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FRONTISPIECE
TO THE AMERICAN EDITION, OF DR. WRIGHT'S LIFE OF CHRIST.

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*What will we that I shall
do to be saved, Lord?*

*do unto you, look unto Me,
ends of the Earth.*



THE
NEW AND COMPLETE
L I F E
OF OUR
BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
J E S U S C H R I S T :
C O N T A I N I N G
AN AUTHENTIC AND FULL ACCOUNT OF ALL
THE WONDERFUL TRANSACTIONS, SUFFERINGS, AND DEATH
O F O U R
GLORIOUS REDEEMER.

WITH THE LIVES, ACTS AND SUFFERINGS,
OF HIS
HOLY APOSTLES, EVANGELISTS, DISCIPLES, &c.

I N C L U D I N G
THE LIVES OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE VIRGIN MARY,
AND MANY OTHER EMINENT PERSONS AND PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS,
NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OTHER WORK OF THIS KIND.

BY PAUL WRIGHT, D. D.
VICAR OF OAKLY, &c. IN ESSEX, LATE OF PEMBROKE-HALL, CAMBRIDGE.

EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

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I N T R O D U C T O R Y
P R E F A C E.

TO CHRISTIAN READERS.

*I*T is a real fact, evident beyond contradiction, that every individual should acquire a thorough knowledge of the Life and Death of our blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, who was Crucified for our sins, rose again for our justification, and now sitteth at the right-hand of GOD, making intercession for us. If Christians seek a noble example of conduct to Copy after, we would recommend to them the glorious and benevolent transactions of the GREAT CAPTAIN of our SALVATION: One, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, suffering his divine essence to be clothed with mortality, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; that mankind by the merits of his redemption, through faith, might enjoy everlasting happiness throughout eternity in the realms above. The Life and Death of our Holy REDEEMER, with other matters herein contained, is a Work, if properly executed, of the utmost consequence to this Christian land, and is the most valuable of all histories; but it is a circumstance which will be readily allowed, by the impartial and disinterested, and which has been long much lamented by many, that no Complete and perfectly authentic Work of this kind has yet been published, whereby persons of every capacity may gain a thorough knowledge of the important subject. Hitherto, Works of this sort have been published in too small a compass, and likewise in too small sizes, which are by no means so elegant, so convenient, or so well adapted to the importance of so valuable a work, which should not be cut short and mangled to suit any private purpose whatever. Some of these publications have been compiled by persons whose names, characters, and private sentiments, would have done no honor to a work of the kind, and were therefore ushered into the world under the names of fictitious persons who never existed; and others of them have been so wretchedly executed, that Christian people have only parted with their money, without having their expectations at all answered. To remedy all these defects, by which the PUBLIC have been long materially injured, I was applied to by numerous friends to publish this NEW AND COMPLETE LIFE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, the diligent labour of many years, and which, by the blessing of God, I have now committed to the press, in order that it may be of real benefit and use to pious and sincere Christians of every denomination. I have been particularly urged to treat this important subject at Large in the most copious and satisfactory manner, and to cause it to be beautifully printed in FOLIO, on an excellent large new letter, which I am persuaded is the most elegant and best size for the purpose, and what will, I doubt not, be approved of by the Public, in preference to any other form. This preferable and superior mode of printing also enables my numerous subscribers to bind this valuable work in a uniform manner with my other Works, wherein I have happily comprized a very extensive and complete Library of CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, both in Faith and Practice, viz.

My New and Complete CHRISTIANS FAMILY BIBLE, with NOTES, &c.

My Complete Edition of FOX'S BOOK of MARTYRS,—and

My Folio Edition of the COMMON PRAYER BOOK, with NOTES, &c.

Which works, I am happy to say, meet with universal applause from an indulgent public, for whom I have long laboured. The present work will convey divine knowledge to all ranks of people, rectify errors which too many are apt to run into, represent real religion in its native colours, as taught by CHRIST himself, and enable even the most ignorant Christian to give an account of the faith that is in him when called upon on any occasion.

The sacred writings of the Evangelists, &c. have not only been carefully consulted and the respective accounts systematically arranged, so as to make this Work a complete Harmony of the Gospels, but prophane authors of undoubted authority, who were co-temporaries with the Evangelists and Apostles, have furnished us with a variety of useful particulars relating to our Blessed SAVIOUR, not included in the Scripture history. The evidence which Josephus bears to different parts of our REDEEMER'S LIFE, has also been faithfully preserved, together with an account of the Jewish customs, offices, and sects; every other writer (ancient and modern) on the subject, has also been diligently perused; and no trouble or expence spared to render this Work, in every respect, the most Complete and Perfect of the kind: being happily calculated to convey to the inquisitive mind, a perfect knowledge of our holy religion, to promote a firm faith in the merits of our BLESSED REDEEMER, and to recommend the practice of every Christian virtue. The chronological and geographical parts are likewise minutely attended to, and the errors which others have fallen into, are most carefully avoided. In this Preface, I shall only mention a few things more; and may they be attentively considered by all persons of both sexes, old and young. Let it be your care to make the evidences of christianity the subject of your serious reflection and converse, wherein such marks of truth and divinity are to be found. The subject of the Life of our Bless'd REDEEMER, is of the utmost consequence to every one, and demands our most serious regard; for, as the great Apostle says, Christ hath suffered for us, leaving an example to us, that we might follow his steps: He declares himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life: He not only redeems our souls from death to life, but enlightens and leads all his faithful followers in the paths of safety, to a happy eternity. The answers which I have given to Atheists, Deists, and Infidelity in general, I hope will be found of the most satisfactory nature to my numerous readers, and such as will build them up in their most holy faith. The examples of the holy Apostles, Evangelists, Disciples, and other eminent persons and primitive Christians (also given in this Work) will likewise afford great instruction to every reader: and the practical improvements and doctrinal remarks, interspersed throughout the whole, will be carefully applied to the faith and duty of every Believer.

P A U L W R I G H T,

Author of the Christian's Complete Family Bible, &c.

St. Peter's, Oakley, Essex.

T H E
N E W A N D C O M P L E T E
L I F E
O F O U R
BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
J E S U S C H R I S T :
WITH THE LIVES, ACTS AND SUFFERINGS,
O F H I S
H O L Y A P O S T L E S , E V A N G E L I S T S , D I S C I P L E S , & c .

C H A P T E R I .

Concerning the State of Religion, &c. in the World in general, and in the Roman Empire and the Jewish Nation in particular, at the Time of our REDEEMER'S Birth. Including an Account of the various Sects amongst the Jews, and other Particulars, by Way of Introduction.

IT is generally acknowledged, by the most learned and judicious chronologers, that the GREAT REDEEMER was born in the four thousandth year after the creation of the world, and four years before the vulgar æra. This mistake is supposed to have arisen from the low state of learning, when the birth of CHRIST was first fixed as the epocha from which the whole Christian world reckoned their time. This being upwards of five hundred years after the birth of CHRIST, and there being no authentic records, to fix the time with exactness and precision, a mistake of four years was at first made, and has been ever since continued. The year in which the SAVIOUR of the world was born, was the thirty-third of Herod, king of the Jews, after his taking Jerusalem; and the twenty-sixth of the emperor Augustus, after the

victory of Actium; which, concluding the contest between him and Mark Anthony; put him in possession of the whole Roman empire. It was now about seven hundred and fifty years since the building of Rome. The Romans had carried their victorious arms through the surrounding nations, and by their justice, clemency, and moderation, risen to the highest pitch of glory and renown: but by the pride, luxury, and frequent quarrels of their great men, the empire was sinking from its ancient greatness; the common-wealth was at an end; and the senate had been forced to submit to a master. Though the state had made a violent struggle for liberty, in the murder of Julius Cæsar, great quarrels succeeded, and the whole empire was subjected to the authority of Augustus. This was a prince of a very amiable disposition: he, by his

wise management, put an end to all contention, and governed the empire with such justice, prudence, and moderation, as made him highly esteemed by his subjects. He not only settled the affairs of the state so as to preserve all things quiet at home, but had the like success throughout the remoter parts of the vast empire: for a general peace prevailed through all the world, when our Great Redeemer, the heavenly Prince of peace, was born.

The Jewish nation was, at this time, groaning under the tyranny of Herod the Great; who, though an old man, declining in his health, and just bordering on the grave, had so little thought of his latter end, that he reigned with such cruelty and tyranny, as justly rendered him the abhorrence of his subjects. A late writer has asserted, that the Jews were, at this time, grievously oppressed by the Roman power; but as Herod was, for the most part, in favour with the emperor Augustus, and had liberty from him to rule as he pleased, and even, on slight grounds of complaint, to put his own sons, Alexander and Christobolus, to death; it must certainly be the oppression of Herod, and not of Augustus (who was a prince of a contrary character) whom the Jews groaned under. Herod was a prince of Idumean descent, whose ancestors had been proselytes to the Jewish religion. He had no right to the regal authority, but was imposed on the Jews by the Roman power, when there was a contest between Hyrcanus and Aristobolus, two brothers of the Asmonian family, for the royal dignity. The Romans took the advantage of this, and Herod was declared king of the Jews by the senate, and, three years after, assisted by the Roman arms in the taking Jerusalem: and from that time he reigned over the Jewish nation, in subjection to the Romans, about thirty-five years. Herod was a prince of a martial disposition, but as he knew he had no legal right to the crown, he was guilty of the highest injustice and cruelty to keep possession of that dignity which he had by unlawful means obtained; and never was at rest till he had procured the death of every prince who was related to it. Having thus erected his throne on murder, treachery, and all kinds of wickedness, his reign was such as might be expected from

such a beginning. For though he rose to great opulence and power; though he was possessed of all that his ambition aspired to; yet he was constantly disturbed by domestic divisions, and troubles of various kinds, which rendered him most deplorably unhappy in the midst of prosperity. Tho' he was successful in his wars, and constantly augmenting his dominions; though in the sumptuous buildings he erected, and in his grandeur and magnificence, in all respects, he exceeded his predecessors, Solomon only excepted; yet his reign was one series of plots, jealousies, cruelties, murder, and every thing that is shocking to human nature.

The state of religion in the world, at the time of our Redeemer's birth, was such as stood in the greatest need of a teacher sent from God. The various nations around the globe were immersed in the darkness of idolatry and superstition. And though the unity of God, and the immortality of the soul had been taught by Socrates and Plato, yet their sentiments were dark and confused, very little known amongst the vulgar, and very little depended on amongst the more learned. The Jews only retained the worship of the true God. Their temple-worship was the same as established by Solomon; and the law and the prophets were weekly read in their synagogues; but they had, in a great measure, made the moral law void by their traditions, and their temple-worship was much declined from the primitive glory of its institution.

The second temple had now stood upwards of four hundred years. It was vastly inferior, in magnificence and grandeur, to that which was built by Solomon. It wanted the ark of the covenant, the Divine Presence, the Urim and Thummim, the holy fire upon the altar, and the spirit of prophecy. It was first profaned and plundered by Antiochus Epiphanus. It had lately been dishonored by the impious boldness of Pompey; and soon after by Crassus, another Roman general, who rapaciously seized those vast treasures which Pompey's piety and modesty had spared. In a few years after came Herod, who having obtained the grant of the kingdom at Rome, besieged and took the city and temple. And though, in order to insinuate

himself into the affections of the people, he did all in his power to preserve the temple from being plundered, and a few years after expended vast sums in repairing and beautifying it; yet, as he obtained the regal dignity by the favour of the Romans, he was always careful to please and oblige them; and accordingly profaned the temple with a golden eagle, which was fixed upon the great porch at the entrance of that fabric, in order to court the favour of the emperor Augustus. This gave great offence to the Jews, who were scrupulously exact in the observance of the minutest rituals, but scandalously careless in the weightier matters of the law: and while, on every trifling occasion, they were ready to cry out, *The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!* they had so little regard to the divinity which dwelt within, that they made this holy place a market for trade and merchandise; and filled the sacred apartments with dealers, merchants, money-changers, and usurers. And such were the injustice and extortion they practised in the holy place, it was justly observed, that the house which God had appointed for an house of prayer, they had converted into a den of thieves.

However little religion there was amongst the Jews, they were very forward and open in their profession, and there were several parties amongst them who violently opposed each other. Those who are mentioned in the gospels are the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians and the Samaritans; of each of these it may be proper to give some account. The *Pharisees* were the greatest of all the Jewish sects; and by their pretences to extraordinary purity, and the shew they made in things external, they drew the bulk of the common people after them. They maintained a kind of priestly pride, and solemn stiffness in their deportment, doing every thing in their power to attract the notice, and gain the veneration, of the multitude. A trumpet was sounded before them when they gave alms to the poor; they made long prayers at the corners of streets, and in the markets, taking every occasion to exhibit the utmost ostentation of piety and devotion.

But the distinguishing character of the Pharisees, was their zeal for the traditions of the elders, which they constantly main-

tained were of equal authority with the written law, as they were received from God himself by Moses when he was forty days on the mount. These traditions were multiplied to such an enormous number, that they were sufficient to fill twelve folio volumes: and these men pretending to an exact and rigorous observance of the law according to these traditions, would fain have themselves looked upon more holy than others, and therefore separated themselves from those whom they esteemed great sinners and profane persons, and refused to eat or drink with them. They looked with contempt on the common people, and the constant language of their looks and behaviour was, Stand by! Come not near me! I am holier than thou! They were scrupulously exact in the performance of the minutest rituals, and prided themselves in their punctuality in paying tithes of herbs, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law. They presumed so far as proudly to mention their good deeds in their prayers, and proposed them as the grounds of the divine acceptance; though, at the same time, while they maintained the fair outward shew of piety and goodness, they were privately guilty of great and scandalous vices. This sect of the Pharisees, in process of time, swallowed up all the other sects amongst the Jews; and, at present, it is by the traditions of the Pharisees, and not by the law and the prophets, that the Jewish religion is formed; it having been corrupted by these men much in the same manner as the Christian religion is by the Romish church.

Joined with the Pharisees in the gospels, are the Scribes and the Lawyers, who were not distinct sects or parties amongst the Jews, but men professing learning, and chiefly followers of the Pharisees in their religion: for the learning of the Jews principally consisting in the knowledge of the Pharisaical traditions, and the interpretation of the Scriptures by them, it is no wonder that the twelve folio volumes, above mentioned, found employment for great numbers of these men.

Another noted sect amongst the Jews, at the time of our great Redeemer's birth, was the *Sadducees*: These, at their first separation, differed only from the Pharisees in their refusing to receive the tradition of

the elders, and abiding by the written law; but in process of time, they degenerated into an universal scepticism; and, like our modern Deists, they neither believed there existed good or evil spirits, or that there would be a resurrection, or a future state. As to the *Herodians*, it is not so precisely known what their distinguishing tenets were; but as their doctrine is called in the gospel, *The leaven of Herod*, and as their party takes it's name from that prince, it is to be supposed their particular opinions were derived from him: now as, from his general character and conduct, we may conclude that the doctrine of the Sadducees would be very agreeable to him, as it delivered him from the fears of an hereafter, and as it is well known that as soon as he was securely settled on his throne (having cut off all the heirs of the Asmonian family) he began to introduce Pagan customs amongst the Jews; it is very likely that the Herodians held nearly the same sentiments as the Sadducees, and that they approved the conduct of Herod, in the introduction of the Heathen superstitions.

It is necessary, lastly, to give some account of the *Samaritans*: These people were not of Jewish extraction, but were the offspring of those Heathen nations whom the king of Assyria sent to dwell in the land of Israel, in the room of the ten tribes who were carried away captive. Those people when first planted in the land, were grievously annoyed by lions; and supposing that this misfortune arose from their being ignorant of the worship of the god of the land (for the Heathens supposed that every land had it's peculiar deity) they applied to Efarhaddon, the grandson of the king who carried them captive, and he sent them an Israelitish priest, who taught them the worship of God according to the law of Moses. They now took the God of Israel into the number of their deities, and worshipped him in conjunction with the gods of the nations from whence they came. Hence, when the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity, and, by the permission and assistance of Cyrus king of Persia, were building their temple, the Samaritans, as they in part professed the same religion, proposed an alliance with them, and offered their assistance in carrying on the work. This the Jews abruptly

refused, which gave such offence to the Samaritans, that they took all possible pains to obstruct them in the undertaking; and, by corrupting the officers of Cyrus, prevailed so far, that the work was interrupted for a considerable time. After some years, the Jews obtained a fresh decree from Darius, the third Persian king from Cyrus, and the temple was finished and dedicated. But the city of Jerusalem lay in a ruinous condition, and the Jews remained under great contempt and various discouragements, for about sixty years. At the end of this time, Divine Providence appeared for them, and raised them up a friend in the person of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Ahasuerus of the Scriptures. This prince, having exalted a Jewish young lady, named Esther, to be his queen, was a constant favourer of the Jews; and sent Ezra, a priest of great learning and piety, from the Persian court, to reform the abuses, and settle the disorders that had arisen amongst them. And, in a few years afterwards, by the interest of the queen, he sent his cup-bearer Nehemiah, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and continue and perfect the reformation which Ezra had begun. In the carrying on of this work, the Jews met with great opposition from the Samaritans; and hence there arose a mortal hatred between the two people. The Samaritans, in the contest, were chiefly supported by Sanballat the governor of Samaria; who having married his daughter to Manasseh, the son of the Jewish high priest, prevailed so far on Darius Nothus, the successor of Artaxerxes, that he obtained from him a grant to build a temple on mount Gerizim, near Samaria; and to make his son-in-law high priest thereof. This was accordingly effected, and introduced a change in the Samaritan religion: for whereas they had, till now, only worshipped the God of Israel, in conjunction with their other deities, they now conformed themselves to the worship of the true God only, according to the law of Moses, which was daily read in their new temple: from this time, the cities of Samaria, became places of refuge for those Jews who had been guilty of such crimes as exposed them to punishment, and thither they fled to escape the arm of justice. Hence, in process of time, arose a mongrel people,

betwixt the Jews and Samaritans. The quarrel between them and the regular Jews continued, and their hatred to each other remained at its highest pitch. And though John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon Maccabeus, destroyed their temple, yet they continued a separate worship from the Jews. They acknowledged the authority of no other Scripture than the five books of Moses, which they kept in a character peculiar to themselves, said to be the old Hebrew character, which was in use amongst the Jews before the Babylonish captivity. Though they were remarkable for their strictness in the observance of the rules of the law, yet they were more detestable to the Jews than were the Heathen nations. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, about seventy

years after the birth of CHRIST, when the temple was burnt, and the whole nation dispersed, the Samaritans remained in possession of their country, and there they continue to this day.

Such was the state of religion amongst the Jews, at the time of the birth of CHRIST; nor were their morals in any respect superior. Their religion chiefly consisted in externals, and by their traditions, they explained away most of the excellent precepts of the moral law. Their great men were privately guilty of the most scandalous vices; nor can it be supposed that the common people were more regular in their conduct, or that they should escape the general corruption which universally prevailed in the land.

C H A P T E R II.

Of the Promises and Predictions, in the various Ages of the World, relating to the Dignity, Character, Office and Birth, of our Great and Glorious REDEEMER.

