ch. 21. 3. 11.

for the righteous. Perhaps our Lord by this designed to teach us, that God's original intention was to make men happy, and not to damn them. No sooner were we created, than a state of consummate felicity was formed for us. But the fire of hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, namely, after their fall; and because wicked men partake with devils, in their sin of rebellion against God, they are doomed to share with them in their punishment. Perhaps also the fire of hell is declared to be made for the devil and his angels, to intimate the greatness of the misery, to which men irreclaimably wicked shall be consigned. The punishment which they shall suffer is of the heaviest kind, being the punishment of devils. The condemnation of the wicked for having neglected to take pity on Christ's brethren, does not imply that he would have our works of charity confined to good men; or that he does not disapprove of inhumanity and cruelty towards those who are bad. The circumstance is formed only to shew more effectually, the niggardly, merciless, selfish disposition of the wicked: for if a person be hard-hearted to a saint, he will be so to a sinner: so that it was needless to mention their cruelty to such. The issue of the judgment, as it is represented in this parable, is awful beyond description. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* If the meaning of this short sentence were fully understood or duly considered, what an impression would it make upon the soul; *everlasting punishment!—everlasting life!*—What is there which is not comprehended in these words; and how miserable are they, who dare to venture their souls on the supposition, that the important word in the original [*αιωνιον*] which is the same in both places, signifies a limited duration in either!

It may seem strange, that in this representation of the judgment, the equity should be said to turn, not upon the commission of crimes, but upon the performance of duties. The reason may be, that, generally speaking, men look upon the neglect of duties as a trivial affair, but dread the commission of crimes: and hence it comes to pass, that while they keep themselves clear of the latter, they are apt to find many excuses for the former. Wherefore, as there is not a more pernicious error respecting religion and morality than this, it was highly becoming the wisdom of Jesus, to give such an account of the judgment, as should be the most solemn caution possible against it.

But since the enquiry is said to turn wholly upon the

<sup>2</sup> <sup>b</sup> Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

<sup>3</sup> ¶ Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

<sup>4</sup> And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

performance of duties, it may seem more strange still, that the offices of charity are mentioned, and not a word spoken of any search made into men's conduct with regard to the duties of piety. To vindicate this part of the representation, let it be considered, that piety and love never can subsist separately: piety and its root, faith, always producing love and charity; and love, wherever it subsists, necessarily pre-supposing piety. See on chap. xxii. 37, &c.

The connection between piety and charity will clearly appear, provided this dictate of enlightened reason and experience is attended to: namely, that no man can be truly benevolent and merciful without loving those dispositions. If so, he must love benevolence in God, that is, he must love God himself:—for piety, or the love of God, is nothing else but the regard that we cherish towards God, on account of his perfections; and, above all, on account of his love to us, manifested in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Piety and true charity being thus essentially connected together, to examine men's conduct with respect to either of these graces was sufficient. In the parable the inquiry is represented as turning upon the duties of charity; perhaps because in this branch of goodness there is less room for self-deceit than in the other. Hypocrites, by shewing much zeal in the externals of religion, oftentimes make specious pretensions of extraordinary piety, and uncommon heights of the love of God; while in the mean time they are altogether defective in charity; are covetous, unjust, rapacious, and proud; consequently really void of the love of God.

The case is otherwise with the love of man. None can assume the appearance of this grace, but by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and performing the other friendly offices of love, according to their abilities and respective stations in life. Charity therefore does not so easily admit of self-deceit. It is true, works of charity may proceed from other principles than the holy root of a pious benevolent disposition,—such as from vanity, or even from views of interest; but then it must be remembered, that an ordinary hypocrisy will hardly engage men to undertake them in any extensive degree. They are by far too weighty duties to be sustained by those hollow false principles which support bad men, and therefore are seldomer counterfeited in any large measure than acts of devotion.

This

5 But they said, <sup>d</sup> Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

6 ¶ <sup>e</sup> Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

<sup>d</sup> Gen. 3. 1. Ch. 21. 26. & 14. 5. Luke, 20. 6. John, 7. 12, 40. Prov. 21. 30. & 19. 21.

<sup>e</sup> John, 11. 1, 2. & 12. 3—9. Mark, 14. 3—9.

Luke, 7. 37, 38. Ver. 12.

This parable therefore teaches us, in the plainest manner, that pretensions to piety, however loud, will avail a man nothing at the bar of God, if he be deficient in works of charity. At the same time, taken in its true light, it gives no man reason to hope well either of himself, or of others, if they be wanting in their duty to God; even though they should not only be charitable but grateful also, and just, and temperate, and outwardly blameless in all their dealings with men. The reason of this is, the duty that we owe to God is no other than what is due to men, in the like circumstances, and which if we neglected, we should be unjust to them. It consists of dispositions and actions, the same in kind, but different in degree proportionably to the perfection of the object.

He who loves and admires holiness, justice, goodness, and truth in men, cannot but love these perfections in God; that is, he must love God: so likewise he that is truly grateful to an earthly benefactor, cannot be ungrateful to one, from whose bounty all the good things that he enjoys do flow. And since ingratitude in men consists in this, that the person obliged forgets the benefit he has received, never thinks of his benefactor, and is at no pains to make suitable returns; how can he acquit himself from the charge of ingratitude, who never thinks of God, nor of all the favours which he has received from him; has no sense of the obligations he lies under to him, and is not at the pains so much as to return him thanks; that is to say, wholly neglects the internal and external exercises of devotion. Since therefore the duty which we owe to God is the same in kind with that which men claim from us in like circumstances, it is unquestionable that true morality never can exist where there is no piety; and that for one to pretend to morality who is destitute of piety, is altogether ridiculous.

But if this parable gives persons no encouragement who are destitute of piety, although they make a fair shew of many moral virtues; it much less gives those any ground of hope, who are not only void of piety, but are faulty almost in every respect; unless it be that they have a lovely kind of tenderness and humanity in their disposition, which leads them on some occasions to do excellent acts of beneficence. For though there be nothing said of any enquiry made concerning the duties of justice, temperance, chastity, and fidelity, we are by no means on that account to fancy these virtues shall not be inquired after at the judgment, and rewarded in the faithful; or that the contrary vices of falsehood, and fraud, and debauchery shall not be taken notice of and punished. Genuine holy love, frequently called charity, being the end of the commandment, so far as it respects our duty to men, is the higher branch, and therefore has for its supports justice, veracity, and the other social virtues; or rather is the fountain of them all: moreover, being connected with temperance, chastity, and self-government, it can never be without these attendant graces, the neglect of which is evidently a direct

and gross breach of love. In a word, as among the vices, so among the graces and virtues, there is a natural affinity and close connection. They are somehow absolutely essential and necessary to each other, and so can in no case subsist separately. For which reason, if any of them be wanting, much more if so capital a virtue as the love of God be wanting, it is a sure proof that our charity, our justice, our temperance, or whatever other graces we may seem to have, are but the mimicry of those virtues, and not the virtues themselves. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the parable is formed so, as to give us the highest idea of works of charity; they are demanded at the judgment as the fruit of all the virtues, and loudly applauded wherever they are found flowing from right motives. On the other hand, hard-heartedness, cruelty, and uncharitableness, are branded with the blackest marks of infamy. And we may observe, in conclusion, that our Lord's declarations on this occasion, open a very wide field for the exercise of charity by the poor as well as by the rich.

*Inferences.*—The same great and important truth, that there is no such thing as negative goodness, is three times shewn in this chapter. In the parable of the *virgins*,—in the much plainer parable of the *servants* who had received the *talents*,—and in a direct declaration of the manner wherein our Lord will proceed at the last day. The several parts of these answer exactly to each other, only each rises above the preceding.

In the first parable we cannot fail to observe, that the *virgins* differ in no respect save one. They are called *virgins*; they all take lamps; they all go forth to meet the bridegroom; they all slumber and sleep; they are all awakened and arise, and prepare to trim their lamps. The great and only difference which so materially distinguishes them is,—with the *foolish*, the want of oil in their vessels; with the *wise*, the possession of that oil; and this is the only thing that can distinguish true and formal professors: each is called by the name of Christ; each is baptized, and made a candidate for immortality; each dies, and slumbers in the grave; and each will be awakened by the last trumpet. But then the material difference will be found: these shall hear, “*Come ye blessed; for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, &c.*” and thus proved your faith “*by your living, holy works of mercy and of love;—while those shall hear, “Depart, ye cursed; for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat, &c.*” professing my faith only, but “*destitute of that love and charity to your brethren, which is the sure characteristic of all my disciples.*”

How careful should we be to provide for this decisive day; to see that we bear not an empty lamp only; are not Christians merely in name, but Christians in heart and life! To this purpose we should labour to obtain the divine oil of the Spirit; carefully examining ourselves, whether we be in the faith,—whether we have redemption

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat.  
8 But when his disciples saw it they had

<sup>f</sup> Eccl. 4. 4. Job, 5. 2. Mark, 14. 4. John, 12. 4—6. Judas stirred up the rest.

through the Blood of the covenant, even the forgiveness of sins? If we can answer these inquiries in the affirmative, to the glory of the grace of God, let us further examine, whether we love God more and more; whether we find the love of our neighbour more and more increased;—whether we find our love of holiness, and our *desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*, daily advancing and quickening into perfection? Thus should we be solicitous and careful in our inquiries after the supplies of grace; not content merely to stand still, to remain from year to year the same; but zealous through divine grace to pluck every evil from our hearts, and to implant there all the fair flowers of paradise, all the sweet graces and holy affections which make the soul indeed the kingdom of God, and transfuse an ineffable sweetness and happiness into our whole life and conversation. Giver of all good gifts! make us more than ordinarily zealous to increase in holiness and in all good works, that we may not only adorn the profession of our Lord and Saviour, but be found happily prepared, with our lamps trimmed and burning, when the blessed bridegroom calls, and gives us a glorious admission into his everlasting joy.

In the parable of the *talents*, our Saviour describes in a striking manner the judgment of his *own servants*,—his apostles, ministers, and all who are in eminent stations of life; shewing, that though they are not blessed indeed with equal advantages, yet all the gifts, whether of nature or of grace, which they have enjoyed, are bestowed on them for their Master's service, to whom they properly belong; and that they should be employed in promoting his interest, the interests of truth and righteousness, which he came to establish on earth:—he, who esteems the most holy and useful life to be the most praise-worthy, and will reward it accordingly.

The behaviour of a good man in an eminent station of life is fitly enough compared to a course of merchandize; for as merchants, by laying out their money in trade, receive it again with profit, so the servants of God, by occupying the abilities and opportunities which he has put into their hands, improve, strengthen, and increase them; and whatever success they have in this spiritual merchandize, their Master is pleased to consider it as his own, and to think himself enriched thereby, rejoicing infinitely in the happiness of his creatures. Can we have a fairer or more amiable view of the Deity?

The excuse which the slothful servant made for himself, truly expresses the thoughts of wicked men. They look on Christ as a hard tyrannical master, who rigorously exacts what he has no title to, and who punishes with unreasonable severity things that are no faults at all, or but small ones; and they regard his laws as so many infringements of their liberty, by which they are secluded from much innocent pleasure. But the answer which the Judge is said to have returned, demonstrates that all the excuses which wicked men can make for themselves, will avail them nothing at the great day; and truly, it is not to be

imagined how any man can produce before God a reason sufficient to justify his neglect of doing good, and improving those talents which are entrusted to him solely for that purpose.

The crime and punishment of this idle servant ought to be attentively considered by all; especially by persons addicted to pleasure, who imagine that there is no harm in giving themselves up to sensual gratifications, provided thereby they do no injury to others: for the Judge of the world here solemnly declares, that to have done no harm, will be by no means a sufficient plea at his bar; that a life spent in amusements will be severely punished; that it is highly criminal to suffer the divine grace to lie buried in idleness; and that all God's servants must be actively good, exerting themselves to the utmost in promoting his interest, which is no other than the happiness of his creatures. By this indeed they acquire no merit; yet it is by this that they are qualified for the enjoyment of heaven, the gates of which Christ has set open by his blood.

But further we may reflect, that if the servant who hid his talent in a napkin was reckoned unfaithful to his trust, and punished accordingly, notwithstanding he delivered it up to his lord intire; what may they expect, who destroy the noble faculties bestowed on them, or use those temporal blessings as occasions of sin, which God intended as means for the exercise and improvements of grace? See more in the *Reflections*, and in the *Inferences* on Luke xix. and, for the latter part of this chapter, the note on the last verse.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though the parable contained in the first part of this chapter may, as connected with the former chapter, have a particular reference to the destruction of the Jewish people, who had slighted the gospel-salvation, and neglected their day of grace; yet it may be well understood as of more general import, and including a warning and caution to men in every age and place.

The parable itself is taken from a common custom in those days, when the bridegroom used to go in the evening attended by his friends, to the house of the bride, who, on hearing of his approach, went out with lights, accompanied by a number of virgins, her companions, to welcome his arrival, and conduct him to the entertainment provided on that occasion; and such shall be the state of the gospel-church at the coming of Christ, as we see represented in this parable. See the Critical Notes. We have,

1. The persons spoken of, *the virgins, who went out with their lamps to meet the Bridegroom*. The *Bridegroom* is the Lord Jesus, who condescends to call his church his spouse; and to honour every member of it with that near and exalted relation. *The virgins* are those professors of religion, who appear desirous to present themselves to Christ, in the comeliness, beauty, and simplicity, which his grace puts upon them: they go forth to meet him, found in his ways and ordinances here on earth, expecting his coming from heaven

indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

heaven, and if they are Christians indeed, loving and looking for the day of his appearing.

2. The characters of the virgins. They were very different, as their actions shewed. *Five of them were wise*; and as an evidence of their foresight and prudence, they took care to be well provided with oil, that they might have enough, if they should continue long in waiting. These represent the faithful souls made wise unto salvation, whose hearts are truly supplied with the oil of divine grace, and have not only the light of profession, but the real experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, possess a living principle, and partake of a divine nature: but *five were foolish*, who, though in appearance associated with the others, were unacquainted with the life-giving truths of the Gospel, professors, but not possessors of the grace which is in Jesus Christ; shining to others in a name to live, but really dead and dark in their own souls: they have lamps; but *no oil with them*, destitute of spiritual life; careful only to make a fair show in the flesh, and recommend themselves to their neighbours as Christians, without a single eye to Christ, and a real desire in simplicity and godly sincerity to approve themselves to him. And they are foolish indeed, who, thus deceiving others, most fatally deceive and destroy their own souls.

3. The bridegroom not coming so soon as they expected, they all *slumbered and slept*; but as their state was different when awake, it was different also when asleep,—at least with respect to their souls in the state of separate spirits.

4. At midnight, the cry of the bridegroom's approach startled them from their slumbers, and instantly they were summoned to meet him with their lamps: thus suddenly surprised are we often by death. But does our Lord delay? Is this moment yet our own? Awake then, thou that sleepest, prevent this dire alarm.

5. Instantly they arose, and began to trim their lamps. The wise trimmed their lamps which were then flaming with love, and welcomed their Redeemer, confidently expecting to be found of him in peace. The foolish too essayed to prepare, but alas! too late; their lamps were gone out, and no oil to be procured: in vain they seek to beg from their companions, or buy from others; they have lost the moment which cannot be regained. While there is life, indeed, the market is still open to the latest moment; they who come to Christ may buy pardon, grace, and peace, without money and without price: but when death closes the scene, the lamp of hope is for ever extinguished; and as the tree falleth, it must lie.

6. While the foolish virgins went to buy, the bridegroom came. Many on their death-beds express deep concern for their neglected souls, and think by some extraordinary acts of devotion and charity still to purchase heaven; mistaking the market, and spending their labours on that which satisfieth not. Christ alone can save a sinking soul, and to the last; they who in this day of trial come humbly and sincerely to him, never find it too late.—*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage*; all who are found justified through his infinite merit, and shining in the graces of his Spirit, are admitted to his eternal pre-

fence, and sit down with him in glory: *and then the door was shut*; they who are entered into the rest of the blessed, go out no more; and they who are once excluded, can never more gain admission: the great gulph is fixed, and despair has for ever barred the door of hope. *Too late the foolish virgins came*, importunately asking for admittance, but all entrance is refused them, and the Bridegroom utterly disowns them: *verily I say unto you, I know you not*; and woe to that sinner who is thus abandoned of God to his misery, and doomed never to enter into the rest which remains for the people of God.

7. The inference from the whole is, *Watch therefore*; the concerns of our souls are infinitely momentous, and will not admit of being trifled with; the time is short; eternity depends upon our improvement of it. We know neither the day nor the hour when we shall be summoned away; the sleeping virgins had a midnight call, and why not you or I? Watch therefore, that you may be always ready to go forth with joy to meet the Lord.

2dly, As a farther illustration of the method in which the Lord will deal with the visible members of his church, the parable immediately following the preceding is delivered. Christ is the great Master and Lord of all; we are all his servants in profession, and they especially who are put in trust with the Gospel: our great business therefore here below is, to make our profiting appear to the glory of our Lord. We are told,

1. Of the trust committed to the servants during their Master's absence. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to the least a very considerable sum. (1.) These talents refer to the gifts that he bestowed on his disciples after his ascension, qualifying them with extraordinary miraculous powers, and furnishing them with ability for the discharge of the arduous trust committed to them while he went up to heaven, being in the fulness of time again to return, and call his servants to an account for the improvement of that which he had committed to their care. (2.) The talents especially refer in general to all the gifts of grace, nature, and Providence; of which we are possessed, and which are lent us of the Lord; purely to serve the purposes of his glory, and promote the interests of his kingdom; and for them we must be accountable to him in the great day of his appearing. Some have more than others, God being sovereign in his gifts; and, as we deserve nothing from him, it is a mercy that we should be entrusted with the least talent. They, who by their station, abilities, or possessions, are entrusted with much, whose capital is large, and influence most extensive, have the more to answer for, and need give the greater diligence: but all have something; the meanest have one immortal soul to care for, infinitely more precious than millions of silver and gold.

2. The improvement that each made of the talents committed to them. Two of them immediately set themselves to work, and by their diligence doubled their capital. Thus faithful ministers and Christians, laying out themselves in the Redeemer's work and service, see the most abundant blessing attending their labours of love. Their own souls

are

10 When Jesus understood it he said for she hath wrought a good work upon unto them, <sup>5</sup> Why trouble ye the woman? me?

<sup>5</sup> Pf. 109. 31. Job, 42. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cor. 10. 13.

are enriched with knowledge and grace, while they are serving others; the church is edified and increased, and immortal souls are gained for Christ (in his account the richest treasure).—One of the servants, and he that had least, was negligent and careless, instead of making use of his talent, he went and hid it in the earth; representing herein the character of those, whether ministers or professors of religion, who make no improvement of their natural abilities, providential endowments or spiritual gifts; but are so buried in earthly-mindedness, and attention to this world's pursuits, that they have neither inclination nor leisure to serve the interests of Christ and of souls.

3. After a long time the Master of these servants came to reckon with them: for though the Lord Jesus waits long, he will assuredly come at last; and we must at his tribunal, every one of us, render up our account. Oh! that it may be with joy and not with sorrow!

(1.) The faithful servants with readiness appeared, and gave up their accounts, highly to their master's satisfaction, who failed not abundantly to reward their diligence. He that had five talents, had gained other five: he that had two, had doubled them: both therefore are received with approbation, and gloriously rewarded. Thus in the day of Christ, the faithful ministers and disciples of Jesus acknowledging the trust committed to them as a matter of grace, will produce full evidence of their diligence and profiting; and whether it be less or more of the gifts of grace, nature, or Providence which they have possessed, their Lord will graciously accept the improvement that they have made, will commend their fidelity, and abundantly reward them; exalting them to a throne of glory in his eternal kingdom, and admitting them into a participation of those unspeakable and never-ending joys which are at his right hand for evermore,—a reward indeed infinitely exceeding all their services. But as it was through grace that they received their talents, so it is of grace, not of debt, that they receive the recompense so far beyond all they could desire or deserve.

(2.) The slothful servant next appears, and vain would excuse his own negligence by the most unjust reflection upon his gracious Master; pretending apprehensions of his austerity and rigorous exaction, as if he expected to reap where he had neither manured the soil, nor sown the seed: producing therefore the talent, and pleading fear, he hopes his Lord will be satisfied with his own, and not disapprove his care in hiding it, that he might restore it intire at his return. Such are the sentiments, pleas, and excuses of the false and faithless disciple. [1.] He has hard thoughts of God, and thinks his demands too rigorous and severe, desirous to lay the blame of his sins on him rather than himself. [2.] He is under the bondage of mere slavish fear; the little that he affects to do proceeds from that base principle alone; and where this only reigns, utterly void of genuine love, no acceptable service can be rendered to God. [3.] He depends for his acceptance with God on a negative religion, and thinks it very suffi-

cient if he can plead that he has done no harm, has not been so bad as others, nor indulged in those excesses which they fell into; though he can produce neither the works of faith, nor the labours of love. [4.] He presumes on the validity of his plea, and sees not that there is a lie in his right hand.

(3.) Convicted out of his own mouth, judgment is pronounced upon him. His sloth and wickedness were evident; and to be idle in the service of God is highly criminal. His very excuse shewed self-contradiction; since, if he had so austere a person to deal with, at least he should have given the money into a banker's hands where it would have been equally safe, and borne lawful interest. *Note;* The sinner's excuses in the day of judgment will but prove his guilt more evident: if God were the hard master that he pretends, he ought to have been at more pains to please him, and more diligent to improve the measure of gifts or grace, however small, which was vouchsafed unto him. Justly therefore does sentence proceed, *take the talent from him*; for they who use not the gifts, means, and mercies, temporal or spiritual, which they enjoy, deserve to forfeit them; and give it unto him which hath ten talents; God thus graciously rewarding the fidelity and diligence of his servant with an increase of blessings, adding to the store that he had improved; while he often strips off even the profession of the hypocrites, and deprives them of the common gifts of nature, Providence, or gospel-privileges which they before enjoyed. Nor does the unprofitable servant's punishment rest in the mere loss of what he possessed, but in the sufferings to which he shall be doomed, when he is cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. *Note;* (1.) Hell is the place of the sinner's torment, and the direct expressions of human agony and distress can but faintly represent the miseries of that dismal mansion. (2.) If the slothful and unprofitable meet so fearful a doom, where will the extravagant and abandoned appear, who have squandered instead of hiding the talent, and abused it to the most immediate dishonour and injury of the Master that entrusted them therewith?

3dly, Without a parable, our Lord proceeds to give a delineation of that awful process, which will be observed in the great day of final judgment: may it awaken our minds to prepare for it! We have,

1. The majesty of the eternal Judge displayed. *The Son of Man*, the incarnate Jesus, who once suffered on a cross, and is now exalted to the crown, all power being given him in heaven and in earth,—at his bar shall the nations be assembled, and every individual of the sons of Adam must then appear before him, to receive, according to the decisions of his justice, everlasting happiness, or eternal torment. In the glory of Deity, with the peculiar dignity of Mediator, shall he be revealed; the myriads of bright angelic hosts shall grace his train, and stand the ready ministers to execute his orders; while seated on a throne of glory, brighter than the sun when he goeth forth in his strength,

11 <sup>h</sup> For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always.

12 For, in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it <sup>i</sup> for my burial.

<sup>h</sup> Deut. 15. 11. John, 12. 8. & 13. 33. & 16. 5, 28. & 17. 11. Acts, 3. 21. with ch. 18. 20. & 28. 20. John, 14. 19. Heb. 13. 5, 8. <sup>i</sup> Ch. 27. 57—60. Mark, 13. 42—47. Luke, 23. 50—56. John, 19. 38—42.

strength, every eye shall see him, and from his lips expect their irrevocable doom. Shall I be there? my soul, tremble at the thought, and give all diligence to be found of him in peace!

2. The all-discerning eye of Jesus, incapable of mistaking the true characters of men, shall now make the final separation. His sheep, who in faith unfeigned, and love without dissimulation, followed him the true Shepherd, shall, in distinguished honour, be placed high at his right hand: while *the goats*, the hypocrites and impenitent, whose hearts remain uncleansed from their native filthiness, who lived and died in sin unpardoned, shall be degraded to the left with shame, the prelude to their approaching fearful sentence. Reader, consider, where shall thy place be?

3. The faithful shall be received with the most endearing welcome. *Then* when he shall have made the separation, and no one spot remains among the glorious host, addressing himself with every endearment of voice and aspect, *the King*, whose word is with power, and his sentence unchangeable, *shall say unto them, Come, ye who have followed me in the regeneration; come, to be for ever with me, to behold and partake of my glory, ye blessed children of my Father; honoured with this distinguished title; though despised, abhorred of men, precious to the God of heaven, blessed now with his eternal favour; come, inherit the kingdom, as joint-heirs with me, a kingdom which cannot be moved, eternal in the heavens; compared with which, all earthly grandeur vanishes, as the glow-worm before the meridian sun; a kingdom of never-fading glory, prepared from the foundation of the world by the power and grace of the Almighty, to crown the felicity of his faithful saints. With what rapture and delight, with what joy unspeakable and full of glory, will the faithful redeemed hear this address from the mouth of their adored Judge, of their beloved Lord! Oh! that my lot may be among these saints in light!*

4. Christ mentions the evidences of their relation to him as his people, clearly shewn in the regard paid for his sake to their brethren in affliction and distress: the destitute, hungry, and naked, their hands were open to relieve; the sick were cheered by their presence and sweet counsel; and all the horrors of a prison kept them not from visiting the faithful there confined for the testimony of Jesus Christ, supporting their wants, and not ashamed of their bonds. Works of genuine charity these, which, though not meritorious, Jesus remembers, and in the riches of his grace is pleased to mention to their honour, as undoubted tokens of their faith unfeigned. (See the Critical Notes for a more enlarged view of this subject.) Surprised to hear their Lord make mention of their poor insignificant services, and with deep humility conscious how little they deserved it at his hands, the righteous were ready to question and discern the works attributed to them. They never saw, at least the most of them, their Lord in the flesh, and cannot hear, without some confusion, his declarations with

regard to their duties; when they ever blushed to think how defective they had been: but the King from his throne shall answer, with the strongest assurances of his kind approbation of their conduct, that he regards what they did for the meanest of his disciples, whom in his infinite condescension he is pleased to call *my brethren*, as done unto himself. He interprets our practice by our principles. The least deed of charity, even a cup of cold water, when bestowed with a desire to his glory, and proceeding from love to him, shall be remembered. And in the least of his poor people Jesus is still present with us; and what we bestow to relieve their wants will be equally acceptable to him, as if we had visited him in the days of his flesh, and ministered to him of our substance. What an engagement and encouragement this, to every work and labour of love!

5. Sentence is passed on those at the left hand. With terror in his voice, and frowns of terrible ire, the Judge shall pronounce the unchangeable decree. *Depart from me, ye objects of my abhorrence, whose guilt and impenitence provoke my indignation; be for ever banished from my presence, and therewith from all bliss, and ease, and happiness for ever. Depart, ye cursed, on whom my wrath eternally abides, and all the penalties of a broken law; vengeance shall pursue you to the bottomless pit, thither must ye be driven, into everlasting fire, to dwell in flames which never can be quenched; where an agonizing body adds to the misery of the tortured soul; and as intolerable as the torment is, so eternal shall be the suffering; no ray of hope shall ever cheer the horrid gloom: there is neither prospect of an end, nor remission of the torture, but black despair adds bitterness inexpressible to every pang which the damned feel: and this not originally designed for you, but prepared for the devil and his angels whom ye have chosen to imitate, whose service ye have devoted yourselves to, whose works ye have followed; and therefore with them must suffer; alike in sin, alike in punishment. With such companions to spend eternity, how terrible! In such torments to lie down how intolerable! O, sin, sin, what hast thou done!*

6. The reason for the sentence is given, and the criminals' plea overruled. The instances of their guilt are produced, drawn from the omissions of those duties which the righteous practised, the sure evidence of the want of that faith which worketh by love. Engrossed with selfish considerations, negligent and at ease, they cared not for the distresses of the miserable, nor sought to alleviate them: were unconcerned what the faithful suffered for their Master's sake; and if at any time mere humanity, sensibility to distress, ostentation, or self-complacency opened their purses to the relief of indigence, their gifts never flowed from the divine principle of love to Jesus and his brethren, nor were directed to his glory alone; therefore they were as reprobate silver. They object indeed to the charge; and because they never saw Christ in the flesh, presume

13 Verily I say unto you, <sup>k</sup> Whersoever world, *there* shall also this, that this woman this gospel shall be preached in the whole hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

<sup>k</sup> Mark, 16. 15. Ch. 28. 19. Rom. 1. 8. & 10. 18. & 15. 19. Col. 1. 6, 23. 11. xlii. xlix. liv. lx.

presume that they cannot be accused of thus neglecting him: but the plea is frivolous. Christ is one with every member of his church, suffers in them and with them; and every insult, slight, or neglect shewn to them, he reckons as done to himself. And this should comfort the despised and suffering servants of Jesus; he feels and takes a part in all their troubles; and let those who treat them with indignity, tremble. They may pretend, indeed, that they mean to discountenance and discourage a deluded sect, to ridicule or oppress a company of enthusiastic religionists, and the like; but men need well consider what they do, and whether they act clearly on the authority of their Bibles, and under the influence of fervent divine love; lest a persecuted Jesus should rise up terribly to avenge his own and his people's wrongs. If the doom of the negligent, the unmerciful, and uncharitable be so dreadful, what will be the case with the unjust, and the persecutors of God's people?

7. The sentence is no sooner pronounced than executed. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment*; there is no appeal from Christ's bar, nor escape from his judgment: the doom is irrevocable, the execution immediate. Driven from his presence, they are cast into the burning lake, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. *But the righteous*, who through his grace are approved as faithful, shall go *into life eternal*; to the enjoyment of God in his kingdom of glory; to partake of all the blessedness which the boundless love and power of an all-sufficient God can bestow on his glorified saints; their holiness and happiness consummated, and their bliss secured to eternity.

#### CHAP. XXVI.

*Ver. 1, 2. When Jesus had finished, &c.]* See Luke, xxi. 37, 38. When our Lord sat down on the mount of Olives to foretel the destruction of the city, and to deliver the parables which represent the method of the general judgment, he was far on his way to Bethany. After the parables were pronounced, and before he departed, he thought fit to add a word or two concerning his own death. The greatest trial which his disciples were ever to meet with was now approaching in their Master's sufferings; wherefore, to prepare them, he foretold those sufferings; together with the particular time and manner of them; and by so doing proved that he knew perfectly whatever was to befall him, and that his sufferings were all voluntary and necessary. The preceding discourses were most likely delivered on the Tuesday of the week in which our Lord suffered; and he probably delivered what we have here, that evening, which was just two days before the Paschal Lamb was eaten. We do not find that any of the transactions of Wednesday are recorded, besides the general account given in the place of St. Luke above referred to. This being the last of our Lord's public teaching, (Tuesday,) it was more full of action than any other mentioned in the history, as will appear from the following induction of par-

ticulars. He came to Bethany six days before the passover, probably about sun-setting. He rode into the city surrounded by the multitude the next afternoon; for when he had *looked round on all things in the temple*, after his entry, it was evening: Mark, xi. 11. This happened five days before the passover. He went thither again from Bethany the day following; namely four days before the passover, and by the way blasted the fig-tree, and after that drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Next morning, namely, three days before the passover, and the last of his public teaching, being on his way to the city, he spake concerning the efficacy of faith, on occasion of the disciples expressing great astonishment at seeing the fig-tree withered from the roots. When he appeared in the temple, the deputies, who were sent by the council, came and asked him concerning his authority; he answered them with a question concerning the baptism of John; then spake the parable of the two sons, and after that the parables of the vineyard and the husbandmen, and of the marriage-supper. Then he avoided the snare which was laid for him in the question concerning the tribute-money; confuted the doctrine of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection; shewed the scribe which was the greatest commandment in the law; asked the Pharisees whose Son the Christ is; cautioned his disciples to beware of the Scribes and Pharisees, against whom he denounced many grievous woes: when the woes were finished, he observed the people throw their gifts into the treasury,—probably as they worshipped at the evening sacrifice, and commended the poor widow for her charity. After the service was over, he left the temple, and went to the mount of Olives, where he foretold the downfall of the nation, and spake three parables representing the procedure at the general judgment. Last of all, he concluded the work of the day with predicting his own sufferings. By this time it must have been about sun-setting. He went away therefore with his disciples to Bethany, intending to pass the night there, at a distance from his enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, who were now gathered together at the high-priest's palace to deliberate how they might take him, and put him to death. There was a tradition among the Jews, (still extant in the cabalistic books) that the people should be redeemed in the days of the Messiah, the same day upon which they went out of Egypt; for though their departure from Egypt was on the fifteenth day of the month, yet they prepared for it on the fourteenth, and ate the passover, standing, on that very day: consequently, on the very day that the paschal lamb, the type of the great Deliverer of mankind, was eaten by the Jews, the Saviour typified by that lamb was sacrificed for the sins of mankind. See Macknight, Grotius, and Calmet.

*Ver. 3. Who was called Caiaphas]* See John, xi. 49. Joseph Caiaphas was made high-priest by Valerius Gratus, as we learn from Josephus, Antiq. b. xviii. c. 3. and afterwards deposed by Vitellius, ch. 6. We may infer from Acts, v. 17. that Caiaphas was of the sect of the Sadducees.



14 ¶ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And

they covenanted with him for <sup>m</sup> thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

<sup>1</sup> Mark, 14. 10, 11. Luke, 22. 3—6. Ch. 10. 4. Pf. 41. 9. & 55. 12, 14. John, 6. 70, 71. & 13. 27. <sup>m</sup> Zech. 11. 12, 13. Ch. 27. 3. Exod. 21. 32. i. e. 31. 8s. 5d. farthing.

Ver. 4. *By subtilty*] *Surprise*. Prussian Testament. See Luke, xxii. 6.

Ver. 5. *Not on the feast-day*] *Ἐορτή*, the *feast*; that is to say, the whole time of the solemnity, which lasted seven days. All this interval was favourable to uproars and seditions, on account of the vast concourse of people. It is very remarkable, that the Jews in this instance receded from their usual custom; which was, to punish the most heinous criminals at this very time, that the example might be more general and diffusive. The priests, however, were doubtless more apprehensive of the Galileans, among whom Jesus resided, than of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. However, through fear of an uproar among the people, they determined to depart from their usual mode of proceeding. This circumstance, therefore, affords us an illustrious proof of the interposition of the divine Providence; for the Jews, having a fair opportunity offered them by the treachery of Judas of apprehending our blessed Lord, relinquished their intended design of not apprehending him on the feast-day, and thereby our Lord's crucifixion had a greater number of witnesses, and fell out upon the very time when the paschal lamb was slain. See Grotius, and Josephus, Antiqu. b. xx. c. 4.