THE great King of the universe, having in his eternal counsels, determined to send his only Son, at an appointed period of time, to accomplish the salvation of lost, undone sinners; he was graciously pleased, in the various ages of the world, to give such intimations of this great event, as were consistent with the nature of his moral government, and the designs of his grace: and that his offending creatures might not grope in darkness and distress, without any hope of his mercy, or knowledge of the way in which he would accept his rebellious subjects, and restore them to his favour, he was pleased, as soon as sin had entered into the world, to give our first parents some hope of their restoration; and in passing sentence on the serpent who had seduced them, he declared that the seed of the woman should bruise his head; which, though it could not give them a clear idea of the nature of their deliverance, nor of the glorious person who should accomplish it, yet it might be sufficient to quiet their minds, and inspire them with a distant hope. What further discoveries of the divine will, in

the redemption of sinners by the Son of God, were made to the antediluvian patriarchs, are not clearly revealed in the word of God; but from the prophecy of Enoch, recorded by the apostle Jude, it may be concluded that the world was not ignorant of this great event; for the patriarch, who could so clearly declare, *Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment on all mankind*, cannot be supposed to be totally ignorant of the great person who was to sit in judgment: and the hard speeches which he charges ungodly sinners with speaking against God, may have no indirect reference to the scorn, contempt, and reproach, which our great Redeemer suffered from the ungodly and unbelieving Jews. What further discoveries of the great Redeemer were made to the patriarch Noah, and his descendants, after the flood, are not to be learned from the volume of inspiration; but there we learn, that Abraham was called from his idolatrous countrymen, by a divine manifestation, learnt the uncorrupted worship of the true God, and informed that in his seed all the nations of the world

should be blessed. That this patriarch had a full expectation of some exalted person, who was to rise out of his family, and that the notion of this prevailed amongst his descendants, are evident from the blessing which Jacob, at his death, pronounces on his son Judah, Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, till Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* The sceptre not departing from Judah, is here a prediction; but the coming of *Shiloh* at an appointed time, is mentioned as a thing already known.— There is no mention directly made of our exalted Saviour, amongst the moral precepts of the law; but it is universally allowed, that the various rituals of the Jewish religion were typical of his exalted person, his offices, and the great atonement he made to divine justice, when he made his soul an offering for sin: and Moses could declare to Israel in plain terms, *A prophet shall the Lord thy God raise unto thee from amongst thy brethren like unto me, and it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hear that prophet, he shall be cut off from amongst his people.*

During the conquest of Canaan, the anarchy and confusion which succeeded in the time of the Judges, and the reign of Saul, we hear nothing of the Messiah. But the royal prophet David, in his Psalms, gives a very lively and spirited account of his full belief in this great descendant of his; and, in language peculiar to himself, describes the glories of his reign, his death, and triumphant resurrection: for having a clear and full view of the Messiah's kingdom and reign, he, in poetic rapture, could cry out, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* But clearer, and stronger still, our great Redeemer blazes forth in the prophecies of Isaiah, who writes more like an historian than a prophet, and minutely particularizes the great events which attended the birth, life, and death of the Saviour of sinners. Full of prophetic fire, the great Isaiah could cry out, *A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel.* And having a clear view of his sufferings and death, he could add, *He was led like a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so*

he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison & judgment; who shall declare his generation? For the transgression of my people was he smitten. He made his grave with the wicked, and the rich in his death. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. The succeeding prophets were very clear and express in their descriptions of the kingdom of the Messiah. The prophet Jeremiah particularly mentions the thirty pieces of silver for which he was sold; and the prophet Daniel pointed out the particular time when he should make his appearance in the world. *Seventy weeks, says the angel, are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city; to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.* From these plain and frequent declarations of their prophets, the Jews had a full and clear expectation of the coming of the Messiah: and they had an old tradition amongst them, which was generally received, and supposed to come from Elias, that the Messiah; should appear in the four thousandth year of the world which accordingly came to pass. Nor was the expectation of our Redeemer's birth confined only to the Jews; a tradition prevailed amongst the Eastern nations, that a great king was to be born to the Jews, who would be worthy to be worshipped: which is manifested from the wise men coming to Jerusalem, to inquire after this glorious person, having seen his star in the East, and being desirous not only to see the young king, but to present their offsprings before him. Nor must it be omitted, that amongst the oracles of the *Sibyls*, at the time of our Saviour's birth, in such high repute at Rome, are various predictions of the times of the Messiah: and the poet Virgil, who wrote in the beginning of the reign of Augustus, composed his *Pollio*, which contains the prediction of a heavenly child soon to be born, whom he calls the Son of God, and describes his kingdom in a manner which is parallel to several sublime passages in the prophet Isaiah, descriptive of the glorious Redeemer of mankind.

CHAPTER III.

The Angel appears to Zacharias, in the Temple. and foretells the Birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Great REDEEMER. Zacharias doubting, is struck dumb for a Sign. The Salutation of the Virgin Mary. Her Visit to her Relation Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias. The Birth and Circumcision of John the Baptist. Zacharias's Mouth is opened : His Prophecy.

THE happy time being near at hand, fixed by the Triune God, for our great Redeemer to make his appearance in the world, called in Scripture, *The fulness of time*, it pleased the Eternal King of heaven and earth, to give notice to mankind, that this exalted person would soon be manifested, and the benefits arising from his mission obtained. God had declared by his prophets, that before his Son appeared in the world, *A messenger should go before his face, to prepare his way.* This messenger was further described, under the character of the prophet *Elijah*; and in another place he was called, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make straight, in the desert, a high-way for our God.* In the accomplishment of those prophecies, it was necessary that John the Baptist, the forerunner of our great Redeemer, should first be born; and, accordingly, the Angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to give notice of the birth of this great herald of the Lord of life. The persons destined to be parents to this extraordinary man, were Zacharias, a pious priest, and his wife Elizabeth; who were both of the family of Aaron, and blameless in the observance of the law. But, though they had lived from their youth in the married state, they were not blessed with any offspring, and were both so far advanced in years, that, according to the course of nature, no issue could be expected from them. The priests that officiated in the temple of Solomon, were divided into twenty-four courses; every course began its service on the Sabbath-day, and continued all the week. Only four of these courses returned from the Babylonish captivity; the rest were either extinct, or tarried behind. But, that the number of twenty-four might still subsist, each course divided itself into six; the new ones taking upon themselves the names

of those who were wanting. Zacharias was of the course of Abia, one of the new ones in this sub-division, and the eighth in the order of the twenty-four. It was the lot of this aged priest to burn incense in the holy place; and while the smoke of the incense ascended, the people, according to custom, were praying in the outward court. As the good priest stood by the altar of incense, the angel appeared in view, all bright and glorious, as a native of the sky. Zacharias, at the sight of the heavenly messenger, was filled with terror and dismay; but the angel, with condescending goodness, thus addressed him: *Fear not Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth: for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall neither drink wine nor strong drink: & he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* As Zacharias was one of the pious Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, doubtless he had often prayed that he might live to see the Messiah come which was the prayer that the angel assured him was heard; but that his wife Elizabeth should bear a son, who should be the forerunner of the Redeemer of Israel, seemed a thing so extraordinary, and out of the course of nature, that the priest could not believe it, though asserted by an angel; and therefore replied to the heavenly messenger: *Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.*

The bright commander of the angelic squadrons seemed displeased that Zacharias

rias should question the truth of his prediction; and therefore proceeded to let him know his dignity, and the high place he occupied in the heavenly world; and the consequential impossibility that he should deceive him. Know, said he, that *I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God, and am sent from heaven, to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.* But, as thou hast presumed to call in question the truth of the heavenly message, *thou shalt be dumb, and not be able to speak until these things shall be performed:* for though thou hast not believed my words, they nevertheless are true, and shall be performed in their season. The priest, astonished at the vision, stayed longer in the holy place than usual; at which the people, who waited without for his benediction, were much surprised: at last he came to them, but found the prediction of the angel awfully fulfilled; for when, according to the course of his office, he was to bless the people, he could not speak; but signified to them by signs, that he had seen a vision, which was the cause of his dumbness; and, the week of his administration being accomplished, he returned to his house. Soon after this, his wife Elizabeth found herself with child, but made a secret of her conception for the first five months, contenting herself with giving God thanks in private, for his great goodness in taking away the reproach of her barrenness, and revolving in her mind, with wonder and praise, the unsearchable counsels of God, and his great goodness to the children of men.

Six months after this, the angel Gabriel, the same who had appeared to the prophet Daniel, and foretold the very time of our Redeemer's birth, and had lately predicted to Zacharias the birth of his forerunner, was sent from the heavenly regions, to the city of Nazareth, to an amiable and virtuous virgin, named Mary, supposed to be about fifteen years of age. She was of the house and lineage of David, and was espoused to a good man; supposed to be a widower, and pretty far advanced in years, named Joseph, who was also of the royal line of David. The husband had not taken home his wife, but she remained a virgin at her father's house; and while, at her private devotions, the angel appeared

to her arrayed in heavenly brightness; and with a condescending smile, saluted her in terms of the highest respect: *Hail Mary, he cried, thou art highly favoured: the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women.* The pious maid was not more surprised at the blaze of heavenly glory which shone around her, than at the salutation of the celestial messenger, to whom she knew not how to reply. When the angel rejoined, with looks and accents of such kindness, and heavenly goodness, as dissipated every fearful apprehension: *Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And behold thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name JESUS; he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.* The holy maid, not immediately recollecting that the prophet Isaiah had, in his predictions of the Messiah, said, *Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son:* and being conscious of her purity, did not, like Zacharias, require a sign; but modestly inquired how her pregnancy could be effected in her virgin state. *How,* said she *can this be, seeing I know not a man?* To which the angel, with condescending goodness, replied, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* And though the holy maid had not required a sign, whereby she might be assured of an event so wonderful, and contrary to the established order of nature, the heavenly guest was pleased to give her this satisfaction: *And behold, said he, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son, in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren: for with God nothing shall be impossible.* This reply was accompanied with such a manifestation of the Divine Presence, that it removed every fear, and filled the wondering maid with heavenly gladness, which she had not known before. The expectation of the MESSIAH was general at this time throughout the Jewish nation, and strong were the desires of Judah's daughters for the honour and happiness of being

the mother of the Redeemer of Israel; and the holy maid, it may be expected, had ardently wished for this great blessing: so that, with growing joy and exultation, she immediately replied to the bright archangel, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.*

Soon after the departure of the angel, the holy virgin, regarding with joy of heart what the heavenly messenger had related concerning her relation and friend, went to the hill country of Judea, to pay a visit to her cousin Elizabeth. It is supposed that Zacharias lived at Hebron, the city of David, before he went to Jerusalem, formerly inhabited by giants, but taken by Joshua; and, when the land was divided, given to the tribe of Judah: which city was about seventy miles from Nazareth. The joy that inspired the blessed virgin, gave her such a flow of spirits, that she lightly tripped over the mountains; and as soon as she arrived at the house of her dear relative, the pious matron was filled with divine illuminations, and so affected at the sound of the maiden's voice, that the evangelist informs us, *the babe leaped in her womb.* And, being filled with heavenly rapture, she addressed the wondering maid in the same language which she had lately heard from the angel, *Blessed art thou amongst women; to which she added, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb:* and still continuing full of heavenly ardour, she exclaimed, *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me!* She then proceeded immediately to inform her of her happy pregnancy, *For lo,* said she, *as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.* And then, in full assurance of the fulfilment of the divine predictions respecting them both, she added, *And blessed is she that believeth, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* The divine flame of holy love and joy, which glowed in the heart of the pious matron, soon caught in the bosom of the holy virgin; who, confirmed beyond all possibility of a doubt, in the truth of the angel's prediction, by what she had now heard from her dear relation, proceeded with a heart full of holy gratitude and humble joy, to bless, and praise, and magnify the name of the Lord, for his

great goodness to her, in appointing her to be the mother of the Messiah.

After three months stay with her dear relative, the virgin Mary returned to her own city Nazareth; and being now the fourth month, her pregnancy plainly appeared; which gave great concern to Joseph her espoused husband. But though he apprehended she had been seduced, yet having a sincere affection for her, and being of a kind compassionate disposition, he was not willing to proceed to the severity of the law; which, in this case, was no less than her being stoned to death at the door of her father's house. But as he had just reason to suppose that her honour could not be vindicated, and being a strict observer of the law, he was not willing to take her to his bed; but stood determined to break the marriage contract as privately as possible. While, with great vexation and trouble, he was ruminating on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and informed him of the nature of his wife's pregnancy; giving him at the same time full satisfaction concerning her innocence. *Fear not* said the heavenly vision, *Joseph, thou son of David, to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring fourth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins.* It was with unspeakable joy, that the good man received this information; and, not hesitating a moment respecting the truth of the heavenly message, he took the lovely maid home to his house. But the evangelist informs us, that *he knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born son.*

While these things were in agitation at Nazareth, Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias the priest, and relative of the favoured virgin, having completed the full time of her pregnancy, was delivered of a son. The reproach of her barrenness being thus removed, her neighbours and friends rejoiced with her; the whole family smiled at the event, and every heart was glad. On the eighth day, when they attended on the sacred rite of circumcision, the relations proposed that he should be named Zacharias, after his father; but the mother informed them that his name must be John. All the guests wondered at this,

because it was a name never known in the family, and for the decision of the affair, they applied to the father. The good man being dumb since the appearance of the angel who predicted the birth of the child, could not inform them, but made signs for a writing table, and wrote *His name is John*. The relations wondered at this, but more at observing the old man's dumbness to cease from that moment, whose voice, rising clearer and stronger for having been so long suppressed, raised loud strains of joy and gladness, and lofty praises to the God of Israel for his great goodness, in remembering and visiting his people; and, full of prophetic rapture, turning to his infant son, *And thou child, said he, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Day spring from on high hath visited us, to*

give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace. Such were the circumstances which attended the birth of the forerunner of our great Redeemer; the report of which soon spread through the hill country of Judea: and various were the conceptions of the people concerning the future greatness of the child. The infant soon grew strong and robust, he was remarkably simple and abstemious in his diet, plain and careless in his dress, and addicted to solitude and contemplation. Sacred history gives us no information what afterwards became of his parents; but there is a tradition that the mother fled into the deserts with her infant son, to preserve him from the rage of Herod; and that the father was slain in the outer court of the temple, by the orders of that tyrant; and is that Zacharias which Christ mentions, whose blood was shed between the temple and the altar.

C H A P T E R IV.

The Birth of CHRIST, with all the various Circumstances that attended it, viz. An Angel bringeth the News thereof to the Shepherds; the heavenly Host praise God; the Shepherds, finding it to be as the Angel had said, glorify God; and the Circumcision of CHRIST.

THE great King of the creation and righteous Governor of the universe, having fixed in his eternal counsels, both the time and the place where his only son was to be born; so ordered the affairs of the world, as to bring his great predictions and gracious designs to pass. And as he over-rules the counsels of princes, and determines the actions of men, so as to answer the wise ends of his government, and accomplish the designs of his grace; so in this present instance, there is a remarkable manifestation of divine wisdom and power co-operating to bring about this great event. The holy Virgin and her husband dwelt at Nazareth; and, according to the prophet's prediction, the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, which was at a considerable distance: but to bring the great

prediction to pass, Divine providence so ordered it, that about three years before the time of our Redeemer's birth, a decree passed at Rome, by the order of the emperor Augustus, that a survey should be taken, and a register made, of the persons, estates and wealth, contained in his vast empire. This survey seems not to have been taken with an immediate design of taxation, but rather from views of ambition, or that the emperor might know the number and riches of his subjects; for there were no taxes gathered by the Romans till eleven or twelve years after this, when Archelias the son of Herod, was deposed for his tyranny and oppression, and Judea reduced into the form of a Roman province; for Herod, and the rest of the tributary kings, received the taxes of their

subjects, and paid such tribute to Rome as was stipulated between them and the emperor. This survey, having been carried through various provinces and kingdoms which were subject to Rome in the two years past, was now making in Judea; and every family received orders from Herod to repair to their own city, to give an account of their real or personal estates, and there to be registered. Joseph and Mary his wife, being both of the family of David, were obliged on this occasion to take a journey to the ancient city of Bethlehem. The evangelists Matthew and Luke have each inserted in their Gospels, the genealogy of JESUS CHRIST, in which there is so great a variation, that it is with reason concluded, that Matthew gives us the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke of the Virgin Mary; that it may appear they were both of the house and lineage of David: one rising through Solomon, and the other through Nathan, another son of that prince. Though the holy Virgin was great with child, and near the time of her delivery, she could not be excused from this long journey. The town of Bethlehem was crowded on this occasion; every inn, and every house of hospitable entertainment was full: the extraordinary persons who are the subjects of our present attention, made no great appearance in the world, and could not command the best accommodations: and while those, whose superior affluence commanded respect, took up the best apartments of the inns, the mother of the great Messiah was content to lodge in a stable; and there, having accomplished the full time of her pregnancy, she was delivered of her heavenly son.

Some have supposed, that, as she had conceived by the mighty power of God, she brought forth her son without pain, or common assistance. The stable in which our great Redeemer was born, is said to be a cave cut out of a rock; and it is not unlikely that he was born in the night. In this situation the holy Virgin, having brought forth her son, wrapped the infant in swaddling clothes, and, having no better accommodations, laid him in a manger. What an amazing instance of condescension was this! The Son of the Eternal God! The Heir of all things! The Darling of

the skies! Who was worshipped by angels, and held in veneration equal with heaven's Great Supreme; to become man; to take human nature upon him in its most helpless and feeble state; to lay aside his starry crown, and all the glories of his heavenly dignity, and become a sucking child! One would have thought, that when the Great King of the universe condescended to become man, and appear in this world; that he would have been received by the inhabitants of the earth with tokens of the highest regard; and that every thing great and good, every thing grand and noble, would have been prepared to honour and accommodate the Mighty Prince. It might have been particularly expected, that the nation which he chose for his residence, that people whom he condescended to make his countrymen, would have received him with the highest acclamations, and warmest tokens of honour and respect. But how contrary to this were the councils of heaven! how opposite to this, the appearance of our great Redeemer! When great princes are born, the city of their birth rings with acclamations, and the illuminated night shines like the day. But when our exalted Redeemer was born, all was silent, all was still. Not the poor peasant, who first draws breath in the homely cottage, steals into the world less unobserved, than did the Son of God. He, in all probability, was born in the night, perhaps without light, or by the glimmering of a winking taper. When great princes are born, they are wrapped in fine linen, and adorned with mantles of purple fringed with gold: the floors of their apartments are decorated with splendid carpets, the windows are adorned with noble hangings, and they lie on a bed of state, which shines with crimson and with gold. But our great Redeemer, the Saviour of mankind, the greatest Prince that ever was born into the world, received no honour, no tokens of respect; was received with no demonstrations of joy; had no splendid apartment, no rich decorations: but was brought forth in a stable, without any person to put on the poor habit prepared for him, but his virgin mother, who herself wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger: but though our glorious Redeemer was received, by the inhabitants of the earth, with no tokens

of respect, or demonstrations of joy; though he was brought forth in the incommensurable limits of a stable, and his companions were the beasts of the field; he was not neglected nor disregarded by the bright natives of the heavenly world. A squadron of shining cherubs was dispatched from the eternal throne, to proclaim the great event, to congratulate the wondering world on their great Deliverer's birth, and proclaim the approach of the exalted Prince of peace. But this report was to be made; not to the great Sanhedrim; not to the learned doctors of the law; not to the chief priests and elders: but to a company of poor shepherds, who were watching their flock by night, in the fields of Bethlehem. The rays of heavenly glory which attended this shining train, breaking through the darkness of the night, alarmed and terrified the artless swains. But one of the angels called to them from on high: *Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapt in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* No sooner had the angel uttered these words than the rest of the squadron, who attended him down the skies, appeared; a flood of light illumined the whole concave of heaven, and angels songs were heard on earthly ground. *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men,* was the strain they sung. And, having ended the cœlestial concert, they vanished out of sight. Soon as the angelic

host was departed, the wondering shepherds repaired to Bethlehem, to seek the heavenly infant, whose birth had in this glorious manner been related. And, as the angels had declared, they found the holy child, attended only by his virgin mother, and his supposed father Joseph; the babe was wrapped in the meanest clothes, and laid in a manger. These circumstances answering so perfectly to the heavenly declaration, confirmed the affected shepherds, who, with the most ardent joy, adored the holy infant, and related to his wondering parents, what a glorious appearance they had seen, and what great things the angels had related concerning the child. The shepherds then, with exultation and joy, returned to their flocks, declaring to all men, the great things which they had seen, and praising God for his condescending goodness, in this unexpected manifestation of his great designs, to persons so low and inconsiderable in the world. When the shepherds were departed, the virgin mother of the Lord of life recollected, with adoration and praise, the various concurring testimonies of the divinity of her son; and treasured them up in her heart, with full expectation of all being accomplished in him, which had been predicted by the prophets concerning the Redeemer of Israel.

When the eighth day was arrived, since the birth of the holy child, he was circumcised in conformity to the command of the law of Moses; and received the name of JESUS, according to the direction of the angel, who predicted his conception and birth.

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST presented in the Temple. The adoration of the Eastern Sages. The departure of the holy Family into Egypt. The Murder of the Innocents. The death of Herod, and CHRIST'S return to Nazareth.

THE holy Virgin and her pious husband Joseph, having performed all that the law required in the sacred rite of circumcision, and it being necessary, that the heavenly infant should, at the end of forty days be presented in the temple; it is reasonable to suppose, that they remained at Bethlehem till those days were accomplished: for Jerusalem was but about six miles from Bethlehem, but a much greater distance from Nazareth the place of their residence. The days of her purification being fulfilled, the virgin mother, according to the rules prescribed in the law, accompanied by her husband, brought her young son to the temple, she waited in the outer court, while the two turtle-doves, which, conformable to her mean condition, she had brought for her offering, were presented by the priest, as an oblation to the Lord; she was then admitted into the inner court, where the priest received the blessed infant from his mother's arms, and presented him to the Lord, at the altar of burnt offering; and received the five shekels, which the law exacted of every family, without regard to their circumstances, for the redemption of a first-born son. The God, whom Israel expected, then suddenly came to his temple: and the glory of the latter house was greater than the former.

While these sacred rites were performing, a pious and venerable old man came into the temple, whose name was Simeon: he had long waited, and earnestly prayed, for the redemption of Israel; and it had been revealed to him, by the spirit of God, that before he died, he should see the exalted Messiah. Accordingly the spirit, which had now directed his steps to the temple, impressed on his mind a clear and strong conviction, that the infant, now presenting at the altar, was this glorious person. Full of heavenly transport, he took the holy blessed infant in his arms, and ad-

dressed the throne of that God, who had thus highly favoured him, in such language as this: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.* It may be supposed, that these words were heard with wonder and joy, by the parents of the holy child: for it must certainly seem strange to them, that the good old man should be acquainted with the great things which concerned the heavenly infant; and they doubtless had reason to wonder how he came by the information: but, turning to the virgin mother, he added, *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.* In these remarkable words, the venerable old man prophesied the opposition which the Gospel of CHRIST should meet with in the world: and shewed that the destruction of many would be the consequence of their final unbelief and disobedience; yet, at the same time, many would rise out of that dreadful condition, into which they were fallen by their sins, by being enabled to believe in the Son of God, and apply to their souls the benefits of his great salvation. The holy prophet proceeded further to inform the mother of our Lord, that her son should be set up as a mark, at which the unbelieving and disobedient should level all the darts of their infernal fury; and that the sorrows that she would feel on that account, would be exceedingly cutting and painful: *Yea, said he, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* This prophecy was remarkably fulfilled, when the holy Virgin, about thirty-three years after this, stood by the cross, and, in all the bitterness of grief, beheld the sufferings of her expiring son. Various have been the conjectures concerning this good old man Simeon; but

who he was, is not decided with any degree of certainty. Some have supposed him to be a priest; others have imagined he was Simeon the just, a great person who bore an excellent character amongst the Jews; others have concluded him to be the son of Hillel, a famous doctor in the Sanhedrim. But, as the evangelists are silent in these particulars, they must be left without any further inquiry.

The testimony of this great person was confirmed by that of an aged matron, named Anna, whom the evangelist calls a prophetess; and declares, that *she departed not from the temple, but served God, with fastings and prayers, night and day.* The meaning of which is, that she had dedicated herself to the service of God, and constantly attended on his worship in the temple. She had been married in her youth, and lived seven years with her husband: after his death, she continued in a state of widowhood, and was now far advanced in years. She came into the temple, while the aged Simeon held our great Redeemer in his arms; and, filled with heavenly rapture, blessed and praised the Lord for his infinite mercy, in remembering his people; and spake of the heavenly child to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Every thing which the law required concerning the redemption and presenting the holy child, being performed, Joseph and his family returned to Galilee, and dwelt in their own city Nazareth. But, it is supposed that they did not long remain there, but settling their affairs, they soon returned to Bethlehem, and, with the heavenly infant, dwelt there.

While the holy family dwelt at Bethlehem, there came to Jerusalem, a company of eastern philosophers or wise men. There had been a tradition spread all over the eastern nations, that a great king was to be born to the Jews, who would gain the empire of the world. This tradition is supposed to have arisen from the Jews, who were scattered throughout the various nations of the East: and Zoroaster, the reformer of the Persian religion, said to be a servant to the prophet Daniel, copied into his book several passages out of the Old Testament, and cannot be supposed to have omitted the famous prophecies concerning the kingdom of the Messiah. At

the time of our Redeemer's birth, a remarkable star, or luminous appearance, was seen in those countries, which induced the learned men of those times to conclude, that this splendid luminary denoted the birth of that extraordinary person: and so fully were they satisfied that their conclusion was true, that a company of learned men actually came to Jerusalem on this errand. Whether they were princes, priests, or philosophers; how many they were in number; from what country they came, or how many days they arrived at Jerusalem after the birth of CHRIST, are questions which have puzzled the learned in all ages, but have never yet obtained a satisfactory answer. However, it is a certain matter of fact, that, *when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of Herod the king, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.* The appearance of these persons, the report, and the inquiry they made, alarmed and terrified the jealous old tyrant: for though by reason of his years, and ill state of health, he could not expect long to hold the crown; he could not bear the thought of a prince being born that was destined to that high dignity. And, as it had been his constant practice to murder every one who had a greater right to the crown than himself, he soon concluded, that the young child, when found, should add to the number of those murders he had been guilty of, to rear his throne, and to support it: but he craftily concealed his wicked design, spake to the strangers fair, and summoned the Sanhedrim to answer their inquiry where the Messiah was to be born. He soon received their answer, and was informed, that Bethlehem in Judea, was the place where CHRIST was to be born: *for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least amongst the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.* The gloomy tyrant, satisfied with this reply, sent for the noble strangers; and seeming well pleased with the event, diligently inquired after every circumstance which might throw light on the affair: and sent them to Bethlehem, desiring

them, when they had found the child, to return to Jerusalem, and direct him to the place of his abode : and he pretended, that he would wait on him himself, and appoint him such honours as his high dignity required. The wise men received this intelligence with great satisfaction, and gladly set out for Bethlehem ; when, to their unspeakable joy, they saw, going before them, the same luminous appearance which they had seen in their own country : this glorious star stopped at Bethlehem, and stood directly over the house where the heavenly infant was. Thus directed by divine wisdom and power, they approached the sacred babe with adoration and joy, and having fallen down and worshipped him, they presented their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when they departed, they returned not to Jerusalem, but went to their own country another way ; for the Lord had warned them, in a dream, not to return to Herod with the information he desired.

Here may be observed the particular care of Divine Providence, in the preservation of the holy child ; for Herod, who was one of the most crafty tyrants that ever existed, did not act in this case with his usual circumspection. He had no other notion of the Messiah, but that of his setting up a temporal kingdom, and supposed that this child would drive both himself and his family from the throne ; and on this account he had resolved to put the infant to death. But is it not strange that he should not have sent some of his officers, or spies along with the wise men, and prevented the escape of his destined prey ? The character and conduct of Herod in almost every case, is contrary to this : but the great Governor of the universe, when he pleases, can cast confusion on the councils of princes, and preserve the innocent from their wicked designs.

We are not to suppose, that the satisfying the curiosity of these noble strangers, was the only end which Providence had in view, when it directed them, in this extraordinary manner, to the place of our Redeemer's birth ; and inspired them with such sentiments concerning him. Several great and important ends were answered by this visit ; it shewed to succeeding generations, beyond the possibility of a doubt,

that there was an expectation, amongst the heathen nations, that a great king would at this time appear amongst the Jews ; and it is manifest from hence, that there were prophecies amongst the Gentiles, which inspired them with a constant hope, that some great things would be done for mankind by this exalted person. And it is to be supposed, that these great men, when they returned to their own country, published abroad through various nations, the tidings of what they had seen : and filling the world with the expectations of the kingdom of the Messiah, prepared the various nations for the reception of his glorious gospel. Thus, while the Jews continued in the blindness of obstinacy and unbelief, vast multitudes of the Heathens received the gospel, rejoiced in the truth, and dwelt under the benign influence of the great Sun of righteousness. It may further be noted, that the coming of these philosophers to Jerusalem at this time, on such an errand, produced the determination of the Jewish council, that it was the language of the prophets, that Bethlehem was destined by heaven to be the place of our Redeemer's birth. And it may further be observed, that the seasonable presents made to the holy family, by these beneficent and learned strangers, enabled the good man to support his family in Egypt, where they soon after this were sent by divine direction, to escape the murdering fury of that execrable tyrant Herod.

The wise men being departed to their own country *the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I bring thee word : for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.* Joseph immediately obeyed the divine command, and, for the greater security set out from Bethlehem in the night : and taking a journey of near two hundred miles, he settled with his family in Egypt, and there he remained till the tyrant was dead. Herod, in the mean time, having waited for the return of the wise men in vain, and knowing he was hated by the Jews, was so jealous, discontented, and wicked, that he mistrusted everybody of plotting against him ; and, perhaps, concluding, that the Jews might conceal this child till a proper opportunity

should offer for them to bring him forth, was full of rage, and, actuated by the most infernal cruelty, sent his soldiers to Bethlehem, and the adjacent country, with orders to kill the young children that were under two years old. The troops too punctually executed the orders of the detested tyrant; and it is asserted by historians, that fourteen thousand young children fell in this bloody massacre, and Judah's streams ran infant blood. The horrid cruelty of this transaction is such, that it is almost sufficient to stagger our belief. But if we consider the conduct and character of the man, that he was grown old in murder and cruelty; that he reared his throne in blood; that he was guilty of the most horrid murders to support it; and, at this very time, was most deplorably miserable by quarrels in his family, and was constantly apprehensive of plots against his life: if we consider, that he had no friend he could trust, but was jealous of all about him, and thought his own sons conspired to poison him; we shall not wonder at any degree of wickedness, which such a man, in such a situation, might be capable of committing. But this horrid scene, as it might be expected, was soon followed by peculiar and distinguished vengeance, which burst on the impious tyrant, and laid him low in death. In the utmost agonies of mind, and the acutest torments of body, he soon after this expired. He ordered the execution of his own son but five days before his death, and he commanded all the nobility of the Jewish nation to be put to death as soon as it was known that he had ceased to breathe.—But the persons whom he trusted to execute this last order, not being so wicked as himself, the noble prisoners were set at liberty.

This affecting and terrible slaughter of the innocents, is pathetically described by the evangelist, in referring to a passage in the prophet Jeremiah. *Then was fulfilled*

that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachael weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.

Some time after the tyrant was dead, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, in Egypt, in a dream, and commanded him to take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: at the same time informing him, that they were dead who sought the young child's life. The good man, without hesitation, obeyed the heavenly vision, and returning to his native country, designed to have settled in Judea, probably at Bethlehem. But when he heard that Archelaus, the son of Herod, succeeded his father in Judea, and he being a prince of a cruel disposition, Joseph judged it imprudent to settle in his dominions; and hearing that Antipas, another of Herod's sons, but more mild and peaceable in his temper, was governor of Galilee, he, by divine direction, went thither, and took up his abode at Nazareth, the former place of his residence; *that it might be fulfilled, the evangelist informs us, which was spoken by the prophet, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

The adversaries of our religion have not neglected to remark, that there is no such prophecy as is here referred to; but very probably, it might be in some prophecy which is not transmitted to us: or, if the very words are not to be found, the thing intended is the frequent language of the prophets; for, whenever CHRIST is mentioned in the gospels, as called a Nazarene, it is always looked upon as a term of reproach; and how applicable this is to the language of the prophet Isaiah, *He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

CHAPTER VI.

The Infancy of CHRIST and his disputing with the Doctors in the Temple.

THE account of our Lord's childhood and youth is very slightly touched on in the sacred writings. How he was employed from his infancy, till he arrived at thirty years of age, is not to be found in any authentic history. This period includes the greatest part of his life, which is absolutely unknown to the Christian world. St. Luke, who is the most particular in his account of our Lord's younger years, only tells us, that *the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.* And, speaking of his life at his father's house at Nazareth, he informs us, *that he was subject to his parents, and that he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*

But, notwithstanding the silence of the sacred writings, we are not to suppose that the heavenly youth was subject to the common frailties of humanity, the follies of childhood and youth. It may naturally be concluded, from what is above declared, that the holy child was remarkable for a native grandeur and majestic modesty in his deportment; that his temper was the most amiable, not peevish and pettish, but all meekness, kindness, condescension, and goodness; and that his mind was peculiarly turned to seriousness and contemplation. It is reasonable to suppose, that he was possessed of the most amazing faculties and powers of mind; a strong retentive memory; a lively imagination; a prodigious understanding; a penetrating judgment; and a remarkable solidity and sedateness, which led him to the most sincere and regular piety and spiritual exercises of every kind.—It is reasonable to suppose, that he spent much time in private retirement, and in divine meditations, and spiritual converse with his heavenly Father; and that he behaved, in every respect, in such a manner to his friends and relations as made him the most amiable child in the age in which he lived. It cannot be learned from the evangelists that he had a lib-

eral education; every account we have of the condition of his parents in the world conspires to prove that they were in low circumstances. Joseph was by trade a carpenter. JESUS abode with his parents till his public ministry commenced, and, no doubt, worked with his supposed father at his trade. He is called in one place in the gospels, the carpenter; and in another the carpenter's son: so that it may be concluded that he had no other learning than what his parents themselves taught him, and what he might gather at the synagogue by attending to the reading of the law and the prophets. But it may be learned, from the words of the evangelist above quoted, that the favour of God towards him was very apparent, and that the holy Spirit with which he was filled appeared in his early youth. The wonderful advances he made in wisdom, the visible strength and steadiness of his mind, and the seriousness and composure of his countenance, beyond what ever was seen before in one so young, were plain vindications of his divinity, and were every day improving and increasing.

It was a general custom of the Jews to take a journey to Jerusalem, and annually attend the feast of the passover. The parents of our Great Redeemer, with their numerous relations and friends, when the holy child was twelve years old, went to the capital of the kingdom on this occasion. Whether the child JESUS had been at Jerusalem before is not certainly known: it is generally concluded that he had not. Having remained seven days with them, during their attendance at the temple, he separated himself from the company, and, when they set out on their return to their own country, stayed behind. They proceeded on their first day's journey and did not miss him till night, supposing he might be in company with some of their relations, who had been at the holy city on the same occasion with themselves, and were now returning. But inquiring amongst all their

kindred and friends, they learnt that he was not in the company. Full of anxiety and distress, they returned to Jerusalem; and searched every place in the city where he was likely to be found. Two days they sought him in vain. On the third day, they found him in the outer court of the temple, amongst the learned doctors of the law, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

In the outer court of the temple, called the court of the people, were several chambers belonging to the priests; and here the doctors of the law assembled at the feast of the passover, and at other times, to teach the people; and not only expounded the Mosaical institutions, but debated with one another; concerning the difficulties that occurred. Such youths as applied themselves to learning, were permitted to converse with the assembly: and received such instructions as were necessary to enable them to pursue their respective studies. At this assembly of the doctors, Jesus presented himself, and not only gave attention to their debates, and proposed such questions, as naturally arose from the subjects under consideration; but propounded several difficult questions of his own, which, when the doctors could not clear up, he expounded himself to the satisfaction and surprise of all present. The learned doctors, with the utmost astonishment, heard the young child manifest such wisdom and deep understanding, as not only exceeded men, but such men as were reputed the most learned and judicious amongst them. No doubt, there was something remarkably majestic and amiably divine in his appearance; and, as he led the discourse himself, we may reasonably suppose, that the question which he debated with the doctors, had reference to some prophecy concerning the Messiah; which he threw such light upon, and explained in such a manner, as raised the admiration and astonishment of all that heard him. It is certainly very strange, that the admiration which the holy child excited in this public assembly, by his understanding and pertinent answers, did not excite some further inquiry after him. But, it is to be supposed, that the coming of such mean persons as Joseph and Mary, who appeared to be his parents, very much abated the

regard which the learned doctors of the law would otherwise have had for so wonderful a child; but things which appear low in the world, are always despised by those lazy inquirers after truth, who seek the praise of man, and are only candidates for popular applause.

Joseph and Mary, who had been seeking the holy child with the utmost apprehensions and concern, found him in this situation with equal surprise and joy. And there is no doubt but JESUS, when he perceived the approach of his parents, arose and went with them immediately; taking this occasion to withdraw himself from the admiring assembly. His mother was very much affected with the appearance of her son, and the place and company in which she had found him. She gently asked him, *Why he had left them in this manner?* rather inquiring into the reason of his staying behind, than designing to blame, or chide him: for no doubt, she perceived that he was under divine direction; yet proceeding to inform him, that her husband and herself had been extremely concerned for him, and had sought him three days with the utmost anxiety and grief, the holy child, with the most amiable meekness, informed her, that they need not have wearied themselves with seeking him, nor their minds with anxiety and care, for he was under the protection of his Father, on whose business he had been employed. The expressions which the heavenly child used on this occasion, were not clearly understood by his wondering parents; but his mother, on this, as on every other remarkable occurrence in the life and conduct of her son, took notice of his words and treasured them up in her heart; and the child JESUS, having given this early and remarkable instance of his diligence and ready obedience in the work in which he was to be hereafter employed, now proceeded to give an open and manifest instance of his duty to his parents; for he returned with them to Nazareth, and was subject to them as before. Here he remained till he arrived at the age of thirty years, and made wonderful improvements in wisdom and knowledge, being favoured by God in an extraordinary manner, and highly esteemed, revered, and loved by all that knew him.

There is nothing expressly recorded in the evangelists relating to our Lord's life and conversation, from twelve years old, to the time when he entered on his public ministry, which was at the age of thirty; but from several passages of Scripture, various circumstances may be collected. It is plain, from his parents seeking him amongst his relations and acquaintance, when he was left behind at Jerusalem, that he was of a familiar, friendly disposition: that he had no objection to company and conversation, and that he lived in familiarity and friendship with his neighbours and relations: it is also evident, that, though the learned doctors, and the people in the temple, were filled with the highest admiration at the abilities and knowledge of JESUS, when a child; and, though afterwards, he, no doubt, gave to his mother, and some few particular friends, plain proofs of his heavenly wisdom; yet his conversation with the common people was such, as cast a veil over his divinity; and the general course of his conduct and converse with the common people was such, that no noise was made about him, nor any great things expected from him in the Jewish nation, nor even in his own city. And it is to be supposed, that his mean appearance in the world, not a little contributed to prevent his being remarked and esteemed for those excellent qualities, which must certainly be apparent in him; for we find he was afterwards reproached in his own city, for pretending to teach them, when they knew the meanness of his extraction, and his illiterate education: *Whence, they cried, hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named*

Mary, and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things!

And it may further be remarked, that the blessed JESUS did not give himself any airs of superiority amongst his brethren and friends; but meekly condescended to attend to the meanest employment, assisting the necessities of his parents with his labour, and not being desirous of popular applause. For as it is to be supposed, that he weekly attended on the reading the law and the prophets in the synagogue, was it not surprising that he could hear the erroneous expositions, which, no doubt, were frequently made, and remain silent at Nazareth, after he had disputed with the learned doctors in the temple, and silenced the wise men of Jerusalem? Herein appears the most profound humility, and the most consummate wisdom of our Lord, in concealing his superior knowledge and understanding, when he might have gained the admiration and applause of his townsmen, and have been justly revered and esteemed by all. It is supposed that Joseph did not live till CHRIST began his public ministry, because he is not mentioned in the Gospels, after John began to baptise. Some of the antient writers have pretended to inform us what was the particular sort of carpentry which Joseph carried on: they say, it was making plows, yokes, and instruments of husbandry for his neighbours. And it is not unlikely, that our Lord lived with his mother, and assisted her in carrying on the trade, after her husband's death: and hence, it is supposed, he is called by St. Mark, *The carpenter, the son of Mary.*

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Death of Elizabeth, and the Murder of Zacharias. The preaching of John the Baptist; his Office, and Manner of Living: He baptiseth in Jordan, and rebuketh the Pharisees. CHRIST is baptised and receiveth a Witness from Heaven. John the Baptist imprisoned and beheaded by Herod, at the Instigation of Herodias.

WE must now pass over, in the history of the life of CHRIST, a period of eighteen years: all the account the evangelists give of our Lord, during this time, is that he dwelt at Nazareth, and was subject to his parents. But, having passed over this time in silence, all the evangelists agree in giving the history of his entrance on his public ministry, and the preparatory preaching of his great forerunner John the Baptist.