Ver. 6, 7. *Now when Jesus was in Bethany*] Or, *Now Jesus being in Bethany*. It is not to be thought that Simon was now a leper; for in this case he would not have been suffered to live in a town, nor would the Jews have come to an entertainment at his house; but either he was once a leper, and had been cured by Jesus, or else the name was given to the family, as some considerable person in it had formerly been a leper. The boxes here spoken of were called only *alabasters*, not because they were all made of alabaster, for there was some glass; but the greatest part of them were of a kind of alabaster called *onyx*, and made in the shape of a pyramid. It was customary among the ancients to regale their guests at entertainments with perfumes, odours, and chaplets of flowers, in token of respect; odoriferous balsams, gums, &c. were likewise used by the Jews and Egyptians to embalm their dead. Instead of, *very precious ointment*, some would render the Greek, *odoriferous balsam of great price*. See Mark, xiv. 3.

Ver. 8. *But when his disciples saw it*] It appears from John, xii. 4—6. that none but Judas found fault with what this woman had done. St. Matthew has probably put the *disciples* in general, for one of the disciples; as he says elsewhere, with St. Mark, that the *thieves* reviled Christ, though it appears from St. Luke, xxiii. 39. that there was but one guilty of that crime. By the figure called *enallage*, the plural number is put for the singular, which Longinus mentions as an elegance in his treatise on the sublime. See Joh. vii. 1, 21. and compare Luke, xxiii. 36. John, xix. 29. with Matth. xxvii. 48. and Mark, xv. 36. Some have thought that Judas Iscariot was the son of that Simon,

in whose house the feast was made; but the name was so common, that it cannot be concluded with any certainty.

Ver. 10—12. *Why trouble ye the woman, &c.*] The vindication of the woman suggests the reason why Jesus permitted so expensive a compliment to be paid to him. He told them, that God had ordered it for the exercise and improvement of charity, that there should always be poor in the land to whom they might do good offices at any time; but if their love was not testified to him at that juncture, they would have no opportunity to shew it afterwards; because he was to die within two days, for which reason the woman had come very seasonably to anoint him for his burial; *πρὸς τὸ ἐνταφίσει με, corpus meum ad funus componere,—ornamentis sepulchralibus ornare,—"to prepare my body for its funeral."* see Mark, xiv. 8. "You think," says our Lord, "that this profusion of precious ointment is a piece of extravagance; but if the very same thing was done to a dead body, none would find fault with it: for this is not only an established custom, but likewise a deed which is worthy of praise, especially when a king is the subject, and such this woman esteems me. Why then should the same action, which would be praise-worthy if the dead were the object, be thought blameable when applied to the living? I have often told you and others that my death is not far off. This woman therefore has only anticipated the solemn office to my body, a short time before it would be otherwise necessary." This possibly was not the design of Mary; but our Saviour puts this construction upon what she did, that he might confirm thereby what he had said to his disciples concerning his approaching death. See ch. xx. 18. John, xii. 3, &c. and the note on Deut. xv. 11.

Ver. 15. *They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver*] Judas Iscariot, *one of the twelve*, (a circumstance of such high aggravation, that each of the evangelists has marked it out in this view) having been more forward than the rest in condemning the woman, or, most probably, the only one who did so, thought himself peculiarly affronted by the rebuke which Jesus gave. Rising up, therefore, he went straightway into the city, to the high-priest's palace, where he found the whole council seasonably assembled, and, being in a passion, he promised to put his Master into their hands for the reward of *thirty pieces of silver*, *τριάκοντα ἀργύρια*. The *ἀργύρια* is commonly supposed to have been the Jewish shekel, which, properly speaking, was the denomination of a weight equal to twenty *gerahs*, (Exod. xxx. 13.) each weighing sixteen barley-corns. The shekel therefore was equal to the weight of 320 barley-corns, or half a Roman ounce; consequently in silver was equal to two shillings one farthing and a half sterling. *Thirty shekels* were the price of a slave: see Zech. xi. 13. It deserves to be remarked, that Judas did not fix this price himself, but

U u the

17 ¶ Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

20 ¶ Now, when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

21 And as they did eat he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 14. 12—17. Luke, 22. 7—13. John, 13. 28. Exod. 12. 6. & 13. 3, 6. Lev. 23. 5, 6. Numb. 9. 3. & 28. 16, 17. Deut. 16. 1—4. Ch. 8. 25. & 21. 3. & 23. 8, 10. John, 20. 16. & 11. 8, 28. Acts, 10. 36. P Ver. 2. John, 7. 40. & 12. 23. & 17. 1. & 13. 1. Luke, 22. 13. <sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. 15. 22. Exod. 23. 21. John, 15. 14. Deut. 12. 28. <sup>c</sup> Mark, 14. 18—23. Luke, 22. 14—30. John, 13. 21—34. Exod. 12. 4, 6. Deut. 16. 1. <sup>d</sup> John, 6. 70, 71. Ver. 2. Pf. 41. 9. & 55. 12—14.

the Jewish Sanhedrim; and therefore, as it was the very price predicted by a prophet, no collusion could be suspected between Christ and his disciples, to make an appearance of his resembling the Messiah in such circumstances, as otherwise he might not have resembled him. This price was fixed by his enemies, who would have done all they could to prevent any resemblance between the circumstances of our Lord's life, and those which were foretold of the life of the Messiah. It was chosen, above all other prices, to shew their enmity, and to disgrace the character of Christ, as it was the price and ransom of the meanest slave: but their malice counteracted itself; and the circumstance which they pitched upon to vilify our Lord's character, served to exalt and ennoble it, by shewing him really to be the person of whom the prophet had spoken. As the treachery of Judas Iscariot must raise the astonishment of every reader, who has any just notion of our Lord's character, some particular considerations will be found at the end of this chapter, respecting the motives which swayed him to be guilty of such an atrocious crime, and the circumstances that attended it.

Ver. 17, 18. *Now, the first day of the feast, &c.*] We learn from Mark, xiv. 12. and Luke, xxii. 7. that this was done the very day on which the paschal lamb was killed; for, though the feast of unleavened bread did not, properly speaking, begin till the 15th of the first month, as it is termed in Lev. xxiii. 5, 6. Numb. xxviii. 16, 17. yet they began to abstain from leavened bread on the evening of the 14th day. The passover [*το πασχα*] means the *paschal lamb*; for the word is often used to denote the lamb itself, which was killed and eaten during the celebration of this solemnity. *Into the city*, means Jerusalem by way of eminence. The phrase *to such a man*, implies that Jesus named the person to whom they were sent; though the Evangelists have not thought it of importance to mention his name. See Mark, xiv. 13. and Luke, xxii. 10. *My time is at hand*, seems to mean, "the time of my sufferings and death;" for every body knew that the time of eating the passover was near. *I will keep the passover*, means, "I will eat the paschal lamb." It was customary for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to prepare rooms, tables, &c. for strangers to celebrate this festival; at which time, as appears by the Talmudists, the houses were not to be let, but were of common-right for any one to eat the passover in. The Jews used to prepare the place in which

they intended to eat the passover the night before, as they do at present. Their chief solicitude in their preparation consists in searching after any leavened bread, and their scrupulousness goes so far as to pick up the least crumb they can find. After this they make the beds or couches on which they recline, furnish their room, and dress their meat. See the notes on Exod. xii. and Calmet's Dictionary under the word Passover.

Ver. 20. *Now, when the even was come*] When the Jews celebrated the passover, they assembled together from ten to twenty in number, at some private house, or more properly speaking, laid down, and ate the lamb with unleavened bread. After this repast was finished, they washed again, and, lying down the second time, they had for the second course, a dish of fallad, consisting of bitter herbs, into which they put a kind of sauce named *haroseth*, made of palm-tree branches, or raisins and berries, bruised and mixed with vinegar and seasoning, to represent the clay of which their fathers made bricks in Egypt; for *haras*, is the Hebrew word for a *brick*. Then the master of the family, dividing the bread into two parts, is said to have blessed one of them in the following form of words: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the king of the whole world, in the eating of unleavened bread;" but he hid the other part under the napkin till the feast was ended. Afterwards he took the piece of bread that was hidden, and having divided it into as many parts as there were persons present, distributed to every one of them, using these words; "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of affliction. Let him that is hungry come, and eat the passover; let him that hath need come, and eat the passover." Then taking the cup he first tasted it himself, and afterwards presented it to each of them, saying, "Blessed be thou, O Lord, who hast created the fruit of the vine." We should observe, that after eating the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, one of the younger persons present (generally a child) asked the reason of what was peculiar in that feast, according to Exod. xii. 26, &c. which introduced the *haggadah*, that is to say, the *showing forth* or *declaration* of it: in allusion to which we read of *showing forth the Lord's death*, 1 Cor. xi. 26. After these things they sung Psalm cxiii. and the five Psalms following, which they called the great hallelujah; and thus the feast ended. See the authors above quoted, Josephus's War, b. vi. ch. ix. and the *Religious Ceremonies*, vol. 1. p. 215.

Ver.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

23 And he answered and said, ' He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

24 ' The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

25 Then Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, ' Thou hast said.

26 ¶ And, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and \* blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples; and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

<sup>1</sup> Pf. 41. 9. & 55. 12—14. John, 13. 18, 26. Luke, 22. 21, 22. 56. Dan. 9. 24, 26. Zech. 13. 7. <sup>2</sup> Pf. 55. 15—23. & cix. Ch. 27. 3—5.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 3. 15. Pf. 22. 1—21. & 69. 1—21. If. 52. 14. & 55. 1—12. & 50. Acts, 1. 16—20. <sup>4</sup> Pf. 94. 7. Prov. 30. 20. Jer. 8. 12. <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. 11. 23—29. & 10. 4, 16, 17. Mark, 14. 22—25. Luke, 22. 19, 20. John, 6. 55. \* Many Greek copies have, gave thanks.

Ver. 23. *He that dippeth his hand with me, &c.*] Grotius and others think this implies, that Judas had placed himself so near his Master, as to eat out of the same dish with him; but their way of lying on couches at meat, must have made it inconvenient for two or more persons to eat in that manner. It is more probable that the disciples, being in the deepest distress, had left off eating; only Judas, to conceal his guilt, continued the meal, and was dipping his meat into the *baroseth*, or thick sauce before mentioned, when Jesus happened to be putting his into it; which sauce, according to custom, was served up in a separate dish. See John, xiii. 26.

Ver. 24. *The Son of man goeth*] *Is going indeed*, that is to say, is departing, or near his death. Heylin.

Ver. 25. *Thou hast said*] This expression is equivalent to a positive assertion, both in sacred and profane authors. Compare ver. 64. The first time our Lord discovered that he should be betrayed, he only told it in John's ear, that Judas was to be the author of that atrocious villany. John told it to Peter; but the rest knew nothing of it. Now Jesus plainly points him out.

Ver. 26. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread*] After they had done eating, &c. Our Lord instituted the holy communion after the paschal feast. See Luke, xxii. 20. and 1 Cor. xi. 25. This passage might otherwise be rendered, *as they were yet eating*. The loaves of the Jews were round, flat, thin, and consequently very easy to break. The Jews, as appears from the Talmudists and Philo, never ate bread or received wine, without having first returned their thanks and praises to God their creator. Maimonides and other rabbies tell us, that it was a rule among the Jews, at the end of the supper, to take a piece of the lamb for the last thing they ate that night. If this custom was as old as Christ's time, it would make this action so much the more remarkable; it would plainly shew, that the bread here distributed, was a very distinct thing from the meal that they had been making together, and might be, in the first opening of the action, a kind of symbolical intimation that the Jewish passover was to give way to another and nobler divine institution. Our Lord having taken the bread, and broken it, gave it to his disciples, *Take, eat, this is my body*, that is, "This is the representation of my body broken on the cross." This

is agreeable to the style of the sacred writers. See Gen. xl. 12, 18. xli. 26, 27. Dan. viii. 20. Gal. iv. 25. Rev. i. 20. and lastly, Exod. xii. 11. where, after God had spoken of the paschal lamb, he says, *It is the Lord's passover*. Now our Saviour, substituting the holy communion, instead of the passover, follows the stile of the Old Testament, and uses the same expressions as the Jews were accustomed to use at the celebration of the passover.

Ver. 27, 28. *And he took the cup*] We learn from Jewish writers, that the wine was mixed with water on these occasions; and from the first fathers, that the primitive Christians adopted this custom. He blessed the cup, according to the usual method mentioned in the note on ver. 20. Hence the cup itself is named the *cup of blessing*. As the words *this is my body*, signify, "This is the representation of my body," so the words *this is my blood of the new covenant*, "this is the representation of my blood of the new covenant." And by the same rule that difficult expression, 1 Cor. xi. 27. *Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, undoubtedly signifies, "guilty of profaning the representation of the body and blood of the Lord." Wherefore Christ's meaning in the passage before us was this, "All of you, and all my disciples in all ages, as many as shall believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, must drink of this cup, because it represents my blood shed for the remission of men's sins; my blood, in which the new covenant between God and man is ratified; my blood therefore of the new covenant." So that this institution exhibits to your joyful meditation the grand foundation of men's hopes, and perpetuates the memory of the same to the end of the world. Every sacrifice consisted of two parts, of flesh and blood; the most considerable part of the sacrifice was the blood; see Lev. xvii. 11. and Exod. xxiv. 8. The first covenant was ratified with blood. It is said of the blood of the sacrifices in the place just quoted from Exodus, *This is, or behold the blood of the covenant*. See 1 Macc. vi. 34. These words of institution relative to the *cup*, shew, that it is a primary end of this service to bring to the devout remembrance of Christians the death of their Master, as the foundation of the remission of their sins, and, in short, the whole mercy of the new covenant, as founded on the shedding of his blood; therefore they greatly err, who

28 For this is my <sup>b</sup> blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

29 But I say unto you, <sup>c</sup> I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that

day when I drink it new with you <sup>d</sup> in my Father's kingdom.

30 ¶ And when they had sung an <sup>e</sup> hymn <sup>f</sup> they went out into the mount of Olives.

<sup>b</sup> Exod. 24. 8. Zech. 9. 11. Heb. 9. 14—17. & 13. 20. Ch. 1. 21. & 20. 28. Rom. 5. 10, 11, 15—21. Jer. 31. 31. Heb. 8. 10—12.  
<sup>c</sup> Luke, 22. 16. Pl. 104. 15. Acts, 10. 41. <sup>d</sup> Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 17. 1 Cor. 15. 24, 28. Luke, 22. 29, 30. <sup>e</sup> Or psalm, i. e. Pl. cxliii—cxliiii.  
<sup>f</sup> John, 18. 1, 4. Luke, 20. 39. Acts, 1. 12.

make the keeping up of the memory of Christ's death in the world, as a simple fact, the only end of the Lord's supper. Dr. Doddridge upon this subject observes very well, "I apprehend this ordinance of the *eucharist* to have so plain a reference to the *atonement* and *satisfaction* of *Christ*, and to do so solemn an honour to that fundamental doctrine of the church, that I cannot but believe, that while this sacred institution continues in the church (as it will undoubtedly till the end of the world) it will be impossible to root that doctrine out of the minds of plain humble Christians, by all the little artifices of such forced and unnatural criticisms as those are by which it has been attacked. The enemies of this heart-reviving doctrine might as well hope to pierce through a coat of mail with a straw, as to reach such a doctrine, defended by such an ordinance as this, with any of their trifling sophistries." Another able writer has observed as follows: "Strange have been the inferences which the Romanists have pretended to draw from these and some other passages of Scripture of the like import; namely, that the elements of bread and wine are each of them actually transubstantiated into the whole natural body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ; but it may reasonably be asked, why these persons endeavour to impose such an unwarrantable signification on the above terms, while at the same time they deny that other parts of the sacred writ, which are expressed in the like words, (see 1 Cor. xii. 27. Ephes. i. 22, 23.) can ever be admitted to have any such meaning. However, to speak more directly to the point, certain it is, that the above doctrine cannot be contained in the places under consideration, as it is impossible to be true in the very nature of the thing. This must evidently appear, from the following absolute contradictions, which, among many others, the transubstantiation in question necessarily implies, and to which it is obvious the most unlimited power can never give a being:—that the same numerical body which has invariably existed for more than eighteen hundred years, does often at this time *begin to be*;—that the body of Christ is formed out of a particular substance, which never had a being till many centuries after the said body had unchangeably existed in full perfection;—that the body aforesaid does at once exist in its own proper form, and not in its own proper form; that the said body is at one and the same moment of time both greater and less than itself, (the size of an ordinary man, and yet no larger than a grain of sand:) that the above body is remote and distant from itself; that it *is* where it *is not*; that it is at once plainly seen and not seen by the same persons; that it is in real motion, while at absolute rest; that it comes where it was not before, and never comes to

such place at all; that it is always in a glorified state, incapable of the least injury or defilement, and yet is sometimes not only eaten by the most contemptible vermin, but likewise totally immersed in the worst filthiness." These observations abundantly demonstrate the falsehood of the tenet above mentioned; and with regard to the phrases, *this is my body*—*this is my blood*, it is to be observed, that they are figurative; their precise meaning is, "This is symbolically, representatively, interpretatively, my body—my blood." Thus, 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. manna is affirmed to have been *spiritual meat*, and water *spiritual drink*, and the drinkers of the same are said to have *drank Christ*; that is, not literally, but symbolically, and in divine construction. In Exod. vii. 1. Moses is declared to have been *made a god to Pharaoh*, that is to say, representatively. So Matth. xix. 6. man and wife are asserted to be *one flesh*; that is to say, are considered in that view by Almighty God. In 1 Cor. vi. 11, 17. he that is joined to the Lord, is affirmed to be *one spirit* (with him); that is to say, in divine estimation; and 1 Cor. xii. 27. the church is said to be *the body of Christ*, and the several individuals which compose it, *members in particular*; that is to say, not corporeally so, but mystically, according to the established rules of the Christian œconomy. The doctrine therefore contained in the passages under examination is, that by divine appointment the sacred elements do, in their use, actually signify, stand for, and represent the *body of Christ* as broken upon the cross, and his blood as shed there for our sins. Such is the true interpretation of the foregoing controverted sentences; which at the same time that it corresponds with the analogy of faith, is likewise agreeable to the sentiments of the best divines, both primitive and reformed. See Waterland on the Eucharist, ch. 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Ver. 29. *But I say unto you*] Or, *moreover, I say*, &c. In Luke, xxii. 18. our Lord made the same declaration concerning the passover cup. Hence we gather his meaning, upon the whole, to have been this; that he would not partake of any joy, till he rejoiced with them in the communications of the Holy Spirit, which were to be bestowed plentifully on them as soon as the Gospel dispensation began. See Mark, xiv. 25. The word *new*, applied to a subject, often signifies in scripture *excellence* and *truth*, consequently the substance represented by any emblematical shadow. See John, xiii. 34. Dr. Clarke paraphrases the present verse thus: "I will have the Jewish passover commemoration no longer continued; but the things, of which these were figures, shall now be fulfilled and accomplished in the kingdom of the Messiah." See Whitby.

Ver. 30. *And when they had sung an hymn*] This is thought by some to have been one of the Psalms used at the

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, <sup>a</sup> All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, <sup>b</sup> I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

32 But after I am risen again, <sup>1</sup> I will go before you into Galilee.

33 <sup>k</sup> Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, <sup>1</sup> Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, <sup>\*</sup> thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, <sup>m</sup> Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee, <sup>n</sup> Likewise also said all the disciples.

36 ¶ <sup>o</sup> Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 14. 27—31. John, 16. 32. Ch. 11. 6. <sup>b</sup> Zech. 13. 7. If. 53. 5, 10. Rom. 8. 32. Job, 19. 13—16. Pf. 38. 11. <sup>1</sup> Mark, 14. 28. & 16. 7. Ch. 28. 10, 16. <sup>k</sup> Mark, 14. 29—31, 66—72. Luke, 22. 31—34, 54—62. John, 13. 36—38. & 18. 15—27. Ver. 69—75. Pf. 30. 6. <sup>l</sup> John, 13. 38. 1 Cor. 10. 12. <sup>m</sup> His principal crowing about three o'clock in the morning. <sup>n</sup> Pf. 30. 6. Prov. 16. 18. & 29. 23. <sup>o</sup> Exod. 19. 8. & 24. 3, 7. <sup>o</sup> Mark, 14. 32—42. Luke, 22. 39—46. John, 18. 1. Heb. 5. 7. Pf. 22. 2.

the paschal feast, (see on ver. 20.) though Grotius and others are of opinion, that it possibly was some other hymn more closely adapted to the celebration of the eucharist. The mount of Olives stood over against the temple of Jerusalem, about fifteen stadia from the city. Our Lord usually retired thither after having taught in the temple.

Ver. 31, 32. All ye shall be offended, &c.] That is "You shall lose all sense of your duty as disciples, and, seeing me in a condition inconsistent with the vulgar idea of the Messiah, shall leave me to the cruelties of my enemies." This was a remarkable completion of Zech. xiii. 7. See the note. Our Lord might use this as a proverbial expression, *I will smite the sheep*, &c. but it being so remarkably accomplished in him above all others, especially as he was the great shepherd of souls, as he was described under that image in the Old Testament, and had assumed the title peculiarly to himself;—his disciples could not but consider this circumstance as a proof of his being the Messiah. No sooner did Jesus mention the offence which his disciples were to take at his sufferings, than, to strengthen their faith, he told them of his resurrection, as well as of the particular place where they should see him after he was risen. An appointment to meet in so large a region as Galilee, would, without this, have been of very little use; and ch. xxviii. 16. expressly declares such an appointment. We do not know the exact place, but we there learn that it was a certain mountain; probably it might be near the sea of Tiberias, not only because we find Christ on the borders of that sea after his resurrection, John, xxi. 1. but also because, as he had resided there longer than any where else, he had, no doubt, the greatest number of his disciples thereabouts; and it lay pretty near the centre of his chief circuits, and therefore must be most convenient, especially for those beyond Jordan, where many had of late believed in him. See John, x. 40, 42. The angel repeats the words of the 32d verse to the disciples who visited our Saviour's tomb. Ch. xxviii. 7. The words *go before* allude to the image of the shepherd in the preceding verse, it being the custom of the Eastern shepherds to precede their flocks. See Doddridge, and John, x. 4.

Ver. 33—35. Peter answered, &c.] St. Peter, no doubt, was sincere in this protestation which he made; nevertheless

he was greatly to blame for not paying a due attention to his Master's repeated predictions concerning his fall, (see Luke, xxii. 34. and John, xiii. 38.) for the preference which he gave himself above his brethren, and for depending upon his own strength, instead of begging assistance of him from whom all human sufficiency is derived. The 34th verse is expressed differently by St. Mark, who represents our Lord as saying, *before the cock crow twice*, &c. and from ch. xiii. 35. of that Gospel it appears, that one of the four watches of the night was named *the cock-crowing*: now as this ended with the second crowing, *before the cock crow*, is equivalent to *before the cock crow twice*, both signifying, "before the expiration of the watch called the *cock-crowing*;"—at three in the morning, when the cock commonly crows the second time. Or we may suppose that this expression in the three historians is elliptical; and that the *twice* is understood, and must be supplied. We have examples of this kind of ellipsis in other parts of Scripture.

Ver. 36. *Unto a place called Gethsemane*] Reland thinks *Gethsemane* was a particular spot in the mount of Olives. But its situation, like that of some other places mentioned in the Gospel, has been settled by considering the description of a particular Evangelist only, without comparing their accounts together. From John, xiv. 31. it appears, that Jesus went out with his disciples immediately after he had pronounced the consolatory discourse; for at the conclusion of it he said to them, *Arise, let us go hence*: and considering the subject of the next sermon, *I am the true vine*, &c. it is probable he was in the mount of Olives, among the vines, when he spake that parable, it being his manner to preach from such subjects as were at hand. Here also he delivered the discourse and prayer recorded John, xvi. xvii. Accordingly, when he prayed, ch. xvii. 1. it is said, he *lifted up his eyes to heaven*; a circumstance which seems to imply, that he was then in the open air. His *coming down* from the mount of Olives is expressed indeed by the word *ἐξελθε*, John, xviii. 1. which has led most readers to imagine, that by some accident or other they were hindered from leaving the house till then, notwithstanding Jesus had ordered them to arise and go away with him: the answer is, that *ἐξελθε*, being a general term, may be applied with propriety to one's going out

37 <sup>p</sup> And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be <sup>q</sup> sorrowful and very heavy.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and <sup>r</sup> watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and <sup>s</sup> fell on his face, and prayed, saying, <sup>t</sup> O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and

<sup>p</sup> Ch. 4. 18, 21. & 16. 16, 23. & 17. 1. & 20. 20. Mark, 5. 37. <sup>q</sup> <sup>r</sup> <sup>s</sup> <sup>t</sup> <sup>u</sup> <sup>v</sup> <sup>w</sup> <sup>x</sup> <sup>y</sup> <sup>z</sup> <sup>aa</sup> <sup>ab</sup> <sup>ac</sup> <sup>ad</sup> <sup>ae</sup> <sup>af</sup> <sup>ag</sup> <sup>ah</sup> <sup>ai</sup> <sup>aj</sup> <sup>ak</sup> <sup>al</sup> <sup>am</sup> <sup>an</sup> <sup>ao</sup> <sup>ap</sup> <sup>aq</sup> <sup>ar</sup> <sup>as</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>au</sup> <sup>av</sup> <sup>aw</sup> <sup>ax</sup> <sup>ay</sup> <sup>az</sup> <sup>ba</sup> <sup>bb</sup> <sup>bc</sup> <sup>bd</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>bf</sup> <sup>bg</sup> <sup>bh</sup> <sup>bi</sup> <sup>bj</sup> <sup>bk</sup> <sup>bl</sup> <sup>bm</sup> <sup>bn</sup> <sup>bo</sup> <sup>bp</sup> <sup>bq</sup> <sup>br</sup> <sup>bs</sup> <sup>bt</sup> <sup>bu</sup> <sup>bv</sup> <sup>bw</sup> <sup>bx</sup> <sup>by</sup> <sup>bz</sup> <sup>ca</sup> <sup>cb</sup> <sup>cc</sup> <sup>cd</sup> <sup>ce</sup> <sup>cf</sup> <sup>cg</sup> <sup>ch</sup> <sup>ci</sup> 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findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. \* The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: ° behold, the hour is at hand, and

the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

47 ¶ And, ° while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 ° Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, ° Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

Ch. 14. 42. & 25. 13. Ver. 38, 43. Mark, 13. 33—37. 1 Cor. 16. 13. 1 Peter, 5. 8. Rev. 16. 15. Eph. 6. 18. \* Song, 5. 2 Rom. 7. 15, 21. Gal. 5. 17, 24. Pf. 78. 39. ° Pf. 22. 1, 2. & 109. 4. Heb. 5. 7, 8. Phil. 2. 8. Acts, 21. 14. 2 Sam. 15. 25. & 16. 10, 11. Ch. 6. 13. ° Pf. 107. 4. 2 Cor. 12. 8. Pf. 22. 1, 2. Heb. 5. 7, 8. ° 1 Kings, 18. 27. Eccl. 11. 9. Judg. 10. 14. ° Ver. 13. John, 13. 1. Luke, 2. 53. Ch. 16. 21. & 17. 22, 27. & 20. 18, 19. Ver. 2, 14—6. Gen. 13. 13. with Ch. 9. 11. ° Mark, 34. 43—52. Luke, 22. 47—53. John, 18. 8—11. Acts, 1. 16. Ver. 5. Pf. 3. 1. & 2. 1, 2. John, 18. 7. ° John, 13. 3, 12. 2 Sam. 20. 9, 10. Pl. 26. 3. & 55. 21. ° Gr. Companion. Pl. 41. 9. & 55. 13, 14. 2 Sam. 16. 17. Lam. 4. 20. Acts, 2. 23. John, 18. 12.

disciples a long discourse, from John, ch. xiv. to xvii. and besides they were oppressed and stupified with sorrow. See Luke, xxii. 45. Our Lord speaks to Peter in particular, who was so forward to boast that he would follow his Master even unto death. Every one is apt to flatter himself, when he is out of danger, that he can easily withstand temptations; but without a particular care and watchfulness, the passions are generally found to prevail over reason at the sight of danger. Archbishop Tillotson very justly and beautifully observes in nearly these words, That so gentle a rebuke and so kind an apology as we read in these verses, were the more remarkable, as our Lord's mind was now so weighed down with sorrow, that we might expect that he would have had a deeper and tenderer sense of the unkindness of his friends: and alas! how apt are we, in general, to think affliction an excuse for peevishness, and how unlike are we to Christ in that thought, and how unkind to ourselves, as well as our friends, to whom in such circumstances, with our best temper, we must be more troublesome than we could wish. See Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons, vol. 2.

Ver. 44. *Saying the same words*] It is plain, by comparing ver. 39. and 42. that the words were not entirely the same; and it is certain that λέγος often signifies *matter*; so that no more appears to be intended than that he prayed to the same purpose as before. The reader by referring to Luke, xxii. 43, 44. will find a more distinct account of this astonishing scene.

Ver. 45. *Sleep on now, &c.*] Some read this interrogatively, *Do you sleep on still and take repose?* See Luke, xxii. 45. This is a reproof which very well agrees with ver. 40, 41. and the words following that passage. *Into the hands of sinners, means* of the Gentiles, according to the

style of the Hebrews, (see Gal. ii. 15.) of which sort were the soldiers whom Judas brought along with him, John, xviii. 3.

Ver. 48. *He that betrayed him, gave them a sign*] The soldiers having perhaps never seen Jesus before, and it being now night, and there being twelve persons together, probably dressed much alike, Judas found it necessary to point him out to them by some such sign as this. It was a Jewish custom, after a long absence, or at departing from each other, to make use of the ceremony of a kiss. They used it likewise as a sign of affection to their equals, and as a mark of homage and reverence to their superiors. See Psalm ii. 12. Luke, vii. 45. It is very probable that our Lord, in great condescension, had used, agreeably to this custom, to permit his disciples thus to salute him, when they returned to him after having been any time absent. One would be apt to believe, from the precaution which Judas gives at the end of the verse, *hold him fast*, that he might suspect Christ would on this occasion renew the miracles that he had formerly wrought for his own deliverance; (compare Luke, iv. 30. John, viii. 59—x. 39.) though he had so expressly declared the contrary, ver. 24.

Ver. 50. *Friend, Wherefore art thou come?*] The heroic behaviour of the blessed Jesus, in the whole period of his sufferings, will be observed by every attentive eye, and felt by every pious heart; although the sacred historians, according to their usual but wonderful simplicity, make no encomiums upon it. With what composure does he go forth to meet the traitor! with what composure receive that malignant kiss! with what dignity does he deliver himself into the hands of his enemies! yet plainly showing his superiority over them, and even then *leading* as it were

51 ¶ And, behold, <sup>e</sup> one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52 Then said Jesus unto him, <sup>h</sup> Put up again thy sword into his place; <sup>i</sup> for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and <sup>k</sup> he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

<sup>e</sup> John, 18. 10. Ver. 33, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. 13. 10. Pf. 55. 23.

Lev. i—vi. xvii. Numb. xix. xxviii. xxix. 11. 52. 13. & 50. 5, 6. Dan. 9. 24—26. Zech. 13. 7. Luke, 24. 25, 26, 44, 46. Acts, 17. 3. & 26. 23.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 54. Num. 23. 19. 1 Sam. 15. 29. Tit. 1. 2. 11. 44. 26.

63. 3, 5. 2 Tim. 1. 15. & 4. 16.

<sup>h</sup> John, 18. 11. Rom. 12. 19. 1 Peter, 4. 16, 19. 1 Cor. 4. 11, 12. 2 Cor. 10. 3.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Kings, 6. 17. Dan. 7. 10. Pf. 91. 11. & 34. 7.

<sup>l</sup> If. liii. Pf. 22. 1—21. & 69. 1—21. Gen. 3. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 31. John, 16. 32. Job, 19. 13, 14. Pl. 28. 8, 18. & 38. 11. 11.

<sup>o</sup> Mark, 14. 53—65. Luke, 22. 54, 66—71. John, 18. 12—14. 19—24. Pf. 22. 16. Acts, 8. 32. 11. 53. 7.

54 But how then <sup>l</sup> shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

56 But all this was done <sup>m</sup> that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. <sup>n</sup> Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

57 ¶ <sup>o</sup> And they that had laid hold on

were *captivity captive*. See Bishop Hall's Contemplations on the subject.

Ver. 51—53. *And behold, one of them—drew his sword*] None of the evangelists but John (ch. xviii. 10.) mentions the name of the high-priest's servant on this occasion, which perhaps the others omitted, lest it should expose them to any prosecution. But John, writing long after our Saviour's death, needed no such precaution. Janfenius justly observes, that it was a remarkable instance of the power of Christ over the spirits of men, that they so far obeyed his word, as not to seize Peter when he had cut off the ear of Malchus, or John while he stood by the cross, though they must know them to have been of the number of his most intimate associates. One would have thought, as Bishop Hall remarks, that Peter should rather have struck Judas; but the traitor perhaps on giving the signal had mingled with the crowd; or Peter might not understand the treacherous design of his kifs; or seeing Malchus more eager than the rest in his attack on Christ, he might postpone all other resentments, to indulge the present fally of his indignation. Though this might seem a courageous action, it was really very imprudent; and had not Christ, by some secret influence, overawed their spirits, it is very probable that not only Peter, but the rest of the apostles, might have been cut to pieces. Accordingly our Saviour ordered him to sheath his sword, telling him that his unseasonable and imprudent offence might prove the occasion of his destruction; or rather as Grotius interprets it, that there was no need of fighting in his defence, because God would punish the Jews for putting him to death; see Rev. xiii. 10. where this very expression is used, in predicting the destruction of the persecutors of true Christians. Our Lord told him further, that it implied both a *distrust* of the divine providence, and also a *gross ignorance of the Scriptures*, ver. 53, 54. The *legion* was a Roman military term, and as the band which now surrounded them was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make use of this term by way of contrast, to shew what an inconsiderable thing the cohort was, in comparison of the force that he could *summon to his assistance*;—*more than twelve legions*, not of soldiers, but of *angels*,—

instead of twelve deserting timorous disciples. How dreadfully irresistible would such an army of angels have been, when one of the celestial spirits was able to destroy *an hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians* in one night. See 2 Kings, xix. 35. and the note on ver. 56.

Ver. 56. *But all this was done*] Or, *Is done*. This was a consideration, which, if duly applied, might have prevented his disciples from being offended at his sufferings; and it strongly intimates that he still kept up the claim which he had formerly made of being the Messiah, and that what he was now to go through was so far from being at all inconsistent with that claim, that on the whole it was absolutely necessary in order to make it out to full satisfaction.

The disciples, seeing their Master in the hands of his enemies, *forsook him and fled*, according to his prediction. Perhaps they were afraid that the action of Peter should be imputed to them all, and might bring their lives into danger. But whatever they apprehended, their precipitate flight in these circumstances was the basest cowardice and ingratitude, considering not only how lately they had been warned of their danger, and what solemn promises they had all made of a courageous adherence to Christ; but also what an agony they had just seen him in, what zeal he had a few moments before shewn in their defence, and what amazing power he had exerted to terrify his enemies into a compliance with that part of his demand which related to the safety of his friends. He had also at the same time intimated his purpose of giving them a speedy and kind dismissal; see John, xviii. 8. So that it was very indecent thus to run away without him, especially as Christ's prophesy of their continued usefulness in his church was equivalent to a promise of their preservation, whatever danger they might now meet with. But our Lord probably permitted it, that we might learn not to depend too confidently even on the friendship of the best of men. See Doddridge and Macknight.