When our Lord was about fourteen years of age, the emperor Augustus died, after a reign of about forty years. Great was the grief of the whole empire at his death, for he was a prince of such a disposition, and reigned with such wisdom, justice, and goodness, as gained him the love of his subjects. He was succeeded by Tiberius, the son of his wife Livia, by a former husband. Tiberius was admitted to a share in the government two or three years before the death of Augustus and now succeeded without opposition. He was a prince of a disposition vastly different to that of his predecessor, and governed the empire in such a manner, as rendered him justly hated by his subjects. Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, had been deposed from the government of Judea about three years before the death of Augustus, and that country was then reduced into the form of a Roman province. Rufus, who was governor of Judea, when the emperor died, was recalled in the second year of Tiberius, and Valerius Gratus was sent to succeed him. He having continued in Judea about eleven years, was recalled, and succeeded by Pontius Pilate, a man of a fierce, irreconcilable spirit, and of a cruel, covetous disposition, too much like his master Tiberius.

Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee; which dignity he had enjoyed twenty-eight years.

His brother Philip was tetrarch of Iturea; and Lysanias of Abilene. The dignity of the high priesthood was vested in Caiphas, the son-in-law of Annas, who formerly had held that high office, and now was revered by the people as high-priest, and probably assisted his son-in-law in the execution of the sacred duties of the priesthood.

Such was the state of the Jewish nation at the time of the opening of the glorious gospel; for in the first year of the government of Pontius Pilate, *the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.* The sacred writers have been silent, with regard to the manner in which this extraordinary man passed the former part of his life; but there is an ancient tradition, that Elizabeth, hearing of the terrible slaughter which that execrable tyrant Herod made among the young children at Bethlehem, fled into the wilderness, to secure her child from his murdering cruelty and rage; and there attended him with all the care and tenderness of an affectionate mother. The child was about eighteen months old at the time of her flight, and about forty days after her abode in the desert, she died. His father Zacharias, next time he officiated in the temple, was slain by Herod, because he would not discover the place of his son's retreat. The helpless infant, being thus deprived of all assistance from his parents, the Lord, who had a great work for him to accomplish, had mercy on him; and sent an angel to be his defender and support, till he was able to provide for himself. Whether this tradition is true or false, cannot be ascertained; but it is a certain fact, asserted by the evangelists, *that he abode in the desert till the day of his shewing unto Israel.*

Some learned men, who have been at great pains in endeavouring to fix the precise time when the prophet John began

his public ministry, have fixed it to the month of October, and at the time of the proclamation of a year of jubilee. They say, that his preaching began on the great day of atonement, when the high-priest went into the holy of holies. This was a particular day of penitence, and, it is said in the law, whosoever did not afflict his soul, should be cut off from the people. This day is supposed to answer to our nineteenth of October, and was the day whereon, by the solemn sounding of trumpets, the thirtieth jubilee of the Jews was proclaimed, which was the last they ever saw.

The extraordinary person, in his appearance, and his way of life, very much resembled the ancient prophets, particularly Elijah, to whom he had been compared in prophecy. The coarseness of his clothing, and the hardness of his fare, were very remarkable: his garment was made of cammel's hair, probably the sackcloth so often mentioned in the sacred writings, to be worn by penitents and mourners; and his food, the wild productions of the wilderness: locusts and wild honey, were his only provisions, and his drink, the clear cold water which bubbled from the mossy spring. In this situation, he began the work of God, and preached in the wilderness of Judea, *Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The remarkable austerity of his life, and the air and appearance of the old prophets, which he assumed, commanded reverence from the people; and his whole demeanor, being so particularly adapted to the doctrine of repentance which he taught, engaged the attention of the public. Nor is it any wonder, that great notice should be taken of so remarkable a person, at a time when the whole nation earnestly expected the appearance of the Messiah. And as he preached the necessity of repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and had a commission from God, to baptise in water, those who confessed their sins, and adhered to his ministry, great numbers of all ranks, sects and characters, surrounded him in the desert, and, confessing their unworthiness and sinfulness, were baptised by him in the river Jordan.

John, when he began his ministry did not come to Jerusalem, or the adjacent

cities of Judea, but continued about the banks of the noted river Jordan, which, on many accounts, seemed proper to favour the designs of his preaching; for there had been so many wonderful things transacted near this sacred stream, that it naturally prepared the minds of the people to expect something extraordinary. Near the banks of this river it was that the prophet Elijah, who was the type of John the Baptist, was taken in a fiery chariot up to heaven: and what could be more natural, than to see the great person, who was the Elias spoken of by Malachi, discover the spirit and power of that great ancient prophet, near the stream which formerly was divided by the stroke of his mantle.

A circumstance which greatly surprised the Baptist, was the great numbers of Pharisees and Sadducees who attended his ministry, and came to his baptism. The Pharisees, he knew, pretended to the highest degree of sanctity and holiness of life; and the Sadducees believed there would be no future state of rewards and punishment. It was therefore surprising, that either of these parties should seek after remission of sins, for the former pretended to have no sins that required pardon, and the other nothing to expect after death, as the consequence of them. Nor can we suppose that John, when he began his ministry, expected to see the whole nation so much affected with his threatenings as was really the case; for he knew that the common people had a great dependance on God's covenant with Abraham, and expected to find favour with the supreme Governor and Judge of the universe on that account: to check their daring presumption, and discourage every hope of divine favour, while they lived ungodly and immoral lives, he addressed them in this alarming language, *O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits therefore worthy of repentance, and begin not to say we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And now the axe is laid unto the root of the tree: every tree therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.* The Baptist

thus demolished every hope of divine acceptance arising from the covenant God made with Abraham; and proclaimed to the world, that the glories of his kingdom would shortly be revealed, and a way of acceptance opened, to which a hearty and sincere repentance of sin was a necessary preparative. The awful manner in which this great man pronounced these solemn truths alarmed and terrified the nation; and a mixt multitude crouded around him, full of anxiety and trouble, inquiring what they should do. In answer to this, he informed them, that an hearty and sincere repentance of their sins, should be accompanied with acts of mercy and benevolence. *He that hath two coats, said he, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.* Amongst the multitudes which surrounded this wonderful man, were numbers of publicans, who were collectors of the Roman taxes. They were, on that account, odious to the Jews, and had rendered themselves more so, by injustice and extortion. As theirs was a particular case, they applied to him for particular advice, and his answer was, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you.* Similar to their case, was that of the soldiers; who being men trained up to cruelty, slaughter, and all the terrors of war, and whose pay was so scanty, that they were very apt to plunder for subsistence; they were exceedingly terrified at the awful vengeance denounced by the prophet; and, with the utmost seriousness and concern, inquired of him what they should do; to which he replied, *Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.*

The Baptist commenced his preaching six months before CHRIST was baptised, and vast multitudes resorted to him from Jerusalem, from the other parts of Judea, and even from Galilee, deeply affected with his discourses, dreading divine vengeance, and confessing their various vileness, they were baptized by the holy man in the river Jordan. He was now generally known and acknowledged for a prophet, and so universal was his reputation, that we read in the Acts of the Apostles, of some brethren at Ephesus, and Apollos of Alexandria, who had received the baptism of

John; which proves, that he was resorted to from foreign countries; and the dawn of the Sun of righteousness was seen beyond the limits of the land of Israel.

Though John received his baptism from heaven, we are left in the dark concerning the name or names in which he baptized: the administration of that ordinance, in the sacred names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, seems peculiar to the institution of it by JESUS CHRIST himself.

This constant and unremitting course of preaching, delivered with holy vehemence, and the utmost force of expression, accompanied with a manifest innocence of life, and a noble zeal in the cause of God, which reprov'd vice and error, however flattered or however highly exalted, so far prevailed on the people, that they would willingly have persuaded themselves that John was really the Messiah; for it is very probable, that the vision which Zacharias had seen in the temple, the coming of the Eastern sages to Jerusalem, the prophecy of Simeon, the discourses of Anna, the perplexity of Jerusalem, and the cruelty of Herod, were fresh in the minds of the people, and by them applied to the Baptist. They were ready to acknowledge him the Redeemer of Israel; and put the question plainly to him, *Whether he were the Christ?* A deputation of priests and Levites was sent from Jerusalem, to ask him the question in form; to which he abruptly replied, *I am not the Christ.* They then proceeded to enquire whether he were the prophet Elijah; to which he answered, *I am not.* They then inquired whether he were one of the antient prophets; to which he replied in the negative. Who then art thou, they inquired, and what answer may we give to them that sent us? *What sayest thou, of thyself?* To which he replied, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.* The priests and Levites then inquired, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be neither CHRIST, nor Elias, nor one of the antient prophets?* to this the Baptist answered, *I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not: he it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sho's latchet I am not worthy to unloose: he shall*





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CHRIST BAPTIZED.

baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

While John remained at Bethabara, beyond Jordan; our great Redeemer thought proper to leave his retirement at Nazareth, and repairing to his forerunner, who was baptizing in the river, he proposed himself a candidate for his baptism. He, who was perfectly pure and holy, could not stand in need of the baptism of repentance, but being willing to honour the institution, he offered himself to John, proposing to be baptized. John, by a prophetic spirit, knew the *Lamb of God*, acknowledged his superiority, and would have declined the task. *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me!* cried the holy man. Jesus calmly replied, *Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* Our great Redeemer did not think proper to explain the case, and lay down the reasons why it was necessary for him to submit to that institution; but, by this reply, gave the Baptist to understand, that the divine will required it to be done; it having a tendency to promote the great end for which they both came into the world. The good man's scruples being removed, the Son of God descended into the stream, and received the sacred rite at the hands of the holy prophet. The exalted Redeemer ascending from the water, kneeled down on the banks of Jordan, and prayed with great fervency to his heavenly Father. As this holy rite was preparatory to his entering on his public ministry, no doubt he prayed for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the great work which lay before him. His prayers were heard: a flood of heavenly glory immediately illuminated the whole concave of the sky, and the Eternal Spirit, arrayed in beamy light, whose whiteness exceeded the new fallen snow, appeared in the shape of a dove, hovering over the head of the Saviour of mankind: at the same time, a voice, awful as the thunders of heaven, yet soft and pleasing as the most delightful music, proclaimed to the wondering multitude, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This manifest testimony from heaven, of the divinity of the holy

JESUS was received with wonder and joy by the Baptist: *For he that sent him to baptize with water, the same had said unto him, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.* And, confirmed by this appearance and heavenly voice, beyond all possibility of a doubt, he immediately cried out to the astonished beholders, *This is he of whom I spake. He that cometh after me, is preferred before me, for he was before me; and of his fulness have we all received grace for grace: for the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

John continued baptizing and preaching at Bethabara, near the banks of the river Jordan, at which place Jesus came to him, whom when the prophet saw, he cried out, *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;* and on every occasion and opportunity that offered, the holy man pointed out the Redeemer of Israel, and proclaimed him to mankind.

John after this, continued preaching and baptizing: his discourses were delivered with such freedom and plainness, and at the same time with such energy and spirit, as gave him a commanding influence over the minds of his hearers. Full of the Spirit of God, he regarded not the frowns of the mighty, nor sought the praises of man. With holy boldness, impartial freedom of speech, and the high authority of a teacher sent from God, he reprov'd the vices and miscarriages of all orders of men. He spared not the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the prophaneness of the Sadducees, the extortion of the publicans, the rapine of the soldiers, nor the lewdness and incest of Herod himself. That prince, who was tetrarch of Galilee, had taken to wife a princess, whose name was Herodias; she was daughter to Aristobulus, one of the sons of Herod the Great, by his queen Mariamne. Her father was put to death by the old tyrant, when he was in so much perplexity and distress, on account of the troubles and quarrels in his family. This princess was afterwards married to Herod Philip, te-

tarch of Iturea, her father's brother; she had now eloped from her husband, and lived with Herod Antipas. This prince was affected with the powerful plainness, and authoritative simplicity of the preaching of the Baptist, and frequently attended on his ministry. The prophet, as he spared no vice, nor man who was guilty of it, however esteemed or exalted, warmly expostulated with him on the wickedness and lewdness of his life, and sharply reproved him for his incestuous marriage. The haughty queen was so offended at the boldness of the prophet, that she demanded his death. The king would have complied with her request, but was afraid of an insurrection amongst the people; for John was highly esteemed and revered by all men; Herod therefore endeavoured to gratify her revenge, by casting the Baptist into prison. Here the holy man remained several months, and his public ministry ceased.

While he was thus in confinement, he heard of the miracles which JESUS daily wrought, and his public ministry and preaching. But our Redeemer not having taken such steps as the Jewish nation expected from the Messiah (for the prevailing notion was, that this great person, whenever he appeared, would set up a temporal kingdom, and reign over all the earth) the Baptist seemed not to be thoroughly satisfied with his proceeding. His chusing a company of illiterate fishermen to be his disciples, and avoiding all popularity and applause, seemed not to promise the rising of his kingdom. The good man therefore sent two of his disciples to the Son of God, to inquire into the meaning of these things, not directly, but rather seeming to hesitate whether he were the Messiah or not: *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* It happened when these disciples came to our Lord, he was employed in publishing his gospel, healing the sick, casting out devils, and restoring sight to the blind. He did not therefore think fit to return a direct answer to the question of John, but referred him to the works he performed, and the miracles he wrought: *Go and tell John, said he, what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear,*

the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.

John continued long in prison, and was mortally hated by the incestuous queen: but it was not in the power of the enraged princess to procure his death. At length an opportunity offered, and the prophet fell a victim to her vengeance. Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, with whom she lived in adultery and incest, made a great feast for the celebrating his birth-day, to which he invited his courtiers, the chief officers of his army, and the nobles and great men of the country. At this entertainment a young damsel, named Salome, the daughter of the queen Herodias, by her former husband Philip, entertained the noble company, and dignified the royal feast by her skill in dancing. This gave so much satisfaction and pleasure to the company, especially to the king, that he promised with an oath, to give her whatever she desired; and assured her, that her request should not be denied, were it for half his kingdom. The young damsel was not willing to make so important a demand without the advice of her mother. The enraged princess, having now an opportunity to accomplish her revenge on the prophet, to whom she bore a mortal hatred, commanded her daughter to demand the head of John the Baptist. This request the damsel soon presented at the throne. The king, as he little expected such a demand, was very much concerned; yet, as he had given his oath, and was not willing to seem little in the eyes of his guests, he gave immediate orders that John should be beheaded in private, in the castle where he was confined. The orders were immediately executed, and the bloody head of the prophet was brought into the banqueting room, and given to the damsel. She took the cruel present to her mother, who beheld, with much satisfaction, the full gratification of her great revenge. Thus fell this great and illustrious person. His disciples hearing of his death, came to Herod, and begged the body of their master: they buried it in a decent sepulchre, and knowing that John had always esteemed JESUS to be the Messiah, they came and informed him of this mournful event.

C H A P T E R VIII.

CHRIST after his Baptism is driven by the Spirit into the Wilderness, where he fasteth Forty Days; during which Time he is tempted of the Devil several Ways, but overcometh him in all of them: Afterwards Angels administer unto him.

OUR blessed Saviour, having been baptized in the river Jordan, and having received the testimony of God, in the most manifest and glorious manner, amidst vast numbers of spectators, declaring him to be the Son of the Most High, now prepared to begin his public ministry, and enter upon the great work for which he came into the world.

Jordan, in which our great Redeemer was baptized, was the most considerable river in the land of Canaan, and ran almost from the northern to the southern boundaries of the Holy Land. It ran a great way through the wilderness of Judea, which was not called a wilderness because it was quite uninhabited, but because it was more wild, uncultivated, and less inhabited than the rest of the country. The river Jordan, like the Nile, overflowed its banks at one season of the year: it was much infested with lions, and other wild beasts, who, being driven out of their dens by the rising of the waters, spread themselves over the country; hence the allusion in the prophet, he comes *like a lion from the swellings of Jordan*.

The exalted Saviour of mankind, when he began his public ministry, did not seek to aggrandize himself, or court the honour or applause of men. It might have been expected, that, preceded by his forerunner the Baptist, and with a blaze of divine glory round his head he would have went to Jerusalem, the seat of power, and made known himself and his pretensions to the great men of the kingdom. But the meek and lowly JESUS, shunning every thing that was grand and noble, retired to the desert. The evangelist Mark informs us, that he was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness: it is not to be supposed, that he was driven by any irresistible power, but by the influence of that Holy Spirit which descended on him at his baptism, and always resided in him. The design of this retirement, no doubt, was, that by

solitude, contemplation, and spiritual converse with his heavenly Father, he might prepare himself for the great work which lay before him; and by baffling the temptations of the evil spirit, might triumph over the grand enemy of mankind in our stead, and point out to us the duty of withstanding his temptations. *It behoved him in all things to be like to his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful highpriest: for in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* That part of the wilderness into which the holy JESUS retired, is supposed to be about four miles from the river Jordan, and twenty from Jerusalem. It was in every respect, a dismal and uncomfortable situation, dry, barren, and waste, surrounded by vast craggy mountains frequented by wild beasts, solitary, dreary, and forlorn.

In this dreadful retreat, our great Redeemer remained forty days (the same time which Moses was in the mount, when he received the law) amidst the howlings of beasts of prey, and constant temptations of wicked spirits, who, no doubt, used all their arts to interrupt his meditations and disturb his peace. The desert was barren and dry, it produced nothing to eat; nor was there any water to allay the thirst. The Son of God fasted forty days, being supported by divine power; at the end of which time, he felt the calls of nature, and the painful sensations of hunger and thirst. What our Lord suffered from the temptations and delusive arts of the wicked spirits, during his forty days abode in the desert, is not particularly recorded; but it seems at the end of that time, he was attacked by the prince of apostate angels himself. It is not to be supposed but a spirit, so subtle and vigilant, must be fully acquainted with the late manifestation of divine glory, which had, at CHRIST'S baptism, declared him the Son of God;

nor could he be ignorant of the circumstances attending his birth, and the various testimonies of his divinity during the course of his life. But the great adversary of mankind, though he must certainly be convinced that he was an extraordinary person, seems not to be fully satisfied, that he was the Son of God : and to prove this important point, took this opportunity when he was afflicted with hunger and thirst, to ply him with his temptations. The wily tempter approached the holy JESUS, very likely in human shape, and, knowing the extremity of his hunger, expostulated with him, why he would endure such hardships, when it was in his power so easily to find relief. *If thou be the Son of God, said he, command that these stones be made bread.* This temptation, seeming so kind and harmless, was the more dangerous : the crafty fiend designing to allure our great Redeemer to some superfluous acts of his divine power, to supply his present necessity, which might have been contrary to an entire resignation and obedience to the will of his heavenly Father : but our Lord repelled this insinuating temptation, by quoting the words of Moses, which implied, that God, when he pleases, can by extraordinary means supply the wants of his creatures, and provide food for the support of the human race, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but every word of God.*

The crafty fiend repulsed in this first open attempt on the blessed JESUS, proceeded to a second trial to ensnare our exalted Saviour ; in order to which, it is asserted by the evangelist, *that he took him to the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple.* Our great Redeemer must be hurried through air to the distance of twenty miles : it is supposed he was set upon some spire on the south side of the temple ; probably on that part which was called Herod's tower, which was built upon the edge of the rock, under which was a valley of prodigious depth. Josephus writes, that he that was on the top of this tower, and looked down to the valley beneath, his head would immediately swim, and grow dizzy ! nay, it was farther than his very eyes could reach the bottom. At this giddy height, the crafty tempter set the blessed JESUS, and thus

addressed him : *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Thus, by a partial and mutilated quotation from the Psalms, the great adversary of mankind attempted to draw aside and overcome their only Saviour ; the words, *to keep thee in all thy ways,* were not to the artful tempter's purpose, and therefore were craftily omitted. The tendency of this temptation seems to be the exciting our Lord to presume too much upon the divine protection, in his present state of humility and submission ; and as he depended on the word of God, when he was in danger of being famished in the wilderness, the tempter quoted the same word to assure him, that God would send his angels to preserve him, though he should leap from that stupendous height. And, perhaps, the malicious fiend might secretly hope, that, if the Lord could be prevailed upon to make the experiment, he would be dashed to pieces with the fall, and all the apprehensions of the infernal powers, on his account, would then have been at an end. But the blessed JESUS was not thus to be overcome : he stood fixed on the immovable basis of his humility and meekness, and replied to the insinuating tempter, in the words of Moses, *It is written again, said he, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* By which we are to learn, that it is not lawful to try the goodness of God, or the reality of his paternal care in our preservation, by putting ourselves into unnecessary danger, or making wild and extravagant experiments of his protection.

The grand adversary of mankind, though twice repulsed with shame, yet scorned to give up the contest ; but rallying all his powers of deception, stood prepared to make one more bold effort. The evangelist informs us, that from the pinnacle of the temple, the devil took our Lord *to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* The crafty deceiver here thought to work upon our Saviour's ambition ; and, doubtless, by the powers of bold enchantment, he filled the wide-stretched landscape with vast

palaces, cities, temples, towers, fleets, and armies, chariots, warriors, foaming steeds, and all the mighty powers of sovereign greatness; which pointing in order to our Redeemer's view, *all these things*, said he, *will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* To this boldness and blasphemy, the holy JESUS gave a sharper rebuke than he had done to the other temptations, and plainly manifesting his divinity, while he assumed a commanding authority, worthy the Son of God, *Get thee hence Satan*, he cried, *for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

The frightened fiend now could stand no longer; he had received such a defeat, as convinced him that all further attempts

were vain: his eyes were dazzled with the divine glory which shone around the Son of God; and it may be supposed that he fled murmuring to his subject fiends, complaining of his sad defeat, and giving them instructions, to use all their infernal arts, to influence the minds of men, fill them with rage against their only Saviour, and prevent their believing in him, and receiving his glorious gospel.

The grand deceiver, thus defeated and fled, a squadron of bright cherubs descended from the heavenly world, congratulating the exalted Saviour of mankind on his victory, and administering to his necessities, such supplies from the celestial regions, as enabled him to pursue the great work which he was now to enter upon.

C H A P T E R IX.

CHRIST begins his Public Ministry. His first Miracle at Cana. He goes to Jerusalem at the Passover; performs several Miracles; clears the Temple of the traders; and holds a Conference with Nicodemus.

IT was during the retreat of our great Redeemer into the desert, and his abode there, that the Jewish Sanhedrim sent the deputation of priests and Levites to John the Baptist, as before related; and he having openly and honestly informed them, that he was not the Messiah, they returned to Jerusalem.

The next day after their departure, the Son of God, having defeated the cunning and disappointed the wiles of the great enemy of mankind, returned from the wilderness, after an abode there for forty days, and came to Bethabara, where John was baptising. The holy Baptist, knowing that the great design of his coming into the world was to prepare the way for, and lead the people to, the Messiah; no sooner saw the exalted Saviour of mankind, than he pointed him out to the people as the object of their highest regard and reverence: *Behold*, he cried, *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!* And that it might not be supposed, that he declared him to be such a dignified person, without sufficient grounds, he proceeded to inform the attentive multitude, that he had received a full assurance

of this truth at the time when he baptised him, by the appearance of the Holy Spirit, in the shape of a dove, visibly resting on his head, *John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon him, and I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost; and I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God.* After this public declaration of his great forerunner, JESUS departed; but returning the next day to the banks of Jordan, the Baptist being there with two of his disciples, he no sooner beheld the holy JESUS, than he repeated and confirmed his former declaration, which was made to the multitude, *Behold the Lamb of God.* It is probable these disciples were absent when JESUS was baptised, and the Spirit descended on him, while a voice from heaven declared him the Son of God. This plain and positive declaration of their master, excited their curiosity, and filled them with a strong desire to be further informed. To this end, they followed JESUS, no doubt

desiring to be acquainted with this extraordinary person. Our great Redeemer, knowing their intentions, turned towards them, and, with that condescending kindness and complacency so natural to him, took them with him to his house. We are informed, by the evangelist John, that one of these disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter; the name of the other is not mentioned, some suppose it was the evangelist himself. They, by this invitation, gained an opportunity of conversing with the Saviour of mankind, and that conversation, joined with the declaration of their master the Baptist, fully convinced them of the truth of his mission, and they esteemed and revered him as the great Messiah, the long-expected Redeemer of Israel.

Soon after this, Andrew found his brother Peter, and with the utmost joy and elevation of heart, brought him to JESUS. The Lord immediately called him by his name, and informed him, that he should hereafter be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone, or rock. The day following, Philip, an inhabitant of the town of Bethsaida, was so happy as to come in company with the great Redeemer; JESUS commanded him to follow him, which that disciple immediately obeyed: perhaps he might not be unacquainted with the character of the Son of God: or if he was, the call of the Great Saviour of sinners was accompanied with such manifestations of divine power, that he gladly obeyed.

Soon after this, Philip came in company with Nathaniel, an inhabitant of the town of Cana in Galilee: Nathaniel is thought by some to be the same person who was afterwards called Bartholomew. Philip told him, that they had found the Messiah, that great person foretold by Moses and the prophets; and that his name was JESUS of Nazareth the Son of Joseph. Nathaniel well knew that, according to the ancient prophecies, the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem: and that he was to belong to the family of David; and as Nazareth was a very low and vulgar place, he could not believe that so exalted a person should dwell in such a contemptible city, and expressed his surprise, by inquiring, *can any good*

thing come out of Nazareth? In answer to this, Philip referred him to the person he had mentioned, and desired him to go with him, and see whether what he had reported, was not evident from the plain marks of superior greatness and divinity which appeared in this extraordinary man. Nathaniel, however mean and despicable his opinion of Nazareth might be, would not give way to his prejudice so much, as to be prevented from embracing so happy an opportunity, and therefore accompanied by Philip, went to visit the Saviour of Israel. His ingenuous and candid disposition, would not permit him to reject the pretensions of JESUS without examination and trial; and, being introduced by his friend, and presented to the Lord, the stranger immediately heard his heavenly lips pronounce this honourable character, applied by our great Redeemer to Nathaniel; *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* The good man was very much surprised to hear a person he had never seen before, address him in this manner, and for his satisfaction in this mysterious point, inquired of our Redeemer, how he came to know him so well, as to be able to give such a description of his character? JESUS, with a condescending smile replied, that, before Philip called him, he saw him under the fig-tree. It is reasonable to suppose, that Nathaniel had been under the fig-tree at his private devotions; and, doubtless, had expressed such sentiments, in the effusions of his pious heart, as entitled him to the noble character which our Redeemer had given him; and it is plain that he perceived, from CHRIST'S answer to his inquiry, that he knew what was done where he was not present, and was fully acquainted with the thoughts of the heart; therefore, with the fullest conviction of mind, and the utmost surprise and joy, he cried out, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.* Our Redeemer, approving his faith, proceeding to inform him, that he should hereafter see fuller and clearer proofs of his divinity; *Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*

Our Lord having thus given manifest proofs of his divinity, and called five disciples, was the third day after, with his mother and them, invited to a marriage-feast at Cana, a small town, not far distant from Nazareth. His mother, it may reasonably be supposed, was either a relation or intimate friend of the married pair; and it happened, at the supper, that they were scarce of wine; she had often, no doubt, been witness of the supernatural power that attended her son, and as she would willingly have every thing so conducted, that there might be no reproach fall on her new-married friends, she applied to him, perhaps, expecting that he would work a miracle for their supply. JESUS, upon receiving the information from his mother, replied, with a kind of gentle rebuke, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come*: intimating by this, that the time for his working miracles in Galilee was not yet approached, but his business lay in other parts of the kingdom. His mother does not seem by this reply, to have given up her hopes of his doing something for her friends in this necessity; and, therefore, she ordered the servants punctually to perform whatever he commanded: nor was she mistaken in her supposition: for our Lord kindly condescended, by his miraculous power, to relieve his friends, and to convince his new disciples of the divinity of their master. He ordered the servants to fill six water-pots, each containing about twenty gallons, with water; the servants obeyed, and filled them up to the brim. The whole, in a moment, was changed into the most excellent wine; *Bear*, said our exalted Redeemer, *to the governor of the feast*: the governor, ignorant of the miracle, and highly pleased with the delicious flavour and richness of the wine, which was much superior to what they had drank before, applied to the bridegroom, and, in the hearing of the company, informed him, that he had acted contrary to the common custom of feasts. *Every man at the beginning*, said he, *doth set forth good wine; and, when men have well drank, then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine until now*. The bridegroom, doubtless, was much surprised at this account, and upon inquiry,

found that this excellent wine was produced by JESUS, in a miraculous manner. This miracle was the first which our blessed Saviour performed; by it he honoured the institution of marriage, convinced his disciples that he, in reality, was the Son of God, and the Saviour of Israel, and spread his fame over all the country around.

It must be acknowledged, that the enemies of our religion, who diligently watch for every opportunity to cast contempt on the great Author of it, have presumed to censure and ridicule this first miracle of our Lord. They represent the affair, as though the evangelist had reported our Saviour to have miraculously produced this wine, after the company had plentifully drank, and hence would insinuate, that he was a friend to drunkenness. They might, however, have spared their mirth, if they had considered that the words of the governor of the feast, before quoted, do not imply that any of the company were intoxicated, but only that it was the custom at such feasts to bring the best wine first. Besides, our self-conceited and impudent cavillers, might have given themselves time to consider, that, though the Jewish marriage-feasts lasted seven days, our Lord did not order all this wine, which he miraculously produced, to be drank at that solemnity: nor is there one circumstance in the account of this feast, which gives the least intimation that any of the company were intoxicated; and it must be supposed that, when they had discovered the miracle, they would have so much reverence for the divinity of the person of our Lord, as would prevent them from making such bad use of his wine, especially in his presence. Nor can it be inferred from the quantity of wine which our Lord thus miraculously produced, that he would connive at intemperance, and furnish the means of excess: it rather ought to be concluded that, by this miracle, he intended to make a seasonable and valuable present to his friends, which might serve for their use, when the solemnity of the feast was over. And, it may further be observed, that by converting so large a quantity of water into wine, our Lord prevented all objections that might have been raised against the miracle being true;

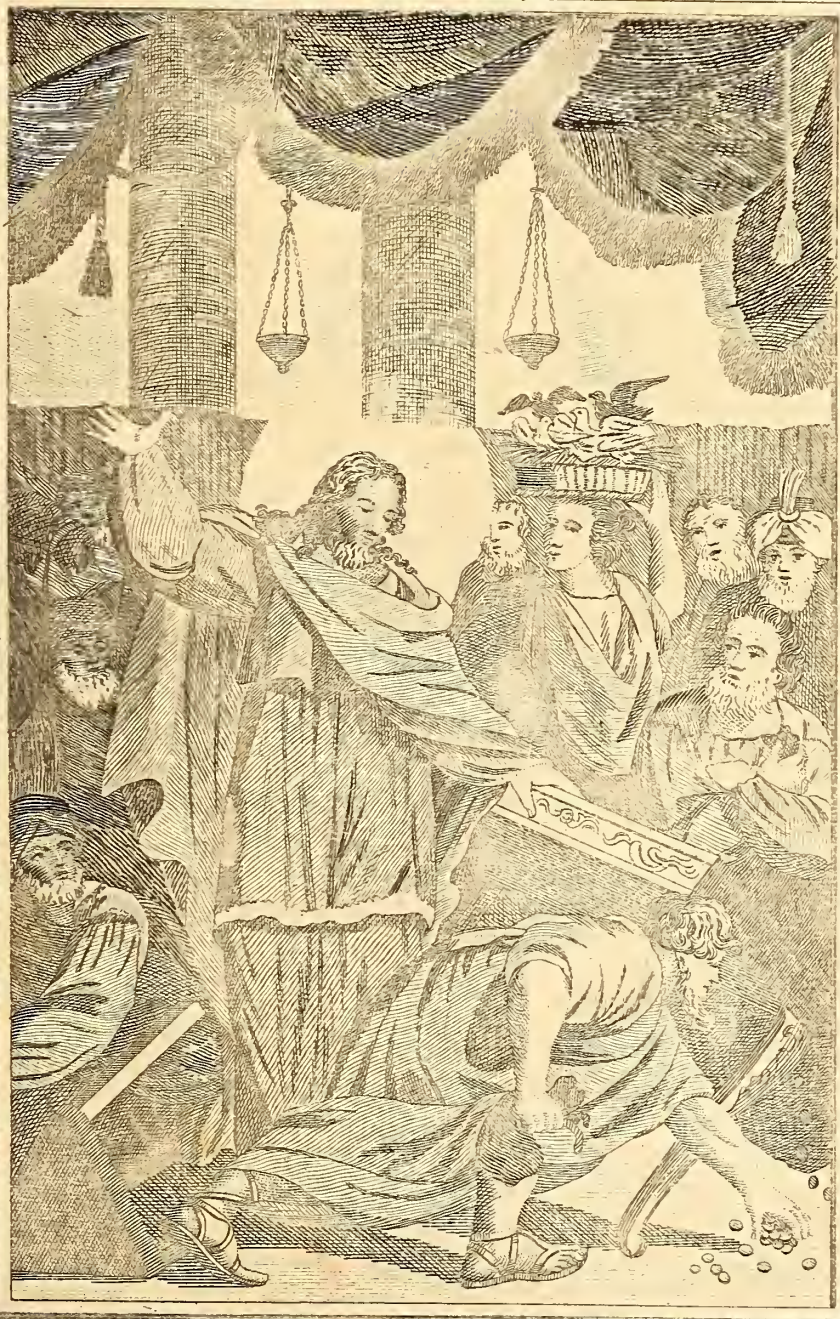
for a small quantity of wine might have been easily procured to carry on the deception, when so large a quantity could not: so that, if it be admitted that these water-pots were ever so large, there can be no objection raised against the design of the miracle; nor can it be charged with giving indulgence to intemperance, any more than the plenty which the all-bountiful Creator showers upon the vineyard and the field: so that, notwithstanding the objections and cavils which may arise from false wisdom, this first miracle of our Lord appears to be, in every respect, worthy of God, and beneficial to man.

The passover, an annual feast of the Jews, kept in commemoration of their preservation, when the Egyptian first-born were slain by a stroke from heaven, being at hand, and our Lord designing to be present at the feast, he departed from Cana, and taking Capernaum in his way, he went to Jerusalem. He no sooner arrived at the chief city of the Jews, but he went to the temple, and probably it being the eve of the feast, he found the sacred apartments, full of traders, money-changers, and merchants, who sold such things as would be wanted at the ensuing festival. The holy JESUS was filled with indignation, to see the holy place thus prophaned; and immediately applied himself to correct the abuse: accordingly, he made a small whip, or scourge, and assuming the air and fervency of the ancient prophets, he drove this mercenary train out of the temple; awed by his majestic all-commanding appearance, they ran before him in a tumult: the oxen and sheep affrighted, fled, and the owners after them, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and pouring out their money upon the ground, none daring to make resistance: the sellers of doves he also urged to depart, commanding them all for the future, to take care how they made the temple of God an house of merchandise. The Jews perceiving a promiscuous throng of people and cattle driving out of the temple in the utmost astonishment and terror, and afterwards finding that JESUS had put them all into this hurry and confusion, by commanding them to depart from the temple, and had drove them before him; they probably summoned a council, and de-

manded of him in form, by what authority he did this; at the same time, requiring him to give them a sign, which should prove that he did it by a divine commission. Our Lord, on this occasion, only referred them to the miracle of his own resurrection, *Destroy, said he, this body, and I will raise it up in three days.* The rulers of the Jews, mistaking his meaning, concluded his words had reference to the noble and magnificent temple built by Herod, and were very much surprised at the assertion; *Forty and six years, said they, was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?* But though this answer of our Lord confounded the great men amongst the Jews; the disciples of JESUS remembered a passage in the Psalms, which was clearly applicable to this part of our Redeemer's conduct, *The zeal of thine house has eaten me up.* And, as this prediction of our Lord was delivered in the style of the ancient prophets, whose prophecies were sometimes not understood till they were fulfilled; this saying of their master came fresh into their minds, after his resurrection, and confirmed them in their belief of the truth.

Though the blessed JESUS refused to work any miracles in the presence of the rulers of the Jews, and strove not to make himself known to the great and mighty in Jerusalem; yet, at this time, he wrought several wonderful works amongst the common people, and, by exerting the mighty power invested in him, confirmed the truth of the doctrines he taught, and proved that he was a teacher sent from God, and that great person so long expected to be the Redeemer of Israel.

Our Lord continued performing several wonders amongst the common people, during the time of the passover, and many of them believed on him; for they were fully convinced of his divine mission, by the miracles which they saw him perform. But JESUS knowing the secrets of men's hearts, and not wanting any information concerning them, he was able to form a just conception of the nature of this belief; and knew how unlikely it was to stand the day of trial, on account of the weakness and fickleness of mankind. In consequence of this knowledge, he did not think it proper to run the hazard of the incon-



CHRIST overturning the Tables, &c. of the
Money changers in the Temple at Jerusalem.



stancy of the multitude, or trust himself too much in their hands: for this reason, he avoided conversing too freely with them, or making more full and clear discoveries of his divinity, and the end of his coming into the world: for he knew how likely it was, that great numbers should desert his cause, when he came to be publicly opposed by the great Sanhedrim, by the Scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and elders, and all the great men of the nation.

But the wonder and astonishment excited by the miracles which JESUS had performed, were not confined to the common people: the wide spread report had reached the ears of Nicodemus, a man of great eminence amongst the Jews; he was one of the chief of the Pharisees, member of the great Sanhedrim, and in great honour and esteem at Jerusalem. He had heard the account of the miracles which JESUS had wrought, and he believed it, and being a person of an ingenuous, inquisitive mind, he wanted to be further informed.

It is to be supposed, that he was not ignorant of the general expectation of the Jewish kingdom, respecting the appearance of the Messiah: and he ardently wished to see the accomplishment of the ancient prophecies, in the appearance of that great person. And, as the general opinion was, that the Messiah, when he came, would set up a temporal kingdom, and exalt the Jewish nation over all the kingdoms on the earth, it is to be supposed, that the great men among the Jews, as well as the common people, strongly desired the approach of this happy event.

Nicodemus was convinced by the miracles which JESUS performed, so wonderful in their nature, so salutary in their effects, so worthy the character of the Son of God, so kind and advantageous to man, so happily adapted to the confirmation of the doctrines he taught, so perfectly agreeable to the attributes of God, and conformable to the predictions of the antient prophets concerning the Messiah, that these mighty works must proceed from a divine original, and that no power less than Omnipotence could produce them. But very likely some considerable scruples might arise in the mind of this ruler in Israel, when he considered the obscurity of the birth, and the meanness of the appearance of the person

who performed these wonderful works. This, in every respect, being so contrary to that magnificence and grandeur in which the Jewish nation expected the Messiah to appear, might cause great scruples to arise in the mind of Nicodemus, and fill his soul with perplexity and doubt: but he being a person of judgment and discernment, as well as probity and honour would not suffer his prejudices to prevent him from fairly and impartially enquiring after truth, in an affair of such importance, and therefore he determined to have an interview with JESUS himself. He did not think it advisable to wait on our Lord in public; for he thought he might be reproached by the rulers and great men amongst the Jews, and therefore concluded to make this visit in private; and that it might be the more so, he chose to make it in the night.