Ver. 57. *Led him away to Caiaphas*] It appears from John, xviii. 13. that Jesus was first led to Annas, because he was father-in-law of Caiaphas; besides, that having been himself a high-priest, and very much concerned in this whole



Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

58 But Peter followed him afar off, unto the high priest's palace, and went in, <sup>p</sup> and sat with the servants to see the end.

59 Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, <sup>q</sup> sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death;

60 <sup>r</sup> But found none: yea, though many

false witnesses came, *yet* found they <sup>\*</sup> none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61 And said, This *fellow* said, ' I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it* *which* these witness against thee?

63 But Jesus <sup>s</sup> held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I

<sup>p</sup> Ver. 13, 15. Prov. 9. 6. & 13. 20. <sup>q</sup> Pl. 27. 12. & 35. 11. Acts, 6. 13. 1 Kings, 21. 10, 13. <sup>r</sup> Dan. 6. 4. 1 Peter, 3. 16. <sup>\*</sup> None  
 that witnessed any thing criminal, or who agreed together. <sup>s</sup> John, 2. 19. Ch. 27. 40. Mark, 15. 29. Acts, 6. 13. 1c. 53. 7. Acts, 8. 32.  
 W. 3. 13, 14. Ch. 27. 12, 14.

whole matter, it was but natural that he should have this honour done him. St. Matthew makes no mention of Anna, because nothing remarkable happened at his house, our Lord having stayed there no longer than what was just necessary to acquaint the council that they were going to lead him to Caiaphas.

*Ver. 59, 60. Now—the council sought false witnesses*] When the council found that Jesus declined answering the question whereby they would have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Messiah, (see John, xviii. 19, &c.) they examined many witnesses to prove his having assumed that character: for by what afterwards happened it appears, that they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who, being nothing but a man, as they supposed, could not, without affronting the majesty of God, take the title of God's Son, which of right belonged to the Messiah. In examining the witnesses, they acted like interested and enraged persecutors, rather than impartial judges; for they formed the questions after such a manner, as, if possible, to draw from them expressions which they might pervert into grounds of guilt, whereupon they might condemn Jesus. But notwithstanding they were at the utmost pains to procure such a proof as in the eye of the law would justify the sentence which they were resolved at all hazards to pass upon Jesus, they exerted themselves to no purpose. As this was a great proof of Christ's innocence (for otherwise his confederates might have been glad to purchase their own security by impeaching him), so is it a singular instance of the power of God over men's minds; that for all the rewards which these great men could offer, no two consistent witnesses could be procured to charge Jesus with any gross crimes. Possibly the exertion of his miraculous power, in striking to the ground those who were most forward to seize him, might intimidate the spirits of some, who might otherwise have been prevailed upon. See John, xviii. 6.

*Ver. 60, 61. At the last came two false witnesses, &c.*] St. Mark, ch. xiv. 58. tells us, that these false witnesses alleged, that our Lord had said, *I will destroy this temple that is made with hands.* Now it is in the addition of these last words that their false testimony consists, because it restrains to the temple of Jerusalem the expression of Jesus, which might otherwise be understood both of that temple, and

of his body, and which indeed he meant of the latter. Besides, our Lord had not said *I will destroy*, but *do you destroy this temple.* See John, ii. 19. The witnesses, it seems, either through ignorance, or more probably through malice, perverted his answer into an affirmation, that he was able to destroy and build the temple in three days; and the judges reckoned it blasphemy, because it was an effect that could be accomplished by nothing less than divine power; wherefore these men are justly branded through the world with the name of false witnesses, and their testimony was deservedly disregarded by our Lord, especially; as they had expressed great ill-will to him in giving it, contrary to the rules of equity and goodness.—*This fellow*, said they contemptuously. This is one instance, among many others, in which the bow of malice has been broken by overstraining it, and innocence cleared up by the very extravagance of those charges which have been advanced against it. It is observable, that the words which they thus misrepresented, were spoken by Christ at least three years before. Their going back so far to find matter for the charge they brought, was a glorious, though silent attestation, of the unexceptionable manner in which our Lord had behaved himself during all the course of his public ministry. See Doddridge and Macknight.

*Ver. 62, 63. The high-priest arose, &c.*] When the high-priest found that Jesus took little notice of the things which the witnesses said against him, he fell into a passion, supposing that Christ intended to put an affront upon the council. For he arose from his seat, which judges seldom do, unless when in some perturbation, and spake to him, desiring him to give the reason of his conduct. The rabbies say, that a judge stands up only when he hears witnesses deposing that some person has blasphemed. But the high-priest finding this in vain, in order to cut the trial short, and ensnare Jesus, he *adjured* or called upon him to answer upon oath, whether he were the Christ. It appears that the Jewish high-priests had the power of administering that oath, which laid the person adjured under the necessity of giving an explicit answer, and of speaking the whole truth without disguise. The craft of the question put to our Lord lay in this, that if he answered in the affirmative, they were ready to condemn him as a blasphemer; but if in the negative, they proposed

X x

<sup>a</sup> adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be <sup>x</sup> the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, <sup>y</sup> Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, <sup>z</sup> Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 <sup>a</sup> Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what

further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

66 What think ye? They answered and said, <sup>b</sup> He is guilty of death.

67 <sup>c</sup> Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him ; and others smote *him* with <sup>\*</sup> the palms of their hands,

68 <sup>d</sup> Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

69 ¶ <sup>e</sup> Now Peter sat without in the pa-

<sup>a</sup> Joh. 6. 26. Mark, 5. 7. Acts, 19. 13. 1 Kings, 22. 16. Lev. 5. 1. <sup>x</sup> Ch. 17. 4, 5. & 16. 16. John, 1. 49—51. & 10. 30, 36. & 6. 69. If. 9. 6, 7. <sup>y</sup> Ver. 25. Ch. 27. 11. 1 Tim. 6. 13. *i. e.* It is as thou sayest. <sup>z</sup> Pf. 110. 1. Dan. 7. 13. Ch. 16. 27. & 24. 30. & 25. 31. John, 6. 62. Acts, 1. 11. Rom. 14. 10. 1 Thess. 4. 16. Rev. 1. 7. & 20. 11. <sup>\*</sup> Lev. 21. 10. 2 Kings, 18. 37. & 19. 1. Gen. 37. 29, 34. <sup>b</sup> Lev. 24. 16. Acts, 6. 13. <sup>c</sup> If. 50. 6. & 52. 14. & 51. 3. Ch. 27. 30. John, 19. 3. <sup>d</sup> Or rods. <sup>e</sup> Judges, 16. 25. Mark, 14. 65. Luke, 22. 64. Acts, 3. 22. <sup>\*</sup> Mark, 14. 66—72. Luke, 22. 55—62. John, 18. 15—18. 25—27. with Pf. 1. 1. & 119. 115.

posed to punish him as an impostor, who, by accepting the honours and titles of the Messiah from the people, had deceived them.

*Ver. 64. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said*] Our Lord would not vouchsafe to give an answer to so frivolous an accusation as was that brought against him, ver. 61. But when he is called upon to acknowledge so important a truth as that contained in this verse, a truth which he came to reveal to the world, and for the maintaining of which he ventured the loss of his life, then he speaks boldly and openly. *Hereafter ye shall see, &c.* means, “ You shall see the sign from heaven which you have so often demanded in confirmation of my mission.” *Hein- sus* would have the words *ἄρα ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, rendered *hereafter*, joined together, so as to make *ἀπαρτι*, the same with *ἀπαρτισμῶνος*, truly, expressly. *Moreover I say unto you expressly, you shall see, &c.* By the right hand of power or greatness, is meant the right hand of God, who by the Jews is called *power*, as *Dr. Whitby* has fully proved. There is a plain reference here to the view in which the Son of man is represented, Dan. vii. 13, 14. where he is said to *come in the clouds of heaven—to receive dominion, &c.* Our Lord looked very unlike that person now ; but nothing could be more awful, majestic, and becoming, than such an admonition in these circumstances. The sending down of the Holy Ghost, the wonderful progress of the Gospel, the destruction of Jerusalem, of the temple, and of the Jewish state, were unquestionable proofs and demonstrations, shewn forth by Jesus Christ, of the infinite power wherewith he was invested at the right hand of God, in his mediatorial kingdom.

*Ver. 65. Then the high-priest rent his clothes*] Though the high-priest was forbidden to rend his clothes in some cases, when others were allowed to do it, (Levit. x. 6. xxi. 10.) yet in case of blasphemy or any public calamity it was thought allowable. Caiaphas therefore, by this action, expressed in the strongest and most artful manner his horror at hearing so vile a wretch, as he pretended our Lord was, thus claiming the sovereignty over Israel, and a seat at the right-hand of God, and this when adjured upon oath on so solemn an occasion. That the high-priest was clothed in ordinary apparel on this occasion, appears

from Exod. xxix. 29, 30. where the pontifical garments are ordered to descend from father to son, and therefore were to be worn only at their consecration, and when they ministered.

*Ver. 66. He is guilty of death.*] Or *he deserves or is worthy of death.*

*Ver. 67, 68. Then did they spit in his face*] Spitting in the face was the greatest contempt and disgrace which could possibly be shewn. See Numb. xii. 14. Buffeting or striking with the fist on the temples, was esteemed one of the most disgraceful punishments by the Greeks, from whom the Romans might have adopted it : *smiting with the open palms of their hands*, was esteemed such a dishonour, as none but a slave ought to endure. See Luke, xxii. 64. and If. liii. 3, 7. Because *St. Matthew* says, that they who condemned Jesus spit in his face and buffeted him ; and *St. Mark*, xiv. 65. mentions the indignities in particular which the servants put upon him,—it appears that he was smitten, blind-folded, and buffeted even by some of the council ; who to ridicule him for having pretended to be the great prophet foretold by Moses, bade him, sarcastically, to exercise his prophetic gifts in guessing who it was that smote him. *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?* The word rendered *prophecy*, signifies not only to foretell things that are future, but also to discover any thing obscure or beyond the reach of uninspired nature. It was hardly possible for these miscreants to invent any thing more expressive of the contempt in which they held our Lord's pretensions to the Messiahship. Thus was the judge of the world placed at the bar of his own creatures, falsely accused by the witnesses, unjustly condemned by his judges, and barbarously insulted by all ! yet because it was agreeable to the end of his coming, he patiently submitted, though he could with a frown have made his judges, his accusers, and those who had him in custody, all to drop down dead in a moment, or sink into nothing ! See *Macknight*, *Grotius* *Wetstein*.

*Ver. 69. Now Peter sat without*] Our Lord's trial in the high-priest's palace, and Peter's denying him, being con- temporary events, might be related the one before the other, according to the historian's pleasure. *St. Matthew* and

lace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the

porch another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

<sup>f</sup> Ch. 2. 22, 23. & 3. 13. & 4. 12, 13.

<sup>g</sup> Ch. 2. 23. & 28. 11. Luke, 2. 39, 51. & 4. 16. John, 1. 45.

<sup>h</sup> Ch. 16. 16. Ver. 33. 35.

and St. Mark describe the trial first, because it is a principal fact. But St. Luke brings it in after the denials. St. John has preserved the exact and natural order: for he begins with the first denial, because it happened immediately after Peter entered the palace; then gives the history of the trial as the principal fact, and concludes with the subsequent denials. The apostles, no doubt, were in great consternation when their Master was apprehended, as appears from their forsaking him. Some of them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance, to see what the end would be: of this number was Peter, and another disciple, whom John has mentioned without giving his name, and who therefore is generally supposed to have been John himself, it being the manner of this Evangelist to speak of himself in the third person. See John, xiii. 23. xxi. 20. St. Matthew and St. Mark seem to differ in the account which they give of the place where Peter first denied his Master. St. Matthew says, Peter sat without in the palace; St. Mark, *iv. 66.* says that this denial happened as Peter was beneath in the palace. It appears from John, xviii. 25. that Peter was with the servants at the fire, when he denied his Master the third time; and from Luke, xxii. 61., that Jesus looked upon Peter, just as he was pronouncing the words of the third denial. Our Lord, therefore, and his disciples were not, the one in the court, and the other in the vestibule of the palace, during his trial, as some have supposed; but they were together in one room, Jesus with his judges at the upper end of it, and Peter with the servants at the fire at the other end. According to this disposition, Peter might be said to have been without in the hall, that is to say, without, in relation to the crowd of judges, witnesses, and soldiers, around Jesus; but in relation to the place where the council sat, he was beneath in the hall, in the lower part of it; a way of speaking common even in our own language. Further, John, ver. 18. says, that Peter, after the first denial, stood with the officers at the fire; whereas St. Matthew and St. Luke tell us, that when he first denied his Master, he sat by the fire. It seems the maid's words had put him into such confusion, that before he answered her, he arose from the seat, which the servants had given him at his first coming in. We learn from St. John, that the damsel who attacked Peter was she who kept the door; it seems, that after having admitted him, she followed him to the fire, and spoke to him in an angry tone, having been informed that it was he who had cut off her fellow-servant's ear. See John, xviii. 17, 26. *Thou also wast with Jesus*, means, when he was apprehended in the garden; *to be with*, signifies sometimes to be a disciple. The woman, probably, either had some knowledge of Peter before, or was informed by John,

or some of those who had been in the garden, that he was one of Christ's friends. See ver. 73. The word *Galilee* is added by way of distinction, *Jesus* being a very common name at this time. See Macknight, Grotius, Doddridge.

Ver. 71. *When he was gone out into the porch*] St. Matthew and St. Mark say it was a woman that attacked Peter in the porch; St. Luke says it was a man; and Grotius, to reconcile the evangelists, has shewn that the Greek word *Ἀνθρωπος* signifies both man and woman, as *homo* does in the Latin. But without having recourse to this criticism, which appears rather too nice, it is natural and easy to suppose, that the apostle was accosted in the porch both by a woman and a man; the former mentioned by St. Matthew and St. Mark, the latter by St. Luke. The word *προαυλιον*, rendered *porch*, answers most exactly to the Latin word *vestibulum*, by which many good interpreters render it: and considering the magnificence of the Jewish buildings at this time, it is reasonable to conclude, that this which belonged to the high-priest's palace, was some stately piazza or colonnade, and therefore the word would be better rendered *portico*. The Jews gave our Lord the appellation of *Jesus of Nazareth* to shew that they looked upon him as an impostor, who was neither a prophet nor the Messiah, and that they held him in the greatest contempt; and in that view the modern Jews give him the same appellation.

Ver. 72. *And again he denied with an oath*] To his denial he now added perjury. Jesus was so public a person, and so well known to thousands, not at all in his interest, that this additional falsehood, *I do not know the man*, was most unnecessary; and—as it frequently happens, when people allow themselves to transgress the bounds of truth,—it was more likely to entangle and discover him, than to clear him. Dr. Clarke conjectures, that Peter was suffered to fall fouler than any of the rest of the apostles, except Judas the traitor; and to make more remarkable mistakes in his conduct, that we might thus be cautioned against that extravagant regard which would afterwards be demanded to him and his pretended successors. How must these people, before whom Peter denied his Lord, be surprised, when they saw, as no doubt some of them did, this timorous disciple, within the compass of a few weeks, when he was brought with John before the council, not only maintaining the cause and honour of Jesus, but boldly charging the murder of this Prince of Life upon the chief men of the nation, and solemnly warning them of their guilt and danger in consequence of it! See Acts, iv. 5—12. Perhaps when it is said there, ver. 13., that they *took knowledge of Peter and John*, that they had been with Jesus, the meaning may be, that some of them or their attendants remembered

73 And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee.

74 <sup>1</sup> Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And imme-

diately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, <sup>k</sup> Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. <sup>1</sup> And he went out, and wept bitterly.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 34. Luke, 22. 65. Mark 14. 71. John, 18. 26, 27. Zech. 12. 10. Jer. 31. 18. 2 Cor. 7. 11.

<sup>k</sup> Ver. 34. Mark, 14. 30. John, 13. 38.

<sup>1</sup> Pl. 119. 57, 60. Ezek. 7. 16.

Peter and John, as the two persons who had followed Jesus thus far, when the rest had forsaken him. See John, xviii. 15—18. and Doddridge.

Ver. 73, 74. *And after a while came, &c.*] The words of Malchus's kinsman, (see John, xviii. 26.) bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that slave, threw him into such a panic, that when those who stood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it. When the servants at the fire heard Peter deny the charge which John has mentioned, they drew near, and supported the argument drawn from the accent with which he had pronounced his answer. We are told by the Jews that the Galileans had a clownish and uncouth way of speaking, for which they were ridiculed by the inhabitants of Judea; and as the Galileans were generally suspected of being disciples of Jesus, Peter's having the Galilean accent is therefore urged as a strong presumption that he was one of the disciples of Jesus. Thus pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better colour, he profaned the name of God by *swearing* and *wishing the bitterest curses on himself*, (for such is the force of the original) if he was telling a falsehood. Perhaps he hoped by these acts of impiety to convince them effectually indeed, that he was not a disciple of the holy Jesus. All the evangelists agree, that the cock crew immediately after Peter pronounced the words of the third denial, which they themselves have related: but upon comparing the things said when this third attack was made, it appears that the speeches at least which St. John has recorded, did not come from the persons mentioned by the other evangelists; wherefore the third denial was occasioned by different attacks made in succession; unless the men spoke all at once, which is not very probable. It is more natural to think, that when Peter denied his Master to them who first attacked him, the others who stood by supported the charge with an argument drawn from his accent in speaking, which proved him to be a Galilean. However, as in either case the succession of his answers must have been very quick, the veracity of the evangelists remains unshaken, because thus the cock crew immediately after Peter pronounced the words which they have severally related. To this part of the history it has been objected, that the Jews, as their tradition goes, never kept any cocks within the walls of Jerusalem, and consequently that Peter could not hear them crew, while he was in the high-priest's palace; but the objection may be removed either by calling the tradition itself in question, because it contradicts the testimony of writers whose veracity is indubitable, and who could not but know the customs of the age in which they lived; and because many traditions of this kind were framed by the rabbis, with a view to magnify the sanctity

of Jerusalem. Or, the objection may be removed by supposing, that the Romans who lived in the city, neglecting the institutions of the Jews, might keep this kind of fowl about their houses, perhaps for their table, or for the auspices, a sort of divination to which they were peculiarly addicted. See Macknight.

Ver. 75. *And Peter remembered the words of Jesus which said, &c.*] Or, *Who had said, &c.* See Luke, xxii. 61. where the remarkably beautiful circumstance of Christ's *turning and looking upon Peter* is recorded: see also Mark, xiv. 72. Hence we learn that St. Peter denied his Master three different times, and with oaths, forgetting the vehement protestations that he had made a few hours before. He was permitted to fall in this manner, to teach mankind two lessons: *first*, that whatever a person's attainments may have been formerly, if once he passes the bounds of morality, he commonly proceeds from bad to worse, one sin naturally drawing on another; for which reason, the very least appearances of evil are to be dreaded, and the greatest humility and self-diffidence maintained. In the *second* place, the goodness wherewith Jesus treated his fallen apostle teaches us, that no sinner whatever needs despair of mercy, who truly repents. But I shall reserve the *Inferences* which I may draw from the fall and repentance of St. Peter for another opportunity; referring the reader in the mean time to Dr. Foster's Sermons, vol. 1. and the Reflections on this chapter; and taking a view here of the conduct and character of Judas Iscariot.

*Inferences.*—The treachery of Judas Iscariot, in betraying his Master, must raise the astonishment of every reader who has any just notion of our Lord's character. Wherefore, the motives swaying him to be guilty of such an atrocious crime, and the circumstances which attended it, deserve a particular consideration.

Some are of opinion, that he was incited to commit this villany by his resentment of the rebuke which Jesus gave him, for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment. But though this may have had its weight with him, it could hardly be the only motive; since the rebuke was not levelled against him singly, but was directed also to the rest, who, being rebuked at the same time, must have kept him in countenance. Besides, though he had been rebuked alone, it can hardly be supposed that so mild a reproof would provoke any person, how wicked soever, to the horrid act of murdering his friend; much less Judas,—whose covetousness must have disposed him to bear every thing at the hand of his Master, from whom he expected great preferment. If it be replied, that his resentment was so great as to hinder him from exercising his reason, and hurried him on precipitately,

## C H A P. XXVII.

*Christ is delivered bound to Pilate. Judas hangeth himself. Pilate, admonished by his wife, washeth his hands, and loseth Barabbas. Christ is crowned with thorns, crucified, reviled, dieth, and is buried: his sepulchre is sealed and watched.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**W**HEN the morning was come, \* all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death :

2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

3 ¶<sup>b</sup> Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 Saying, I have sinned, <sup>c</sup> in that I have

\* Mark, 14. 1—11. Luke, 22. 65. & 23. 1—28. John, 18. 28—40. & 19. 15. Acts, 4. 25—28. & 2. 23. Ps. 2. 1—4. II. 33. 7, 9. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 25. 46. 1 Kings, 21. 27. Job, 20. 5, 15. 2 Cor. 7. 10. with Ch. 26. 15. <sup>c</sup> Ver. 24. Acts, 18. 6.

it should be considered, that though he struck the bargain with the priests a few hours after he was rebuked, yet almost two days passed before he fulfilled his bargain. Besides, to impute this treachery to the sudden impulse of a strong resentment, is such an alleviation of his crime, as seems inconsistent with the character given of it in Scripture; where it is always represented in the blackest colours, and said to merit the heaviest punishment.

Others think that Judas betrayed his Master out of covetousness. But neither can this be admitted, if by covetousness is understood an eager desire of the reward given him by the priests: for the whole sum was not much more in value than 3*l.* sterling; a trifle, which the most covetous wretch cannot be supposed to have taken as an equivalent for the life of a friend, from whom he had the greatest expectations of gain. The reader will see the strength of this reason, when he calls to mind that all the disciples believed the kingdom of the Messiah was instantly to be erected, and that, according to the notion which they entertained of it, each of them, but especially the Apostles, had the prospect of being raised in a little time to immense riches. Besides, the Scripture tells us, that Judas's predominant passion was covetousness. He would not therefore be so inconsistent with himself, as when just on the point, according to his apprehension, of reaping such a reward of his service, to throw all away for the trifling sum above-mentioned.

Others attribute Judas's perfidy to his doubting whether his Master was the Messiah, and suppose that he betrayed him in a fit of despair. But of all the solutions, this is the worst founded. For if Judas thought that his Master was an impostor, he must have observed something in his behaviour which led him to form such an opinion of him; and in that case he certainly would have mentioned it to the chief-priests and elders at the time when he made the bargain with them; which it is plain he did not, otherwise they would have put him in mind of it, when he came to them and declared his remorse for what he had done. Doubtless also they would have urged it against our Lord himself in the course of his trial, when they were at such a loss for witnesses to prove their accusations; and against the Apostles afterwards, when they reproved them for preaching in Christ's name. Acts, iv. 15., &c. v. 27., &c. Farther, had Judas thought that his Master was an impostor, and proposed nothing by his treachery but the price that he put upon his life, how came he to sell him for

such a trifle, when he well knew that the priests would have given him any sum, rather than not have gotten him into their hands! To conclude this head, the supposition of Judas's believing that his Master was an impostor, is directly confuted by the solemn declaration which he made to the priests, implying the deepest conviction of Christ's innocence, (Chap. xxvii. 4.) *I have sinned, said he, in betraying the innocent blood!* It is also confuted by the remorse which he felt for his crime, when Jesus was condemned; a remorse so bitter, that he was not able to bear it, but fled to a halter for relief.

Since Judas's treachery then proceeded from none of these motives mentioned, it may be asked, what other motive can be assigned for his conduct? St. John tells us, that he was so covetous, as to steal money out of our Lord's bag. This account of him gives us reason to believe, that he first followed Jesus with a view to the riches and other temporal advantages which he expected the Messiah's friends would enjoy. It likewise authorises us to think, that as he had hitherto reaped none of these advantages, he might grow impatient under the delay; and the more so, as Jesus had of late discouraged all ambitious views among his disciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting his kingdom, which was offered by the multitude who accompanied him into Jerusalem with Hosannahs. His impatience, therefore, becoming excessive, put him upon the scheme of delivering his Master into the hands of the council, thinking it the most proper method of obliging him to assume the dignity of Messiah, and consequently of enabling him to reward his followers. For as this court was composed of the chief-priests, elders, and scribes, that is, the principal persons belonging to the sacerdotal order, the representatives of the great families, and the doctors of the law, Judas did not doubt, but that Jesus, when before such an assembly, would prove his pretensions to their full conviction, gain them over to his interests, and forthwith enter on his royal dignity. And though he could not but be sensible, that the measure which he adopted to bring this about, was very offensive to his Master, he might think that the success of it would procure his pardon, and even recommend him to favour. In the meantime, his project, however plausible it might appear to one of his turn, was far from being free from difficulty: and therefore while he revolved it in his own mind, many things might occur to stagger his resolution. At length some-  
thing.

betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, the temple, <sup>e</sup> and departed, and went and  
<sup>d</sup> What is that to us? see thou to that. hanged himself.

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces,

<sup>d</sup> Acts, 18. 15. Job, 13. 4. & 16. 2.

<sup>e</sup> Acts, 1. 18, 19. 2 Sam. 17. 23. 1 Sam. 31. 4, 5. Judges, 9. 54.

thing happened which urged him on. Thinking himself affronted by the rebuke which Jesus had given him, in the matter of the last anointing, and that rebuke sitting the heavier on him, as he had procured a former mark of his Master's displeasure by an imprudence of the like kind, he was provoked; and though his resentment was not such as could inspire him with the horrid design of murdering his Master, it impelled him to execute the resolution that he had formed of making him alter his measures. Rising up therefore from table, he went straightway into the city to the high-priest's palace, where he found the chief priests and elders assembled, consulting how they might take Jesus by *subtily* (ver. 4.). To them he made known his intention, and undertook for a small sum of money to conduct a band of armed men to the place where Jesus usually spent the nights, and where they might apprehend him without the danger of a tumult. Thus the devil, laying hold on the various passions which now agitated the traitor's breast, tempted him by them all.

That these were the views with which Judas acted in betraying his Master, may be gathered, *first*, from the nature of the bargain which he struck with the priests, ver. 15. *What will ye give me, said he, and I will deliver him unto you?* He did not mean that he would deliver him up to be put to death. For though the priests had consulted among themselves how they might kill Jesus, none of them had been so barefaced as to declare their intention publicly. They only proposed bringing him to a trial for having assumed the character of the Messiah, and to treat him as it should appear he deserved. The offer therefore which Judas made to them of delivering him up, was in conformity to their public resolution. Nor did they understand it in any other: for had the priests thought that his design in this was to get Jesus punished with death, they must likewise have thought that he believed him to be an impostor, in which case they certainly would have produced him as one of their principal evidences, no person being more fit to bear witness against any criminal than his companion. Or, though Judas had repented before the trial came on, and had withdrawn himself, the priests might have argued with great plausibility, both in their own court, and before the governor, that for a man's disciple to require the judges to bring him to condign punishment, branded him with such a suspicion of guilt, as was almost equal to a full proof. Again, when Judas returned to them with the money, declaring that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood, instead of replying (as they did ch. xxvii. 4.) *what is that to us? see thou to that*, it was the most natural thing in the world to have upbraided him with the stain he had put upon his Master's character, by the bargain that he had entered into with them. It is true, they called the money which they gave him *the price of blood*, (ch. xxvii. 6.) but they did not mean this in the strictest sense, as they neither had hired Judas to assassinate his Master, nor can

be supposed to have charged themselves with the guilt of murdering him. It was only the *price of blood* consequentially, being the reward that they had given to the traitor for putting it into their power to take away Christ's life under the colour and form of public justice. Nay, it may be even doubted, whether Judas asked the money as a reward of his service. He covetously indeed kept it, and the priests for that reason called it the price of blood; but he demanded it perhaps on pretence of gratifying and encouraging the people who were to assist him in apprehending Jesus. To conclude, Judas knew that the rulers could not take away the life of any person whatsoever, the Romans having deprived them of that power, (John, xviii. 31.) and therefore could have no design of this kind in delivering him up; not to mention that it was a common opinion among the Jews, that the Messiah would *never die* (John, xii. 34.); an opinion which Judas might easily embrace, having seen his Master raise several persons from the dead, and among the rest one who had been in the grave no less than four days.

That the traitor's intention in betraying his Master was what has been already urged, is probable, *secondly*, from his hanging himself when he found him condemned, not by the governor, but by the council whose prerogative it was to judge prophets. Had Judas proposed to take away his Master's life, the sentence of condemnation passed upon him, instead of filling him with despair, must have gratified him, being the accomplishment of his project, whereas the light wherein we have endeavoured to place his conduct shews this circumstance to have been perfectly natural. Judas having been witness to the greatest part of our Lord's miracles, and having experienced the certain truth of them in the powers which had been conferred upon himself, could never think that the council would have condemned him as a false Christ, far less as a blasphemer. He knew him to be perfectly innocent, and expected that he would have wrought such miracles before the council as should have constrained them to believe. Therefore when he found that nothing of this kind was done, and that the priests had passed sentence of condemnation upon him, and were carrying him to the governor to get it executed, he repented of his rash and covetous project, came to the chief-priests and elders, the persons to whom he had betrayed him, offered them the money again, and solemnly declared the deepest conviction of his Master's innocence, hoping that they would have desisted from the prosecution; but they were obstinate, and would not relent; upon which his remorse arose to such a pitch, that, unable to support the torments of his conscience, he went and hanged himself.

Thus it seems probable that the traitor's intention in delivering up his Master, was to lay him under a necessity of proving his pretensions before the *grandees*, whom he had hitherto shunned; thinking that if they had yielded, the

and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

whole nation would immediately have submitted, and the disciples have been raised forthwith to the summit of their expectations.

This account of Judas's conduct is by no means calculated to lessen the foulness of his crime, which was the blackest imaginable. For, even in the light above mentioned, it implied both an insatiable avarice, and a wilful opposition to the counsels of Providence; and so rendered the actor of it a disgrace to human nature. But it is calculated to set the credibility of the traitor's action in a proper light, and to shew that he was not moved to it by any thing suspicious in the character of his Master; because, according to this view of it, his perfidy, instead of implying that he entertained suspicions of his Master's integrity, plainly proves that he had the fullest conviction of his being the Messiah. And, to say the truth, it was not possible for any one intimately acquainted with our Lord, as Judas was, to judge otherwise of him; having seen his miracles, which were great and true beyond exception, and having experienced his power in the ability of working miracles, which, along with the rest of the apostles, he had received from him, and no doubt exercised with extraordinary pleasure. However, as the motives of men's actions, at such a distance of time, must needs be intricate, especially where history is in a great measure silent concerning them, we ought to be very modest in our attempt to unravel them: for which cause the above account of Judas's conduct is proposed only as a conjecture worthy of farther inquiry. See the notes on the next chapter.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The time was now at hand, when Messiah, the Prince, should be cut off.

1. He gives his disciples notice of his betrayal and approaching crucifixion, that they might be the less surpris'd. He had finished his discourse on the sufferings that they might expect, and on their encouragements to bear up under them, and now he was going himself to set them the bright example they should copy.

The views of a suffering Christ should support every suffering Christian. Within two days the dreadful plot was to be executed.

2. Just at this time the chief-priests, scribes, and elders, the members of the sanhedrim, and the men of highest authority among the Jews, exasperated now beyond measure, and resolved upon the death of Jesus, assembled to consult upon the properest means of accomplishing their bloody purpose. The high-priest's palace was the place where these conspirators met; and, having weighed the dangers of an uproar which might ensue, if on the feast-day they should attempt to arrest him amid the concourse of people who attended him; they resolved, if possible, to watch their opportunity to seize him privately, and either thus make away with him, or get him condemned by the Roman governor, and execute him as a malefactor, on account of crimes which they were ready to lay to his charge. *Note*; The fear of man often restrains those from wickedness, who are unawed by any fear of God.

adly, Jesus, though he spent the day at Jerusalem, re-

tired at even to Bethany, a village at a little distance, and was now in the house of Simon the leper; one of those probably who had experienced his healing power, and had become his faithful disciple. We are told,

1. The singular mark of respect shewn him by a gracious woman who was present when they sat at meat. She poured upon his head a box of precious ointment, as the profession of her faith in him as the Messiah, the anointed of God, and as a token of her love to him, as her adored Lord and Saviour. See the critical notes.

2. The offence which the disciples took at the matter. They among themselves censured the action as an unnecessary waste of what might have been more profitably employed, if the money which so valuable a box of ointment would bring had been given to the poor; and perhaps meant tacitly to blame their Master for permitting this to be done, and not discountenancing the woman. *Note*; (1.) Charity bids us put the best construction on what is dubious; and we should be very careful how we censure those of over-doing, or as guilty of imprudence, who go farther than we dare or care to do. Probably the fault we complain of, will be found more justly retorted; and that not their intemperate rashness, but our lukewarmness and want of zeal and love for Jesus, is to be blamed. (2.) That is never wasted, which is employed for Christ and his service.

3. Christ rebukes his disciples, and vindicates this gracious woman. He knew their murmurs, and expostulates with them on the unjustness of their indignation, *why trouble ye the woman* by such harsh judging, and unkind sentiments of her conduct? The work was both suitable and seasonable, deserving of commendation, not censure. Among the poor, for whom they expressed such jealousy, they would always find objects to exercise their charity; but his bodily presence with them was short, and therefore this act of respect was not only pleasing to him, but had a particular view which they knew not: it was intended for his burial, as an embalming of his body though now alive, which she would not have an opportunity to do when he was dead; and this she did either by revelation, or the Holy Ghost directed her to the action for this end. So far therefore from issuing to her reproach, it should be mentioned to her perpetual honour, as the evidence of her genuine faith and love, wherever the Gospel should be preached in the whole world. (See the Annotations.) *Note*; (1.) If we knew the principles and motives on which others act, we should often see abundant reason to approve that conduct which now we condemn. (2.) It is a real grief to a gracious soul to be censured for well-doing, especially by those whose approbation he had reason to expect; but our judgment is with the Lord, and our reward with our God. (3.) We never need want opportunities of doing good, if we have hearts to do it; objects of distress every where abound. (4.) Those who honour Jesus, he will honour.

3dly, The traitor Judas provoked with the vindication of the woman, and vexed at the reproof which he peculiarly felt, as having been the chief murmurer and instigator of the rest, given up now to the devil's power, presently arose

8 Wherefore that field was called, 'The field of blood, unto this day.

9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, ' And they

<sup>f</sup> Acts, i. 19. Jer. 18. 2.

<sup>g</sup> Zech. 11. 12, 13.

rose full of malice and resentment, and went directly to the chief priests, who wanted, but could not hope to find, to fit an instrument for their hellish purpose. We need not startle to find that one of the twelve was a traitor, or had a devil: where shall we find, among professors in general, so small a proportion of hypocrites? We have,

1. The offer he made. *What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?* This was the very thing they desired; they dared not seize him openly; nothing therefore could be more opportune than to have a traitor among his followers, who could introduce them secretly, that they might arrest him without an uproar. The traitor, conscious of his Master's innocence, does not presume to vindicate his own baseness, by pretending the discovery of any crime, or daring to appear as an evidence against him; yet, resolved to ruin him, he proposes this villanous treachery. *Note;* (1.) Many want only opportunity and temptation, to shew the baseness and hypocrisy of their hearts. (2.) None wound the cause so deeply as those, who from apostles turn apostates, and employ their bitter enmity against the Gospel which they once preached and espoused. (3.) When the heart is bent on mischief, the devil will suggest the means. But see the notes and inferences for other views of the subject.

2. The chief-priests eagerly embraced the offer, and immediately the bargain is struck for thirty shekels of silver, *the goodly price he was valued at by them, Zech. xi. 13.* *Note;* (1.) They who sell themselves to work wickedness, often find the wages as wretched as the service is vile. (2.) Many cry out against the falsehood of this traitor, yet by crafty bargains, and inordinate profit on their goods, how often have they lied, deceived, defrauded, and sold their Master for less than thirty pieces of silver?

3. From that time Judas sought opportunity to betray him, that, acquainting them with his retirement, they might seize him in the absence of the multitude. The way of sin is headlong, one crime draws on another, the conscience is hardened by the repetition of guilt, and onward the miserable slave of Satan is hurried to the precipice of eternal ruin.

4thly, We have our Lord's celebration of his last passover.

1. The preparation for that solemnity. *The first day of the feast of unleavened bread,* when the paschal lamb was to be killed and eaten in the evening; the disciples, presuming that their Master would keep the passover at Jerusalem, though they knew of no house ready for his and their reception, asked him where they must prepare the paschal supper? and Christ, at the same time that he gave them a striking proof of his omniscience, directs them to a person who, on delivering the message that he gave them, would shew them the place they sought. *Say unto him,* who was probably a disciple, and well knew Jesus, *the Master saith, My time is at hand,* the time of his departure; *I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples;* this was the last kind office he would be able to shew them while upon earth. The

disciples, without hesitation, obeyed; found all things as he had said; prepared the passover; and at even when he came, the twelve sat down with him at table. *Note;* When we follow Christ in his commands, he will make us feast with him in his comforts.

2. During the supper, he took occasion to inform them of a circumstance which many of them would be shocked to hear; and this was, that one of them should betray him. He well knew the traitor and the plot, and gave them this notice for the confirmation of their faith, when the thing should come to pass. Exceedingly distressed at the thought that he should be betrayed, and more that one of them should be so perfidious, with anxious solicitude the eleven began severally to ask him, *Lord, is it I?* each perhaps trembling at the deceitfulness and treachery of their hearts; or rather grieved at the suspicion, and conscious of their innocence, desired to clear themselves from such an imputation. Just then, it seems, Judas stretched out his hand to dip the bread into the dish, and by this circumstance Christ pointed out the traitor; *he that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me,* which he mentions, to make the perfidy appear more base, and to shew the fulfilment of the Scripture; while he adds a terrible condemnation, if any thing might startle the hardened conscience of this apostate: the Son of man must indeed be betrayed, but woe to the traitor; *it had been good for that man if he had not been born,* a convincing proof of the eternal misery of every damned soul. With impudent effrontery, unabashed, though conscious of his guilt, Judas, who had been silent before, perceiving himself pointed at, endeavoured to brave it out; either fancying that Christ would not know of his guilt, or would not directly charge him with it, and therefore said, *Lord, is it I?* *He said unto him, Thou hast said.* The reply is express: he was the man. *Note;* (1.) True humility will ever make us jealous over our hearts; we know not to what we may be tempted, nor how weak we are to resist; nothing is too bad for the best to do if left one moment to themselves; therefore we should never be high-minded, but fear. (2.) The more nearly we have been connected with Jesus, in the participation of his ordinances, the more aggravated will be the guilt of unfaithfulness. (3.) Many put a bold face upon a bad cause, and they may indeed escape the judgment of men, but God trieth the heart.

5thly, All Jewish ordinances were now about to be abrogated, and among the rest the passover. In its room Christ here institutes the great Gospel ordinance, hence called *The Lord's Supper*, where he is held forth as our passover, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and we are invited to come and feast thereon. The paschal supper being ended,

1. Our Lord took bread, which lay by him, and, blessing it, brake and gave to his disciples, commanding them to eat, and explaining the import of what he did, saying *this is my body,* the representation of the sacrifice that I am about to suffer for your redemption, when my body shall be thus broken



took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, \* whom they of the children of Israel did value ;

10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

11 ¶ <sup>b</sup> And Jesus stood before the governor :

\* Or whom they bought of the children of Israel.

<sup>b</sup> Mark, 15. 2. Luke, 23. 3. John, 18. 33, 37. 1 Tim. 6. 13. with ch. 25. 26, 64.

broken on the tree, the constant memorial of which shall thus be observed in my church to all ages, as the passover perpetuated the memory of Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

The doctrine of transubstantiation, raised from this passage, is almost too absurd to need confutation ; and not only gives the lie to our senses, but contradicts the very nature of a sacrament. See, however, the Critical Notes.

2. He took the cup, and, with thanksgiving and prayer, having consecrated the wine, gave it to them, and commanded them all to drink of it, as the representation and memorial of that blood which he was now just ready to shed, to confirm and establish the New Testament, or Covenant, and to procure for them all spiritual blessings, and for as many also, as afterwards, trusting in his atonement, should plead the redemption hereby purchased for them from sin and guilt.

3. He takes a solemn farewell. No more would they enjoy this free and familiar converse with him, till the day, the glorious day arrived, when, admitted to his eternal kingdom, they should partake of those unutterable joys (signified by *the new wine*) which are at his right hand for evermore. *Note ;* A dying saint with delight takes his farewell of all the comforts that he ever enjoyed here below ; sweet as ordinances, the word, communion with God were to his soul, he is going where, instead of the drops that he tasted here below, he shall be admitted to drink of the living streams of eternal consolations, that flow uninterrupted, ever new, from the throne of God.

4. They closed the solemnity with a hymn ; and never is the song of praise more suitable than on such an occasion. Hereupon departing from the house, he retired by moonlight to the mount of Olives, the place appointed for the scene of his agonizing sorrows.

6thly, In their way to the mount of Olives, we are told,

1. The prediction of his sufferings, and of their flight, which Christ delivered to his disciples. He foretels them of the offence they would take at the treatment he should meet with that very night, inasmuch that every one of them would desert him, and fulfil the Scripture, Zech. xiii. 7. ; but though he should be smitten, and die, as it was prophesied of him, yet he should rise again and come to them, recover them from their fright and dispersion, and go before them into Galilee, where they would meet him to their unspeakable comfort. *Note ;* (1.) We know not our own weakness till the trying hour comes. (2.) We are never safe, and must never be secure. The sweetest seasons of communion with Christ are sometimes succeeded by the forest temptations.

2. Peter, unable to bear such a reflection, with too great confidence engages for his own fidelity, though all the rest should fly. He not only relies on his own resolution, but intimates a strong conceit of his superior courage. *Note ;* A haughty spirit is sure to fall. We have lost our

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footing the moment we begin to think any thing as of ourselves.

3. Christ warns him of the delusion that he was under in this self-confidence of boasting ; and assures him, that all his vaunted courage would quickly fail him,—that he would not only forsake, but disown him, repeatedly disown him ; and that during the present night, before the crowing of the cock announced the approaching return of day. And this he solemnly affirms, *Verily I say unto thee.* He knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. *Note ;* The forwardest to boast, are usually the first and foulest in their falls.

4. Peter still persists in his vain confidence, though warned by him who could not err ; and, with increasing vehemence, unable to bear the suspicion of denying his Master, solemnly affirms that he will sooner die than be guilty of such baseness. And all the disciples joined his assertion, unwilling to be outdone by Peter, and equally confident of their own zeal for their Lord. *Note ;* (1.) When death and danger are at a distance, it is easy to boast great things ; but, when they come, how many stagger ! (2.) It is among the follies bound up in the human heart, that we are all apt to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think ; and sad experience is in general needful to bring us to a more humbling view of our weakness.

7thly, With sacred reverence we are called to approach the scene of the Redeemer's agony. The storm of divine vengeance now arose, to discharge all its fury on him who bore our sins and carried our sorrows.

1. The place whither he retired was called Gethsemane, *an olive-press* ; for there it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief. The companions he took with him were his disciples, all but Judas ; and, leaving the others at a distance, with an injunction to sit there, he, with Peter, James, and John, retired into some more secluded part of the garden to pray. Those who had seen his transfiguration, are chosen to be witnesses of his deepest humiliation.

2. There his agony began : the sorrows of death compassed him about, and distress and consternation unutterable seized upon his soul. The words in the original are most emphatical, expressive of the heaviest load of grief, perplexity, dejection, and anguish. No outward cause appeared ; the conflict was internal : the powers of darkness now rallied their once-defeated forces, and summoned up all their fury for this decisive blow. The wrath of an offended God, due to the sins of mankind, all centered now on their Redeemer, and weighed him down under the intolerable burden. Death, with all its horrors of ignominy, shame, and torture, stood before him ; and, worse than ten thousand deaths of the body, the pains of hell gat hold upon his soul, the wages of our iniquities.

3. In this distress he acquaints his disciples with the sorrows of his soul, that even now pressed him down to the

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the

and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, \* Thou sayest.

12 <sup>1</sup> And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13 Then said Pilate unto him, <sup>2</sup> Hearst

\* i. e. It is so as thou sayest.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 26. 63. If. 53. 7. Acts, 8. 32, 34. Ver. 14. 1 Peter, 2. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 26. 62. John, 19. 10.

the gates of death, and only would end entirely with his expiring breath,—sorrows such as mortal never knew before, and perhaps beyond what even the damned ever felt. He enjoins them to continue there and *watch* with him, observe his agony, and be on their guard against their own approaching temptations.

4. He humbly applies to Him, whose terrors he suffered with a troubled mind. Being truly man, as well as God, he could not but wish for relief from pain, from pain to agonizing, and therefore poured out strong crying and tears, Heb. v. 7. He went a little further, that alone he might tread the wine-press of the wrath of God, and, there falling on his face, under a load of guilt and misery to the humanity alone insupportable, he poured out his complaints before his Father, *O my Father*, for with unshaken faith he still looked through the dark cloud: *if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*; if, consistent with the glory of the divine perfections and the atonement that he was about to accomplish, these torments may be alleviated or removed, his nature asks relief: *nevertheless*, if all that I suffer is needful to glorify thee, I am all resignation, I bow my neck, and say, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*; his human will, with perfect acquiescence, submits to the divine. *Note*; (1.) In all our sorrows it is good to make God our refuge, and in prayer to pour out our griefs into his compassionate bosom. (2.) Humble desire to be delivered from our sufferings is perfectly consistent with the most unfeigned resignation under them. (3.) Whether our troubles be removed or not, it is a sure token for good when we can say, *Not my will, but thine be done*.

5. Arising from the earth he returned to his three disciples, and, lo! astonishing to tell, while their Master was agonizing, they were asleep. Oppressed with grief, their senses were stupified, and their eyes closed. But Christ rouses them from their slumbers, and gently chides their disobedience to his commands, and inattention to his sufferings; and, directing his discourse to Peter, who lately appeared so forward in his professions of fidelity and zeal, he said, *What! is it possible! asleep! and I overwhelmed with anguish! Could not ye, from whom I had such expectations, and whose plighted vows of constancy till death promised other conduct, could ye not watch with me one hour? so short the space, so little difficult the command! Watch and pray; you have need to be awake, if not to sympathize and join with me, at least to guard yourselves, that ye enter not into temptation*, and by this sloth and drowsiness be exposed to fall more easily, when the approaching hour of your temptation comes. Yet, while he thus gently rebukes and admonishes, he also pities and kindly excuses them, *the spirit indeed is willing*; he knew that their hearts were really attached to him, that their love was without dissimulation, and that their desire was to serve him; *but the flesh is weak*; the body weighed down the soul; and he knew whereof they were made, forgave, and cast the mantle of love over the

failings which he could not but condemn. *Note*; (1.) Slothfulness, and neglect of prayer, in time of temptation, are the sure forerunners of a fall. We need always watch; but, when we are forewarned of danger near, we should double our guard, and be more importunate at a throne of grace. (2.) We have a compassionate High-priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

6. Our Lord again retires, repeats his fervent supplications, and submits to all his Father's will. Again he returns, and finds his disciples sleeping; their heavy eyelids were closed, and all his remonstrances were ineffectual to keep them awake and watchful. The third time he withdraws, redoubles his prayers, renews his self-resignation, and is heard: though the cup may not pass from him, he is strengthened to bear the load, and patiently to yield up his soul to God. Coming to his disciples, still they sleep, and now he consigns them to their repose, if they can or dare any longer indulge themselves, when his foes and theirs are now at hand. It is high time to awake, when the traitor is so near. *Rise, let us be going*, not to fly from the sufferings before him, but to meet them: since the hour is come, Jesus is prepared, and resigns himself into the hands of his enemies. *Note*; (1.) Though we have not an immediate answer, we must pray and not faint. (2.) Repetition of the same requests in prayer is often far removed from the *vain repetitions* which our Lord condemns. Reiterated cries in the same words frequently bespeak the warmest importunity of desire. (3.) When calls and warnings raise us not from spiritual slumbers, it is a mercy if Jesus sends heavier judgments, or corrections, to rouse our sluggish souls.

8thly, As the words dropped from his lips, his enemies appeared to seize him.

1. Judas, who knew the place of his Master's retirement, led the way: one of the twelve, and lately dipping his hand with him in the same dish, now the guide to this savage band, composed of Roman soldiers, and the servants and officers of the chief priests, armed with swords and staves, and under their authority pretending to seize Jesus as a criminal. Thus often, while good men sleep, unapprized of danger, the wicked are awake, and plotting their destruction. It is well for us that we have a Guardian, who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

2. He had given them a signal before they set out, left in the night they should mistake, by the glimmering of torches, the person of Jesus; and this was, that whomever he should kiss, that was he whom they should seize and bind. Accordingly, with the most hardened impudence, he no sooner descried his well-known Master's face, than he approached with the deepest professions of respect and warmest good wishes, and with a kiss executed his traitorous design. Well knowing his villany, Jesus rebukes his baseness, and with the piercing title of *Friend*, that should have spoken ten thousand daggers to his heart, replies,

wherefore

thou not how many things they witness against thee?

14 And he answered him to never a word; infomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

wherefore art thou come? how durst thou be present? What! lost to all shame? adding such impudence to foul ingratitude? *Note*; The bitterest enmity lurks often under the most plausible professions and apparent civilities.

3. Christ is immediately arrested and bound as a malefactor. He quietly yielded up himself, now his hour was come, and as a criminal submitted to the arrests of divine judgment for our transgressions.

4. Peter, fired with zeal at what he saw, instantly drew his sword, and, attempting a rescue, struck at one of the high priest's servants, who probably appeared very active on that occasion, and cut off his ear.

5. Christ rebuked him for his rashness, and bade him sheath his sword; *for they that take the sword shall perish with the sword*. Resistance at present only exposed them to useless danger; but, ere long, they would see those who arrested their Master fall by the sword of the Romans, or in some civil tumult as their own executioners. As for them, the weapons of their warfare were not carnal but spiritual; patience and prayer were their best defence. Besides, Christ neither needed their help nor chose to be rescued; if he had, effectual succours were even now at hand; more than twelve legions of angels, upwards of seventy thousand, were ready to appear, one of the least of whom could destroy a world. He had only to ask his Father, and these ministers of flame would attend his orders: *but how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* and their accomplishment, wherein also were involved the redemption of the world and the salvation of every faithful soul, was far dearer to him than his own safety. *It must be that he should suffer, that he might redeem; and therefore he willingly resigned himself as a lamb to the slaughter, Isa. liii. 7.* *Note*; (1.) God wants not our services: we mistake, when we think our feeble arm of importance to his cause. (2.) Christ's sufferings were voluntary: he might, whenever he pleased, have been released; but his love to sinful souls bound him stronger than the cords of his persecutors. (3.) Surrounded as the people of God are with enemies, still more and mightier are those who are for them, than all who can be against them; the innumerable company of angels is their guard.

6. Christ turns from his disciples to the multitude, and mildly expostulates with them on their present conduct. What use was there in all this armed host? had he behaved as a desperate villain, who needed such force to overcome him? or had he fled from public justice, that at midnight, in this clandestine manner, they sought to arrest him? The gentleness and innocence of all his conduct confuted the one, and his public daily appearance in the temple the other: but the Scripture must be fulfilled.

7. His disciples hereupon shamefully deserted him, and fled. Seeing him passively submit, and fearing lest Peter's rash action should exasperate the guard, and that they should be murdered, or seized with their Master, each endeavoured to shift for himself, and left him alone to bear his burdens. Their baseness and ingratitude herein were highly

criminal: and thus it became him to *tread the wine-press alone*.

othly, Our Lord, being seized as a malefactor, is dragged before the rulers, and his process begun.

1. His judges were his inveterate persecutors, the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who, though in the dead of night, waked to do him mischief, and were now assembled at the palace of Caiaphas the high priest. Before this confederacy of treacherous men was he presented as a criminal, while they sat in judgment upon him. The Lamb of God, now about to be offered for the sins of the world, was thus presented to the priests, (see Lev. xvii. 5.) before he bled on the altar.

2. Peter, whose fright began a little to abate, solicitous about his Master's fate, followed the crowd at a distance, and, mingling with the servants in the hall, thought he might, unnoticed, there hear the issue of the trial, and see whether Christ would deliver himself by some miraculous act of power, or what punishment they would inflict upon him. Thus, without a call, having thrust himself into temptation, he could not expect divine support; and his cowardly hypocrisy, of appearing among the crowd as one of those who had been employed to seize the prisoner, foreboded no good. For they who are ashamed to be known as Christ's disciples, if brought to the trial, will, like Peter, solemnly disown him.

3. Having brought Christ to their bar, and previously determined his condemnation, the question was, where to procure evidence to furnish them with a pretext for putting him to death; nothing less than his blood being able to satisfy his merciless and unjust judges: but though they endeavoured to procure accusations, and suborn witnesses against him, yet the falsehoods which they advanced were so palpable and inconsistent, that they carried their own confutation, and even before such partial judges could not furnish the shadow of a crime. At last two false witnesses appeared, and with virulence and insolence alleged that they had heard him say, *I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days*. He had said no such thing. His words were, *Destroy ye this temple, not that made with hands, as they added, Mark, xiv. 58.* but the temple of his body, John, ii. 21.; and his raising it up referred to his own resurrection, not the rebuilding of the material house of God. But by such a false quotation they meant to accuse him as an enemy to the holy place, and a blasphemer against God, as well as one that dealt in magic, from his presuming to say that he could raise such a building in three days. A far-fetched accusation indeed! and too weak to support the bloody sentence which they desired to ground thereon. *Note*; If false witnesses rose up against the innocent Jesus, laying to his charge things that he knew not of, let it not appear strange if we meet with the like injurious treatment. The disciple is not above his Master.

4. Unable longer to retain his rage, the high priest in a fury arose, vexed at being able to produce no more plausible an accusation; and out of all patience to behold the meekness and silence of Jesus, *dumb as the sheep before her shearers*, he

15 ¶<sup>1</sup> Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

16<sup>m</sup> And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

17 Therefore when they were gathered

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 26. 2, 5. Luke, 23. 17. Mark, 15. 6. John, 18. 39.

<sup>m</sup> John, 18. 40. Luke, 23. 25. Mark, 15. 7.

bids him make his defence instantly, if he had ought to say why sentence should not pass upon him. But Jesus held his peace. He knew their designs, and that the clearest evidence of innocence would weigh nothing before such judges. The high priest hereupon adjures and commands him upon oath to answer whether he was indeed the Messiah, God's eternal Son, or not; that from his own mouth they might obtain a charge against him, which they sought for from other witnesses in vain. *Note*; The silence of Jesus should teach us meekness before our bitterest persecutors.

5. To this solemn interrogatory Jesus makes a direct reply. He was apprized of their captious design; but his hour was come; therefore he professes himself to be that very Messiah concerning whom the high-priest spoke, though he knew the disdain with which they would treat his claim: *nevertheless* he made it before them all. And since they would admit no present proof of it, he would give them one *hereafter*, which should astonish them, *Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*: which would be fulfilled in the effusion of his Spirit after his ascension, in the ruin of their state and nation, and most eminently in the great day of his appearing and glory, when they, who sat as his judges, must stand as criminals at his bar, and perish under his righteous vengeance. *Note*; Impenitent sinners will one day be convinced, when it is too late, of the eternal ruin that they have brought upon their heads by rejecting the Lord's Christ.

6. Pretending to be shocked at such blasphemy, in token of his abhorrence, the high-priest rent his clothes; and, appealing to the council for the evidence of the crime, now clear from the confession of Jesus, presumes further witnesses to be needless: and all concurred in the opinion that he deserved to die as a blasphemer, for arrogating to himself divine power and honours. Thus was he condemned, though innocent, that we might be acquitted, though guilty.

7. No sooner was he thus unjustly condemned, than they began to treat him with all manner of indignities: some of the company, or the officers and servants, spat on his face, in token of detestation and contempt; beat and buffeted him with the palms of their hands, or with rods; and in ridicule of his prophetic character, having blindfolded his eyes, bid him tell who smote him. To such insult and suffering did the holy Jesus submit for our sakes: he hid not his face from shame and spitting, that our faces might not be covered with everlasting shame and contempt; he was bruised for our iniquities, that we might not be crushed for ever under the wrath of God. If we then, for his sake, are rendered contemptible, ridiculed, and mocked, by wicked men, let it be remembered how much more he bore for us; and let us never be ashamed of his reproach.

10thly, We have here the memorable event of Peter's fall and recovery.—A warning to us, never to be self-confident, lest we should fall like him..

1. His sin, with all the aggravations of it, is faithfully recorded; and blessed be God for the simplicity and fidelity of the sacred historians. Had they, in their account of God's saints, like the histories of human biographers, blazoned the excellencies and concealed the faults and infirmities of their worthies, how many an important lesson would have been concealed from us! While his Master was suffering within, Peter sat with the servants without. In bad company, no good can ever be expected; in the devil's palace we must not hope for protection; and, if we will associate with the crowd of his servants, the consequence naturally follows, we must be like them, or be laughed at. (1.) The temptation came first from one of the servant-maids; for the weakest instrument in the devil's hands can do much mischief. She shrewdly suspected, perhaps by Peter's melancholy looks, that he was a disciple of Jesus; or she had seen him formerly among Christ's attendants; and therefore charged him with her suspicions. Peter, quite disconcerted, shuffled out an answer, false, as he knew, and faithless, pretending not to understand her, and before them all denying the charge. *Note*; Many, who would hesitate at a direct lie, scruple not to evade; and will pretend not to understand what is said, when, in truth, it is because they are ashamed of their profession, and dare not avow their knowledge of Christ: which is most base, cowardly, and criminal. (2.) The second temptation quickly followed, and from a similar quarter. With infinite contempt of Peter's appearance, another maid-servant came up to him as he stood in the porch, perhaps meaning to steal off for fear of farther discovery, and, looking in his face, perfectly recollected his person among the followers of Jesus, and confidently asserted before those who stood by, that this fellow was certainly a disciple of Jesus the Nazarene: as if it was a reproach to admit such a fellow into their company. With such contempt and insolence are the disciples of Jesus often treated by those who know *them* not, because they knew *him* not. To silence such a suspicion, he solemnly denies his knowledge even of the person of Jesus, as if he had never seen him; and, to gain credit, backs his assertion with an oath; a shrewd proof of the falsehood that he urged: for they justly are to be suspected of making no conscience of a lie, who make none of rash oaths. (3.) A little while after, one who, perhaps excited by what had been suggested, marked Peter more narrowly, and was convinced by his provincial dialect and accent that he must be a Galilean, concluded certainly that he was a follower of Jesus, and declared it to his face before the company, with this evident proof, *thy speech bewrayeth thee*. Quite in a consternation, and not knowing what to say or do, he thought with a resolute air to carry it off; and, as in a passion at being suspected

together, Pilate said unto them, " Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barabbas, or ° Jesus which is called Christ ?

18 For he knew ° that for envy they had delivered him.

19 ¶ When he was set down on the judg-

° John, 24. 15. 1 Kings, 18. 21. Ver. 21.

° Ch. 21. 9, 11.

° Acts, 7. 9. John, 9. 22. & 12. 42. Eccl. 4. 4. Job, 5. 2. Prov. 27. 4.

suspected of such a thing, he began to curse and to swear, affirming with most horrid imprecations, that he never had the least knowledge or acquaintance with *the man* they mentioned, nor had ever before in his life seen him. He could not indeed have taken a more effectual way to prove that he did not belong to Jesus; his disciples never used such language. *Note*; (1.) One lie generally paves the way for another, and then perjury becomes needful to support the falsehood: so dreadfully connected are the links of sin. (2.) A real disciple of Jesus may ever be known by his discourse; his speech will indeed bewray him. (3.) While we look at such a fearful fall, we should tremble for ourselves, and dread the first step of deviation from the path of truth, lest with Peter we should be hurried down the precipice.

2. His recovery affords us as amazing an instance of divine mercy, as his fall has done of human weakness and corruption. *Immediately*, as he spake, *the cock crew*, a sound in Peter's ears more terrible than the burst of loudest thunders: it instantly recalled to his memory what Jesus had foretold, and he had most guiltily accomplished; his baseness, ingratitude, profaneness, perjury, all stared him in the face, and overwhelmed him with confusion. Unable to stay there a moment longer, *he went out* to give vent, in some retired corner, to the bursting anguish of his soul, and with tears of bitterest sorrow and unfeigned repentance bewailed his sin, and found mercy with a pardoning God. *Note*; (1.) Nothing so deeply affects the truly penitent sinner as the sense of his ingratitude, and base returns for all the love of Jesus to his sinful soul. (2.) They who have never wept with Peter over their sins, it is to be feared, have never felt their bitterness. (3.) It is never too late to return to God. None perish merely because of the greatness of their sins, but through their impenitence and unbelief.

C H A P. XXVII.

*Ver. 1, 2. When the morning was come, &c.*] The preceding transactions of this malignant night being over, as soon as the day dawned, the priests and elders, having condemned Jesus, resolved to carry him, loaded with chains, before the governor, that he might likewise give sentence against him: they could not otherwise accomplish their purpose, the power of life and death being now taken out of their hands. From the history of the Acts it appears, that the Roman governors of Judea resided commonly at Cæsarea, and that there was only an inferior officer at Jerusalem, with a single legion to keep the peace of the city. At the great festivals, however, they came up to suppress or prevent tumults, and to administer justice; for the governors of provinces frequently visited the principal towns under their jurisdiction on this latter account. See John, xviii. 39. and Lardner's Credibility, part i. b. 1. Pilate was, properly speaking, no more than procurator of Judea; but he was called governor, because this name was better

known, and because Pilate discharged all the offices of a governor, namely, in taking cognizance of criminal causes, as his predecessors had done, and as was usual with the procurators in the smaller provinces of the empire, where there were no proconsuls. See Joseph. War, b. 2. and Tacitus, lib. xv. c. 44. Our Saviour ate the paschal supper in the evening; then he went into the garden, where he was apprehended, and was in the high priest's palace the rest of the night. In the morning they hurry him away, bound with fetters to the common magistrate.

*Ver. 3. Then Judas—repented himself, &c.*] St. Matthew introduces this account of the fate of Judas, as we see, immediately after the Jews had delivered Jesus to Pilate; but after this the Jews must have been so intent on persuading Pilate to consent to his death, that there was hardly time for the Sanhedrim's adjourning to the temple where this occurrence happened, before they had prevailed with Pilate to condemn him; and as Judas must have often heard his Master say that he should be crucified, Pilate's order for his execution must have more sensibly affected him, than the Jews passing sentence on him; as they had not then the power of putting any one to death; and therefore this event, most probably, happened immediately after the condemnation of Jesus by Pilate. The word *τοτε, then*, with which the Evangelist begins this history, may be taken in some latitude, to introduce the mention of an occurrence which happened *about that time*, whether a little before or after, and need not be interpreted with so much rigour, as to determine it to an assertion of observing the exactest order in all circumstances. See Doddridge, Gerhard, &c. Dr. Macknight however is of a different opinion; "Be-  
" cause," says he, "Judas cast down this money in the  
" temple, it is thought that the council adjourned thither,  
" before they carried Jesus to the governor, and that Judas  
" found them there; but they were too much in earnest  
" to delay their revenge one moment; besides, they had  
" now no time to spend in the temple: he might come  
" to the priests immediately after they had condemned his  
" Master, while they were yet in the high priest's palace;  
" or he might accost them as they were passing along the  
" street to the *prætorium*; or he might find them standing  
" before the *prætorium*; into which they would not enter,  
" lest they should be defiled: this latter seems to be the  
" true supposition; for the historian insinuates, that Judas  
" addressed the priests, after they had carried Jesus to the  
" governor. When they refused the money, he left them,  
" and went to *hang himself*; but taking the temple in his  
" way, he threw down the whole sum in the treasury, or  
" that part of the women's court where the chests were  
" placed for receiving the offerings of the people who  
" came to worship. This money might be gathered up  
" by the Levite porters, who always waited at the gates  
" of the temple, (1 Chron. xxvi.) and might be carried by  
" them to the priests, with an account how they got  
" it."

*Ver.*

ment-feat, his wife sent unto him, saying, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.  
Have thou nothing to do with that just man :

9 If. 11. 10. Ver. 4. Acts, 13. 46. with Dan. 2. 1. & 4. 5. Job, 33. 15, 16.

Ver. 5. *And went and hanged himself*] When Judas found that he could not prevent the horrid effects of his treachery, his conscience lashed him more furiously than before, suggesting thoughts which by turns made the deepest wounds in his soul. His Master's innocence and benevolence, the usefulness of his life, the favours that he had received from him, with many other considerations, crowded into his mind, and racked him to such a degree, that his torment became intolerable. Wherefore, unable to sustain the misery of those agonizing passions and reflections, he makes a full confession of his Master's innocence, returns the wages of iniquity, and goes and hangs himself. St. Peter seems to give a different account of the traitor's death:—*Falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out*, Acts, i. 18. And to reconcile the two passages, Tobit, iii. 10. is commonly brought to prove that the word ἀπὸ γαστροῦ, in St. Matthew, may signify suffocation with grief, in consequence of which a man's bowels may gush out; and instances are cited from Virgil, Eclogue vii. 26.:

Invidiâ rumpantur ut ilia Codro.

and from Josephus, Antiq. xv. c. 13. where one Zenodorus is mentioned, who is supposed to have died in this manner. The Talmudists make such a suffocation the punishment usually inflicted by God upon such persons as bore false witness against their neighbour. But as the above-quoted instances may be otherwise understood, it is more natural to suppose that Judas hanged himself on some tree growing out of a precipice, and that the branch breaking, or the knot of the rope wherewith he hanged himself opening, he fell down headlong, and dashed himself to pieces, so that his bowels gushed out. St. Peter's phrase, ἐλάκησε μέσος, *he burst asunder*, favours this conjecture; for λακω signifies properly *lacero cum strepitu*, to rend or tear with a noise or cracking, and so may imply that Judas burst asunder by falling from an height. See Le Clerc, Grotius, and Wetstein. Thus perished Judas Iscariot the traitor,—a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness and worldly passions, and a standing monument of the divine vengeance, fit to deter future generations from acting contrary to conscience through love of the world; for which this unhappy wretch betrayed his Master, Friend, and Saviour, and cast away his own soul!

Ver. 6—8. *The treasury, &c.*] Καρβανῶν: the place where the gifts set apart for the service of the temple, and for other pious uses, were deposited, 2 Kings, xii. 10. Mark, xii. 41, 42. Such an offering as this price of blood would have been as much an abomination to the Lord, as the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, Deut. xxiii. 18. The chief priests therefore determined to buy the potter's field with it, for burying strangers in: that is to say, such persons, whether Jews or Gentiles, as, happening to die at Jerusalem, had no burying-place of their own. Because the deliberation of the priests concerning this matter, and

their buying the potter's field, had an immediate relation to Judas's treachery, St. Matthew very properly takes notice of it here, though the purchase might not have been made for some days, perhaps weeks or months, after the unhappy death of Judas. *Thirty pieces of silver* may seem a very inconsiderable price for a field so near Jerusalem. But as Grotius well observes, the ground was probably much spoiled by digging it up for earth to make potter's vessels, so that it was now unfit for tillage or pasture, and consequently of small value. This field was called *Acheldama*, or the *field of blood*, because it was bought with the money which Judas received for betraying his Master's life. Divine Providence seems to have set this name upon the field, to perpetuate the memory of the transaction: in St. Peter's speech it is intimated that Judas made an acquisition of infamy and disgrace; for the people of those times might be supposed to say, as they passed by, "This field was purchased with the money for which Judas sold his Master." Some ancient authors have even supposed that this was the place where Judas hanged himself, and was buried. St. Jerome, who had been upon the spot, tells us, that they still shewed this field in his time; that it lay south of mount Sion, and that they buried there the meanest of their people. The historians mentioning the purchase of the potter's field with the money for which Judas betrayed his Master, being an appeal to a very public transaction, serves to put the truth of this part of the history beyond all manner of exception.

Ver. 9, 10. *Then was fulfilled, &c.*] I. Concerning this prophecy we must, first, remark, that Zachary, not Jeremy, is the prophet in whose writings this passage is found. Some learned men have supposed, that there might have been such a passage as this in some of Jeremiah's writings, which were extant in the apostles' times, but now are lost; and indeed St. Jerome expressly affirms, that these very words were read by him in an apocryphal book of the prophet Jeremy; and as we find in 2 Macc. ii. 1—9. many words said to have been spoken by the prophet Jeremy, which are not in the book of his prophecy, why might not these words also have been spoken by him, and kept in memory, or in some writing, till the time of Zachary? of whom it is observable, that he loved to use the words of Jeremiah, as appears on comparing many passages; whence the Jews used to say, that the spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah; and so both made but one prophet: and Mr. Mede thinks it highly probable that Jeremiah wrote the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of Zechariah, in the last of which these words are found. Others assert, that, as the Jews place Jeremiah's prophecy first of the sixteen, the whole book of the prophets might be called by the single name of Jeremiah; so that by quoting Jeremiah, the book of the prophets, or the collection of prophecies in general, was quoted; just as by the *Psalms* they meant the *hagiographa*, or the moral books of Scripture in general, because the Psalms were placed at the head of this collection.

See

20 ¶ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

¶ Mark, 15. 11. Luke, 23. 18. John, 18. 40. Acts, 3. 14, 15.