He accosted our Redeemer with a confession of his conviction of the truth and reality of the miracles he had performed; and that they could not be produced by enchantment, or any infernal assistance; but the nature of them proved them to be produced by the mighty power of God, and confirmed the doctrines JESUS taught to be divine: *Rabbi*, said he, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.* It does not by this salutation appear, that Nicodemus was convinced that JESUS was the Messiah; that was the point which he wanted to be more fully demonstrated, and hoped, by this interview, to receive some satisfaction concerning it. Our Lord did not think proper to satisfy the scruples of this ruler of Israel concerning this, but took the opportunity to instruct him in a matter of greater importance, and lead him into an acquaintance with the nature of his religion: in order to this, he began with introducing the first great doctrine of the gospel, respecting its operations on the mind of man; *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Our Saviour, by these remarkable words, may be supposed to inform the ruler of Israel, that though the lustre of his miracles had forced him to acknowledge, that he had received his commission from on high, yet he could

not discern, that he really was the Messiah, not understand the spiritual nature of his kingdom, without the operation of a supernatural power, which must produce such a change in his soul, as might fitly be described by being born again. Nicodemus, being an utter stranger to this doctrine, and thinking our Lord's words had no figurative allusion, but had reference to a natural birth, was very much surprised at the assertion; for he could not imagine that the seed of Abraham stood in need of any second birth, to render them the children of God, and the heirs of his kingdom; and therefore hastily and earnestly inquired, *How can a man be born when he is old; can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Our Lord then proceeded to inform him, that his words had not a natural, but a spiritual meaning, *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, said he, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Nicodemus might learn, from these words, that his apprehensions were gross and wide from the purpose; for if it were possible for a man to be born a second time of his earthly parent, he would not thereby become so holy and pure, as would render him fit for the kingdom of God: but the birth our Redeemer had reference to, was of a spiritual nature, which, by producing that faith which had a lively and powerful influence on the heart and life, might prepare the possessors of it for the divine acceptance: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* Whatever is born of woman, partakes of the imperfections and sinfulness of human nature; but that which is born of the Spirit, is pure and holy, and prevails over those things which render mankind unfit to be partakers of the kingdom of God, by implanting a new and powerful principle of action, and working an entire renovation in the soul, which may very fitly be compared to a new birth. Nicodemus, still continuing full of hesitation and surprise, our Lord proceeded to inform him, that the thing would not appear so mysterious, when rightly understood, as his prejudices induced him to think it was, but might, as to the probability of it, be illustrated by a familiar simile; *Marvel not, says he, that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.*

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. The meaning of these words seems to be, that, though the entire renovation of heart, which Christ's religion required, might seem impossible to the blind eyes of carnal men, it might nevertheless be true: for in the natural world, there are many things of so fine a texture, that we cannot discern them with our eyes, but it is very manifest that they exist, and they are very great and powerful in their effects. The wind is a thing altogether invisible, no man can behold it's body, or trace it's motion, even when it blows with the greatest violence; yet that there is such a thing is sufficiently evident, and the effects of it are universally known: thus, therefore, that regeneration, or renovation which is wrought in the heart of man, by the powerful agency of the Spirit of God, though, in itself, it be invisible and not at all discernible by sight or sense; yet, in it's effects, it is a great and plain thing, and really as great and manifest a change in the nature and disposition, the desires and pursuits of the soul, and conducing as much to all the purposes of divine and eternal life, as the birth of man does to this mortal life.

Though these arguments were plain, and not to be evaded or denied, yet Nicodemus retained his prejudices; this system of spiritual religion was contrary to his apprehensions, nor could he see how the children of Abraham could stand in need of a renovation and change, equal to that which the infant finds when born, to fit them for the kingdom of God; and therefore, the ruler of Israel inquired, *How can these things be?* To which our great Redeemer replied, that it was strange he should be so hard to be instructed, *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* Art thou a teacher of others, and yet unable to discern things which I have so plainly revealed? Our Lord then proceeded to inform him that he was certain of the truth of what he had advanced concerning the new birth, and therefore it ought to be received; but if these plain and easy truths, relating to the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, were so slowly received by men of the

first eminence and understanding in the nation, how would they be able to comprehend the more sublime and noble doctrines of the gospel, which he was come to preach to the sons of men. Our Redeemer further proceeded to inform Nicodemus, that it was the indispensible duty of mankind to attend to his ministry, because he came with superior credentials, and higher authority than ever man had before him. Moses had never ascended into heaven, but received his law from the top of mount Sinai: none of the ancient prophets had descended from the blessed abodes, to teach mankind; whereas the Son of God came down from heaven fully commissioned from above: he had been favoured with the clearest and most extensive view of spiritual things, and was fully acquainted with the deepest recesses of the divine councils; nay, at this very time, is present with God in heaven, and at one comprehensive view, beholdeth the extent of the universe; he is conscious to all the gracious intentions of the King of heaven towards the human race, and, of consequence, must be superior in authority and dignity to Moses, or any other person who hath appeared in the world.

Our great Redeemer, before the conference concluded, took occasion to set the inquiring ruler to rights, respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, concerning which he so much wanted to be informed. He gave him to understand, that the nation in general, were greatly mistaken in their views of that exalted person setting up a temporal kingdom, and assuming the authority and command of an illustrious and powerful conqueror; on the contrary, this divine teacher explained to Nicodemus, that it was conformable to the language of ancient prophecy, as well as the councils of heaven, that the Messiah, when he appeared in the world, should be poor and despised; that he should assume no

No. 2.

titles of honour, but be exposed to a variety of misery, poverty, and wretchedness; and, of consequence, his kingdom must not be a temporal, but spiritual kingdom; and the deliverance, which he came to procure for his people, was not from temporal evils, but eternal wrath. This deliverance, he proceeded to inform the noble Pharisee, must be procured by his sufferings and death, by which, whosoever believed on him, would be reinstated in the divine favour, and made eternally happy: but whosoever refused to receive him as their Saviour, and persisted in their obstinacy and unbelief, would certainly perish for ever, and justly fall into so severe a condemnation, because their unbelief would not arise from want of evidence of the truth of his mission, but from their own inveterate prejudices, and the habitual wickedness of their hearts and lives. *He that believeth on him is not condemned, said he, but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

This excellent and pathetic discourse of our Lord, had an effect on Nicodemus, proportionable to the importance of it: he not only believed that JESUS was a teacher sent from God, but was convinced that he was that great person who was to be the Redeemer of Israel. He constantly defended him in the council; and when JESUS was put to death, by the impious rage, and unexampled cruelty of the Jews, he, in conjunction with Joseph of Arimathea, begged the body of our Lord of the Roman governor, and bestowed on him the honour of a decent funeral, when all the rest of his disciples had forsaken him.

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CHAPTER X.

CHRIST converses with the Woman of Samaria, and revealeth himself unto her : He heals the Nobleman's Son at Cana, while he lay sick at Capernaum. He repairs to Capernaum, and having called more Disciples, he preaches in Galilee, and delivers his Sermon on the Mount.

THE feast of the passover being ended, JESUS departed from Jerusalem, and went to some of the obscurer parts of Judea ; probably he might retire to the bank of the river Jordan, where he had been baptised, and had received the honour of divine approbation, and the testimony of a voice from heaven, that he was the *Son of God*. The holy JESUS, remained here a considerable time, and his disciples baptised great numbers of people, while his fame was spread through several parts of the country.

John the Baptist was not yet cast into prison, but continued preaching and baptising, probably at Bethabara, the place of his former residence. Some of the Jews hence took occasion to dispute with the disciples of John, about the propriety of this, and wanted to be informed, whether the baptism of JESUS was not superior to that of their master. Not being willing themselves to decide this controversy, or answer so important a question, they applied to the Baptist himself. The prophet took occasion to remind them, how often he had declared, that the person they mentioned, was the Messiah, whom God had sent into the world, to accomplish the designs of his grace, in the salvation of sinners ; and that himself was no more than a messenger to prepare the way before this illustrious person. He likewise proceeded to inform them, that his own ministry now was on the decline, and would soon be at an end ; *He must increase, said he, but I must decrease*. The holy man continued his testimony concerning CHRIST, by giving his inquiring disciples to understand that he was above all ; and as much superior to him, as the heavens were above the earth ; and though, comparatively speaking no man received his testimony, though he was low and

despicable in the eyes of mankind, yet he was in the highest estimation in the heavenly world ; that he was the well-beloved of his Father, and the heir of all things, both in heaven and earth ; that the fulness of the divine Spirit dwelt in him, and it was of the utmost importance to mankind to hear, believe in, and obey him. And then the holy man concluded his ministry with these remarkable words. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*.

Soon after this, the holy Baptist departed from the banks of Jordan, and leaving the wilderness of Judea, repaired to Galilee, and often visited the court of Herod, who seemed to attend to his precepts, and take delight in his company and conversation : but, as the Baptist was too strictly virtuous to flatter that prince, he took occasion severely to reprimand him, on account of his cohabiting with the princess Herodias. This roused the rage of that haughty woman, who, on that account, procured his imprisonment and death, in the manner before related.

In the mean time, the blessed JESUS continued in the wilderness of Judea ; great multitudes resorted to him, attended on his divine instructions, beheld the miracles he wrought, and were baptised by his disciples. His popularity daily increasing, it excited the envy of the Pharisees, on which account, our Lord thought proper to retire into Galilee, and there continue that great work which he had so successfully begun.

In this journey, he passed through Samaria, and being fatigued with travelling, and overpowered with the heat of the day, he sat down to rest by the side of a noted well, near the city of Sychar (which was reported to be given by the patriarch





JOHN 4:7

J. Seymour sc.

The WOMAN of SAMARIA.

Jacob, to his son Joseph) while his disciples repaired to the city to purchase provisions.

Before their return, a woman came from the city to draw water at the well, and JESUS being thirsty, asked her to give him to drink. The woman, knowing him to be a Jew, was very much surprised at this request; for the hatred between the Jews and Samaritans, which had commenced four hundred years before this time, still continued, and was, on all occasions, carried on by each party: *How is it, said she, that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* Little did the woman think, that no less a person than the Son of God, requested this small favour at her hands: had she been acquainted with his high dignity, she would certainly, without hesitation, have granted his request. But JESUS, perceiving her delay, proceeded to let her know, that he was well able to make her the most noble and beneficial return for the favour he asked. *If thou, said he, knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink: thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* The woman surprised to hear such a declaration, and no doubt, perceiving something awfully majestic, and divinely amiable in the countenance of our Lord, without attending to his first request, was touched with a curiosity to know who this stranger was, and how he could come at the water he spoke of: *Sir, said she, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* JESUS replied to this question. *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.* Thus this divine teacher, from the circumstances of sitting by the side of a well, and the woman preparing to draw water, described, in the most beautiful allegory, the efficacy and effects of divine grace, and at the same time repre-

sented the plenitude and perpetuity of its happy consequences, which remain to an eternal duration. But the woman, still understanding the words of our Lord in their plain literal sense, requested him to give her a draught of the water he spoke of, that she might thirst no more, nor have occasion to come daily to that well to draw. Our Redeemer then turned the discourse in such a manner, as gave him an opportunity of letting the woman understand, that he was acquainted with her former and present way of life, and all her circumstances and affairs. *Sir, says she I perceive that thou art a prophet: and being convinced of his superior knowledge, she desired his opinion of a question, which was a matter of contention between the Jews and Samaritans, whether the temple at Jerusalem, or mount Gerizim was the place where God would be worshipped: Our fathers, said she, worshipped in this mountain: but ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* Our Lord, in answer to her inquiry, informed her, that the time would soon approach, when the worship of God would not be confined, either to that mountain or Jerusalem; but the great King of the universe, would be willing to accept all true spiritual worshippers, without any regard to the place where they worshipped. *God, said he, is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* The woman replied to this, that she supposed this point would be settled by the Messiah, who was shortly expected to come, both by the Jews and the Samaritans. *I know, said she, that the Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.* To this JESUS directly replied, *I that speak unto thee am he.*

Just at the moment when JESUS had told the woman that he was the Messiah, the disciples returned; and finding their master in close conversation with one that was a native of Samaria, and of consequence an enemy to the Jews, and to the temple worship at Jerusalem, they were very much surprised: but the woman, having heard JESUS call himself the Messiah, left her pitcher at the well, and ran to the city to publish the glad-tidings, that the Redeemer was then sitting at Jacob's well,

and had told her all the secret transactions of her life. This declaration filled the listening Samaritans with the highest astonishment, and at the same time raised their curiosity to see this extraordinary person, whom Moses and the prophets had foretold, and of whose appearance there was at that time so universal an expectation.

During this interval, the disciples set before their Lord the provisions which they had been procuring, and requested him to eat; but he seemed little to regard their intreaties, having turned his thoughts to divine meditations: but being further urged, he replied, *that he had meat to eat which they knew not of*; and gave them to understand, that it was meat and drink to him to do the will, and proceed in the work of his heavenly Father: then looking about him, and seeing the Samaritans coming in crowds from their city; he said to his disciples, *Say ye not that there are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest; and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.* By this our Lord instructed his wondering disciples, and let them know that the conversion of these Samaritans, who were now in great crowds surrounding him, was a greater satisfaction to him, than the pleasure he could receive from the refreshment he might have experienced in partaking of their provisions: he let them know, that to gather this spiritual harvest, and finish the work of his heavenly Father, was his proper food; and adding, for the encouragement of his disciples, that as they had laboured with him in this harvest of souls, so should they be partakers in the eternal harvest of joy, which would be the reward of their diligence in the work of God.

The words of the woman had taken such an effect on the inhabitants of the city, that many of them believed that JESUS was certainly the Messiah; and when they crowded about him with wonder and joy, their first request was that he would condescend to go to their city, and take his abode among them. The kind indulgent Saviour of sinners was so favourable to them, that he

complied with their petition, and staid with them two days. This time he spent in preaching the kingdom of God, and instructing them in the nature of his religion. Such success attended his ministry, that a great number of the inhabitants of the city believed on him, and declared unto the woman at his departure, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the saviour of the world.*

Our Lord, having thus favoured the Samaritans with his heavenly instructions, he left the city of Sychar, and continued his journey to Galilee: and though he did not expect much honour or esteem among his countrymen, he would not neglect giving them an opportunity of receiving his heavenly doctrine. He had performed several miracles at Jerusalem, during the late feast of the passover, at which many of the inhabitants of Galilee were present: his preaching amongst them, in consequence of this, was at first attended with great success, and he dwelt some small time at Cana, where he had turned the water into wine, and both himself and his doctrine were kindly received.

While he abode in that city, a nobleman of Capernaum, having heard of the many miracles he performed, came to him, and addressed him with the utmost reverence and respect; at the same time humbly beseeching him to come to Capernaum, and heal his son, who lay at the point of death. Our Lord was so compassionate, as to comply with the latter part of the request, but thought proper to give the concerned parent to understand that there was no necessity for him to take a journey to Capernaum to effect his cure: for that great Being, who was present in all places, could perform his mighty works, without personally appearing at the place where the miracle was wrought: JESUS, therefore dismissed the father, with a declaration that his son was restored to health, but refused to accompany him to his city: *Go thy way, said he, thy son liveth.* The nobleman, not doubting the truth of what our Lord had declared, departed to his house; but before his arrival he was met on the road by his servants, who brought the joyful news, that his son was perfectly recovered. The father enquired, at what

time they perceived the first alteration in him; the servants replied, *Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him.* By this, the joyful father perceived, that his son recovered immediately as JESUS had spoken the words, *thy son liveth;* and was fully convinced, that this cure was performed by the mighty power of God. This amazing instance of divine power and goodness, fully convinced the nobleman, and all his family, not only that JESUS was a true prophet, but that he was the Messiah, that great deliverer of his people, so long expected in the world.

Some short time after this, JESUS departed from Cana, and went to Nazareth, the place where he had been brought up, and where he had dwelt till he entered on his public ministry. There, as had been his constant custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and attended on the reading of the law and the prophets. After the passages appointed for the service of the day were read, JESUS took the book from the hand of the person who officiated, and opened it on this celebrated prediction of the Messiah, in the prophecy of Isaiah, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

It is the opinion of some learned and judicious commentators, that our Lord read this passage in native Hebrew, which was then a dead language, and as it was known by his townsmen, that he was not learned, it excited their admiration, especially when he expounded it with such clearness of judgment, and beauty of expression; and what the more raised their astonishment, he applied it to himself: but, as he had performed no miracles in their city, they seemed to be offended: perhaps, they imagined, that the place of his nativity should have claimed his first regard, and that his friends and townsmen should have been the objects of his peculiar care; and as it appeared, that with a word, he could heal the sick or diseased at a distance, it is very likely, they thought that there should not have been one sick, lame, or

blind person, at Nazareth. That they really entertained such sentiments as these, is plain from our Saviour's own words, *Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself; whatever we have had done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country:* they seem to have hinted to our Lord, that it was unkind in him to heal the nobleman's son at Capernaum, and take no notice of the sick and diseased at Nazareth; which, being the place of his nativity and residence, should have been a larger sharer in his benevolence and care, than those cities which were unknown to him, and therefore could have no claim on his goodness. To this insinuation, our Lord thought fit to reply, by giving them an account of the conduct of the two great prophets Elijah and Elifha, who were directed by the God of Israel to exert those miraculous powers, which he had given them, in favour of Heathens, when many of the people of Israel stood in need of their assistance. *I tell you of a truth, said he, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.* No sooner had our Redeemer spoken these words, than the synagogue was in an uproar; the whole assembly foamed with rage, and was the more unruly and turbulent, because none of them knew how to reply; but forgetting the solemnity of the Sabbath, they seized the Saviour of the world, and took him by force, to the brow of the hill on which their city stood, thinking to have thrown him down, and dashed him to pieces; but no sooner were they come to the place where they intended to have put their cruel designs in execution, than they were impressed with awe; and each looked on the other, none daring to make the horrid attempt. Our Redeemer perceiving the consternation which they were in, departed from amongst them, and none presumed to detain him.

Our Saviour being thus treated by the blind, outrageous fury of his townsmen,

and the cruel usage he had received, he removed his place of residence, and for some time abode at Capernaum. This was the capital city of Galilee, and was built on the borders of the lake of Genesareth.

It may not be improper in this place, to give a short account of this lake. It is called, in the Old Testament, the sea of Chinnereth; but, in the Evangelists, it has three several names: it is called the sea of Galilee, from the province where it was situated; the sea of Tiberias, from a city of that name on its western shore; and the lake of Genesareth, from the name of a considerable part of Galilee, extending along its western shore. According to Josephus, it was twenty-two miles in length, and five in breadth; the bottom being of gravel, rendered the water both clear and good tasted: it was said to be softer than either fountain or river water, and at the same time so cold, that it would not grow warm, though exposed to the rays of the sun in the hottest season of the year. The river Jordan runs through this lake, and it abounds with plenty of excellent fish, and some sorts that are not to be found in any other place.

The countries surrounding this lake, according to the above-mentioned historian, were fertile and populous, especially the two Galilees, which contained a great number of towns and villages, the least of which included fifteen hundred souls. On the east-side, were the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Gadara, and Hippon; on the west, Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarrichea. From all these advantages, it was a common saying amongst the Jews, that God had a peculiar love to the sea of Galilee: and if we consider, that, added to the above-named privileges, it was so often favoured with the presence of our great Redeemer, we must allow that the observation was just; for frequent were his excursions on these waters, while he dwelt at Capernaum; and once he honoured them with his presence, and worked a miracle in their streams, after he had risen from the dead.

It was the divine will, that JESUS should spend a considerable time in preaching, and working miracles, to confirm the truth of his divine mission, and instruct his dis-

ciples in the doctrine which they were afterwards to preach through all the nations of the world. He did not chuse to take up his abode at Jerusalem, because he knew the opposition which he would meet with from the Scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and rulers, and the great men of the nation. The ambition and envy of these men would never have suffered so celebrated a teacher as JESUS CHRIST, to have resided amongst them. Our Lord therefore chose to dwell at Capernaum, where he had lately, by restoring the nobleman's son, procured himself friends, and he was sure of a kind reception. Nor is it unlikely, that so great and benevolent a miracle should be generally known in the city, and not have influenced the minds of the inhabitants in favour of our Redeemer, while it prepared them for the reception of his heavenly doctrine. This city seemed a place highly convenient for the execution of his great and benevolent designs; for it being the capital of the country, and nearly bordering on the lake, it was frequently crowded with merchants and traders; who, on their return to their respective countries, might spread the report of what they might be eye and ear witnesses of; and by this means, the miracles and doctrine of the Saviour of the world, might be related in distant places. It was in the city of Capernaum, and the adjacent cities and villages bordering on the lake, that our great Redeemer spent two out of the three years of his public life; most commonly going to Jerusalem at the public feasts, but soon returning. He frequently preached in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, not only in Capernaum, but in the other cities of Galilee; and often the country villages, the fields, the mountains, the plains, and the waters of the lake were blessed with his presence; and his heavenly doctrine was learned by the attentive multitudes who followed him, to hear his words and see his wondrous works.

It was in one of these excursions, that he called Simon, and Andrew. These disciples were following their occupation of fishing on the lake: they had known him before, and immediately followed him. Soon after, he saw James, and John, who were busy in the same employment: he

called them also, and they readily obeyed. Perhaps, they might have been acquainted with our Redeemer on the banks of Jordan; or if not, his call was accompanied with such a manifestation of divine power, that all their scruples were overcome, and with a joyful readiness and elation of mind, they followed the Saviour of the world.