See Luke, xxiv. 27. Though the present reading is certainly very ancient, it appears to me very doubtful, whether any prophet's name was mentioned in the first copies, as the Syriac version, which is allowed to have been made in the most early times, reads only, *which was spoken by the prophet*; and St. Austin tells us, that in his time there were many Greek Copies, in which no particular name of any prophet was inserted. We may therefore well conclude, that the passage stood originally without any prophet's name, which was afterwards inserted from some marginal remark, and so has remained ever since Origen's time; a full proof, as it appears to me, not of what the enemies of Christianity would object, but entirely of the contrary; namely, that the writings of the New Testament, so far from being in any degree corrupted, have been preserved with such a scrupulous exactness, that the preservers of them have not presumed to alter a tittle even in points of the least consequence, and where they might have been justified; a reflection, of great importance, and of much comfort to every true believer in these sacred books. II. Now, *secondly*, with respect to the prophecy itself, we refer to the notes on Zech. xi. 13. St. Matthew does not quote entirely either from the Hebrew or the LXX. but rather gives the sense than the exact words of the prophet; but by following the Syriac version, the passage may be translated thus, more agreeably to the original: "I have received of the children thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me." Dr. Doddridge observes, "as for the general propriety of applying these words on this occasion, it may well be vindicated; for the connection and sense of the prophecy seems to be this: in order to represent to Zechariah the contempt which Israel put upon their God, he had a vision to the following purpose: he thought God first appointed him to appear among them as a shepherd, making him, by that emblem, a representation of himself. After some time he directs him to go to the rulers of Israel, and ask them what they thought he deserved for his labours in that office. They give him the price of a slave, *thirty pieces of silver*, and this in the house of the Lord, where the court sat. On this, God, as resenting this indignity offered to him in the person of his prophet, orders him to throw it down with disdain before the first poor labourer he met,—who happened to be a potter at work by the temple gates,—as a fitter price for a little of his paitry ware, than a suitable acknowledgment of the favours they had received from God. Now surely if there was ever any circumstance in which the children of Israel behaved themselves so as to answer this visionary representation, it must be when they gave this very sum of *thirty pieces of silver*, as a price for the very life of that person whom God had appointed their great Shepherd: and, in order to point out the correspondence

"more sensibly, Providence so ordered it, that the person to whom this money went should be a potter, though the prophecy would have been answered, if he had been a fuller, or of any other profession." It may also be further observed, that God's ceasing to be the Shepherd of Israel, which was represented by the prophet's breaking his pastoral staves, was never fully answered, till their final rejection after the death of Christ, which may further lead us to refer the affront of their giving the pieces of silver to this event. See Zechariah, xi. We shall make some further remarks on this subject, when we come to the first chapter of the Acts. Sir Norton Knatchbull reads the passage, *and I took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was prized of the children of Israel:—ver. 10. (and they gave them for the potter's field) as the Lord commanded me.*

*Ver. 11. And Jesus stood, &c.]* See John, xviii. 29, &c. and Luke, xxiii. 2. for a more full account of our Saviour's appearance before Pilate.

*Ver. 14. And he answered him to never a word, &c.]* Jesus made no reply to the heavy charges laid against him; nay, he continued mute, notwithstanding the governor expressly required him to speak in his own defence. See Isaiah, liii. 7. A conduct so extraordinary in such circumstances, astonished Pilate exceedingly; for he had good reason to be persuaded of Christ's innocence. Indeed his humble appearance was a sufficient refutation of the charge which the Jews brought against him; and his silence served instead of the most elaborate defence; and possibly Jesus might decline making any public defence, lest the common people, moved by what he must have said, should have asked his release, and prevented his death; in which respect, he has shewn his followers a noble example of courage and submission to the divine will.

*Ver. 15. Now at that feast, &c.]* Pilate had already sent Jesus to Herod, having learned that he belonged to Galilee; and Herod had sent him back to him. Luke, xxiii. 6—11. At former passovers the governor had courted the favour of the people, by gratifying them with the pardon of any one prisoner whom they pleased. There was no law to oblige him to this; but as acts of grace are generally popular things, this seems to have been first freely used by the Romans, to please their tributaries, and now by custom was in a manner established.

*Ver. 16. A notable prisoner] A notorious criminal. Heylin.* It seems he was the head of the rebels; (see John, xviii. 40. Luke, xxiii. 19, 25.) the ringleader of a sedition, in which murder had been committed.

*Ver. 18. (For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.)* Pilate had probably heard of the stir made by the rulers on this occasion; and, as a prudent magistrate, could not but have inquired into the reason of it. The modesty with which Jesus appeared before him, must have given credit to the report that he had received; and the confidence which

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail

nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of *"* this just person: see ye *to it*.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, *His* blood *be* on us, and on our children.

26 Then released he Barabbas unto them:

<sup>1</sup> If. 53. 2, 1. John, 15. 18. & 10. 32. Rom. 8. 7. 8. <sup>2</sup> Deut. 21. 6, 7. Job, 9. 30. Pf. 26. 6. Prov. 30. 20. Jer. 2. 35. <sup>3</sup> Ver. 4. 19. Deut. 17. 6. & 19. 15. <sup>4</sup> Deut. 19. 10. Acts, 5. 28. <sup>5</sup> Theif. 2. 15. 16. Heb. 10. 29. J. sh. 2. 19. <sup>6</sup> 2 Sam. 2. 16. In the crucifixion of multitudes of them by Titus, and in their miseries for 1700 years past, they have felt the effects of their wish.

which Jesus placed in his innocence, by not replying to any charge that was brought against him, might have been sufficient to convince Pilate, that there was no fault in him. Nicodemus, or Joseph of Arimathea, might have been consulted by Pilate at the first appearance of the tumult; for Joseph of Arimathea most probably was personally acquainted with Pilate, as may be inferred from his going to him to beg the body of Jesus. We can have no doubt of their being acquainted, if Joseph was one of the council who assisted Pilate in managing the affairs of his province, and particularly in judging causes. All governors of provinces had a council of this kind. Accordingly we find it mentioned, Acts, xxv. 12. by the name of Συμβούλιον. It is objected to Joseph's being a member of Pilate's council, that it was composed of Romans only; yet even on this supposition he might be a member of it, since he might have enjoyed the privileges of a Roman citizen, as well as St. Paul. What other reason can be assigned for his being called βουλευτής, a counsellor, Luke, xxiii. 50. and an honourable counsellor? Mark, xv. 43. a name not commonly given to the members of the Sanhedrim, whose proper title was ἀρχοντες, rulers. Further, St. Luke tells us, ch. xxiii. 51. that Joseph did not consent to the counsel (βουλή) and deed of them; that is to say, he did not agree to the advice which the governor's council gave, when they desired him to gratify the Jews. See Macknight, Grotius, and Lardner's Credibility, b. i. ch. 2.

Ver. 19. *When he was set down, &c.*] Or, *While he was sitting on, &c.* While Rome was governed by a commonwealth, it was unusual for the governors of provinces to take their wives with them; but afterwards it grew customary, and the motion made against it in the fourth year of Tiberius was rejected with some indignation. This circumstance ascertains the time of the event, and affords a strong proof of the veracity of the sacred historian. Possibly the word σήμερον, rendered *this day*, may imply, that she had dreamed these things that morning, since Pilate rose; and as the heathens imagined those dreams most significant which came about break of day, she might on that account lay the greater stress upon them. Janfenius thinks, and very probably, that she had now a representation or foresight of those calamities which afterwards befel Pilate and his family. Josephus assures us, that Pilate, having slain a considerable number of seditious Samaritans, was deposed from his government by Vitellius, and sent to Tiberius at Rome, who died before he arrived there. And Eusebius tells us, that quickly after having been banished to Vienne in Gaul, he laid violent hands

upon himself, falling on his own sword. Agrippa, who was an eye-witness to many of his enormities, speaks of him in his oration to Caius Cæsar, as one who had been a man of the most infamous character. The words ἐκείνῳ, ἐκείνῳ, would be rendered more properly, *that just or righte us one*.

Ver. 23. *Why, what evil hath he done?*] So bent were the chief-priests and elders to have Jesus put to death, that though the governor urged them again and again to desire his release, declaring his innocence, and offering three several times to dismiss him, they would not hear him; to such a pitch was their enmity carried against the Lord of life! They insisted upon his crucifixion, as being the most ignominious death; they insisted upon his being sentenced to this death by a Roman governor; and among the Romans it was inflicted only upon the vilest of slaves. To have inflicted such a punishment as this upon any free Jew, would probably have been sufficient to have thrown the whole city and nation into an uproar. But now they were deaf to every thing but the clamour of passion; and in their madness forgot with how dangerous a precedent they might furnish the Roman governor: and indeed it turned dreadfully on themselves, when such vast numbers of them were crucified for their opposition to the Romans during the time of their last war. See on ver. 25. and *Inferences* on ch. xxiv.

Ver. 24. *Pilate—took water, &c.*] It is well known that the Jews in some cases were appointed to wash their hands, as a solemn token that they were not themselves concerned in a murder committed by some unknown person. See Deut. xxi. 6—9. In allusion to which law the Psalmist says, *I will wash mine hands in innocency*, that is to say, in testimony of my innocence. But as this was also a rite which was frequently used by the Gentiles in token of innocence, it is more probable that Pilate, who was a Gentile, did it in conformity to them. He thought possibly, by this avowal of his resolution to have no hand in the death of Christ, to have terrified the populace; for one of his understanding and education could not but be sensible that all the water in the universe was not able to wash away the guilt of an unrighteous sentence. The following lines of Ovid may be justly applied to Pilate:

Ah! nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina cædis  
Flumineâ tolli posse putetis aquâ! Fast. l. ii. v. 45.

Ah! ye easily self-deceived, who fondly imagine that you can wash away the horrid guilt of murder with the water of the stream!

Ver.



and when he had <sup>1</sup> scourged Jesus he delivered him to be crucified.

27 ¶ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the \* common hall, and <sup>2</sup> gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed

in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!

30 <sup>a</sup> And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

31 <sup>b</sup> And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

<sup>1</sup> John, 19. 1—15. Luke, 23. 24, 25. Mark, 15. 15—20. \* Or governor's house. <sup>2</sup> Pl. 22. 16. Prov. 29. 12. Luke, 23. 11. Mark, 15. 16—18. John, 19. 2, 3. with Gen. 3. 18. <sup>a</sup> Ch. 26. 67. If. 50. 6. & 52. 14. Mich. 5. 1. <sup>b</sup> Pl. 22. 6—8. & 69. 7, 19. Ch. 21. 39. Heb. 13. 12.

Ver. 25. His blood be on us, &c.] As this terrible imprecation was dreadfully answered in the ruin so quickly brought on the Jewish nation, and the calamities which have since pursued that wretched people, in almost all ages and countries; so it was peculiarly illustrated in the severity with which Titus, merciful as he naturally was, treated the Jews whom he took during the siege of Jerusalem; of whom Josephus himself writes, that *μαρτυρημένοι ἀνεξαρτήτως, having been scourged, and tortured in a very terrible manner, they were crucified, in view and near the walls of this city, (perhaps, among other places, on mount Calvary; and it is probable that this might be the fate of some of those very persons who now joined in this cry, as it undoubtedly was of many of their children.)* For Josephus, who was an eyewitness, expressly declares, "That the number of those thus crucified was so great that there was not room for the crosses to stand by each other, and that at last they had not wood enough to make crosses of:" a passage which, especially when compared with the verse before us, must impress and astonish the attentive reader beyond any other in the whole history. If this were not the very finger of God, pointing out their crime in crucifying his Son, it is hard to say what could deserve to be called so. Eifner has abundantly shewn, that among the Greeks, the persons on whose testimony others were put to death, used by a very solemn execration to devote themselves to the divine vengeance, if the persons so condemned were not really guilty. See his Observat. vol. i. p. 123. Joseph. War, lib. v. c. 11. and Doddridge. Bishop Fleetwood observes, that the modern Jews are as virulent against the name of Jesus, as their fathers were against his power; so that they suffer as their fathers did, and for a like reason.

Ver. 26. And when he had scourged Jesus] The Romans usually scourged the criminals whom they condemned to be crucified: this was the reason why Pilate ordered our Lord to be scourged, before he delivered him to the soldiers to be crucified. St. Matthew and St. Mark insinuate, that the scourging was performed on the pavement; for they tell us that, after it was over, the soldiers took Jesus into the pretorium, and mocked him; we may therefore suppose that the priests and the multitude required the governor to scourge him openly in their sight, and that he, to pacify them, consented, contrary to his inclination; which, as he believed Jesus to be innocent, must have led him to shew him all the favour in his power; and probably he thought that this previous punishment would have

excited the pity of the Jews, and have prevented the crucifixion of Jesus. See Eifner and Wettstein.

Ver. 28. And they—put on him a scarlet robe] St. Mark says, they clothed him with purple; but the ancients gave the name of purple to all colours which had any mixture of red in them. This was probably some old purple robe which they put upon him in derision of his claim to the kingdom of Judea, purple being worn by kings and great personages. See Braunius, de Vestit. Sacerd. l. i. c. 14.

Ver. 29. And when they had platted a crown of thorns] Though it is unquestionable that they intended hereby to expose our Lord's pretended royalty to ridicule and contempt, as well as by the purple robe and mock sceptre; yet had that been all, a crown of thorns alone might have served as well. They meant, without all doubt, to add cruelty to their scorn, which especially appeared in their striking him on the head, to drive the horrid thorns into the tender parts of his temples, when this crown was put on. If the best descriptions of the Eastern thorns are to be credited, they are much larger than any commonly known in these parts. Hasselquist, speaking of the *naba*, or *nabka* of the Arabians, says, "In all probability this is the tree which afforded the crown of thorns put on the head of Christ; it grows very common in the East, and the plant is extremely fit for the purpose, for it has many small and most sharp spines, which are well adapted to give great pain. The crown might be easily made of these soft, round, and pliant branches; and what in my opinion seems to be the greatest proof of it is, that the leaves much resemble those of ivy, as they are of a very deep green: perhaps the enemies of Christ would have a plant somewhat resembling that with which emperors and generals were used to be crowned, that there might be calumny even in the punishment." It has been observed, that the curse inflicted on our first parents included thorns as the product of the earth, and this curse was put an end to by the thorns here used. See Solomon's Song, ch. ii. 2. The word *καλαμίσκος*, does indeed sometimes signify a slender reed, (ch. xi. 7. xii. 20; 3 John, ver. 13.) but it also includes all kinds of canes, and it is most probable that this was a walking cane, which they put into his hand as a sceptre; for a blow with a slight reed would scarcely have been felt, or have deserved mention in a detail of such dreadful sufferings. See Hasselquist's Travels, p. 288. and Doddridge.

Ver. 31. They took the robe off from, &c.] It is not said that they

32 <sup>c</sup> And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

33 ¶ And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

<sup>c</sup> Mark, 15. 21, 22. Luke, 23. 26, 33. Numb. 15. 35. 1 Kings, 21. 13. Acts, 7. 53. Heb. 13. 12. Ch. 21. 39. John, 19. 17. <sup>d</sup> Pl. 69. 21. John, 19. 28. Mark, 15. 23.

they took the crown of thorns off his head, which served to gratify their passions both of malice and contempt: probably our Lord died wearing it, that the title which was written over him might be better understood. It was a Jewish custom in the time of Moses to execute delinquents without the camp; but after Jerusalem was built, they were executed without the city walls. Dr. Lardner has abundantly proved by many quotations, that it was customary not only for the Jews, but also for the Sicilians, Ephesians, and Romans, to execute their malefactors without the gates of the cities. See Heb. xiii. 12, 13. and Lardner's Credibility, part, i. vol. 1.

Ver. 32. *And as they came out, &c.*] We learn from the other Evangelists, that our blessed Lord had borne his cross agreeable to the custom in executions, at his first setting out. It was not indeed the whole cross which criminals carried, but only that transverse piece of wood to which the arms were fastened, and which was called *antenna*, or *furca*, going cross the *stipes*, or upright beam, which was fixed in the earth; the criminal, from carrying this, was called *furcifer*. Our blessed Lord, through the fatigue of the preceding night, spent wholly without sleep, the agony that he had undergone in the garden, his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trial, the want of food, and the loss of blood which he had sustained, was become so faint, that he sunk beneath the burden, and was not able to bear the weight of the cross. The soldiers therefore (for among the Romans the execution of criminals was performed by them) meeting with Simon of Cyrene, a town of Africa abounding with Jews, seized on him, probably by the instigation of the Jews, and compelled him to carry the cross after Jesus. Simon's sons, Alexander and Rufus, were two noted men among the first Christians, at the time St. Mark wrote his Gospel. See Mark, xv. 21. The soldiers, however, did not remove the cross out of compassion to Christ; but from an apprehension of his dying by the excessive fatigue, and thereby eluding the public punishment to which they were escorting him; or to prevent delay. See Lipsius *de Cruce*, and Bishop Pearson on the Creed, p. 203.

Ver. 33. *A place called Golgotha*] A Syriac word, which signifies a *skull* or *head*. In Latin it is called *Calvary*: the place was so named, either because malefactors used to be executed there, or because the charnel house, or common repository for bones and skulls, might have been there. See Mark, xv. 22.

Ver. 34. *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall*] It was usual to give criminals, before they suffered, a stupifying potion to render them insensible of the ig-

34 <sup>d</sup> They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,

nominy and pain of their punishment; but our blessed Lord, because he would bear his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupifying himself, but through the strength of patience, fortitude, and faith, refused to drink of it. St. Mark says, *they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh*, Ch. xv. 23. But the two Evangelists speak of the same ingredients: for though St. Mark terms that *wine*, which St. Matthew calls *vinegar*, he may have really meant vinegar, which was a common drink among the ancients, (see Numb. vi. 3.) and such as might very properly be called *wine*, in regard that it was usually made of wine, or of the juice of grapes; besides, it is well known that the ancients gave the general name of *wine* to all fermented liquors: it is evident therefore that to reconcile the Evangelists here, we have no occasion for the reading of Beza's copy, which has *οίνου* instead of *αἵνου*. *ἄζως* might be rendered *four wine*, as indeed the word *vinegar* properly imports; and this mixed with water was the common drink of the Roman soldiers, and consequently was in a vessel at hand. As to the other ingredient of this potion, let it be observed, that the word *χολή* in the LXX, is often used as the translation of the Hebrew word *רשף* *resph*; which properly was the name of a poisonous herb common in those countries, and remarkable for its bitterness; hence an infusion of it is called *ὕδωρ πικρῶν*, *bitter water*, Jer. xxiii. 15. and *ὕδωρ χολῆς*, *the water of bitterness*, Jer. viii. 14. ix. 15. Probably it was a weak infusion of this herb in vinegar and water, which our Lord's friends offered him, (as we have observed was usual on such occasions) to make him insensible, and to shorten his life. It is called indeed by St. Mark *ἴσμι μίχθου οἴνου*, *myrrhed vinegar*, perhaps because it had myrrh mixed with it, there being nothing more common than for a medicine compounded of many ingredients, to take its name from some one of them which is prevalent in the composition. That *myrrh* was proper in a potion of this kind has been shewn by Vossius; who proves from Dioscorides, lib. ii. c. 70. that frankincense, macerated in liquors, makes those who drink them mad; and that if the quantity taken be large, it sometimes produces death. Hence, when Ptolemy Philopater designed to engage his elephants, "He gave them wine mingled with frankincense, to enrage them." The Evangelists may be reconciled more directly still, by supposing that *χολή* signifies any *bitter drug* whatsoever; for it is applied to *wormwood*, Prov. v. 4. and by parity of reason may denote *myrrh*, which has its name from a Hebrew word signifying bitterness. Casaubon has given a third solution of this difficulty; he thinks that our Lord's friends put a cup of *myrrhed wine* into the hands of one of the soldiers to give it

'They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

36 And sitting down they watched him there;

37 And set up over his head his accusation written, 'THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38 'Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39 ¶ And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

40 And saying, 'Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. <sup>k</sup> If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 'He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said,

<sup>a</sup> Pf. 21. 18. John, 19. 23, 24. Mark, 15. 24. <sup>f</sup> It avowed his innocence and Messiahship in three languages which were generally understood. Mark, 15. 26. Luke, 23. 38. John, 19. 19—21. Deut. 23. 5. <sup>g</sup> If. 53. 12. Luke, 23. 32, 33. Mark, 15. 27, 28. John, 19. 19. <sup>h</sup> Pf. 22. 7. & 69. 20. & 109. 25. Lam. 2. 15. Mark, 15. 20. Luke, 23. 35. If. 53. 3. <sup>i</sup> Ch. 20. 61. John, 2. 19. Ch. 4. 3, 6. & 26. 63, 64. <sup>j</sup> 1a. 40. Ch. 12. 38, 39. & 16. 1. John, 4. 48. Luke, 4. 12. Heb. 4. 15. & 2. 18. <sup>k</sup> Pf. 22. 8. & 18. 1, 2, 19.

it to Jesus; but that he, out of contempt, added gall to it. See the note on Pf. lxi. 21. Lipsius *de Milit. Rom.* and Wetstein.

Ver. 35. *And they crucified him, and parted his garments, &c.*] This was the custom of the Romans; the soldiers performing the office of executioners, divided among them the spoils of the criminals. There was only Christ's *tunic* which they did not divide, but cast lots to see whose it should be. See John, xix. 23, 24. They also used to appoint a guard, to watch by the crucified persons, that nobody might come and take them away, ver. 36. Respecting the inscription ver. 37. which was also a Roman custom, we shall speak, when we come to John, xix. 19, &c.

Ver. 38. *Then were there two thieves crucified with him*] They placed Jesus in the middle, by way of mock honour, because he had called himself a king, and was now crowned with thorns; or, if the priests had any hand in this, they might design hereby to impress the spectators with the thought of his being an impostor, and to make them look upon him as the chief malefactor: by *thieves* may be meant here persons concerned in an insurrection, perhaps confederates with Barabbas: for the Greek word signifies those who take up arms, without commission or authority of a superior; and such, by the Roman laws, were subjected to crucifixion. See Mark, xv. 28. and on ver. 44.

Ver. 39, 40. *And they that passed by reviled*] The common people whom the priests had incensed against our Lord by the malicious lies which they spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the evidence of the witnesses seeing him hang as a malefactor on the cross, and reading the superscription placed over his head, expressed their indignation against him by railing on him,—*blaspheming*—in the original. See Pf. xxii. 7. They thought their sarcasm, *thou that destroyest the temple, &c.* the more biting, as this was one of the charges brought against him by the false witnesses, Ch. xxvi. 61. and the latter part of the verse contains the charge on which they had condemned him as being guilty of blasphemy.

Ver. 41—43. *Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, &c.*]

The rulers having, as they imagined, wholly overturned our Lord's pretensions as Messiah, ridiculed him on that head, and with a meanness of soul which will for ever render them infamous, mocked him even in the agonies of death. They scoffed at the miracles of healing, by which he demonstrated himself the Messiah; and promised faith, on condition that he would prove his pretensions by coming down from the cross. In the mean time nothing could be more false and hypocritical; for they continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding Jesus raised himself from the dead, which was a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been; a miracle also that was attested by witnesses, whose veracity they could not call in question; for it was told them by the soldiers, whom they had themselves placed at the sepulchre to watch his body. It is plain, therefore, that the priests said they would believe if Jesus came down, not because their incorrigible stubbornness would have yielded to any proof, however convincing, but to insult Christ; fancying it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands. It is difficult to tell what it was that the rulers alluded to in the 43d verse: *He trusted in God;—let him deliver him now, if he will have him;—εἰ θελεῖ αὐτοῦ, ἰφ ἡ ἐκδίκησιν ἐν αὐτῷ, &c.* Perhaps those who now spake, were the persons who attended Judas and the armed band when they apprehended Jesus. Luke, xxii. 52. On that occasion they had heard him order Peter to put up his sword, telling him that he could *pray to his Father, and he would give him more than twelve legions of angels.* In derision of this expression of his reliance on God, whom he called his *Father*, they say to him, now that he was hanging on the cross, "*He trusted in God that he would deliver him, and claimed a peculiar relation to him as his Son. If God really delights in him as his Son, let him shew it now, by delivering him from this ignominious punishment.*" But whatever the particular was to which they now alluded, certain it is that the rulers, by speaking as above, fulfilled a remarkable prophecy concerning the Messiah's sufferings, Pf. xxii. 8. where it is foretold, that the Messiah's enemies would utter these words in derision of his pretensions. Many of the Jewish

<sup>m</sup> I am the Son of God.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

45 ¶ Now <sup>o</sup> from the sixth hour there

was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour <sup>p</sup> Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama

<sup>m</sup> Ch. 26. 64. John, 3. 16. & 5. 17—20. & 10. 30. <sup>n</sup> Pf. 35. 15. Luke 23. 39—41. It seems that at first they both rallied at him. <sup>o</sup> Amos, 8. 9. Is. 50. 3. <sup>p</sup> Pf. 22. 1—21. & 69. 1—21. Heb. 5. 7. Mark, 15. 33—36. Luke, 23. 44—46.

writers themselves acknowledge that these words belonged to the Messiah; and it certainly merits a serious reflection, that at the very time when these priests and elders intended to explode our Lord's pretensions to the Messiahship, they should make use of what their own writers acknowledged to be a characteristic of the true Messiah. See Macknight and Doddridge.

- Ver. 44. *The thieves also—cast the same in his teeth*] Reproached him in like manner. St. Luke says, that *one* only of the thieves reproached him. See Luke, xxiii. 39, 40. Some commentators endeavour to remove this difficulty, by supposing that both the thieves might revile Jesus at first; but this solution is not very probable. The phrase is a Hebraism, it being very common in that language to express a single thing in the plural number, especially when it is not the speaker's or writer's intention to be more particular. Thus, Judges, xii. 7. *then died Jephtha the Gileadite, and was buried in the cities of Gilead*; that is to say, in *one of the cities of Gilead*, as it is well supplied by our translators. So likewise the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the worthies of the Old Testament, says, *they stopped the mouths of lions, they were sawn asunder*; whereas the former sentence is applicable only to Daniel, and the latter to Isaiah. So that by the word *thieves*, both here and in St. Mark, we are to understand only one of the thieves.

Ver. 45. *Now from the sixth hour, &c.*] During the last three hours that our Lord hung on the cross, a darkness covered the face of the earth, to the great terror and amazement of the people present at his execution. This extraordinary alteration in the face of nature was peculiarly proper, while the Sun of Righteousness was in some sense withdrawing his beams from the land of Israel, and from the world; not only because it was a miraculous testimony borne by God himself to his innocence, but also because it was a fit emblem of his departure and its effects, at least till his light shone out anew with additional splendour, in the ministry of his Apostles. The Jews had been accustomed to the figurative language of the *eclipse of the luminaries*, as significative of some extraordinary revolution or calamity, and could hardly avoid recollecting the words of Amos, viii. 9, 10. on this occasion. The heathens likewise had been taught to look on these circumstances as indications of the perpetration of some heinous and enormous crime; and how enormous was that now committed by the Jews! The darkness which now covered Judea, together with the neighbouring countries, beginning about noon, and continuing till Jesus expired, was not an ordinary eclipse of the sun, for that can never happen, except when the moon is about the change; whereas now it was full moon; not to mention that total darkneses, occasioned by eclipses of the sun,

never continue above twelve or fifteen minutes. Wherefore it must have been produced by the divine power, in a manner that we are not able to explain. Accordingly, Luke, after relating that there was a *darkness over all the earth*, adds, *and the sun was darkened*, Ch. xxiii. 44, 45. Farther, the Christian writers, in their most ancient apologies to the heathens, affirm, that as it was full moon at the pass-over, when Christ was crucified, no such eclipse could happen by the course of nature. They observe also, that it was taken notice of as a prodigy by the heathens themselves. To this purpose we have still remaining the words of Phlegon the astronomer, and freed-man of Adrian, cited by Origen from his book, at the time when it was in the hands of the public;—that heathen author, in treating of the 4th year of the 202d Olympiad, which was the 19th of Tiberius, and supposed to be the year in which our Lord was crucified, tells us, “That the greatest eclipse of the sun that ever was known, happened then; for the day was so turned into night, that the stars in the heavens were seen.” See Orig. contr. Cels. p. 83. If Phlegon, as Christians generally suppose, is speaking of the darkness which accompanied our Lord's crucifixion, it was not circumscribed within the land of Judea, but must have been universal. This many learned men have believed, particularly Huet, Grotius, Guffé, Reland, and Alphen. Another ancient writer asserts, “that walking in Heliopolis, a town of Egypt, with a studious friend, he observed this wonderful darkness, and said, that it certainly portended something extraordinary: that either the God of nature was suffering, or nature itself was about to be dissolved.” Josephus, it is true, takes no notice of this wonderful phenomenon; but the reason may be, that he was unwilling to mention any circumstance favourable to Christianity, of which he was no friend; and the Jews would, no doubt, disguise this event as much as they could, and perhaps might persuade him and others who heard the report of it at some distance of time or place, that it was only a *dark cloud*, or a *thick mist*, which the followers of Jesus had exaggerated, because it happened when their Master died. Such representations are exceedingly natural to hearts corrupted by infidelity. See Macknight, Doddridge, and Calmet's Dissertation on the subject.

Ver. 46. *Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, &c.*] A little before he expired, Jesus repeated the first verse of the 22d Psalm, pronouncing it in the Syriac dialect, which was the common language of the country; and speaking with a loud voice, that all who stood around might hear him distinctly, and know that he was the person spoken of by David. Some would translate the words, *My God, my God, to what a degree, or to what a length of time, hast thou forsaken me? Lama* in the Hebrew has this signification.

fabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, <sup>1</sup> This man calleth for Elias.

<sup>1</sup> Pf. 56. 5. with Mal. 4. 5. Ch. 11. 14. & 17. 11—13.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

<sup>1</sup> Pf. 69. 21. Mark, 15. 36. Luke, 23. 36. John, 19. 29.

tion. Accordingly St. Mark, in the parallel passage, has rendered it by *εἰς τὴν*. But, however translated, our Lord's words must be viewed in the same light with his prayer in the garden. For, as that prayer expressed only the feelings and inclinations of his human nature, sorely pressed down with the weight of his sufferings; so his words on the cross proceeded from the greatness of his sufferings then, and expressed the feelings of his human nature; viz. an exceeding grief at God's forsaking him, and a complaint that it was so. But as his prayer in the garden was properly tempered by the addition of the clause, *yet not as I will, but as thou wilt*; so his complaint on the cross may have been tempered in the same manner; perhaps by his repeating the following third verse of the Psalm, though the Evangelists have not mentioned it particularly: for that, in the inward disposition of his mind, Jesus was perfectly resigned, even while he hung on the cross, is evident beyond all doubt, from his recommending his spirit to God in the article of death; which he could not have done, had he been discontented with the divine appointments. The sufferings which made our Lord cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* were not merely those which appeared to the spectators, viz. the pains of death which he underwent. Many of his followers have suffered sharper and more lingering bodily tortures, ending in death, without thinking themselves on that account forsaken of God; on the contrary, they both felt and expressed raptures of joy under the bitterest torments. Why then should Jesus have complained and been so dejected under inferior sufferings, as we must acknowledge them to be, if there was nothing here but the pains of crucifixion? Is there any other circumstance in this history which leads us to think him defective in courage or patience? In piety and resignation came he behind his own Apostles? Were his views of Deity and religion more confined than theirs? Had he greater sensibility of pain than they, without a proper balance arising from the superiority of his understanding? In short, was he worse qualified for martyrdom than they? The truth is, his words on the cross cannot be accounted for, but on the supposition that he suffered in his mind pains inexpressible, inflicted on him by an immediate interposition of the power of God, the nature and intenseness of which cannot in the language of men be more justly, or more emphatically expressed, than by the metaphor of *God's forsaking him*. Some think that Jesus on this occasion repeated the whole 22d Psalm; and certainly, as it is composed in the form of a prayer, it must be acknowledged, that no address could be more suitable to the circumstances wherein our Lord then was, or better adapted to impress the minds of the beholders with becoming sentiments. Nevertheless, the things mentioned by the Evangelists as

next happening, were of such a kind, that they must have followed immediately upon the repetition of the first three or four verses of the Psalm. It is probable, therefore, that he stopped there. Perhaps it was not his intention to go farther; for it was the custom of the Jews, when they quoted large portions of Scripture, to mention only the first verses or words of the passage. Such of his hearers as knew these to be the first verses of the 22d Psalm, would easily understand that Jesus meant to apply the whole Psalm to himself. And as it contains the most remarkable particulars of our Lord's passion, being a sort of summary of all the prophecies relative to that subject, by citing it on the cross, and applying it to himself, Jesus signified, that he was now accomplishing the things therein predicted concerning the Messiah. Farther, as the Psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by citing it at this time, Jesus also claimed of his Father the performance of all the promises that he had made, whether to him, or to his faithful people, the chief of which are recorded in the latter part of the Psalm.

*Ver. 47. This man calleth for Elias*] Though Jesus spoke in the vulgar dialect, some of the people present did not understand him; for they fancied that he called upon the prophet Elijah to help him. Hence some have conjectured, that they were Roman soldiers who thus misunderstood Christ's words. The conjecture, however, cannot be admitted, unless these soldiers were proleptes, and had learned the language and religion of the Jews more perfectly than it is reasonable to suppose. We may therefore believe, that it was our Lord's own countrymen who gave their opinion concerning the meaning of his words; and though they misunderstood him, it may have arisen, neither from their ignorance of the language in which he spoke, nor from their hearing him indistinctly, for he spake with a loud voice; but from their not considering that he was repeating the words of the 22d Psalm. Others have supposed that this was the mistake of some Hellenist Jews, who did not understand the Syro-Chaldaic language. See Craddock's Harmony, part ii. p. 256. and Grotius.

*Ver. 48. One of them—took a sponge, &c.*] We have before observed, that vinegar, or a small sharp wine and water,—a mixture which was called *psisa*,—was the common drink of the Roman soldiers. Possibly, therefore, this vinegar was set here for their use, or for that of the crucified persons, whose torture would naturally make them thirsty. See John, xix. 28, 29. where we are told that *they put the sponge upon hyssop*, that is to say, a stalk of hyssop, called by the other Evangelists *καλαμῶς*, which signifies not only a reed or cane, but the stalk of any plant; for that this hyssop was a shrub, appears from 1 Kings, iv. 33. where it is reckoned among the trees. They did this

office

50 ' Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 ¶ ' And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; " and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

\* Mark, 15. 37, 38. Luke, 23. 46. John, 19. 30. Heb. 5. 7. Pf. 22. 14, 15. Dan. 9. 26. If. 53. 10. John, 10. 11, 15, 18. Heb. 9. 14.  
 \* Mark, 15. 38. Luke, 23. 47. Exod. 26. 31. 2 Chr. 7. 14. 2 Cor. 3. 12-16. Heb. 6. 19. & 10. 19. Eph. 2. 15. \* Pf. 18. 7. Exod. 19.  
 18. Hab. 3. 10, 13. \* Pf. 68. 20. If. 26. 19. Hof. 13. 14. John, 5. 21, 28, 29. & xi. \* Ver. 36. Mark, 15. 39. Luke, 23. 47. If.  
 11. 10. Ch. 8. 5-11.

office to Jesus, not so much perhaps from pity, as to preserve him alive, in hopes of seeing the miracle of Elijah's descent from heaven. See the next verse.

*Ver. 50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost*] St. John tells us, that when our Lord had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished.* "The predictions of the prophets are all fulfilled, and the redemption of the world is finished, to accomplish which I came into the world." And the other Evangelists inform us, that in speaking these words, our Lord *cried with a loud voice*; probably to shew that his strength was not exhausted, but that he was about to give up his life of his own accord. The Evangelists use different words in expressing our Lord's death, which our translators, notwithstanding, render in the same manner,—He *yielded* or *gave up the ghost*; St. Mark and St. Luke say, *ἐξέπνευσε*, *He expired*; St. John, *παρέδωκε το πνευμα*, *He yielded up his spirit*; but St. Matthew's language is most singular, *ἀφῆκε τὸ πνευμα*, *He dismissed his spirit*; as the same word *ἀφῆκε* is used, Ch. xiii. 36. Mark, iv. 36. xi. 6. and elsewhere. Now this expression seems admirably to suit our Lord's words, John, x. 18. *No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself*, &c. shewing (as did also the strong cry, which so much impressed the centurion) that he died by the voluntary act of his own mind, and in a way peculiar to himself, by which he alone of all men that ever existed could have continued alive, even in the greatest tortures as long as he pleased, or have retired from the body whenever he thought fit. Which view of the case, by the way, suggests an illustration of the love of Christ manifested in his death, beyond what is commonly observed; inasmuch as he did not use this power to quit his body as soon as ever it was fastened to the cross, leaving only an insensible corpse to the cruelty of his murderers; but continued his abode in it with a steady resolution as long as it was proper, and then retired from it with a majesty and dignity never known, or to be known in any other death; dying, if we may so express it, *like the Prince of Life!* See Heb. v. 7. Doddridge, and Gerhard.

*Ver. 51. The veil of the temple was rent, &c.*] While Jesus breathed his last, the veil of the temple was miraculously rent from top to bottom; most probably in the presence of the priest who burned the incense in the holy place at the evening sacrifice; for the *ninth hour*, at which Jesus expired, was the hour of offering that sacrifice. The sudden rending of that veil was a supernatural sign of the destruction of the temple being at hand, and of the dissolution of the Jewish economy. The earth also trembled, and the rocks rent, in token of the Almighty's dis-

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 ' Now when the centurion, and they

pleasure against the Jewish nation, on account of the horrid impiety wherof they were now guilty. Mr. Fleming tells us, that a deist, lately travelling through Palestine, was converted by viewing one of these rocks, which still remains torn asunder, not in the weakest place, but across the veins; a plain proof that it was done in a supernatural manner. Mr. Sandys, in his travels, p. 264. has given a natural description and delineation of this fissure; and Mr. Maundrell tells us, that it was about a span wide at the upper part, and two spans deep, after which it closes, but opens again below, and runs down to an unknown depth in the earth. He adds, that every man's sense and reason must convince him, that this is a natural and genuine breach. See Fleming's *Christology*, vol. ii. p. 97. and Maundrell's *Journey from Aleppo*, p. 73.

*Ver. 52, 53. And the graves were opened, &c.*] The ancient sepulchres were hewn out of rocks, which being rent by the earthquake, discovered the cells wherein the bodies of the dead were deposited; but though these sepulchres were opened by the earthquake at our Lord's death, yet the dead in them did not come to life till his resurrection: for *Jesus himself was the first-born from the dead.* Col. i. 18. and *the first-fruits of them that slept,* 1 Cor. xv. 20. It seems probable that those *saints* were not some of the most eminent ones mentioned in the Old Testament, but disciples who had died lately; for when they went into the city, they were known by the persons who saw them, which could not well have happened, had they not been their cotemporaries; and as the rending of the veil of the temple intimated that the entrance into the holy place, the type of heaven, was now laid open to all nations, so the resurrection of a number of saints from the dead, demonstrated that the power of death and the grave were broken, the sting was taken from death, and the victory wrested from the grave. In short, our Lord's conquest over the enemies of mankind were shewn to be complete and an earnest was given of a general resurrection of the dead. There is an ancient Greek manuscript, which reads in ver. 53. *after their resurrection*; and this is followed by the Arabic and Ethiopic versions. It may be as natural to read the passage with *When he yielded up the ghost, the graves were opened after his resurrection, many bodies of saints arose, and came out of their graves.*

*Ver. 54. Truly this was the Son of God*] Or the centurion. It is probable that this centurion was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and acquainted with their opinions. Others however think, that it should be rendered,

that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they <sup>a</sup> feared greatly, saying, <sup>a</sup> Truly this was the Son of God.

55 <sup>b</sup> And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him :

56 Among whom was <sup>c</sup> Mary Magdalene,

and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

57 ¶ <sup>d</sup> When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple :

58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

<sup>a</sup> Exod. 20. 18, 19. Pf. 48. 6. Acts, 2. 37. & 16. 29. <sup>b</sup> Ch. 8. 27. & 14. 33. & 16. 16. John, 1. 49. & 6. 69. Acts 8. 37. Neh. 1. 6. Pf. 13. 7. Ver. 40. <sup>c</sup> Luke, 8. 2. 3. Mark, 15. 40, 41. Luke, 23. 48, 49, 55. John, 19. 25. <sup>d</sup> Luke, 7. 37—50. Mark, 16. 1, 9. John, 20. 1—18. Mark, 6. 3. Ch. 20. 20, 21. Ver. 61. & 13. 55. Mark, 15. 40. <sup>e</sup> Mark, 15. 42—47. Luke, 23. 50—56. John, 19. 38—42. Pf. 22. 29.

was a Son of God; for as the centurion was a Roman, say they, among whom it was not uncommon to stile a person of remarkable abilities and merit a *son* of some deity, the centurion, in consequence of this custom, seeing the circumstances which attended this event, was convinced, that though Christ was executed as an impostor, yet he could not be less than the *son of a god*. The former however seems the most probable opinion, as it is most likely that these words of the centurion refer to those of the chief priests and scribes, ver. 43. *He said, I am the Son of God*, See Ch. xxvi. 63, 64. Elfner, in a note on this place, has shewn, that some of the heathens had a notion among them, that prodigies, especially storms and earthquakes, sometimes attended the death of extraordinary persons peculiarly dear to the gods. Bishop Sherlock has made a fine use of the passage before us in the following words: "Go to your natural religion, (says he) lay before her Mahomet and his disciples arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands and tens of thousands who fell by his victorious sword. Shew her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her to his retirements; shew her the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives: let her see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and a divine commission to justify his lust and his oppression. When she is tired with this prospect, then shew her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse: let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God: carry her to his table, to view his poor fare, and hear his heavenly discourse; let her see him injured, but not provoked; let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies; lead her to his cross, and let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

"When natural religion has viewed both, ask which is the prophet of God?—but we have already had her answer; when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at the cross by him, —she spoke and said, *truly this was the Son of God.*"

Ver. 56. *And the mother of Zebedee's children*] Though the construction of the original be dubious, yet I think it very rational, says Dr. Doddridge, to conclude, that the mother of the sons of Zebedee, or of James the greater and John, was a different person from the mother of James the less and Joses; both as the sons of Zebedee, though such distinguished friends of Christ, are never called his *brethren*, as James and Joses are, (See Ch. xiii. 55. and Mark, vi. 3.) and as some Scriptures plainly intimate, that no more than two of the Apostles were the sons of Zebedee. See Ch. x. 2. xxvi. 37. and Mark, iii. 17. The frequent mention which is made in the Evangelists of the generous and courageous zeal of some pious women in the service of Christ, and especially of the faithful and regular constancy with which they attended him in those last scenes of his sufferings, might very possibly be intended to obviate that haughty and senseless contempt which the pride of men, often irritated by those vexations to which their own irregular passions have exposed them, has in all ages affected to throw on that sex; which probably in the sight of God constitute the better half of mankind, and to whose care and tenderness the wisest and best of men generally owe and ascribe much of the daily comfort and enjoyment of their lives. See Mark, xv. 40.

Ver. 57. *A rich man of Arimathea*] A city of the Jews, anciently called *Ramoth*, which lay in the tribe of Ephraim, and was the city of the prophet Samuel. St. Mark, xv. 43. describes Joseph under these two characters; *first*, that he was an honourable counsellor; *secondly*, that he waited for the kingdom of God. And St. Luke, xxiii. 51. adds, that he had not consented to the condemnation of Jesus with the rest of the Sanhedrim. See John, xix. 38. and the note on ver. 1. of this chapter. Some critics would render the last clause, *who himself also made disciples to Jesus*; that is to say, after his ascension. The word *ἐμαρτυροῦσε* has this sense in the 19th verse of the next.

Ver. 58. *He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus*] St. Mark says, Ch. xv. 43. that he went in boldly, and craved the body. And it was certainly a courageous act for that rich and noble senator thus publicly to own his friendship for Jesus in the midst of his greatest infamy; and a person of such sagacity could not but know, that if a resurrection should happen, nothing would have been more natural than that he should be brought into question as a confederate in the pretended fraud of conveying him away. But the regard he had for his Master overcame all other considerations;

59 And, when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

62 ¶ Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and

\* If. 53. 9. Pf. 22. 15. Hof. 13. 14. So it could not be said another had risen.  
Acts, 4. 27, 28. Ch. 26. 3, 4.

h John, 7. 12. Luke, 23. 2. 2 Cor. 6. 8.

† Ch. 26. 17. John, 19. 14. Mark 15. 42.

‡ Pf. 2. 1-6.

§ Ch. 12. 40. & 16. 21. & 17. 23. & 20. 19. John, 2. 19.

considerations; he therefore requested leave to take down his body, because, if no friend had obtained it, it would have been ignominiously cast out with those of the common malefactors. See a more distinct account of this event in John, xix. 38, &c.

*Ver. 60. In his own new tomb*] See John, xix. 41. The sepulchre in which they laid our Lord, being but lately made, was unfinished, and had not yet a lock on its door; therefore they fastened the door by rolling a great stone to it. The word *roll* implies, that the stone was both ponderous and large, too large to be carried, and therefore it was rolled upon the ground; according to Beza's copy, it was so weighty, that twenty men could not roll it; which was the reason why the women asked that question recorded by another Evangelist,—*Who shall roll away the stone for us?* Which implied, that they were both too few and too weak to do it for themselves. This sepulchre it seems, differed from that of Lazarus, in being partly above ground; whereas the other, being wholly under ground, had a stone laid on the mouth of it, covering the entry of the stairs by which they went down to it. See Beza and Macknight.

*Ver. 62—64. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, &c.*] That is, after the sun was set. They took this measure, therefore, not on the *morrow*, in our sense of the word, but in the evening after sun-setting, when the Jewish sabbath was begun, and when they understood the body was buried: to have delayed it till sun-rising would have been preposterous, as the disciples might have stolen away the body during the preceding night. Besides, there is no inconsistency between this account of the time when the watch was placed, and the subsequent articles of the history, which proceed on the supposition that the women present at our Lord's funeral were ignorant that any watch was placed at his grave; for they departed so early, that they had time to buy spices and ointment in the city before the preparation of the sabbath was ended; whereas the watch was not placed till the sabbath began. The *day of preparation* was the day before the sabbath, (see Mark, xv. 42.) whereon they were to prepare for the celebration of it. The next day then was the sabbath, according to the Jewish style; but the Evangelist here expresses it by the circumlocution, *the day which followed the day*, because the Jewish sabbath was then abolished, and a new order succeeded. The Christian sabbath is the octave of that week. See Heylin.

When the scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign from Jesus, he referred them to that of the prophet Jonah, see Ch. xii. 39, 40. where he foretold his own resurrection from the dead the third day. Also at the first passover, when the Jews required a miracle of him, in confirmation of his mission, he replied, "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.*" See also what he said further to the Pharisees, John, x. 17, 18. Now if the persons to whom these two last declarations were made happened to hear the promise of the miracle of the prophet Jonah, they might, by connecting the *three*, understand, that Jesus meant to signify to them his resurrection from the dead on the third day, and might tell Pilate they remembered that he had said, while yet alive, *after three days I will rise again*. Perhaps also, on some occasions not mentioned by the Evangelists, our Lord might have made a public declaration of his resurrection in the very terms here set down; or we may suppose that Judas informed the council of his prediction; in short, whatever way they came to the knowledge of it, certain it is, that the chief priests and Pharisees were well acquainted with our Lord's predictions concerning his resurrection. It seems they were often repeated, and so public, that they were universally known; and one cannot help remarking upon this circumstance, that if our Lord's resurrection had been a cheat, imposed upon mankind by his disciples, it was the most simple thing imaginable for him to speak of it beforehand, because the only effect of such a prediction was to put all his enemies on their guard. Accordingly, the precaution and care which we find the rulers used in guarding the sepulchre, rendered it next to impossible for the disciples to be guilty of any deceit in this matter; and so by the Providence of God, what they meant for the entire subversion of the Christian cause, turned out the strongest confirmation of it. Mr. West, in his excellent observations on the history of the resurrection, has the following very useful remarks concerning the evidence of our Saviour rising on the third day: "That he did not rise before the third day, says this author, p. 222: is evident from what St. Matthew here relates of the watch or guard set at the door of the sepulchre. Now I observe from these words, 1. That the watch or guard was set at the sepulchre the very next day after the death and burial of Christ. 2. It is most probable this was done on what we call the evening of that day, because it was a high day—not only a sabbath, but the passover; and



say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: \* so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have <sup>k</sup> a

\* If that is believed, it will be worse than all that hath happened.

<sup>k</sup> Roman soldiers ready at your service. Acts, 4. 1.

“and it can hardly be imagined that the chief priests, and especially the Pharisees, who pretended to greater strictness and purity than any other sect of the Jews, should, before the religious duties of the day were over, defile themselves by going to Pilate; for that they were very scrupulous upon that point, appears from what St. John says, Ch. xviii. 28. of their not entering into the hall of judgment or *pratorium*, where Pilate’s tribunal was the day before, lest they should be defiled, and so kept from eating the passover. And if it should be said, that, the paschal lamb being always eaten in the night, all their sacrifices upon that account were over, and they at liberty to go to Pilate in the morning, or at what other time they pleased; I answer, that allowing the objection, it is still farther to be considered, that this was the sabbath-day; and can it be supposed that the Pharisees, who censured Jesus for healing, and his disciples for plucking and eating the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, would profane that day, and defile themselves, not only by going to Pilate, but with the soldiers, to the sepulchre of Christ, and setting a seal upon the door of the sepulchre, before the religious duties of that solemn day were past? Especially, as they were under no necessity of doing it before the evening, though it was highly expedient for them not to delay it beyond that time. Jesus had said, while he was yet alive, that he should rise again from the dead on the third day; which prophecy would have been equally falsified by his rising on the first or the second as on the fourth. If his body therefore was not in the sepulchre at the close of the second day, the chief priests and Pharisees would gain their point, and might have asserted boldly that he was an impostor; from whence it will follow, that it was time enough for them to visit the sepulchre at the close of the second day. On the other hand, as he had declared he should rise on the third day, it was necessary for them (if they apprehended what they gave out, —that his disciples would come and steal him away) to guard against such an attempt on that day, and for that day only. And as the third day began from the evening or shutting in of the second, according to the way of computing used among the Jews, it was as necessary for them not to delay visiting the sepulchre, and setting their guard, till after the beginning of that third day; for if they had come to the sepulchre, though never so short a time after the third day was begun, and had found the body missing, they could not from thence have proved him an impostor. And accordingly Matthew tells us, they went thither on the second day, which was the sabbath; and though the going to Pilate, and with the Roman soldiers to the sepulchre, and sealing up the stone, was undoubtedly a profanation of the sabbath in the eyes of the ceremonious Pharisees, yet might they excuse themselves to their consciences, or (what seems to have been of greater consequence in their opinions) to the world, by pleading the necessity

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“of doing it that day: and surely nothing could have carried them out on such a business, on such a day, but the urgent necessity of doing it then or not at all. And, as I have shewn above, that this urgent necessity could not take place till the close of the second day, and just, though but one moment, before the beginning of the third, it will follow, from what has been said, that in the estimation of the high priests and Pharisees, the day on which they set their guard was the second day, and the next day consequently was the third, to the end of which they requested Pilate to command that the sepulchre might be made sure. Here then we have a proof, furnished by the murderers and blasphemers of Christ themselves, that he was not risen before the third day; for it is to be taken for granted, that before they sealed up the sepulchre, and set the guard, they had inspected it, and seen that the body was still there. Hence also we are enabled to answer the cavils that have been raised upon these expressions, *three days and three nights*, and *after three days*; for it is plain that the chief priests and Pharisees, by their going to the sepulchre on the sabbath-day, understood that day to be the second; and it is plain, by their setting the guard from that time, and the reason given to Pilate for their so doing, viz. lest the disciples should come in the night, and steal him away, that they construed that day, which was just then beginning, to be the day limited by Christ for his rising from the dead; that is the third day. For had they taken these words of our Saviour, *The Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*, in their strict literal sense, they needed not have been in such haste to set their guard; since, according to that interpretation, there were yet two days and two nights to come; neither for the same reason had they any occasion to apprehend ill consequences from the disciples coming that night, and stealing away the body of their Master; so that unless it be supposed that the chief priests and Pharisees, the most learned sect among the Jews, did not understand the meaning of a phrase in their own language; or that they were so impious or impolitic as to profane the sabbath, and defile themselves without any occasion; and so senseless and impertinent, as to ask a guard of Pilate for watching the sepulchre that night and day, to prevent the disciples stealing away the body of Christ the night or the day following; unless, I say, these strange suppositions be admitted, we may fairly conclude, that in the language and to the understanding of the Jews, *three days and three nights*, and *after three days*, were equivalent to *three days*, or *in three days*. That he rose on the third day, the testimony of the angels, and his own appearances to the women, to Simon, and to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, which all happened on that day, are clear and sufficient proofs.”

Ver. 65. Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch] See ver. 54. Pilate, thinking their request reasonable, allowed them

3 4

them

watch : go your way, make *it* as sure as you can.

66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, ' sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 6. 17. Their stone, seal, and guard, but concurred to render Christ's resurrection the more illustrious and remarkable.

them to take as many soldiers as they pleased out of the cohort, which at the feast came from the castle Antonia, and kept guard in the porticoes of the temple; for, that they were not Jewish but Roman soldiers, whom the priests employed to watch the sepulchre, is evident from their asking them of the governor. Besides, when the soldiers returned with the news of Christ's resurrection, the priests desired them to report, that the disciples had stolen him away while they slept; and, to encourage them to tell the falsehood boldly, promised that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ear, proper means should be used to pacify him, and to keep them safe; a promise which there was no need of making to their own servants. See Josephus's Antiq. L. xx. c. 4.

*Ver. 66. So they went, &c.]* The priests going along with the guards granted them by the governor, placed them in their post, and sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of the sepulchre, to hinder the guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud whatever. We find a precaution of the like kind made use of by Darius, Dan. vi. 17. in the case of Daniel shut up in the lion's den. Thus while the priests cautiously proposed to prevent our Lord's resurrection from being palmed upon the world, resolving, no doubt, to shew his body publicly after the third day, to prove him an impostor; they put the truth of his resurrection beyond all question, by furnishing a number of unexceptionable witnesses to it, whose testimony they themselves could not refuse.

*Inferences.*—The sentence of death is past, and who now with dry eyes can behold the sad pomp of the Saviour's bloody execution. All the streets are full of gazing spectators waiting for the ruthless fight; at last, O Saviour, I behold thee coming out of Pilate's gate, bearing that which shall soon bear thee; but alas! worn out with sorrows, and unequal to the burden, the blessed Jesus soon sinks beneath its insupportable weight. It is not out of any compassion to thy misery, or care of thine ease, blessed Sufferer, that Simon of Cyrene is forced to sustain thy cross: it was out of thine enemies' eagerness for thy dispatch; thy feeble paces were too slow for their purpose; their thirst after thy blood made them impatient of delay.

Hadst thou done this out of choice, which thou didst out of constraint, how should I have envied thee, O Simon, as too happy in the honour to be the first man who bore that cross of thy Saviour—an honour, wherein multitudes of blessed martyrs, since that time, have been ambitious to succeed thee! Thus to bear thy cross for thee, O Saviour, was more methinks than to bear a crown from thee. Could I be worthy to be thus graced by thee, I should pity all other glories.

Jerusalem could not want malefactors, though Barabbas was dismissed: that all this execution might seem to be done out of zeal for justice, two capital offenders shall accompany thee, O Saviour, both to thy death, and in it.

Long ago was this unbecoming society foretold by the evangelical seer. *He was taken from prison and from judgment; he was cut off out of the land of the living; he made his grave with the wicked.* It had been disparagement enough to thee, adorable Jesus, to be sorted with the best of men. But to be matched with the refuse of mankind, whom justice would not suffer to live, is such an indignity as confounds my thoughts! Surely there is no angel in heaven, but would have rejoiced to attend thee; and what could the earth afford worthy of thy train? No, ye fond judges, ye are deceived. This is the way to grace your dying malefactors. This is not the way to disgrace him, whose guiltlessness and perfection triumph over your injustice. His presence was able to make your thieves happy: their presence could no more blamish him than your own. Thus guarded, thus attended, thus accompanied, is the blessed Sufferer led to that loathsome and infamous hill, which now his last blood shall make sacred. There, while he is addressing himself for his last act, he is presented with that bitter and farewell potion, where-with dying malefactors were accustomed to have their senses stupified, that they might not feel the torments of their execution. It was but the common mercy to alleviate the death of offenders, since the intent of their last doom is not so much shame, as dissolution. That draught, O Saviour, was not more welcome to the guilty, than hateful to thee. In the vigour of all thine inward and outward senses thou wouldst encounter the most violent assaults of death, and scornedst to abate the least touch of thy quickest apprehension! Thou dost but taste of this cup; it is a far bitterer than this that thou art about to drink up to the dregs. Thou refusedst that which was offered thee by men; but that which was mixed by thine eternal Father, though mere wormwood and gall, thou didst drink up to the last drop; and therein, O blessed Jesus! lies all our health and salvation. I know not whether I do more suffer in thy pain, or joy in the issue of thy sufferings.

Now, even now, O Saviour, art thou entering into thy dreadful lifts, and now art thou grappling with thy enemy, as if thou hadst not suffered till now. Now bloody passion begins. A cruel exspoliation is the prelude to this violence; again do these merciless soldiers lay rude hands upon thee, and strip thee naked; again those bleeding marks of the scourges laid open to a second time; again must thy sacred body undergo the shame of horrid nakedness: Lo! Thou that cloathest man with the garment, and all nature with its covering, standest exposed to the scorn of all beholders! As the first Adam entered his paradise, so dost thou the second Adam into nakedness: and as the first Adam was clothed in his glory when he had no other covering, so wert thou too: and more than so, thy nakedness, O Saviour, is our souls, not with innocence only, but with our sins; hadst not thou been naked, we had been clothed in confusion. O happy nakedness! whereby we

C H A P. XXVIII.

*Christ's resurrection is declared by an angel to the women: he himself appeareth unto them. The chief priests give the soldiers money to say that he was stolen out of his sepulchre. Christ appeareth to his disciples, and sendeth them to baptize and teach all nations.*

[Anno Domini 33.]

**I**N the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,

came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there <sup>b</sup> was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 <sup>c</sup> His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

<sup>a</sup> Mark, 16. 1, 2. Luke, 24. 1. John, 20. 1. Ch. 27. 56. <sup>b</sup> Or had been. Mark, 16. 4. Luke, 24. 2. John, 20. 1. <sup>c</sup> Dan. 10. 5, 6. Ch. 17. 2. Mark, 16. 5. Luke, 24. 4. John, 20. 12. Luke, 1. 11, 12. & 9. 2, 9. Rev. 18. 1.

vered with shame: O happy shame! whereby we are invested with glory.

Shame is succeeded by pain; methinks I see and feel, how, having fastened thee transverse to the body of that fatal tree, laid upon the ground, they racked and strained the tender and sacred limbs of my Redeemer, to fit the extent of their four appointed measures, and having tortured out his arms beyond their natural reach, how they fastened him with cords, till those strong iron nails which were driven up to the head through the palms of his blessed hands, had not more firmly than painfully fixed him to the cross! The fatal tree is raised up, and with a vehement concussion settled in the mortice!—woe is me, how are the joints and sinews of this patient sufferer torn by this severe distension! how does his own weight torment him, while his whole body rests upon this forced and dolorous hold! how did the rough iron pierce his soul, while, passing through those tender and sensible parts, it carried his flesh before it, and rivetted it to that shameful tree!

There now, Almighty Sufferer, there now thou hangest between heaven and earth, naked, bleeding, forlorn, despicable, a spectacle of miseries, the scorn of men. Is this the head that was decked by thine eternal Father with a crown of pure gold, of immortal and incomprehensible Majesty, which is now bleeding with a diadem of thorns? Is this the eye that saw the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descending upon that head, which now begins to be overclouded with death? Are these the ears that heard the voice of thy Father owning thee out of heaven, which now glow with reproaches, and bleed with thorns? Are these the lips, that spake as never man spake,—full of grace and power, which are now swollen with blows, and discoloured with blueness and blood? Is this the face that should be fairer than the fons of men, which the angels of heaven so desired to see, and can never be satisfied with seeing—which is thus defiled with the foul mixtures of sweat and blood and spittings? Are these the hands, that stretched out the heavens as a curtain; that by their touch healed the lame, the deaf, the blind; which are now bleeding with the nails? Are these the feet, which walked lately upon the liquid pavement of the sea, before whose feetstool all the nations of the earth are commanded to worship, which are now so painfully fixed to the cross? O cruel and unthankful men, that offered such treatment to the Lord of life! O infinitely merciful Saviour, who wouldst suffer all this for unthankful men; where shall

we find words sufficiently strong to express our boundless obligations!

Now, O ye cruel priests and elders of the Jews, you have full leisure to feed your eyes with the sight that you have so much longed for! there is the blood which ye purchased; and is not your malice yet satiated? Is not all this enough, without your taints and scoffs at so exquisite a misery? The people, the passengers, are taught to insult, where they should pity; every man has a scorn ready to cast at a dying innocent: a generous nature is more wounded by the tongue than with the hand. Thine ear, O Saviour, was more painfully pierced than thy brows, or hands or feet. It could not but go deep into thy soul, to hear these bitter reproaches from those whom thou camest to save.

But alas! how trifling were these in comparison of the inward torments which thy soul felt, in the sense and apprehension of thy Father's wrath for the sins of the whole world, which now lay heavier upon thee for satisfaction. This, O this it was that pressed thy soul, as it were to the nethermost hell. While thine eternal Father looked lovingly upon thee, what didst thou, what needest thou care for the frowns of men or of devils? But once he turned his face from thee, or bent his brows upon thee, this was worse than death. It is no wonder now if darkness was upon the face of the whole earth, when thy Father's face was eclipsed from thee by the interposition of our sins; how should there be light in the world without, when the God of the world, the Father of lights, complains of the want of light within! that word of thine, O Saviour, was enough to bring down the sun out of heaven, and dissolve the whole frame of nature, when thou criest, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!*

O what pangs were those, blessed Lord, which drew this doleful complaint from thee! thou well knewest that nothing could be more cordial to thine enemies, than to hear this mournful language from thee! they could see but the outside of thy sufferings. Never could they have conceived so deep an anguish of thy soul, if thy own lips had not expressed it. Yet as not regarding their triumph, thou thus pouredst out thy sorrow; and when so much is uttered, who can conceive what is felt! This was the very acme of that bitter passion, which thou wouldst undergo for us; when *the Lord laid on thee the iniquities of us all.* O Saviour, hadst thou not thus suffered, we must

4 And <sup>a</sup> for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, <sup>c</sup> Fear not ye: for I know that

<sup>a</sup> Ch. 27. 65, 66. Pf. 144. 6. & 48. 6. Dan. 8. 27. & 10. 7. If. 33. 14. Mark, 5. 36.

<sup>c</sup> Mark, 16. 6. Lukr., 24. 5. If. 41. 10, 14. Rev. 1. 17, 18.

have borne the heavy weight for ever. Thy sufferings are our salvation; thy dissolution is our safety.

But the severity of this torment was not long to be borne; and now the measure of thy sufferings, as well as the prophecies concerning thee, being fulfilled; all types and ceremonies, all satisfactions, both happily effected and proclaimed; nothing now remains but a voluntary, sweet, and heavenly resignation of thy blessed soul into the hands of thine eternal Father; and a bowing of thy head for the change of a better crown, and an instant entrance into rest, triumph, and glory.

And now, O blessed Jesus, how easily have carnal eyes all this while mistaken the passages and intentions of this thy last and most glorious work! Our weakness could hitherto see nothing here but pain and ignominy; now my better enlightened eyes see in the elevation of thine both honour and happiness. Lo, thou that art the mediator between God and man, the reconciler of heaven and earth, art lifted up betwixt earth and heaven, that thou mightst accord both. Thou that art the great captain of our salvation, the conqueror of all the adverse powers of death and hell, art exalted upon this triumphal chariot of the cross, that thou mightst trample upon death, and drag all those infernal principalities manacled after thee. Those arms which thine enemies meant violently to extend, are stretched forth for the embracing of all mankind. Even while thou sufferedst, thou reignedst. O the impotent madness of vain men! they think to disgrace thee with bitter scoffs, with poor wretched indignities; when in the mean time, the heavens declare thy righteousness, O Lord, and the earth shews forth thy power! the sun withholdeth his light, as not enduring to see the suffering of his Creator. The earth trembles under a sense of the wrong done to her Maker. The rocks rend; the veil of the temple tears from the top to the bottom; in short, the frame of the whole world acknowledges the dominion of that Son of God, whom man despised. Thou therefore, O my soul, unite in acknowledgment, not only of his dominion, but of his love; and living in constant adoration of his tender mercies, who did die for thee on the cross, intreat him in the last hour to sustain thee, and to enable thee to say, with his fortitude and faith, *Father, into thine hands I commend my spirit.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Though the Sanhedrim had condemned the innocent Jesus as worthy of death, they had not in their hands the power of capital punishments, and therefore must have him sentenced by the Roman governor before they could proceed to execution, the sceptre being now departed from Judah, and the country become a Roman province. Hereupon we are told,

1. On a second council held in the morning, in order effectually to get their bloody purposes executed of putting him to death, they determined to accuse him before

Pilate, at that time the Roman president, as an infamous malefactor and incendiary; and accordingly, binding him as a criminal, they led him ignominiously through the streets, from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's palace, and delivered him up, that sentence might be pronounced upon him, and that he might die the death of the cross; thus undesignedly fulfilling the predictions of Jesus, Chap. xx. 19.

2. Remorse had by this time seized on the conscience of Judas. When he saw that Jesus was condemned and ready to be executed, filled with horror, and agitated with self-indignation, anguish, and despair, he ran to the temple, and there in one of the chambers to which the council seems to have been adjourned, he brought the hated price of his wickedness, the thirty pieces of silver, and, publicly acknowledging the atrocious crime that he had committed in betraying innocent blood, would have returned their wages of unrighteousness. But they, instead of being struck with conviction, treated his confession with contempt. He had answered their ends; and as to the means employed, or the guilt that he had incurred, they cared not about it; as if it was nothing to them that they had bribed him to commit the villainy, and were that moment persecuting to death the innocent person whom he had betrayed. Made desperate by such neglect, and the unavailableness of this attempt to stop the prosecution of Jesus, his life became a burden, and the devil urged him to put an end to it. Casting down the abhorred silver in the temple before them, and flying to some solitude, he immediately hung himself, by self-murder finishing the measure of his iniquities. *Note;* (1.) The time will come when the sweetest sins will be turned into the poison of asps. (2.) There is no repentance without restitution, as far as possible, of ill-gotten gain. (3.) When wicked men can bring the professors of religion to join them, indifferent to the remorse which they afterwards behold in them, they only mock at the calamity, and at sin the cause of it. (4.) The love of money has been the fatal snare to many a soul: for this they have plunged themselves into the gulph of perdition. (5.) Despair is among the greatest crimes, and often ends in self-murder, a remedy still worse than the disease: for the deepest guilt there is mercy to be hoped, while life continues; but, when men fly from God to the devil for ease by suicide, they are undone for ever.

3. The money being left, they consulted how to dispose of it. Pretending conscience, they would not put it into the temple treasury, though probably it was taken thence, because it was the price of blood; and therefore, with the shew of great piety and humanity, laid it out to purchase a small piece of ground which had been dug up by a potter and was of little value, in which to bury strangers or proselytes: whereby they perpetuated their own infamy; the people, who knew what money made the purchase, calling it justly *Aceldama, or the field of blood.*

ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as

he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

<sup>f</sup> John, 2. 19. Ch. 12. 40. & 16. 21. & 17. 23. & 20. 19.

And herein they exactly fulfilled what the prophet had foretold, Zech. xi. 12, 13. The words are said to be in Jeremy, though only found in Zechariah: concerning which there are many ways suggested to solve the difficulty. The most probable seems to be, either that, in the division of the sacred books, the last volume began with Jeremiah, and therefore, though containing all the later prophets, bore his name; or that Jeremiah had so prophesied first, but had not committed it to writing, and Zechariah confirmed and wrote it in his prophesy. The words, as they stand in the prophet, are, *They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.* Thus did they who rejected the Messiah fulfil many of the great prophecies concerning him. *Note;* (1.) Many who are bitter persecutors of God's people, still study to maintain the character of piety and humanity among men. (2.) Christ's blood has provided a resting-place for poor sinners after death; and though he was treated with such contempt, and his price so low, we see in his humiliation peculiar glory; and the deeper his abasement was, it renders him in the eyes of all that believe more precious.

2dly, Behold the Son of God a prisoner at a human bar; and he, to whom every knee must bow, and whom we all must meet as our eternal Judge, now appears as a criminal before Pilate: having condescended to bear our sins, he submits to suffer in our stead as a transgressor. We have,

1. The charge laid against him. Knowing the jealousy of the Roman government, the chief priests, his accusers, had suggested that, in assuming the character of the Messiah, he meant to raise an insurrection, and make himself a king. Pilate therefore interrogated him on this head, whether he presumed to arrogate the title of *King of the Jews?* and Jesus acknowledged the charge; though he assumed no such temporal dominion as they suggested; his kingdom was not of this world: (see John, xviii. 36.) The chief priests and elders were hereupon very loud and clamorous in their accusations, as if he was a perverter of the people, a fower of sedition, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and affecting the sovereignty of the country. To all which Jesus, with astonishing patience, made no reply. What they said was indeed notoriously false, as themselves knew: but he wanted not to defend himself; his hour was come, and he stood prepared to answer the demands of divine justice, and to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Therefore, when Pilate urged him to reply to the charges, and clear himself of these accusations, he observed a profound silence, to the great astonishment of the governor, who could not account for so unusual a behaviour in a person whose life was at stake, and depended on that moment. *Note;* (1.) It has been usual with the enemies of the servants of Jesus to dress them up so as to render them suspected by the civil go-

vernment, and to insinuate ill designs against the state, in order the more easily to oppress them. (2.) Silence is often the best answer to the accusations of malice; and when we know our defence is sure to be overruled, it is fruitless to contend.

2. Pilate, convinced of the innocence of Jesus, and well knowing the motive of the virulence shewn against him by the chief priests, who were stung with envy at the excellence of his character, and the high reputation he held with many, which eclipsed their own, wished for a pretext to release him. And hereunto he was yet more induced by a message from his wife, who just at that time, while the trial was going on, sent to entreat him to do nothing against that *just man* before him: for she had that morning been terrified by a very uncommon dream concerning him, which bore strong marks of a divine original; and therefore conjured him to discharge the prisoner, lest he should bring down the wrath of God upon himself and family by condemning the innocent. Therefore, as it was an established custom at that feast to gratify the people with the release of any prisoner whom they chose, Pilate thought he could not fail of succeeding by proposing to the people their choice, whether of Barabbas or Jesus. The infamous character of Barabbas, who for sedition and murder, and other villainies, was held in the greatest detestation, left him no room to doubt that the people would prefer Jesus, whom they had so lately ushered with hosannahs into the city, and whose excellencies all must have seen. *Note;* (1.) God has access to the spirit, and can speak to our souls when our senses are locked up in deep repose. (2.) Sinners have sometimes solemn warnings; but they are too apt to slight the heavenly admonition. (3.) The nearer and dearer any person is to us, the more are we obliged to watch over him for good.