Accompanied by these disciples, our blessed Redeemer took a tour through several cities, towns, and villages in Galilee: the time he spent in this progress, is not particularly noted by the evangelists, but we are told, that he wrought a great number of miracles, that he healed the diseases of those that applied to him, and performed such wonderful works, that his fame drew great multitudes of people after him, not only from Galilee, but the remoter parts of Judea, and even from beyond Jordan: nor was the fame of the wonders he performed, confined to the land of Israel, for the inhabitants of Syria brought their sick into the province of Galilee, to be healed by the Saviour of mankind.

The blessed JESUS, perceiving himself followed by a vast multitude of people, who all crowded around him, with the utmost earnestness and attention, ascended a mountain that was near at hand, and placing himself on the eminence, while all the people stood on the sides of the hill, he addressed the listening throng from thence; and with the most intelligent simplicity and plainness, joined with the most powerful heart-affecting energy, he inculcated in them the moral precepts of his religion.

He began his divine discourse, with the doctrine of happiness, a subject which had claimed the first attention of the schools of the philosophers, and the wise men of the age; and a subject, which, in its own nature, claims the consideration of every intelligent being, and the more so, as the wisest of mankind have differed very much in their definitions what true happiness is, as well as the means by which it is to be attained. The Jews in general, concluded it to consist in opulence, grandeur, and glory; and on that account they wished to see the Messiah's kingdom, because they supposed it would be a tempo-

ral dominion, and that a golden sceptre, instead of a *sceptre of righteousness*, would be the *sceptre of his kingdom*; and so prevailing was the opinion of the temporal reign of the Messiah, that the disciples themselves retained this notion, till after his resurrection, and probably were induced to follow him at first, by the expectation of high honours and rewards.

The blessed JESUS, therefore, thought fit to shew his hearers in general, and his disciples in particular, their mistakes in so important a point, and let them know, that happiness did not consist in the abundance of things possessed, nor in the opinion which the world might form concerning them, but in an entire resignation of mind to the will of God, who is perfectly wise and good, who orders and disposes all things with the utmost accuracy and exactness, so as to promote the best interest of his people; and an acknowledgment of his superior wisdom, and our own blindness and folly, tends to the ease and quiet of our minds, when we are oppressed and afflicted, and cannot discern the wise ends of his dispensations. *Blessed, said our great Redeemer, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And though the sense of our own meanness and unworthiness might excite us to mourn, and fill us with sorrow of heart, the divine teacher informed his hearers, that this was a true sign of succeeding happiness: *Blessed, said he, are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* Our exalted Redeemer further proceeded to inform his attentive hearers, that true happiness did not consist in the gratification of their inordinate passions and inclinations, but in the suppressing of them, and keeping them within the bounds of reason and religion. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* The divine teacher then proceeded to observe, that happiness did not consist in what the world calls conquest and glory; for tyrants and conquerors, who disturb the peace, and destroy the comforts of mankind, are most deplorably miserable: but true happiness

falls to the share of those who are lovers of peace, and seek to promote kindness, benevolence, and all the social affections amongst men; for they imitate the perfection of heavenly goodness, which so conspicuously shines in their Maker, and will therefore be called his children. *Blessed are the peace-makers*, said our exalted Redeemer, *for they shall be called the children of God.* And if these holy and amiable persons, should not at first find that happiness, which they are entitled to as heirs of heaven; though they should be reviled and persecuted by the wicked of this world; though they should be deprived of their comforts, and undergo the severest trials; yet the great Saviour of mankind pronounces them blessed. *Blessed*, said he, *are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Solid contentment and true happiness, the heavenly teacher informs us, are not to be expected from the praise of men, nor from the noise of popular applause, but will hereafter be the portion of those who are falsely reviled for their integrity and uprightness, and their steady attachment to the truth; such persons measurably partake of the sufferings of CHRIST: and it was by these persecutions, and the contempt of the world, that the prophets have been in all ages distinguished, *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Such were the declarations of the Son of God, with the reference to the happiness of man; after which, the blessed JESUS addressed himself to his disciples, and pointed out their duty as preachers of the gospel, designed by the sovereign Ruler of all things, to teach his will, and lead others in the paths of eternal happiness. But, as the doctrine which he had advanced was so directly contrary to the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, our Redeemer thought it necessary to inform his disciples, that he had no intention to destroy the moral precepts contained in the law and the prophets, but to fulfill and confirm them, Nothing is more firm, and fixed

on a more immoveable basis, than the great precepts of morality: these, being copied from the perfections of God, must remain fixed and immoveable: the eternal laws of righteousness cannot be altered; heaven and earth will pass away, but the moral law of God will always remain the same. This our great Redeemer strictly enjoined his disciples to enforce in the strongest manner, both by precept and example; and gave them several instances, in which the Scribes and Pharisees had interpreted the moral law in too loose and careless a manner. He then condescended to assist their devotions, by teaching them that excellent form of Prayer, which is called by his name, and is in constant use amongst Christians.

Our Father which art in heaven, The great Creator and Preserver of men, may be, with the highest propriety, called our Father; for it is to his almighty power, that we owe our existence; he is, in a peculiar and distinguishing manner, called the Father of spirits, because he alone is the author of all spiritual existence. The form of our bodies owes its original to his boundless, unerring wisdom, and all our active powers are the produce of his all-creating goodness. Nor is it only by right of creation, that the eternal God may justly claim the title of our Father; but the same endearing appellation is due to him on account of our daily preservation: he watches over us, with the care of a Father, and we are constantly made sharers in the benefits of his paternal tenderness and protection. But there is still another and more emphatical sense, wherein God is the Father of his people: it is by the almighty power of his spirit, that they are regenerated; and this great work is frequently, in the New Testament, styled being born of God: by this it is, that poor, lost, undone sinners, are formed anew, so that, partaking of his divine nature, they become his children indeed, and are permitted to lift up their eyes to the great King of the universe, and call him their Father. In the former sense, God is the Father of the creation, and a parent to all his creatures, good or bad: but in the latter sense, he is a Father only to his own people, who are converted by his almighty power and spirit, enabled

to believe in his Son, and to live such lives as are consistent with the rules of his gospel. Father, is the most grand and magnificent title which can be found in the whole compass of nature, and it conveys the most honourable and lovely idea that can be formed in the human mind: it is particularly happy in marking the essential character of the true God, who is the great Father of the universe. This noble and tender appellation not only displays him as the first cause of all things, but gives us a beautiful and lovely idea of his tenderness and care, which he extends over all his creatures, whom he nourishes with an affection, and protects with a watchfulness and care, vastly superior to any earthly parent. We are permitted and encouraged to call the eternal God our Father, to encourage our hope in his goodness and mercy, in granting us every request that is not improper to be bestowed; for a father would not deny a petition to a child, if it was in his power to give, and the petition was fit to be granted: and, at the same time, our being permitted to call God our Father, should raise in us an holy emulation, by exciting us to consider what sort of children we ought to be, who claim so high and honourable a relation. And our being exhorted to call God our Father, in the plural number, ought to put us in mind that we are all brethren, the children of one common parent, and that we should love one another in sincerity, and sincerely and fervently pray for the good of each other.

Which art in heaven. By these words, we are commanded to express the glory, majesty, and power of the great God: his presence is not confined to the heavenly worlds; the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; the whole universe lies open to his eyes: his presence extends itself through the infinitude of space: at one vast comprehensive view, he beholds the whole creation, past, present, and to come; heaven is his throne, and earth is his footstool; the night and the day, the darkness and the light, are equal to him; he sees all things, both in heaven and earth; *even hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.* But, by God's being in heaven, we are to understand, that this is the

place where his glories are plainest seen, and where he is best worshipped.

Hallowed be thy name. By the name of God, the Hebrews understood the divine Majesty himself, all his attributes, and his works; and therefore, we are to understand by this petition, a desire in the worshipper, that the honour, dignity, glory, and majesty of the great Creator, may be displayed and exalted amongst men; as much as though we should pray, may thy existence be universally believed, thy supremacy over all things acknowledged, thy goodness believed and confided in, and may all men think well, honourably, and worthily of thee, of all thy works, and all thy ways, and all thy dealings towards them.

Thy kingdom come. May thy glorious gospel, and the spiritual kingdom of thy Son, be extended over the whole earth; and may all ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and iniquity, be driven before the glorious rising of the Sun of righteousness.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. May the sons of men be turned from darkness to light, and from sin and Satan to the knowledge of thyself, and by the divine aids of thy Spirit, may they be enabled to do thy will, as steadily and sincerely, though not with such perfection, as it is done by the angels of light in the heavenly world.

Give us this day our daily bread. Be pleased, O thou great Parent of the universe! who suppliest all thy creatures from the rich fountain of thy fulness, to give us, day by day, such a portion of thy creature-comforts, as may enable us to serve thee with cheerfulness and satisfaction of mind.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. God being the supreme and righteous Governor of the world, he hath a right to punish those who break his just and equitable laws. The suffering of punishment is therefore a debt, which sinners owe to supreme justice: and when we are commanded to pray, that God will forgive us our debts, the meaning is, that he will remit that dreadful punishment due to our sins. This enormous debt, the great King of the universe, on account of the satisfaction which his justice has received, in the blood and righteousness

of his Son, is ready to forgive to all that believe in him, with such a lively and powerful faith, as produces a steady and prevailing obedience to his gospel. But the infinite mercy of God in forgiving our transgressions, ought at all times to be remembered by us, in such a manner as to soften our minds, and inspire them with a readiness to forgive those who have transgressed against us. We give but a poor evidence, that by a sincere and influential faith, we are become partakers of divine forgiveness, if we indulge an unforgiving temper of mind, and pursue with inexorable and implacable resentment, those who have transgressed against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Deliver us, O thou eternal Father of our spirits! thou great maker and supporter of the feeble frame of our bodies! from such temptations as thou knowest will be too hard for us. Preserve us, O Lord! from such temptations as are too powerful for human nature, either by removing them from us, or granting such a measure of thy grace, and such assistance from thy Holy Spirit, as may enable us to overcome. Make us sensible, O our God! how weak and frail we are; may we never presume on our own strength, but depending on thy grace, may we, in thy might, be enabled to overcome all our spiritual foes, and be preserved to thy heavenly kingdom.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Thou, O God! art the eternal, universal Monarch; thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion extendeth over all: the government of the universe is thine, and thou reignest the great independent King of the creation: thou, by thine infinite power, first didst establish, and now preservest the stupendous frame of nature: all power in heaven and earth is in thine hand, thou canst do what thou pleasest, and none can stay thine hand, or say unto thee, What dost thou? Thou art able, by thine almighty power, to protect and defend all thy faithful servants; and thou holdest omnipotence in thine hand to crush thy daring foes. Thou art all perfect and all glorious; thou art possessed of every attribute and every perfection which justly renders thee the ob-

ject of supreme adoration and the delight of the whole rational and intelligent creation. We adore thine almighty, thine irresistible power; we venerate thy boundless, thine unsearchable wisdom; we reverence thine impartial, thine inflexible justice; we rejoice in the glories of thine all-supporting goodness: and exult in the contemplation of thine immutable mercy. Open our eyes, O Lord! that we may see thy glory. May we be enabled at all times to bless and praise thy holy name, and may we be of the number of those, whose delightful employment will be to do thy will, and sing thy praises for ever and ever.

Such was the Prayer which the Son of God himself delivered to the multitude who surrounded him; from which it may be learned, that the great King of the universe, who is seated on the exalted throne of heaven, surrounded by angels and archangels, and constantly adored by all the holy and happy inhabitants of the upper world, is so kind and condescendingly good, as to hear the cries, and attend to the petitions of sinful man. What an animating, heart-reviving thought it is, that poor, frail, sinful creatures are permitted to stand before the throne of the eternal God, and call him our Father! The glimmering light of the dim-winking taper, which sleeps in its socket, is not more exceeded by the splendour and glory of the sun shining in his strength, than the brightness of the throne, the extent of the dominions, the power, glory, and majesty of the great King of the creation, exceeds the most exalted prince on earth. Earthly princes are so proud, and their ministers and attendants so covetous and haughty, that they are rendered inaccessible to the greatest part of their subjects; but the great Monarch of the universe, the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, is easy of access; he calls upon sinners to seek his face, and the meanest of mankind may at all times have free access to his exalted throne. How blind and stupid, how regardless of their best interest, how cruel to themselves are those men who will not pray! We are poor necessitous creatures; we stand in need of various blessings; God hath all things to give; and God hath said, *Ask and ye shall receive*: he hath erected a

throne of grace, and is at all times ready to hear and answer our prayers; and shall we be so very deficient as not to pray? Shall we, when in distress, and pressed with the most urgent necessities, stand at a gloomy distance, and refuse to ask? What folly and madness is this! It is highly incumbent on all who have neglected this duty, to consider their ways, to treasure up our Lord's words in their hearts, and daily, with fervent prayer, approach the throne of that God, who is willing to hear, and able to help, in every time of need. And when we seriously reflect on this excellent Prayer proposed by the Son of God, and are admiring the vast extent of divine mercy and forgiveness, we ought to remember, that in this Prayer, we are reminded of our duty to forgive one another; and we may learn from hence, that a mild, placable, forgiving spirit, is not only well-pleasing to our heavenly Father, but has a manifest tendency in it's own nature, to prepare us, in the habitual temper of our minds, for the forgiveness of God.

The next point, which our Lord treated on in his admirable sermon, was the duty of fasting. In this part of his discourse, he severely blamed the conduct of the Pharisees, who made the greatest ostentation of their religion, and were particularly fond of mortification and fasting. Hence, that they might be remarked for superior degrees of strictness and sanctity, and appear to men of the most recluse and mortified disposition, they disfigured their faces, and appeared with sad and sorrowful countenances; but our Lord enjoins us not to perform our religious exercises, with design to be seen of men, but, with all uprightness and sincerity of heart, to regard the omnipresence of our heavenly Father, who *seeth in secret*, and will *reward openly* all his faithful worshippers. The divine orator then turned his discourse to another subject, and inculcated the necessity of heavenly-mindedness on his attentive and respectful audience. So vastly important in their nature, and extensive in their duration, are the concerns of the soul above those of the body, that it is the highest wisdom of man, closely to attend to heavenly things, and at all times to give them the preference to the frail and fleeting trifles

of this present world. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, said the heavenly Teacher, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* The shortness and uncertainty of our abode in this present state, with the many disasters which may happen to us, and take away our worldly possessions, should excite us not to put our trust or confidence in any thing which belongs to this world; it is greater wisdom to contemplate on heavenly things, to consider their superior excellency, and the extent of their duration, with such a fixt and unremitting attention, as may work in the soul an habitual desire after them, and prepare us, in the prevailing temper of our minds, for the enjoyment of them.

Our Lord was the more earnest in recommending this heavenly-mindedness to his hearers, because it was a doctrine which they had not been used to hear from their former teachers. The Jewish doctors were, in general, strangers to the blessedness and glory of an happy eternity. The rewards promised to the keepers of the law, were chiefly of a temporal nature; and as it was the gospel of CHRIST, which brought *life and immortality to light*, the doctrine of eternal happiness was the peculiar province of our Redeemer; and that they might not suppose that the heavenly-mindedness which he recommended, was consistent with a covetous and anxious desire after worldly riches, our Lord informs them that these things are directly contrary to each other. *No man, says he can serve two masters; for either he will love the one, and hate the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon!*

Our Lord proceeded to enforce the heavenly doctrine by asserting the universality of the providence of God, and his paternal care over the least and meanest of his creatures. *Behold, says he, the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye*

much better than they? If the providence of God extends to the meanest and most insignificant of his creatures, and his wisdom hath so conducted his wide creation, that there is abundant provision made for the fowls of the air, and beasts of the field, shall his creature man, whom he hath placed at the head of his lower creation, and made the object of his peculiar care, be over anxious and careful, or gloomy and discontented for fear he should not be able to procure food and raiment? How unworthy is this of his superior reason, and how dishonourable to his great Maker, and most bountiful Benefactor! Thus the divine Teacher led the most ignorant and illiterate of his hearers to entertain great and sublime ideas of God and his providence; and gave them a more elevated and extensive view of the nature of his government than had been taught in the schools of the philosophers: for though they believed that there was a God, and that he made and governed the world, they had but very dark and confused notions of his particular providence, as it relates to the state of every individual in his creation. This, our great Redeemer gave them to understand, was fixed by the universal Governor, with more exactness and precision than was generally imagined, and less in the power of individuals to alter by their utmost anxiety and care. *Which of you, says he, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?*

The illustrious Preacher then proceeds from the animal, to the vegetable part of the creation, and infers the absurdity of anxious and vexatious cares concerning raiment. Can it be supposed that the great Being, who spreads fresh verdure over the fields, and adorns them with those flowers which shine brighter than the golden embroidery which glitters on the purple robes of kings, will not provide raiment for his own people? Will he thus clothe the inanimate and neglect the noblest part of his creation? *Consider, said the exalted Redeemer, the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall*

he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Let these considerations excite you, he adds, to be easy and quiet, patient and resigned to the allotments of Providence. *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* Make it your first great concern to pursue the interest of your immortal souls, and rest not till you have obtained a rational and scriptural satisfaction that your eternal interest is safe; and, when this great blessing is obtained, be not anxious or vexatiously careful concerning the things of time and sense, but rest assured that *all these things, so far as necessary to your supreme good, shall be added unto you.*

The exalted Redeemer, now drawing towards the conclusion of his discourse, proceeded to forbid all rash and uncharitable judgment, either with regard to the general characters or particular actions of men. This is an evil of the most atrocious kind; innocence and virtue often suffer, and, however sorry the slanderer may be for the wrong done, the injury cannot be repaired. No character is more hurtful to society, and no person more hateful to God and man than the slanderer; and our Lord intimates that both God and man will resent the injury done to his creatures. *Judge not, said he, that ye be not judged.* If you judge charitably, said the kind and compassionate, the meek and benevolent Saviour of mankind; if you make allowances for the frailty of human nature, and are ready to pity and pardon those who have offended you, both your heavenly Father, and your fellow-mortals will deal with you in the same manner. But if you are always ready to hear, and eager to spread slanderous reports; if you put the harshest construction on every action; if you are pleased to hear of another's misconduct, or misfortunes, and never touched with the feeling of your brother's infirmities; if you take all opportunities to injure him in the opinion of mankind, or pursue him with inexorable and implacable resentment; if you are a stranger to mercy or forgiveness, no mercy, or forgiveness will you find, either from offended Omnipotence, or injured and insulted man. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

In order to prevent mankind from passing rash and censorious judgment, our great Redeemer advises them to look unto themselves; and if they would carefully advert to their own errors and failings, they would find less time, as well as less desire, to censure the rest of mankind. It frequently happens that those persons who are most ready to censure and condemn their fellow-creatures, and most eager to search out, and expose the failings of others, are not the most blameless themselves; but frequently more culpable than the persons whom they are so ready to accuse. It is therefore with the highest reason that our great Redeemer exhorted his hearers to look unto themselves, and carefully mend their own faults, which would be of greater service to them than endeavouring to expose and scandalize those who are better than they. *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye: 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. 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.*

Such are the several branches of moral righteousness inculcated by the Son of God; but some are so perverse in their dispositions, and so obstinately attached to their evil practices and errors, that it is impossible to reclaim them; and therefore our Saviour advises his followers not to attempt it: *Give not,* says he, *that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they tread them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.* Lastly, that it might not be supposed that the moral precepts of Christianity were above the attainment of mankind, our Lord proceeded to inform his hearers, how gracious, and full of compassion, their heavenly Father was, and how ready to hear and assist all who called upon him; and in consequence advised them humbly to intreat his assistance, at the same time that they exerted their utmost endeavours to do his will, and be found in the way of his commandments. *Ask,* says he, *and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for*

every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Our Lord appeals to their own feelings towards their children, as an encouragement to be earnest in their petitions to their heavenly Father: *If ye, being evil, says he, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* But, that they might not depend on the divine assistance without the diligent exertion of their utmost endeavours, our Lord immediately adds, *Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.*

The illustrious Preacher, before he concluded his discourse, proceeded to warn his hearers of false prophets and teachers, who would come with fair pretences; but as their lives and conversation were not answerable to their profession, nor honourable to the cause they espoused, they were to be despised and disregarded: *Ye shall know them by their fruits,* said the divine Teacher; *do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* It is not the pretences to extraordinary piety and goodness; it is not the most flaming zeal, or the most ardent devotion, that will compensate for a disregard to the divine commands, or a departure from the unvariable rules of righteousness and goodness. *It is not every one that saith, Lord, Lord,* said the exalted Saviour of mankind, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* And then he sums up the whole, with a beautiful and striking simile, intended to demonstrate the absolute necessity of such a regard to the words of CHRIST as influenced the mind and determined the conduct in an universal and persisting obedience: *Therefore,* said he, *whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell*

not : for it was found upon a rock. 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 ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. Thus ended our Lord's excellent and admirable sermon. The multitudes stood around him with the utmost

attention and surprise. The plain tokens of divinity which attended his discourse, joined with his all-commanding eloquence, attracted every eye, and affected every heart : but what surprised them the more was, the difference of his doctrine from what they before had heard ; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

C H A P T E R XI.