3. The multitude, instigated by the craft of their wily priests, who represented Jesus in every black and diabolical colour, and engaged them to prefer Barabbas before him, demanded the murderer, to the astonishment of Pilate, and rejected the Lord of life and glory: and, not content with this, when the governor, willing to release Jesus, inquired of them what they wished he should do with him whom many regarded as the Christ, or Messiah; they with one consent cried out, *Let him be crucified,* a death the most painful; ignominious, and accursed. Shocked at such a demand, Pilate remonstrates with them on the injustice and cruelty of such an action, *Why, what evil hath he done?* On the severest scrutiny his judge could see no fault in him, his adversaries prove none, nor did even the traitor suggest the shadow of a crime—A glorious testimony of the avowed innocence of Jesus. But this tumultuous assembly, notwithstanding, wrought up to a pitch of fury by their malignant priests and rulers, with louder cries demanded his crucifixion, determined to extort the governor's consent, and bear down reason and justice with rage and clamour. *Note;* (1.) How little dependance is

to

7 And <sup>s</sup> go quickly, and tell his disciples he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall that he is risen from the dead ; and, behold, ye see him : lo, I have told you.

\* Ch. 26. 32. Ver. 10. Mark, 14. 28. & 16. 7. John, 21. 1. Acts, 1. 3. & 10. 41. & 13. 31. 1 Cor. 15. 5. Ch. 4. 15. & 8. 11, 12.

to be placed on popular applause. They who one day cried, Hofannah to the Son of David, now cry, Crucify him, crucify him. (2.) The unspotted innocency of the Lamb of God evidently shews, that he bore not his own sins, but the sins of others : he voluntarily submitted to die as a criminal, that he, though just, might suffer the punishment due to the unjust, and thereby bring us unto God.

4. Pilate, unable to prevail with them, and not having resolution to deny their request, so importunately and clamorously urged, for fear of an uproar ; yet conscious of the innocency of Jesus, and shocked at the thought of murdering a just man, bethought himself of a miserable expedient to pacify his conscience without disobliging the people : and therefore, though yielding to their importunity, he protests against the fact ; and, taking water before them all, he washed his hands, that by this significative action he might appear clear from all the guilt which should ensue, declaring himself innocent of this righteous blood ; and therefore, since they compelled him to condemn the innocent, he lays it wholly upon them to answer for the crime before God and the world.—An absurd procedure indeed in a judge, whom nothing should awe from the administration of impartial justice.

5. They hesitate not to subject themselves to all the consequences which might ensue : and, since Pilate seemed scrupulous, they are very ready to quiet his conscience by solemnly transferring all the guilt upon their own, madly imprecating on themselves, and their latest posterity, the vengeance, if any were due, *His blood be on us, and on our children*. So daring do presumptuous sinners grow : so little are they apprehensive of the consequences of their impiety. But these murderers soon found the vengeance which they had imprecated terribly lighting on their devoted heads in the utter destruction of themselves and families ; such multitudes being crucified by Titus during the siege, that the crosses stood so thick around the walls, that there was no more room for them ; five hundred in a day thus miserably expiring. And to this hour the effects of that imprecation are visible upon this miserable people ; and will be, till, returning to the Lord whom they once rejected, the wrath shall be removed, and their iniquity be forgiven.

3dly, The matter being thus determined :

1. Pilate having released Barabbas, that most infamous criminal, delivered Jesus over to their will, having first scourged him severely, in hopes of moving their compassion, John, xix. 1. ; but finding it all ineffectual, and that they were bent on his destruction, he appoints his immediate execution on the cross, as they insisted. And herein we may observe, (1.) The fulfilment of the Scriptures, Ps. cxxix. 3. Isa. l. 6. liii. 5. where these stripes had been foretold. (2.) In the release of Barabbas we have an emblem of our own deliverance through Jesus Christ. As guilty perhaps have we been as this notorious prisoner : we have robbed God of his glory, and often

laboured to murder our own and others' souls. For which we must all have perished without hope, had not our divine substitute yielded up himself that we might go free, and that the chief of sinners might find in him plenteous redemption. (3.) Bloody as the stripes of Jesus appear, we need bless God for them, since by these stripes we are healed.

2. Being delivered into the hands of the inhuman soldiers, they dragged him into the common hall, and, to make themselves merry in his miseries, and in the view of the character that he assumed as a king, they stripped off his clothes, arrayed him in a scarlet robe in mockery, and, plating a crown of thorns, in derision placed it on his head, giving him a reed, or hollow cane, for a sceptre ; and, gathering the whole band around him, they, with insulting homage, bowed the knee, and addressed him with the deriding title of king of the Jews ; while some spat in his face in contempt of his majesty, and others snatched the cane out of his hand and smote him on the head that the thorns might wound the deeper his sacred temples. While we reflect on their wickedness with horror, indignation, and astonishment, let some measure thereof be transferred to ourselves. They were the instruments, but all mankind, and we in particular, have been the cause of all his torment. And when we see the innocent Lamb of God submitting to these indignities, and look on that face, marred more than any man's, defiled with spitting, black with buffetings, and dyed with blood streaming from his temples, what emotions of love and gratitude should glow in our bosom towards him who endured such things for us, that we might not be the mockery of devils, the scorn of angels, and abhorred of God ?

3. Glutted with cruelty, and satiated with such inhuman mirth, they stripped off his robes of mock majesty, and put on him again his own seamless garment, the perquisite of those who should be more immediately employed in his execution. Then, binding his cross upon him, John, xix. 17. they led him, as a lamb to the slaughter, a spectacle through the city, to suffer without the gate. But, it seems, wearied out with his sufferings, his strength failed him, and they were obliged to release him of his load, lest they should be disappointed of their cruelty in nailing him alive to the tree. Seizing on one who was passing by, known probably to have been a disciple of Jesus, and therefore treated with such indignity, they compel him to bear the cross after Christ to the place of execution. *Note* ; Every true believer must expect his cross, and be content to go to Jesus without the camp, *bearing his reproach*.

4thly, We have an account of the crucifixion of Jesus.

1. The place where he suffered was called *Golgotha*, signifying the place of a skull ; either from the form of the hill, or because the malefactors executed there were buried on the spot. Where death therefore erected his trophies, there Christ, who tasted death for every man, erected his cross, that he might in triumph look down upon

8<sup>h</sup> And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 ¶<sup>i</sup> And as they went to tell his disciples,

behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, <sup>k</sup> Be not

<sup>b</sup> Eccl. 9. 10. Rom. 12. 11. Ezra, 3. 12, 13. John, 16. 20, 22. & 20. 20. Pf. 2. 11. <sup>c</sup> If. 64. 5. Pf. 19. 11. Mark, 16. 9. John, 20. 14, 16. So; 3. 4. <sup>k</sup> If. 41. 10, 14. & 35. 3, 4. Rev. 1. 17, 18. Mark, 5. 36.

<sup>c</sup> If. 64. 5. Pf. 19. 11. Mark, 16. 9. John, 20. 14, 16.

upon his vanquished foe, as it was said, *O death, I will be thy destruction.*

2. Before they nailed him to the tree they offered him a bitter cup of vinegar mingled with gall. (See the Annotations.) He tasted it, but refused to drink. He wanted not to prolong his life, nor would do ought to discompose his mind, prepared to feel every misery before him, and desiring not to be excused the sensation of any one painful pang that he must endure. The gall of that cup our sins supplied; had he not atoned for them, we must eternally have drank to the dregs the cup of bitterness and trembling.

3. *They crucified him*; which was done by stretching the arms on the wood as it lay upon the ground, and nailing them; then they fastened the feet to a piece of wood fixed to the body of the cross, and lifting it up, stuck it fast in a hole prepared to receive it, the shock of which frequently dislocated the bones of the criminal; and there hanging upon the nails, in convulsions and torments inexpressible, he expired. Thus did the Son of God humble himself to death, even the death of the cross. Whilst angels with wonder and amaze behold him, what sentiments of transcendent admiration and love should glow in our bosoms, when we see him dying on the accursed tree, for us men and for our salvation?

4. The executioners divided his garments as their fee; and while they sat down and watched him, that no rescue might be attempted should the people now relent, they cast lots for his outer garment, which was without seam, and must have been spoiled if cut to pieces; thus in the most exact manner fulfilling the prophetic word, Pf. xii. 18. *They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*

5. On the cross a tablet was hung, importing the crime for which he suffered, as was usual on these occasions. But this bespoke his honour rather than reproach: *This is Jesus the king of the Jews.* Such indeed he really was; and whatever intention they had who wrote it, God designed even here that a testimony should be borne to his Messiah.

6. Two thieves were crucified with him, and he placed in the midst, as if to stamp the most indelible infamy upon him, as the vilest of all malefactors. *Thus was he numbered with transgressors, and with the wicked in his death.* Though he had done no violence, yet, bearing the sins of the world, divine justice treated him as a criminal, and he died under the curse of our iniquities.

7. On the cross he endured the greatest contradiction of sinners against himself:

[1.] From the common people, and passengers who went by as he hung on the tree. Unmoved at his sufferings, unaffected with the astonishing patience wherewith he bore them, they vented their blasphemies against him, wagging

their heads, as insulting over his miseries, (Pf. xxii. 7.) and triumphing in his torments; upbraiding him with his pretended ability of destroying the temple, and raising it in three days; and bidding him now put forth some of that power of which he boasted, in coming down from the cross to which he was nailed, and thus at least prove the truth of the high pretensions that he made, as being the Son of God. *Note*; (1.) When a man is run down, and cast out for his religion, under the name of enthusiasm, by the great and the rulers, almost every one is ready to join in the cry. (2.) If Christ was thus reviled and ridiculed, let us not think it strange, if the mouth of the ungodly be opened upon us in bitter words.

[2.] *From the chief priests, scribes, and elders.* They came to feast their eyes with this sight of misery, and, instead of being at their devotions in the temple, (Lev. xxiii. 7.) meanly mixed with the rabble around the cross, to gratify their malice, and spit their venom; mocking at him; and saying, *He saved others, himself he cannot save.* His present state, they suggest, evidently proved the delusion of the miracles to which he pretended, and the impossibility of his being the Saviour of the world; whereas in fact the very reason why he would not save himself, was, because it would not then be possible for him to save others, since on his sufferings their salvation depended. As he assumed the honour of Israel's King, they upbraid him with his arrogance, and bid him exert his authority, and loose himself from the cross; then, they profess, they will believe in him; though after what he had done, this was a mere subterfuge for their infidelity. Had he complied with their proposals, they would instantly have found new objections, and would suppose that some trick had been played; that he had never been nailed to the tree; as they afterwards evaded the evidence of his resurrection, by the absurd pretence that his disciples stole away the body by night. Because Jesus had professed such unshaken confidence in God, and claimed so near a relation to the Most High, they now bid him put it to the proof; intimating, that God's not delivering him in his distress, shewed him a deceiver; and while they thus vilified him in the eyes of the people, they hurled a fiery arrow against the faith of the Redeemer, to terrify his innocent soul, as if there was no hope for him in his God. (Pf. xxii. 8.) Unmoved, the Saviour heard in silence their blasphemies, and persisted patiently in accomplishing his own glorious work. *Note*; Many pretend want of evidence as a reason for their unbelief; but were Christ to indulge them with the grant of what themselves propose, they would be as far from faith in him as ever. The fault is in the heart: they who believe not Moses and the prophets, will be proof against every other method of conviction.

[3.] From the thieves who were crucified with him. See the Annotations.

afraid: <sup>1</sup> go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

11 ¶ Now when they were going, behold, \* some of the watch came into the city, and

<sup>1</sup> Judges, 10. 16. Hosea, 11. 8. Pf. 103. 8—13. Heb. 2. 11, 12. Ch. 12. 49, 50. John, 20. 17. See on ver. 7. \* Being terrified by the earthquake.

8. A dreadful darkness now came on over all the land. The sun miraculously withdrew his light, as if terrified at beholding his Maker's agony, and testifying his abhorrence of such transcendently atrocious wickedness; affording an emblem of that judicial blindness to which this devoted people were now abandoned. It might be intended also to represent the dreadful conflict with the rulers of the darkness of this world, which Jesus maintained on the cross, when, by dying, he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And this eclipse of the great luminary of heaven was also but a faint image of the darker eclipse in the Redeemer's soul, when every cheering beam of consolation was withdrawn, the light of his Father's countenance withheld, and a sense of this dereliction, arising from the wrath of an offended God, completed the measure of his suffering. Three such hours had never passed since *darkness was upon the face of the deep*.

9. After a long and silent conflict, about the ninth hour, his agony being now at the summit, with a loud but lamentable voice Jesus cried, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—Strange accents from him whom God had repeatedly owned for his beloved Son, and in whom he had testified himself so well pleased! We never hear one complaint from these sacred lips of all his inhuman treatment or bodily torment. What he then felt was infinitely more insupportable, and extorted this exceeding bitter cry. Not that the hypostatic union was dissolved, or that there was any real abatement of the Father's love towards him; never did he as Mediator appear more amiable than now, when, through the Eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God. But since he took upon himself the sins of the world, he was given for a while into the enemy's hands, and all the powers of hell were let loose upon him; every divine support was withdrawn, and the terrors of wrath due from an offended God seized on his soul, and sunk him in the lowest deeps. Despair excepted, I question much, whether the spirits of the damned have felt the wrath of God in this its utmost depth of bitterness: yet, though forsaken, firm and unshaken Jesus hangs fast on God, and in this deepest dereliction still can say, *My God*.

Lastly, The by-standers, either wilfully or ignorantly mistaking his words, said he *called for Elias*, as if he wanted his help, and that it was too late for him to cry now. And hereupon one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and with a cane lifted it to his lips, which might be a suggestion of compassion, since his pains must have created intolerable thirst; though usually it is supposed to have been done to mock and tease him, and add to his anguish: while the rest deriding said, *Let be, let him alone; let us see whether Elias will come to save him*, since he is to be the forerunner of the Messiah; but no such help, they presumed, would be afforded him, alike abandoned by heaven and earth.

12thly, The conflict is now over, the victory complete,

sin atoned for, Satan's head bruised, justice satisfied, death vanquished, hell shut up, the kingdom of heaven opened for all believers, and all this by the death of Jesus here recorded; concerning which we are told,

1. The manner in which he expired. Having finished the work the Father had given him to do, *he cried*, not as a dying man exhausted and spent, but *with a loud voice*, the shout of victory over all his conquered foes, and thus in his full strength *yielded up the ghost*; freely resigned his soul into his Father's hands, and his body to death, the threatened wages of sin, which he had consented to bear. Thus fell the spiritual Samson, *spoiling principalities and powers, and triumphing over them* on his cross. Thus died the great Redeemer, just at the time when the evening sacrifice of the lamb was slain, the figure of him who in the evening of the world appeared, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

2. The miracles which attended his death.

[1.] *Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain*, which separated the holy of holies from the outer tabernacle, where the table of incense stood, and the golden candlestick; and this at the very time probably when the priests were there ministering, and burning the sacred incense before it. Whereby was signified, (1.) The abolition of the Mosaic services, the darkness of that dispensation being now removed, and its mysteries unveiled; so that with open face we now behold the glory of the Lord. (2.) The demolition of the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, who are alike called into the fellowship of the Gospel, and partakers of the same privileges. (3.) The free access which every sinner has to God; so that he may now come boldly to a throne of grace: and every faithful soul, when death shall rend the veil of flesh, shall be admitted to a throne of glory, *by that new and living way which Jesus hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*, Heb. iv. 16. x. 19, 20.

[2.] *The earth did quake, and the rocks were rent* by it; marks of God's wrath against these murderers, and of that fury which he would pour out upon them, when their rocky hearts should be broken in pieces. Hereby also was signified the destruction of Satan's kingdom, and the wondrous changes now about to be wrought in the world, when the most stout-hearted sinners should tremble before the Lord, and feel their souls rent with deepest conviction when led to look up to a crucified Jesus.

[3.] *The graves were opened*, immediately by the earthquake, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many,—a glorious proof of Christ's victory over death and the grave, and an assurance to all his saints of a joyful resurrection.

Who these saints were, whether the patriarchs, or such as had seen Christ in the flesh; to whom they appeared; what they said or did; these and the like inquiries, being matters of mere curiosity, the Holy Ghost has not thought fit to reveal to us. All that is needful for us to know,



shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

12 And <sup>m</sup> when they were assembled with

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by

<sup>m</sup> Pf. 2. 1—6. & 64. 2. Ch. 26. 3, 4.

know, is told us, and therein we should thankfully acquiesce, not coveting to be wise above what is written.

3. The effect which the death of Christ and the subsequent miracles had on the centurion and soldiers who kept guard at the place of execution. Though heathens and strangers to the true God, and probably the very persons who had treated Jesus with such indignity, had dragged him to that place, and nailed him to the tree; these strange sights, the darkness, earthquake, and expiring cry of the Redeemer filled them with consternation. Their stout hearts trembled for fear lest they should be swallowed up in righteous vengeance; and these amazing effects of divine power and interposition extorted from them that noble testimony to the Saviour's divine mission and character, *Truly this was the Son of God.*

4. To the honour of the female sex, mention is made of several women, and three of their names are recorded, who, though the disciples in general had forsaken their Master, and fled, continued their attendance in his last moments; and, having followed Jesus out of Galilee, and ministered to him of their substance, now stood afar off, perhaps not daring to approach nearer; and with broken hearts and floods of tears beheld and lamented their dying Lord, unable to minister to him either help or comfort. *Note:* (1.) The longer and the farther we have followed Christ, the more should it engage us to cleave to him, even to the end. (2.) They who love the Lord Jesus in their hearts, will be happy to employ their substance in his service.

6thly, It was foretold, that the Messiah should make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; and we see it fulfilled in the honourable interment given him by Joseph of Arimathea, after he had died as a malefactor, and suffered in our stead the wages of sin. Several circumstances concerning his burial are taken notice of by the Evangelist.

1. The time,—the evening of the day on which he suffered, which was Friday, some time before the Jewish Sabbath commenced.

2. The person who charged himself with the care of the burial,—Joseph of Arimathea, a man of wealth and distinction, one of the sanhedrim, and a secret disciple of Jesus, though through fear he had not publicly avowed it; but now, when Christ seemed deserted of all, he dared step forth, boldly went in to Pilate, and begged the corpse, that he might inter it with due respect; which was granted immediately, and an order sent to deliver the body to him.

*Note:* (1.) There are more secret disciples than we are aware of. (2.) The possession of worldly wealth and honour is usually a grievous check to the faithful and profession of Jesus and his cause. (3.) In times of trial, when the boldest are ready to shrink, we sometimes see those who were scarcely numbered among the disciples before, come forth with unexpected courage and fidelity, and make a noble confession before many witnesses.

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3. The manner of it. He took down the body from the cross, and wrapped it in clean linen, according to the custom of the Jews; and he himself attended, and performed these last kind offices to his dear Master.

4. The place where Joseph laid the corpse,—*In his own new tomb, hewn out in a rock,* and closed with a great stone at the mouth; which when Joseph had done, he departed in silent sorrow to bewail his loss. So divine Providence ordered the circumstances, that none having lain there before, there could be no doubt, when Christ arose, concerning the person: and the solid rock out of which the sepulchre was hewn, prevented the possibility of suspicion of any secret access to the body, except by the entrance, and that was sufficiently guarded. *Note:* (1.) He who when alive had not a house to cover his head, when dead, wanted a grave: so destitute was the Lord of glory: who then after him dares complain? (2.) Since Jesus has lain in the grave, he has perfumed the noisome abode; and in this bed of dust, as the phoenix in her fabled nest, the faithful now lie down, only to rise in brighter array, and take their flight to mansions of eternal glory.

5. The care which Christ's enemies took to have the sepulchre secured. The chief-priests and Pharisees, who were such scrupulous observers of the Sabbath, had not patience to wait till it was over, but assembled, and went in a body to Pilate, to petition him for a guard, in order to secure the body against the following day; because, they suggested, Jesus, *that deceiver*, (so do they call him who is the truth itself) had said, *while he was yet alive*, (so that they admit he was now certainly dead,) *After three days I will rise again.* We find not indeed that he had ever expressly said so to them; and if they founded their suggestion upon what they had heard, (John, ii. 19.) then their own barefaced wickedness was yet more evident; since on this very passage, which they applied to the temple, they formed a great part of their accusation against him. Pretending therefore to fear, *lest his disciples should come by night and steal him away, and say he is risen*, they desire to be furnished with a band of soldiers, to prevent all such attempts; lest, if such a trick should be played, the consequences of *this last error*, in not properly guarding the sepulchre, *should be worse than the first*, in suffering him to preach and live so long; for should this be once believed, the character of Jesus would then be established, and his doctrines spread with greater rapidity than ever. Pilate readily gratified them in granting their request, though no doubt he regarded their fears as absurd and ridiculous, and presumed that they had little now to apprehend from a dead man. They had a body of soldiers in the tower of Antonia for the service of the temple, and he permits them to detach what number they pleased to guard the sepulchre, and to use every other method to make the place as sure as they could. Nor did they fail to take every step to prevent the possibility of an imposture; setting a guard of soldiers, in whom they could confide, to watch the body that night, and

3 B

Sealing

night, and stole him away while we slept. ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.  
 14 <sup>n</sup> And if this come to the governor's 15 So <sup>o</sup> they took the money, and did as

<sup>n</sup> John, 3. 19, 20. Acts, 12. 19.

<sup>o</sup> Ch. 26. 15. 1 Tim. 6. 10. Prov. 1. 10—16. & 23. 21.

sealing the stone with the public seal, either of Pilate or the sanhedrim, that none might presume to enter, till the next day they should return themselves, and, producing the dead corpse, undeceive the people, and detect the impostor. Thus by the gracious Providence of God was every circumstance so ordered, respecting the resurrection of Jesus, that our faith in that grand event might have the most unshaken grounds of evidence indisputable, and be more strongly confirmed by all the methods that his enemies took to guard the body from the possibility of being clandestinely removed. Indeed it can scarcely be supposed, that his disciples, who all so basely forsook him and fled when he was alive, would ever return to steal him away when he was dead: and they could have no end to answer by it; for to endeavour, by saying he was risen, to impose on the people, would be inconceivable madness and folly in them; since they must thereby expose themselves to every suffering for their testimony, and be of all men the most miserable in this world; conscious of dying with a lie in their right hand, and having no hope in the next. But had they desired or designed to execute such a scheme, they must have been now effectually prevented. In the face of a body of armed soldiers, placed as sentinels on the sepulchre, and whose lives depended upon their watchfulness,—to suppose that they would ever have attempted to break the public seal, roll back a ponderous stone, descend into the tomb, and carry off the body by stealth, is an absurdity too glaring to be conceived. So far as human, as diabolical power could go, Christ's enemies went; but counsel and might are alike vain against the Lord. They who oppose his kingdom will find their attempts not only baffled but turned to their own confusion; their guilt but the more aggravated, and their eternal ruin more dreadful.

#### CHAP. XXVIII.

Ver. 1. In the end of the sabbath, &c.] Some writers close the last chapter thus, *Sealing the stone, and setting a watch late on the sabbath*; and begin the present, *and when it began to dawn, &c.* as the Jewish day began at sun-setting, the Jews distinguished the evening into two parts, which they called the first and second evening; the first being the evening with which the preceding day ended, and the second the evening with which the new day began. The first evening was the space from three in the afternoon to sun-setting; the second began at sun-setting, and lasted till nine, comprehending the whole first watch of the night. Those able and ingenious writers who have written upon our Lord's resurrection, are not agreed whether the word rendered *the end*, signifies the first evening or the second. I. They who imagine that the first evening was intended by the historian, suppose that the two Marys went to visit the sepulchre at the end of the Jewish sabbath, or about the setting of the sun; but that they were prevented by the earthquake, mentioned ver. 2. which frightened them so that they turned back. To remove the objection which might be drawn from the expression, *as it began to*

*dawn*, τῆς ἑσπέρης, they observe, that the Greek word, though it implies that idea in its primary signification, yet in Luke, xxiii. 54. signifies *to be about to begin, or to draw on*, and that the word should be used in the same sense in this passage; *In the end of the sabbath, as it drew near to the first day of the week.* II. They who imagine the historian is speaking of the second evening, appear to be supported by the account in St. Mark, as well as that in St. John; for whether we take the Greek word to signify *to draw near, or to dawn*, as both these interpretations may imply that it was yet dark, its beginning, or drawing near to the dawn, will be allowed to denote the same point of time; namely, the end of the night, and the beginning of the day. The only question arising from this interpretation is, how this can be reconciled with the time mentioned by St. Mark, namely, the rising of the sun? ch. xvi. 2. But this question may be solved upon the principle of the former hypothesis, that the women set out towards the end of the evening, or towards the dawn, but were prevented from coming to the sepulchre till the time determined by St. Mark. And indeed the order of St. Matthew's narration requires, that his words should be understood to signify the time of their setting out, otherwise all that is related of the earthquake, &c. must be thrown into a parenthesis, which would very much disturb the series of the history, and introduce much greater harshness into the construction, than any avoided by it: nay, it must be confessed that there can hardly be any harshness in the interpretation now contended for. The word ἄλλοι, in St. Matthew, might as well have been translated *went as came*; the verb itself signifying both *to go* and *to come*, and consequently being capable of either sense, as the context may require. That in St. Matthew requires to take the original word in the former sense, for the sake of order, and for the following reason: the principal fact upon the account of which the whole history of the women's going to the sepulchre seems to have been related, is the resurrection of Christ: and this fact is absolutely without a date, if the words of St. Matthew are to be understood to denote the time of the women's arrival at the sepulchre. When we say *without a date*, we mean, that it does not appear from any thing in St. Matthew or the other evangelists, at what hour of that night this great event happened: all the information they give us is, that when the women came to the sepulchre, they were told by angels that he was risen. But on the contrary, by understanding St. Matthew to speak of the time of Mary Magdalen's setting out to take a view of the sepulchre, we have the date of the resurrection settled, and know precisely that Christ rose from the dead between the dawning of the day and the sun-rising: and can any substantial reason be assigned, why St. Matthew, having thought fit to enter into so circumstantial an account of the resurrection, should omit the date of so important a fact; or that, not intending to mark it, by mentioning the time of the women's going to the sepulchre, he should place that fact before another, which

they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

¶ Ch. 26. 32. Ver. 7. 10. Mark, 16. 9. 1 Cor. 15. 5.

which in order of time is prior to it? All these considerations therefore seem to be powerful arguments for understanding this passage of St. Matthew in the sense above expressed. About St. Mark's meaning there is no dispute: he certainly intended to express the time of the women's arrival at the sepulchre; his words cannot be taken in any other sense: those in St. John are limited to the same interpretation with those of St. Matthew, it having been allowed before, that they both speak of the same point of time. The reason of the two Marys setting out so early is here assigned. They went to take a view of the sepulchre; that is to say, in general to see if all things were in the same condition in which they had left them two days before; that if in that interval any thing extraordinary had happened, they might report it to their companions, and, in conjunction with them, take their measures accordingly. Hence it is also evident why they were so few in number; they came to view the sepulchre, and came before the time appointed for their meeting. They knew that they themselves were not able to roll away the stone, which they had seen placed by Joseph of Arimathea at the mouth of the sepulchre, and which they knew could not be removed without a great number of hands. Accordingly, as they drew near, they said among themselves, *Who shall roll away the stone for us from the door of the sepulchre?* Words which intimate that one of their chief views in coming to see the sepulchre, was to survey this stone, and to consider whether they, and the other women who had appointed to meet them there, were by themselves able to remove it, or whether they must have recourse to the assistance of others; for *who shall roll away the stone for us?* implies a sense of their own inability, and of the necessity of calling in others; after which the only thing to be considered was *whom*, and how many. This therefore was the point under deliberation when they approached the sepulchre. It is plain from these words, that they did not expect to find any body there, and consequently that they knew nothing of the guard which the high-priests had set to watch the sepulchre; of which had they received any intelligence, they hardly would have ventured to come at all, or would not have deliberated about rolling away the stone, as the only or greatest difficulty. See West on the Resurrection, p. 48, 49.

Ver. 2—4. *And behold, there was a great earthquake]* While the women were going to the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake, namely, that which preceded the most memorable event that ever happened among men,—the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead. This earthquake probably frightened the women to such a degree, that they immediately returned back; or their return might have been rendered necessary by a storm, if this earthquake was attended with a storm; or we may espouse the opinion of Hammond and Le Clerc, who interpret the words *σεισμός μέγας* in this passage, of a tempest only. The word *σεισμός* properly signifies any shaking, whether in

earth, air, or sea. As the tempest therefore, or earthquake, which preceded our Lord's resurrection, was a great one, it could hardly fail to lay the women under a necessity of returning. The guards, it is true, remained at the sepulchre all the while; but there was a great difference between the tempers of the persons; not to mention that the men being soldiers, duty obliged them to keep their post as long as possible. The whole of this account is further strengthened by the following remark; that, on a supposition that our Lord's resurrection was preceded by a tempest, or earthquake, or both, which frightened the two Marys as they went to the sepulchre, and made them turn back, we can see the reason why the women did not go out with the spices till the morning, notwithstanding, according to St. Luke, they had bought and prepared at least the greatest part of them the evening on which Jesus was buried; and notwithstanding the nature of embalming required that they should make as much dispatch as possible. After the two Marys returned, they went with their companions to get ready such spices as were necessary to complete their preparation; (see Mark, xvi. 1.) and while they were making these preparations for embalming Jesus, he arose from the dead; this resurrection being preceded, as we observe, by the descent of an angel, who assumed a very awful and majestic form, inasmuch that the keepers shook, and became as dead men, for fear of him: probably they fainted away. It is not said at what particular instant Jesus arose, whether it was before the guards fell into the swoon, or after they recovered themselves and fled. St. Mark indeed, by observing that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, may be thought to insinuate, that the guards did not see him when he arose; yet the Evangelist's words do not necessarily imply this; for his meaning may be, that he appeared to Mary Magdalene first of all in respect to the disciples only. Besides, though the guards saw him arise, it was, properly speaking, no appearance of Christ to them: however, be this as it may, it is certain that Jesus was arisen and gone, before any of the women arrived at the sepulchre. Probably also the angel had left the stone on which he sat at first, and had entered into the sepulchre; for as we shall see immediately, when he shewed himself to the women, he invited them not to go away, but to come, and see the place where the Lord lay. Besides, when the women observed the stone rolled from the door of the sepulchre, they saw no angel sitting on the stone, as is evident from their going forward so briskly. See Mark, xvi. 5. The purpose of this angel's descending from heaven, says Mr. West, seems to have been, not only to roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, that the women who were on their way thither might have free entrance to it, but also to fright away the soldiers who were set to guard it; and who, had they continued there, would certainly not have permitted the disciples of Jesus to have made the necessary inquiries for their conviction. Could

17 And when they saw him they <sup>a</sup> worshipped him: but some <sup>\*</sup> doubted.

18 ¶ And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, ' All power is given unto me in

<sup>a</sup> Pf. 45. 11. & 2. 12. John, 5. 23. Rev. 5. 9. Heb. 1. 6. \* Or *Lad doubted.* † Dan. 7. 13, 14. Pf. 89. 27. If. 52. 13. & 53. 12. & 9. 6, 7. Ch. 11. 27. & 16. 28. Luke, 1. 32. John, 3. 35. & 13. 3. & 17. 2. Acts, 2. 35. & 5. 31. & 10. 36, 38, 42. Rom. 14. 9. 1 Cor. 15. 24. Eph. 2. 10, 20. Phil. 2. 9—11. Col. 1. 16—18. Heb. 1. 2, 3. & 2. 9. 1 Peter, 3. 22. Rev. 1. 13, 16, 18, 20. & 17. 14. & 19. 16.

it be supposed that either they or the women would have attempted to enter into the sepulchre, while it was surrounded by a Roman guard? For this end it is not unreasonable to suppose, that he might not only raise a tempestuous earthquake, but assume a countenance of terror, flashing with dreadful light amid the darkness of the night; which were circumstances so full of amazement, that they could not fail of producing, even in the hearts of Roman soldiers, the consternation mentioned by the Evangelists, and driving them from a post, of which the Divinity (for so, according to their way of speaking and acting, they might have styled the angel) had now taken the possession. The reasonableness of these two purposes every body must acknowledge, and that this is a very material point towards establishing the fact: especially, if we consider, that without the interposition of heaven the sepulchre would not have been opened, nor the guard removed, till after the expiration of the third day, the day prefixed by Christ for his resurrection from the dead: in which case, though no earthly power could have hindered Christ from coming out of the sepulchre, yet the door remaining closed, and the guard continuing there, must effectually have prevented that examination into the state of the sepulchre, which convinced St. John that Christ was risen; and which, if it did not of itself amount to a clear proof of the resurrection, was at least admirably calculated to prepare the minds, not of the Apostles only, but of all the Jews who were at that time in Jerusalem, to admit such other proofs as were afterwards offered to their consideration; for it is not to be imagined that none but the disciples of Jesus visited the sepulchre that day, See West and Macknight.

*Ver. 5—7. And the angel answered*] This paragraph is not so connected with the preceding, as if nothing had intervened; since it will be found, upon a closer examination of it, and comparing it with its parallel, Mark, xvi. 2—8. that between the soldiers becoming like dead men, and the angel's speaking to the women, Salome had joined the two Marys in their way to the sepulchre; and that before they arrived there, the keepers were fled, and the angel was removed from off the stone, and seated within the sepulchre; for which reason the particle *de*, instead of being rendered by the copulative *and*, should rather be expressed by the disjunctive *but*, or *now*, as denoting an interruption in the narration, and the beginning of a new paragraph. See West, p. 23.

*Ver. 8. And they departed quickly, &c.] And they instantly left the sepulchre:—Version of 1729. And they hastily went out of the sepulchre.* Heylin. This verse contains a beautiful description of the mingled passions.

*Ver. 9, 10. And as they went—Jesus met them*] In the general scheme of the resurrection which I propose giving at the end of St. John's Gospel, when we have had the whole narrative before us, the precise time and circumstances of

this meeting of our Lord's with the women will be shewn.

*Ver. 11—15. Now when they were going, &c.]* The chief priests, having received the report of the guard, called the whole senate together, and consulted among themselves what they were to do. The deliberations, however, of the meeting were not kept secret. They were reported to the disciples, perhaps by Joseph and Nicodemus, two members of the council, who were our Lord's friends. The priests were reduced to a most absurd story, though certainly the best colour which they could put on the affair; a story, which they endeavoured by bribery and every other mean method to propagate as much as they could; and accordingly St. Matthew tells us, ver. 15. that this idle tale was commonly reported among the Jews, even so long after the ascension of our Lord as when he wrote his Gospel. Justin Martyr informs us, that the Jews sent a rescript or embassy to their brethren of the dispersion, and their converts all over the globe, affirming this very thing; and Tertullian likewise says as much. To furnish the Jewish converts with an answer to this absurd story so industriously propagated among their unbelieving brethren, and supported by the authority of the chief priests and elders, this Evangelist relates at large the history of the guarding the sepulchre, the earthquake, the descent of the angel, his rolling away the stone, and the fright of the soldiers at his appearance: and indeed, by comparing this relation with the report given out by the soldiers, it will easily appear on which side the truth lay. For as there is nothing in the miraculous resurrection of our Lord, so repugnant to reason and probability, as that the disciples should be able to roll away the stone which closed the mouth of the sepulchre, and carry away the body of Jesus unperceived by the soldiers, who were set there on purpose to guard against such an attempt; so it is also evident, that the particulars of the soldiers' report were founded upon the circumstances of this history. In this report three things are asserted; viz. that the disciples stole the body,—that they stole it in the night,—and that they stole it while the guards were asleep.

That Jesus came out of the sepulchre before the rising of the sun St. Matthew informs us: who says, that the earthquake, &c. happened at the time when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary set out to take a view of the sepulchre, which was just as the day began to break. This fact was undoubtedly too notorious for the chief priests to venture at falsifying it, and was besides favourable to the two other articles: this therefore they admitted; and, taking the hint from what the soldiers told them, of their having been cast into a swoon or trance, and becoming like dead men at the appearance of the angel, and consequently, not having seen our Saviour come out of the sepulchre, they took the hint, we say, of framing these two last-mentioned articles from that circumstance related by St. Matthew, of the keepers *slaking and becoming like dead men* upon

heaven and in earth.

19 ' Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost :

' Mark, 16. 15, 16. Luke, 24. 47. Rom. 16. 18. Acts, 2. 38. & 8. 12. 1 Cor. 1. 13, 15. & 10. 2. 2 Peter, 3. 21. Col. 1. 23, 28. Acts, 20. 27. 1 Cor. 11. 2, 23. Deut. 5. 32. & 12. 32.

upon the sight of the angel; for throughout this whole history there was no other besides this, upon which they could prevaricate and dispute. The stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and the body was gone; this the chief priests were to account for, without allowing that Jesus was risen from the dead. The disciples, they said, stole it away. What! while the guards were there? Yes; the guards were asleep. With this answer they knew many would be satisfied, without inquiring any farther into the matter: but they could not expect that every body would be contented; especially as they had reason to apprehend, that although the soldiers, who had taken their money, might be faithful to them, keep their secret, and attest the story which they had framed for them, yet the truth might come out by means of those whom they had not bribed; for St. Matthew says, ver. 11. "Some of the watch went into the city, and shewed," &c. Some therefore remained behind, who probably had no share of the money which the chief priests gave to the soldiers; or, if they had, in all likelihood it came too late: they had already divulged the truth, as well from the eagerness which all men naturally have to tell any thing wonderful, as from a desire of justifying themselves for having quitted their post. The chief priests therefore were to guard against this event also; in order to which nothing could be more effectual than to counterwork the evidence of one part of the soldiers, by putting into the mouths of others of them a story, which, without directly contradicting the facts, might yet tend to overthrow the only conclusion which the disciples of Jesus would endeavour to draw from them, and which they were so much concerned to discredit; viz. That Jesus was risen from the dead. For if the disciples and partizans of Jesus, informed by some of the soldiers of the several circumstances related in St. Matthew, should urge these miraculous events as so many proofs of the resurrection of their Master, the unbelieving Jews were, by the testimony of those suborned witnesses, instructed to answer that the earthquake and angel were illusions and dreams,—that the soldiers had honestly confessed that they were asleep, though some of them, to screen themselves from the shame or punishment that such a breach of duty deserved, pretended they were frightened into a swoon or trance by an extraordinary appearance, which they never saw, or saw only in a dream;—that, while they slept, the disciples came and stole the body; for none of the soldiers, not even those who saw most, pretend to have seen Jesus come out of the sepulchre;—they were all equally ignorant by what means the body was removed;—when they awaked, it was missing;—and it was more likely that the disciples should have stolen it away, than that an impostor should come from the dead. This story is founded entirely upon the circumstance of the soldiers not having seen Jesus come out of the sepulchre; a circumstance, that even those who told the real truth could not contradict, though they accounted for it in a different manner, by saying that they were

frightened into a swoon or trance at the sight of a terrible apparition, which came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. But this fact the chief priests thought not prudent to allow, as favouring too much the opinion of Christ's being risen from the dead; neither did they reject it intirely, because they intended to turn it to their own advantage; and therefore, denying every thing that was miraculous, they construed this swoon or trance into a sleep, and, with a large sum of money and promises of impunity, hired the soldiers to confess a crime, and, by taking shame to themselves, to cover them from confusion. The guards say, that they were asleep, and that the disciples in the mean time stole away the body: but how came they to be so punctual in relating what had happened when they were asleep? What induced them to believe that the body was stolen at all? What, that it was stolen by the disciples, since, by their own confession, they were asleep, and saw nothing,—saw nobody? as this story has no evidence to support it, so neither has it any probability. The disciples were ignorant men, full of the popular prejudices and superstitions of their country; and is it likely that such men should engage in so desperate a design as to steal away the body in opposition to the combined power of the Jews and Romans? What could tempt them to do it? What good could the dead body do to them? Or if it could have done them any, what hope had they to succeed in the attempt? A dead body requires many hands to move it; the great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre was to be removed, which could not be done silently, or by men walking on tiptoes to prevent discovery; so that if the guards had really been asleep, yet there was no encouragement to go on in this enterprize; for it is hardly possible to suppose, but that rolling away the stone, moving the body, and the hurry and confusion in carrying it off, must have awakened them. But supposing the thing practicable, yet the attempt was such as the disciples, consistently with their national prejudices, could not undertake. They continued all their Master's life-time to expect to see him a temporal prince, and they had the same expectations after his death. Consider now their case; their Master was dead, and they are to contrive to steal away his body; for what? Did they expect to make a king of the dead body, if they could get it? or, did they think, if they had it, they could raise it again? This is in all views absurd. It is not to be imagined that none but the disciples of Jesus visited the sepulchre that day. The story told by the soldiers undoubtedly soon spread all over Jerusalem; and bare curiosity, without any other motive, was surely sufficient to carry numbers to survey the scene of so astonishing an event:—a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, closed with a vast stone, committed to a guard of Roman soldiers, notwithstanding all these precautions, opened, as one part of the soldiers reported, by an angel; as others said, by the disciples of Jesus; who stole away the body, which in effect was missing. These two different and irreconcilable reports must

20 Teaching them to observe all things ' I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, the world. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Joshua, 1. 5, 9. If. 41. 10, 14. & 46. 4. Ch. 18. 20.

must have likewise induced others to go and consider upon the spot, by examining into the nature and situation of the sepulchre, and the probability of that report which charged the disciples with having stolen away the body : for as, upon that supposition, none but human means are said to be employed, to know whether those means were proportioned to the effects ascribed to them, it was necessary to compare what was done with the manner in which it was to be performed. And upon such an examination, it must have appeared to every considerate man, if not impossible, at least improbable in the highest degree, for the disciples of Jesus to have stolen his body away, while the guards were at their posts. For supposing the disciples to be the reverse of what they were,—bold, enterprizing, cunning impostors, and capable of making so hazardous an attempt; can it also be supposed, that a company of Roman soldiers, trained up under the strictest discipline, and placed there but the evening before, should be all asleep at the same time, and all sleep so soundly and so long as not to be awakened, either by the rolling away of the stone, which must certainly have been very large, or by the carrying off of the body? the former of which required a great number of hands, and the latter must have appeared to have been done with some deliberation, since the linen cloths in which the body was wrapped, and the napkin that was about the head, were found folded up and laid in different parts of the sepulchre? The sepulchre was hewed or hollowed out of the solid rock, and consequently must have been entered by that only passage which was closed up by a large stone and guarded by a band of Roman soldiers. These several circumstances, duly attended to, were of themselves sufficient to invalidate the testimony of those soldiers who pretended that the disciples stole away the body. But they were, on the other hand, very strong arguments for the credibility of that account in which all the rest at first agreed. For in this relation a cause is assigned proportionable to all the effects; effects, which, as they were visible and notorious as well as extraordinary, could not fail of exciting the natural curiosity of mankind, to inquire by what means they were brought about. The solution is easy and full;—*for the angel descended, &c.* ver. 2. This accounts for the terror of the soldiers, their deserting their post, and their precipitate flight into the city; for the stone's being rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, even while it was surrounded by a Roman guard; for the sepulchral linen being left in the grave folded up, and lying in different places; and for the body's being missing. See *West on the Resurrect.* p. 16, &c. *Sherlock's Trial of the Witnesses*, p. 43, &c. and *Ditton on the Resurrection*. Instead of *large money*, ver. 12. some read, *a large sum of money*.

*Ver. 16, 17. Then the eleven disciples went away, &c.*] The time now approached when Jesus was to shew himself publicly in Galilee, after having frequently shewn himself in a more private manner to his disciples and the women. This was in many respects the most remarkable of all his ap-

pearances. He promised it to his apostles before his death, ch. xxvi. 32. The angels who attended at his resurrection, spoke of it to the women who came to his sepulchre, and represented it as promised to them also, Mark, xvi. 7. Nay, Jesus himself, after his resurrection, desired the company of women to tell his brethren to go into Galilee, where they should see him, as if the appearance which he was to make that day, and on the eighth day thereafter, were of small importance in comparison. Moreover, the place where he was to appear in Galilee was mentioned by him, as St. Matthew here informs us. Whether there were more present at this appearance than the eleven, the Evangelist does not say: nevertheless the circumstances of the case direct us to believe that it had many witnesses. This appearance was known before-hand. The place where it was to happen was pointed out by Jesus himself. The report, therefore, of his being to appear, must have spread abroad, and brought many to the place at the appointed time. In short, it is reasonable to think that most of the disciples now enjoyed the happiness of beholding personally their Master raised from the dead. What confirms this supposition is, that St. Paul says expressly, that Jesus after his resurrection was *seen of above five hundred at once*, 1 Cor. xv. 6. For the number of the witnesses mentioned by St. Paul, agrees better with the appearance on the mountain in Galilee, described by St. Matthew, than with any other. Galilee having been the principal scene of Christ's ministry, the greatest part of his followers lived there; for which reason he chose to make, what may be called, his most solemn and public appearance after his resurrection on a mountain in that country,—the appearance to which a general meeting of all his disciples was summoned, not only by the angels who attended his resurrection, but by our Lord himself, the very day on which he rose. The greatest part of those present were so fully convinced that the person they saw was their Master, that they worshipped him:—*and when they saw him, they worshipped him;—but some doubted:* with respect to a few, their joy at seeing their Lord put them into a kind of perturbation; and their desire that it might be he, made them doubtful, and afraid that it was not. This reason is assigned by St. Luke for the unbelief of some on an occasion previous to this, (see ch. xxiv. 41.)—*They believed not for joy and wonder*, and therefore it may be fitly offered to account for the unbelief of others on this occasion. Besides, the thing is agreeable to nature, men being commonly afraid to believe what they vehemently wish, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys, which they must soon lose. Hence the saying in Terence,—*Mifera mens incredula est; quo plus cupio, minus credo:* "My anxious mind is incredulous; the more I wish, the less I believe." The case of the disciples, whose desire and joy made them doubt the truth of what they saw, may be illustrated by the instance of the states of Greece and Asia, whose joy and surprize on hearing a Roman herald declare them all free, and at liberty to use their own laws, had a similar effect on them, as you will find the circum-

stance

stance beautifully related in Livy, lib. xxxiii. ch. 35. The Prussian editors, however, who are followed by some others, render the clause thus,—*even those who had doubted.* It is probable, that at this appearance the apostles received orders to return to Jerusalem; for from Acts, i. 3—12. compared with Luke, xxiv. 50. it is plain that our Lord's discourses before his ascension, related Mark, xvi. 15, &c. and Luke, xxiv. 44, &c. were delivered in or near to the city. Besides, he ascended from the mount of Olives, as we shall see in the subsequent evangelists. Wherefore, if the orders for the apostles to repair to Jerusalem were not given at this appearance, Jesus must have shewed himself again, which indeed is not impossible, as it is evident from 1 Cor. xv. 7. that he shewed himself somewhere, after his appearance to the *five hundred brethren*, to the apostle James alone, though none of the evangelists have given the least hint of this appearance. In the college of the apostles there were two persons of that name; one the brother of John, who was killed by Herod; another the brother or cousin of Jesus. Perhaps it was to James the brother of John, that our Lord appeared after his resurrection; and his being to suffer martyrdom so early, might make this special favour necessary. See Macknight and West.

Ver. 18. *All power is given unto me, &c.*] Our Saviour here declares all power and authority to be given to him, as Mediator at his resurrection: in consequence of which power, he commissions his disciples to convert, baptize, and instruct the world. There is no doubt but this *power* is part of the exaltation spoken of by St. Paul, to which God raised the human nature of Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, for his sufferings. See Phillip. ii. 6, &c.

Ver. 19. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, &c. And disciple all nations.* This commission of our Lord marks out the difference between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation: the one was confined to the Jews; the other was extended to all the sons and daughters of Adam. The whole tenor of the succeeding books of the New Testament shews, that Christ's design by this commission was, that the Gospel should be preached to all mankind without exception, not only to the Jews, but to all the idolatrous Gentiles: but the prejudices of the apostles led them at first to mistake the sense, and to imagine that it referred only to their going to preach the Gospel to the Jews among all nations, or to those who should be willing to become Jews. The word μαθηταῖς, is very properly rendered *profelyte*, or *make disciples of*, to distinguish it duly from διδάσκαις, teaching, in the next verse. The former seems to import instruction in the essentials of religion, which it was necessary that adult persons should know and submit to, before they could be admitted to baptism: the latter may relate to those more particular admonitions in regard to Christian faith and practice, which were to be built upon that foundation. Because profelyting is here enjoined as previous to baptism, it has been inferred by some that *infants* are not to be baptized: but if this argument were good, it would follow from Mark, xvi. 16. that infants cannot be saved; nay, it is there declared, *that he who believeth not, shall be damned.* The truth is, both passages must be interpreted according to the subjects treated of in them, which are plainly adult persons; and therefore no argument can be drawn from them concerning either the baptism or the salvation of infants. *In or into the name*, is a Hebraism,

which signifies to devote one's self to any particular person, and to be desirous of being called after his name,—to profess one's self his disciple. Thus St. Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 13, &c. that he had *baptized no one in his name*, that is to say, that he had made no one a convert to himself as the founder of a new religion: see also 1 Cor. x. 2. Though perhaps we should not positively assert, that the use of *these very words* is essential to *Christian baptism*, yet surely the expression must intimate the necessity of some *distinct regard* to each of the sacred Three, which is always to be maintained in the administration of this ordinance; and consequently it must imply, that more was said to those of whose baptism we read in the Acts, than is there recorded, before they were admitted to it. The Christian church in succeeding ages has acted a safe and wise part in retaining these words; and they contain so strong an intimation, that *each of these Persons* is properly God, and that worship is to be paid, and glory ascribed to *each*, that we cannot doubt but they will be a means of maintaining the belief of the one, and the practice of the other, to the end of the world. See Doddridge, Grotius, and Waterland's Sermons on the Trinity, p. 286.

Ver. 20. *Teaching them, &c.*] Christ commands that nothing should be taught which he himself had not taught: whence it is evident that every thing fundamental may be found in the Gospel; and that even the apostles themselves could not teach any thing as necessary to salvation, which Christ himself had not asserted to be so. The ascension of our blessed Lord seems to have been a fact so well known to all the Christians in Palestine, that there was no necessity for St. Matthew to mention it. It seems to be implied, and to have been declared to his disciples, from this passage, which is intended to obviate the objection which would arise from considering that circumstance; and our Lord may be represented as saying, "I am indeed going to heaven, and shall not appear visibly among you; but I shall always be virtually present with you." St. Mark and St. Luke, writing to those who lived out of Judea, very properly mention the ascension, and were under a necessity of doing so. Our Saviour adds, *I am with you always even to the end of the world*; that is, to the final dissolution of this temporary system. "I am with you; I the eternal Son of God; I, who have the angels at my beck, and make the devils to tremble with my looks; I, who in your sight have caused the storms to cease, the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to rise, only with the word of my mouth; I, who have all power in heaven and earth committed to me,—am with you;—not I will be with you; but I am with you,—in the present tense;—minding them thereby of his divine essence and power, to which all things are present; and therefore, as he elsewhere says, *Before Abraham was, I am*; so here, *I am with you*, at all times, *to the end of the world*, as really as at this present: it follows, *I am with you*, my apostles, who now receive commission to go and convert all nations to the Christian faith, to baptize and teach mankind my commands. I am with you *παρα τὰς ἡμέρας*, every day. Wherever you are, whenever you do any thing in my Spirit towards the executing the commission which I have given you, I am with you in the doing of it; and that too *to the very end of the world*, that is to say, so long as I have a church upon earth, which will be till my coming again to judge the world.

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“ All this while I promise to be with you, and consequently “ as long as the world shall last,” See Bishop Beveridge’s first Sermon, vol. i. on Christ’s Presence with his Ministers. Though the word *Amen*, with which each of the Gospels ends, seems chiefly to have been intended as an intimation of the conclusion of the book, and as an asseveration of the certain truth of the things contained in it; yet, considering the connection of the word with the preceding promise, which was undoubtedly the greatest strength and joy of St. Matthew’s heart, it is very natural to suppose, that it has some such reference as this to that promise: “ *Amen!* blessed Jesus, so may it indeed be; and “ may this important promise be fulfilled to us; and to “ our successors in the ministry, to the remotest ages in “ its full extent.” St. John uses the like turn in more express language, in the last verse but one of the *Revelation*; surely, I come quickly; Amen, Even so, come Lord Jesus.

*Inferences.*—The grave is an unusual stage for the display of glory; the best that Job could say of it, when in the anguish of his soul he most desired it, was, “ There “ the wicked cease from troubling; there the weary are “ at rest.” And some others, distressed like him, may think death eligible, and long for the grave as a refuge from misery. Generally speaking, however, the grave is an object of horror too loathsome to be described. There lie the ruins of man sinking into corruption and putrefaction. So offensive, ignominious, and loathsome is the grave, in the ordinary course of nature. But it was the peculiar privilege of our Lord, that *his rest*, his sepulchre, *should be glorious*, Isaiah, xi. 10. For it was the theatre of his resurrection. To methodize our thoughts upon this subject, it may be proper to consider the glory of our Lord’s resurrection in two views; *first*, as it illustrates *him*; and, *secondly*, as it influences *us*; for it is of the essence of glory to be diffusive, and to stream forth from its subject upon all objects within its sphere; which occasions these distinct considerations of the glory of this his resurrection, in its *source*, and in its *influence*.

1. We shall discover somewhat of the *personal glory* of Christ, in the circumstances of his resurrection related by the Evangelists: and here it is material to observe, that not only the prophets, but he himself had often foretold it; a circumstance which was particularly remarked by the angel who first brought the glad tidings to the two Marys, at their early visit to his sepulchre, *He is not here, he is risen, as he said*, ver. 6. that is, “ according to his “ own prediction;” a circumstance of great moment for establishing our faith in this mystery, and preventing or answering the cavils of infidelity.

And *first*, He had frequently told it to his disciples, as appears from many passages in the Gospel, wherein he commonly foretels his death and resurrection together, perhaps to mitigate a little the scandal of the cross, by the glories which were to ensue; and at the same time to prepare their faith by the one for the other. At first his sayings could not but appear highly improbable to his disciples; for they could not conceive how a person like him, vested with omnipotence, should suffer by Jew or Gentile, much less that he should die under their hands: yet they saw this verified within five days after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; and this in reason should

have confirmed their faith in the remaining part of the prophecy which concerned his resurrection; for so our Lord intended it should, as he declared upon a like occasion; *I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.* John, xiv. 29.

But had the disciples alone been acquainted with these predictions, sceptical men might have had some pretences against their testimony; at least we should have lost many substantial proofs of the resurrection, which the vigilant malice of the Jews has furnished; and therefore our Lord took proper occasions to inform them of it. Indeed the Jews in general understood sufficiently that he appealed to such a resurrection for the final confirmation of his divine mission, as appears particularly from their address to Pilate for a guard to watch his sepulchre; wherein they mention his foretelling his resurrection as a thing that was notorious: Pilate, readily consenting to their request, left the guards to their disposal; for, if he had given them directions himself, they might still have had some room to pretend that right measures were not taken for securing the sepulchre; and therefore by the especial appointment of Providence, to remove all the subtleties of infidelity, they had the ordering of the guard themselves.

Thus authorized by the governor, and animated by the passion which transported them, they neglect nothing. The tomb is closed with a great stone; that stone is sealed, and the whole sepulchre invested, and, as it were, besieged by soldiers. No precaution was omitted. There was no want of care to reproach themselves with, that there might be no want of evidence wherewith to reproach the truth: a needless provision this, against a few poor fishermen, who were naturally timorous; who had abandoned their Master at the first appearance of danger; who were since sunk into consternation and despair at his death; and whose hopes were all buried in the tomb with him; who were so far from an inclination, as well as capacity, for so hazardous an enterprize, that they were strangely backward even to believe the miracle itself, when it was accomplished; and Thomas in particular was so obstinate in his unbelief, that he would not be persuaded of his Master’s revival, till he had the testimony of all his senses.

It was reasonable to expect, that our Lord’s persecutors should have first heard of his resurrection from his disciples; but as they had contrived matters, they received the news of it from their own watch flying in dismay from the angelic vision. Thus God, who in the order of his providence converts the evil purposes of men to his own glory, made the Jewish malice contribute to establish the certainty of our Lord’s resurrection by such proofs, as could not have happened but by their opposition. And this was needful, that his glory should at last break forth with a lustre sufficient to dissipate any reasonable doubt and surmise. For all his foregoing transactions from the manger to the tomb, although infinitely excellent, were comparatively little glorious; because their merit was in a considerable measure veiled by his humility. Now *glory is merit displayed*; it is a manifestation of excellence; and the resurrection is therefore, by way of eminence, *the glorious mystery*, because it was the manifestation of the excellency of Christ; it was a demonstration of his Divinity, which emerged, as it were, from the abyss of humiliation into which it was sunk. Here he shewed, that



what he had done and suffered was truly meritorious, because it was voluntary. We know that he had willingly laid down his life, when we see him by his own power take it up again; and we learn to value his death as a free-will offering for our redemption, when we contemplate his resurrection. Expiring on the cross, he seemed to go the way of all flesh, and fall like the rest of Adam's sons, by a common and unavoidable fate: but we cannot longer doubt that he sought death as a conqueror, when we see him return in triumph from the grave. St. Paul speaks of this as a fundamental of Christianity, that the resurrection of Christ certifies us of his Divinity. *He was declared, says he, to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead;* and indeed there can be no doubt of this, while we believe that he raised himself from the dead. Now, what a splendor and glory does this cast upon all the parts of his precedent life, which, if we consider him only as what he often styles himself, the *Son of man*, is indeed exceedingly pious, holy, and virtuous, to a degree never before attained: but when his resurrection shews him to be the *Son of God*, it is all amazing. That the *Son of God* should be born in a stable, that the *Son of God* should live in poverty, and die in pain;—what instruction! what an example! what encouragement! but above all, how glorious is that Son of God, amid such miracles of goodness, such prodigies of divine love and condescension, for which the angels can never sufficiently admire him; for which all his saints shall eternally adore him!

So glorious, and infinitely more than words can express, is the resurrection of our Lord, with regard to himself, as it asserts his Divinity, and puts the seal to all his revelations. But glory, as we observed, is of a diffusive nature, issuing forth in bright influences upon all objects within its sphere; and therefore we are next to consider our Lord's resurrection with regard to ourselves, and shew the certain consequence of it, which is our own resurrection from the dead. The world had now lasted four thousand years, at the time of Christ's death; and all generations hitherto had sunk into the grave, unknowing in general what would become of them. We must except here the patriarchs and saints of the Jewish church, who, by an anticipated revelation of a Redeemer, had their hopes full of immortality. But the bulk of mankind were in the dark concerning a future state. Good men might wish, and wise men expect, a life to come; but these wishes, and these expectations, were perplexed with much doubt and misgiving. Death was as a gulf, whereof they saw only the entrance, and could discern nothing beyond. But the glories of our Lord's resurrection have enlightened the grave, and so dissipated the shades of death, as to shew that to be only a passage or thoroughfare, which before seemed a gulf and an abyss. For life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel of Christ, who declared not only that there was a resurrection, but that himself was the resurrection, or that power whereby he shall be raised from the dead,—and the life, John, xi. As the sun is light in itself, and the great source of all the worlds around it, so Christ is resurrection to himself, and the great cause and author of resurrection to all mankind; who, after they have undergone the common sentence of death passed upon them in Adam, the first head of our race, are by this second representative

of the human species restored to immortality; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as by Adam all died, even so by Christ shall all be made alive. And indeed it is a very natural prerogative of Christ, as Judge of the world, that he should by his own power summon all men to his tribunal: of which he himself gives a most particular account, John, v. 21—26, &c.

The resurrection and a future judgment are fundamental principles of morality, and they are in the Gospel not only taught but demonstrated. The Divinity raised Christ's human body out of the grave, to convince us that he will also raise us at the last day. This is a miracle in kind, involving the thing in question, most pertinent, cogent, and irrefragable; so that we cannot but conclude with St. Paul, That God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, Acts, xvii. 31.

Seeing then that we have this assurance, do we hope or do we fear a resurrection? for we must expect it. If upon just grounds we hope for it, happy are we; but if we fear it, may we be warned in time to remove those fears, by such faith in this great Redeemer, and such holiness of life, as may give comfort and joy to the soul in the prospect of futurity! It is my duty here to persuade every reader to this, and to advise and direct him in the performance of it: but I can only persuade and advise; he himself must work out his own salvation, for it is God that worketh in him.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The resurrection of Jesus being the grand hinge on which our hope of salvation turns, it must afford the most singular satisfaction to observe the amazing force of evidence wherewith this glorious event is attested. Had he still lain in the grave, and had death maintained his dominion over him, our faith had been vain, and we must have perished in our sins: but, glory be to God, he hath raised up Jesus from the dead, and hath thereby begotten us to a new and lively hope. Some testimonies of this fact are here produced: many more will be found in the other Evangelists. We have,

1. The visit made to the sepulchre by those holy women who had attended Jesus to the cross and to the grave, even Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James; and they came now to see the sepulchre, if it was as they left it, bringing spices to embalm the body; this was in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week. Christ had lain in the grave part of our Friday, all Saturday, which was the Jewish sabbath; and on the Sunday morning, the third day, very early, probably about four o'clock, he arose, after dwelling among the dead about six and thirty hours; long enough to shew his death real, yet not so long as that his body should see corruption. Pf. xvi. 10. See the Annotations.

2. As they went, and talked about the difficulty of removing the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, which seems to have been more ponderous than they could roll away, behold! to their astonishment, there was a great earthquake, which, had the guards indeed slept, must needs have roused them; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, as the officer of the Most High. He accordingly came, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it, 3 C. defying

defying all the powers of earth or hell to roll it on again; waiting there to welcome the poor women who were on their way, and striking terror and dismay into the stout-hearted soldiers. *His countenance was bright as the lightning, and his raiment white as snow*, the emblem of purity and victory. Trembling in every limb, the guards shook like the earth which rocked under their feet, and, pale as death, with haste fled from the tremendous presence of this angelic minister.

The other Evangelists mention two angels: one sat on the stone without, and invited and led the women into the sepulchre, where they found another; the one of which stood at the feet, and the other at the head of the grave, where the body had lain.

3. The women, being come to the sepulchre, were at first affrighted at the sight (Mark, xvi. 5.); but the angel, kindly accosting them, endeavoured to silence their fears. *Fear not ye*; whatever terrors seize the sinners in Zion, the lovers of the Lord Jesus need not tremble; *for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified*, and they who seek a crucified Jesus, have nothing to fear; have every thing to hope: none ever fought his face in vain. *He is not here*, that you should any longer bedew his corpse with tears: no; *he is risen for your comfort*, as he said he should on the third day. Then graciously inviting them to *come and see the place where the Lord lay*, that they might be convinced he was not there, he probably led the way into the sepulchre, whither they followed him, and saw the other angel, mentioned John, xx. 12. And hereupon the angel dismisses them with a message to the disconsolate disciples; *Go quickly, and be the messengers of this glad news; tell his disciples*, now dejected and despairing, to their surprise and joy, *he is risen from the dead; and behold*, for the confirmation of your own faith and theirs, *he goeth before you into Galilee*, where you and they must follow him; and *there shall ye see him, converse with him*, and receive the fullest assurance of his resurrection. *Lo! I have told you*; remember to deliver these tidings, and be assured of the truth of what I have spoken.

4. Agitated with surprise and joy at what they had seen and heard, and eager to communicate the glad news, they ran to the disciples; and in their way Jesus himself met them, and with kindest salutation accosted them, *All hail, all peace, happiness, and joy be with you!* With lowliest reverence they cast themselves instantly at his feet, and in a transport of love embraced them, adoring him as their risen Lord and Saviour. Then Jesus, further to confirm their hearts, and remove every fear, bids them *not be afraid*; they need apprehend neither danger nor delusion, but must deliver the message his angel had put into their mouths, *Go tell my brethren*; by such an endearing name was he pleased to distinguish his disciples; that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. *Note*;

- (1.) Christ is not ashamed to call his servants brethren.
- (2.) Faith in a risen Redeemer effectually silences a sinner's fears: in him we see the great atonement accomplished, and are filled with joy and peace in believing.

2dly, The resurrection of Jesus is proved by a cloud of unexceptionable witnesses, among whom his very enemies held a distinguished place.

1. The guard, who had fled, had just reached the city as the women were on their return thither; and some of them, probably the officers who commanded the detach-

ment, went directly to the chief priests; and to their astonishment related all that had passed—the earthquake, the descent of the angel, the removal of the stone, and perhaps the rising of Jesus; and if any thing could ever have shocked their obdurate hearts, one should conceive the report of such incontestible eye-witnesses of the fact would have convinced them of their wickedness, and turned them to the Lord. But they were determined in impenitence and unbelief, and therefore given up to a reprobate mind. Hereupon,

2. The chief priests and elders consulted together, and resolved to support what they had done at all events; and therefore, to invent the most plausible pretext to evade the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, knowing the powerful effects of money, and how ready men are to sell the truth, nay their very souls, for it, they bribed the guard high to tell a lie as absurd as wicked, that *his disciples came by night, and stole him away while they slept*. And as the men might justly apprehend such a confessed criminal neglect in them, as sleeping upon guard, might be attended with rigorous punishment if it came to the governor's ears, the rulers engage to interpose their influence, and to save them harmless. But the whole contrivance was so barefaced, that it carried its own confutation, except to such as chose their own delusions. Can it be conceived, that where the trust was so important, and death the penalty of neglect, a sentinel would sleep? But if one man may be supposed to be overtaken, would a whole band of men be all asleep at once? If they had been so, would those timid disciples, who had fled at the first approach of danger, when their Master was alive, now dare rush into the jaws of death, to rescue his corpse? Could such a number of them as was requisite to roll away the stone, and remove the body, have been able to accomplish such a thing without awaking one of the soldiers that lay around the tomb? and if they slept, how could they possibly know that his disciples came and stole him away? Nay, their very living to support the falsehood was a full proof against them; for, had they slept as they pretended, these very priests had been the first to have had them put to death for their neglect, instead of interesting themselves to screen them from punishment.

3. The bribe extorted from the heathen soldiers an easy compliance: *they took the money*, and said *and did as they were taught*. And this senseless story, being industriously propagated by the priests, was readily followed by those who wished to be deceived, and continued long after to be commonly reported among the Jews, to render the disciples odious, and prevent the effects of their ministry. *Note*;

- (1.) Money is the grand bait for the grossest crimes the raging love of that once rooted in the heart, swallow up every consideration of truth, honesty, and justice.
- (2.) No outward evidence is sufficient to overcome the infidelity of the heart, where the sinner is determined to oppose the powerful operations of the Holy Ghost. Were we to choose what proofs we would, greater could not be given than these men beheld, and yet not one of them was converted. No signs or wonders will convince those who willfully and obstinately reject the Gospel.
- (3.) Malicious lie once raised, is in its consequences often fatally extensive; but woe to the author!

3dly, According to the directions of their Master, the eleven Apostles went into Galilee to the mountain at

pointed, having summoned a general meeting of all the disciples, whose number amounted to above five hundred. There Jesus again appeared unto them, and, fully convinced now of his being the Son of God, they paid him divine adoration. But *some* among them still *doubted*, weak and wavering, and scarce able to credit the testimony of their senses: so very slow of heart were they to believe, and so little disposed to be credulous in a matter of such infinite importance. But Jesus soon removed all their doubts, conversing familiarly with them, and giving them the most indubitable proofs of the identity of his person, and the certainty of his resurrection. Hereupon, as he was now about to take his farewell of earth, he invests them with his authority, sends them out under his influence, directs them in their work, and assures them of his blessing on their labours.

1. He asserts the authority with which, as Mediator, he is invested, and in virtue of which he puts them in trust with his gospel. *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* As Mediator, he had received the universal sovereignty; angels, principalities, and powers above were made subject unto him; and on earth all things and persons were put under his government; which was a most encouraging consideration to them who were about to go forth in his name, since his support would make them more than conquerors. *Note;* When we are discouraged with the view of our own weakness and insufficiency, we should look by faith to the all-sufficiency of Jesus, and be comforted.

2. He gives them a commission out of the plenitude of his power. *Go ye therefore, and all who shall in succeeding ages be put in trust with the same Gospel, teach all nations.* They are to carry the glad tidings into all lands, and make disciples every where, *baptizing them* and their

households, who should be converted by their ministry, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, admitting them by this rite into the visible communion of the church: *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*; declaring to them the riches of the grace, and the extent of the privileges of the Gospel; with all the mighty obligations to obedience resulting from faith, which worketh by love; enjoining the word of Jesus as the only rule of duty, to which nothing is to be added, and whence nothing must be diminished; and urging the disciples to adorn the doctrine which they profess, by that conscientious observance of all those moral duties and positive ordinances, which may prove the truth of the grace which is in them, bring glory to God, and credit to their holy religion.

3. He assures them of his constant spiritual presence, to teach, comfort, and prosper them in all their labours of love. *Lo! I am with you*; be assured of it, as the most undoubted truth, though my bodily presence be removed, my spirit shall abundantly supply that loss; in all difficulties and dangers I will support you; in all emergencies I will direct you; I will give you success in all your labours, and consolation in all your sufferings; and that *always, even unto the end of the world.* Not only all your days shall you find me near to help you, but to the end of time your faithful successors in the ministry shall experience my continual support and blessing, in the preaching of that Gospel which you deliver unto them. *Amen.* Verily I say unto you, who am the faithful and true witness, I will fulfil my promises. Or this may be the Evangelist's word, expressing his own, and the church's faith and prayer, that so it may be, and so we believe it shall be. What Christ hath promised, we may confidently expect to receive, and pray in faith, nothing doubting.