CHRIST having finished his Sermon on the Mount, repairs to Capernaum, and on his way there is met by a leprous Person, whom he cleanses : On his entering the City, he is accosted by a Roman Centurion, whose servant was ill of the Palsy, whom he heals : He afterwards repairs to the Synagogue on the Sabbath-Day, where he dispossesseth a Devil : He cures Peter's Wife's Mother of a Fever, and many other diseased Persons : He Travels through Galilee ; and directs the Disciples to take a great draught of Fishes.

THE exalted Saviour of finners, having finished his sermon, came down from the mountain, attended by a great concourse of people, who had listened to his discourse, with the mixt emotions of wonder and joy. They surrounded the divine person of our Redeemer, with the most respectful regard, and soon an incident arose which gave them fresh cause of wonder and praise. As he was on his way to Capernaum, he was met by a leprous person, who, doubtless, having heard of his wonderful works, and the condescending goodness with which he delivered the afflicted and diseased, threw himself with the utmost humility at his feet, and cried, *Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

The species of leprosy common amongst the Eastern nations, and the Jews, was very nauseous and infectious, as well as extremely hard to be cured. Our Lord was not deterred by this, from approaching an object so loathsome ; but full of pity, he condescended so far as to touch him, with this reply. *I will : be thou clean.* The dire infection immediately fled before the touch of the Son of God ; who charged the person, thus instantaneously healed, not to publish the matter abroad, but go

directly and shew himself to the priest, offering, at the same time, the oblations which the law in such cases required.

The blessed JESUS then proceeded to Capernaum, but as he entered the city, he was accosted by a Roman centurion, who with the care and tenderness of an indulgent master, informed him of the dreadful condition of his servant, who was afflicted with a paralytic disorder, and grievously tormented with pain. The compassionate Redeemer of mankind, listened to his complaint with pitying attention, and replied to his address, that he would come and heal him. The centurion thought this goodness too much to be expected by one who was not of the Israelitish nation, and, therefore, told our Lord, that he was not worthy so illustrious a person should come under his roof : and he, very probably, having heard of the nobleman's son, who, while he lay sick at Capernaum, was healed by JESUS, when he was so far off as Cana, desired our Lord only to speak the word, and he doubted not but his servant would be healed ; for he believed that diseases and devils were as much under the command of our Redeemer, as his soldiers were subject to the will, and obeyed the word of their com-

mander. Our Lord was well pleased with the centurion's faith, and commended it in the highest terms; *I have not found, said he, so great faith, no not in Israel.*

This believing stranger, having applied the most exalted ideas of the divine power and goodness of JESUS CHRIST, who appeared to be no more than a man, our Lord took occasion, from the open confession of his faith, to declare the gracious design of his Almighty Father towards the Gentile world, and gave the surrounding multitude to understand, that the divine goodness was not confined to the seed of Abraham, nor to the land of Israel: *And I say unto you, said he, that many shall come from the East, and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.* And, having a clear view of the obstinacy, impenitence, and final unbelief of the Jewish nation, he added, *But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Having thus spoken to the listening throng, our Lord directed his discourse to the centurion, and said, *Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee;* and immediately the servant was healed.

On the next sabbath-day, JESUS went to the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum, and instructed the people with such energy and power, and at the same time, with such remarkable plainness and simplicity, that the congregation heard him with the greatest pleasure and surprise: and to increase their admiration, there was a person in the assembly, that was possessed by an unclean and wicked spirit, who cried out in the most dreadful manner: *Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God.* But the blessed JESUS, who wanted no such testimony, commanded him to keep silence, and immediately came out of the man; this command, the wicked spirit durst not disobey, and directly complied, leaving the disordered person, to the astonishment of the whole congregation.

It is constantly alledged, by those who are enemies to our religion, and delight to cavil with the conduct of our Redeemer, and depreciate his mighty deeds,

that the persons, who are said in the gospels to be possessed by devils, were only affected by some strange and unaccountable disorders; and because sepulchres were esteemed polluted places, the melancholy persons who frequented them, were said to be possessed with the devil. And the adversaries of our religion, are fond of inquiring, why there should be any more dæmons in Judea, than in any other country.

To these objections it may, with great certainty be replied, that these dæmoniacs were not persons affected only with some uncommon and dreadful disease; for the evangelists have taken care to be very particular on that head: and being possessed with the devil, is carefully distinguished from any other affliction and complaint: St. Matthew tells us, that, *They brought unto Christ, all sick people, that were taken with divers diseases, and those that were possessed with devils, and those that were lunatic; and he healed them,* chap. iv. ver. 24. And again, chap. x. ver. 1. *He gave to the apostles power against evil spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and diseases.* And we are informed by St. Mark, chap. i. 34. *That they healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out devils.* There is in these passages a plain distinction between those who were sick of various diseases, and those who were possessed with devils; and this being distinctly noticed by the evangelists, it cannot be supposed, that there were not plain, evident marks of distinction, which made the cure so manifest, that there was no danger of being deceived.

And it may further be observed, to those who doubt of the existence of evil spirits, that they cannot entertain such doubts without questioning the truth of the Holy Scriptures; for the sacred writers have laid down several particulars concerning these impious and envious beings; they have taken care to acquaint us with their original and fall, their names and numbers, their government and orders, their malicious designs, and various, of their employments; and it is abundantly evident, both from sacred and prophane history, that before our Saviour's ascension, there were great numbers of persons possessed with evil

spirits. These evil spirits had gained so great an ascendancy, and taken possession of so large a part of the world, that they reviled the great Creator in his worship; and in several Heathen nations, there were oracles which were applied to, in order to resolve the doubts, and answer the enquiries of their worshippers. And as the design of our Lord's incarnation, and his whole ministry, was *to destroy the works of the devil*; perhaps, the reason why these apostate spirits were so frequently permitted to appear in Judea at this time, was, that the Son of God might, in a more manifest and triumphant manner, display his authority and power over the prince of darkness, and all his infernal legions, and thereby convince the wondering world, that he was really the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind.

The fame of this miracle was soon spread over the neighbouring country. Our Redeemer had healed the sick, and done various wonderful works, which had excited the admiration of the people, and raised their expectations of something very great and advantageous to the Jewish nation, to arise from so extraordinary a person. But when the people beheld him in the public assembly, with a commanding authority, dispossess the devil, and drive the powers of darkness before him; their astonishment increased, and they acknowledged that this was *the mighty power of God*.

Our Lord having performed this miracle in the synagogue, he departed to Peter's house, whose wife's mother lay sick of a fever; he took her by the hand, and immediately the fever left her; and so perfectly was she restored to her former health, that *she arose and ministered unto him*. The evangelist Luke, in his account of this wonderful cure, says, that *he rebuked the fever*: which is a figurative way of speaking, conformable to the language of the Scriptures, where not only the inanimate parts of the creation, but diseases, famine, pestilence, and the like, are personated and represented as the servants of the Almighty, to execute his vengeance on rebellious sinners: hence, says the prophet, *before him went the pestilence; and burning diseases went forth at his feet*.

Our Lord being grown popular, and famed through the city of Capernaum, for

the authority and eloquence of his teaching, and the manifold wonders which he wrought, vast numbers of people resorted to him while he abode at Peter's house, and brought with them great numbers of sick persons, and those who were possessed with devils. The kind and compassionate Saviour of the world, was touched with pity at the sight of so many distressed and afflicted objects; when he immediately healed them all, and fulfilled, by his extensive, all-relieving goodness, the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, *He himself took our infirmities, and bear our sickness*.

But the vast crowds of people, who now gathered about him in Capernaum, were not easily to be borne, and to avoid the troublesome press, our Redeemer retired to the desert, whither he was soon followed by great multitudes of people, who were so delighted with his instructions, and had conceived so high an opinion of him, from his kind condescension, and his many wonderful works, that they desired him never to depart from them. But this request being inconsistent with the nature of his ministry, and the great design of his coming into the world, he departed from the desert, *and preached in the synagogues of Galilee*; and after he had proceeded through various cities of that country, he returned to Capernaum.

When our great Redeemer was known to be returned to the city, he was soon surrounded by great multitudes of people; so that he was forced to retire into a ship, which being a little way from the shore, the divine Instructor taught them from thence, while the attentive multitude crowded the sea-side, and listened with great attention to his heavenly words.

When he had finished his discourse, he turned to Peter, who was the owner of the vessel, and advised him to launch out further from the shore, and let down his fishing-net into the sea. Peter informed him of their unsuccessful toil during the night, but said, at his command, they would let down their net and make one trial more. Accordingly, they cast into the water, and immediately found that their net had enclosed so prodigious a number of large fish, that it was in danger of breaking. Peter, surprised at so strange a turn, and

such unexpected success, and knowing it must be produced by a supernatural power, fell down at JESUS's feet, *Depart from me, said he, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* He was convinced by this miracle, of the divinity of his master, and was at that time impressed with awe from a sense of his own unworthiness: but the all-gracious Saviour of mankind bid him banish his fears, and informed him, that henceforth himself and his companions should be engaged in more noble employments. Our Lord declared that they should catch men, meaning, that they should be made instrumental in turning them from darkness to light, and from sin and Satan to the knowledge of God.

This miracle was considered, by the disciples of CHRIST, as a fuller and plainer manifestation of his divine power, and a clearer evidence of his being the Son of

God, than those they had seen him perform in Capernaum and the adjacent country. It was the common opinion amongst the Jews, that good men, by their prayers, might prevail so far with the almighty Governor of the world, as to heal the sick and cast out devils; but they concluded that the creatures inhabiting the elements of the air or water, were subject only to the commands of our great Creator: and as he never granted to man an authority over these, the miracle which our Saviour had just wrought, proved him to be the Son of God, and the great Messiah; and accordingly this manifestation of divine power fully convinced the disciples of the divinity of their Master, and all they, without hesitation, joined in the resolution to follow him through the world.

C H A P T E R XII.

CHRIST cleanseth a second Leper: He rebukes the storm and calms the sea: He casteth out the Legion of Devils, and suffereth them to enter into an herd of Swine: He cures a Person who had long been afflicted with the Palsy: And calls Matthew, who was sitting at the receipt of Custom.

THE disciples now having every scruple removed and being fully convinced that their Master was the Messiah, left their employment and followed him, while, according to his usual custom, he went through various cities of Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and confirming his divine doctrines with the most astonishing miracles.

In one of the cities which he visited on this occasion, he found a man said, by the evangelist, to be *full of leprosy, who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.* It was the custom of the priests of Judea to drive from the conversation of mankind, those persons who were infected with the contagious kind of leprosy; and as this person was permitted to dwell in the city, it may be supposed that his leprosy was not of the worst kind. His case, however, excited the compassion

of our great Redeemer, who immediately cleansed him, and commanded him to depart to Jerusalem, and shew himself to the priest, and offer the accustomed gifts; but not publish abroad the account of his cure, nor make any noise about it. But the blessing which the poor man had received, was so great and unexpected, and his heart was so full of gratitude and joy, that he could not contain it; and he published the great things which our Lord had done for him, to all men where ever he came. This brought such crowds of people to the Son of God, that he was obliged to depart from Capernaum into the wilderness, where he spent some time in retirement, meditation, and prayer.

Some writers have supposed that this leper, and the other mentioned in the foregoing chapter, were one and the same person; but this must be a mistake, the former being cleansed in the fields, the latter in

the city: after cleansing the first, JESUS went to Capernaum and healed the centurion's servant; after curing the latter, JESUS retired into the wilderness, to shun the vast multitudes which soon gathered round him, from the leper being so careful to proclaim to all men the miracles which JESUS had wrought.

Perhaps it may seem strange that the blessed JESUS should be so careful to conceal his wonderful works, and be looked upon, in some measure, contrary to the end for which they were performed, which must certainly be to prove his divine mission. But it may be observed that his modesty and humility would not allow his works to have the least appearance of ostentation; nor the Jews to have the least pretence of accusing him of seeking his own glory, or aiming at popular applause.

And it may be supposed that our great Redeemer did not think it proper, at this time, to irritate the Scribes and Pharisees by the proclamation and publication of his miracles through the kingdom. He very well knew that at the appointed time they would perform whatever had been determined concerning him in the counsels of heaven. In the mean time, he was to work the works of him that sent him, and proclaim his gospel amongst mankind. This he knew could not be so conveniently performed if the fame of his miracles had roused the rage of his enemies, and excited their malice and envy to exert their utmost power against him. He likewise was sensible of the unruly humour of the multitude: they were convinced that he was the Messiah; they had no further views than a temporal reign; and he might be apprehensive that they would *come by force and make him king*, if the fame of his miracles were blazed abroad before he had informed them of the spiritual nature of his kingdom. If such were his views, there was the greatest necessity to keep his miracles concealed as much as possible. The fame of his cleansing the last leper had brought such numbers of people to Capernaum, that he was forced to retire into a solitary retreat in the neighbouring desert: nor could he even in this retirement long enjoy the repose he sought; for the people soon found out the place

of his retreat, and flocked to him in great numbers from every part of the country.

Our Lord finding his endeavours to conceal himself in the wilderness would be in vain, he ordered his disciples to accompany him to the other side of the lake. A certain Scribe, who happened to be amongst the company, declared that he would follow him whithersoever he went: JESUS, who well knew that his only desire was to gain the profits and honour of that temporal kingdom which he supposed the Messiah would establish, told him, that if he wanted nothing more than to advance and improve his worldly fortune, he would be greatly deceived; for the blessed JESUS informed this teacher of Israel, *That the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

The Son of Man is a name by which the Messiah is called in the prophecy of Daniel, where his wide and extensive dominion is described; and therefore when this title is applied to our Lord, it hath reference to his human nature, and at the same time conveys an idea of that glorious kingdom to which his manhood will be exalted. But as it was also a name by which the old prophets were called by way of contempt, it is used in several places to express the deep humiliation of the Son of God.

The disciples having provided a ship, took their Master on board, and crossed the lake, being followed by several boats full of people who were desirous of hearing his heavenly discourse, and seeing the wonderful works which he constantly performed. Our Lord, being fatigued with the labour of the day, fell asleep in the ship while she smoothly glided along the level seas.

But soon the weather, which till now had been calm and serene, changed, black clouds covered the skies, and the big storm burst from the dark concave of heaven, the winds roared aloud, and the white foam appeared on the face of the waves; the ship could scarce bear the dashing tides, which beat incessantly against her; the darkness of the night increased the horrors of the tempest; the waves began to break over the ship, and she was in the utmost danger of sinking, all hopes of

being saved were lost, and in the agonies of despair the disciples ran to JESUS, crying, *Master, Master, we perish!* This piteous exclamation awaked him from his sleep, and raising that hand, so often employed in acts of benevolence and mercy, he, with an awful all-commanding voice, rebuked the boisterous ocean. The elements knew his voice; the roaring winds forsook the seas; and the foaming waves subsided. All was quiet, all was still, and the ship smoothly cut the smiling deep, soon arriving at her destined port.

The disciples, before this, had seen our Lord perform many miracles, and had abundant reason to rely on his power and goodness. They had certainly no cause to be so much affrighted, or to give way to such despair and terror: they might have considered, that the same divine person who had so often healed the sick, and had lately shewn such power over the watry element, as to bring the fish to their nets, was equally able to stay the wild waves, or to have preserved them alive, had the ship sunk beneath them: but they seemed, in the hurry of mind consequent on the terrors of the storm, to have forgot the power of their Master, and therefore he gently rebuked them, *Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?* They ought to have remembered likewise, that the voyage was undertaken at his command, and it was not to be feared, that he would permit them to perish: but when the terror of the storm, was over, they wondered at his power, and, though they frequently had occasion to remark the effects of his heavenly goodness, they exclaimed, *What manner of man is this! that even the winds and the sea obey him.*

Soon after the storm was stilled, the ship arrived in the country of Gadara; and on their landing, two men possessed with devils, came to meet our Redeemer. They were both exceeding fierce, turbulent, and unruly; but one of them was more furious than the other: this person had often been bound with chains and fetters, but all in vain, for his fetters were always broken with the greatest fury, so that no man attempted any longer to restrain him; being therefore at full liberty he shunned all human society, and wan-

dered day and night, in desert and dry places, and amongst the sepulchres and tombs, filling the silent repositories of the dead, with the most dismal and horrid howlings, and sometimes tearing his flesh, and cutting himself with stones.

The disciples were very much alarmed and terrified at the approach of these horrid and furious beings, but JESUS soon quieted their apprehensions of danger, by commanding the devils to come out of the men, while they were at some distance. The heavenly command had no sooner passed from the lips of our great Redeemer, than the men fell on their faces crying, *What have we to do with thee Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? I adjure thee, by God, that thou torment us not.* The infernal spirits were not ignorant of the power of the Son of God, and were afraid, that he would cast them immediately into the torments prepared for them, and suffer them no longer to wander about the earth, which they seem to have hoped would be permitted them till the judgment of the great day.

JESUS, being willing that the torment of these miserable men should be the more understood, asked one of the dæmons his name, who immediately answered, *My name is Legion, for we are many:* at the same time, he humbly requested, that our Lord would not immediately cast them into the ultimate torments prepared for them in the great deep of bottomless perdition, but would permit them to enter into an herd of swine, then feeding on a neighbouring mountain.

The grand deceiver of mankind, no doubt, beheld with gnawing envy, the effects of our Redeemer's power and goodness; and to abate the opinion which the inhabitants of Gadara might form of him, and make him odious in their view, seems to be the reason of his petition to enter into the swine; for doubtless, the Devil knew, that if his legion could gain this permission, it would be in their power to destroy them; but though his secret designs could not be hid from the Saviour of the world, yet our Lord was pleased to grant to the fiend, the permission he desired: perhaps this might be complied with, to give the disciples a full proof that

these persons were really possessed with devils, and to give a terrible instance of the power of these malicious beings when free from restraint.

The commission was no sooner granted, than the devils forsook the men, and, swift as lightning, seized their bristly prey. The whole herd were immediately in a tumult, and the torments the poor creatures suffered, were plainly perceived by the spectators at a distance; the keepers were affrighted, and found it impossible to calm or restrain the wild fury of the herd; they poured, with amazing rapidity, down the mountain's side, and approaching the confines of the lake, leaped from the rocks and precipices into the sea, and the whole herd *perished in the waters*. The persons, who but a moment before, were roaring, raving, and cutting themselves, were now become calm and composed; they were become mild and gentle, having recovered the use of their reason, and being now proper members of society, they, doubtless, believed in the Son of God.

The keepers of the herd, astonished at this surprising event, ran into the city, in the utmost terror and amazement, and related the cure of the men who had been possessed with devils, and the destruction of the swine. This wonderful report, threw the whole city into the utmost consternation, and the inhabitants, in crowds, left their houses, to be spectators of the strange event. They saw the men sitting at the feet of JESUS, and in their right minds; but, as they were conscious of having committed a trespass against the law of Moses, by keeping such numbers of swine, which were strictly forbid to be eaten, they were afraid, and seemed to expect some severer judgment: they might have been convinced of the goodness and compassion of the great person who had performed these wonders, by the cure of the men; but they were afraid, and meekly besought our Lord to depart from their country.

The stupid Gadarenes, had they known how great a benefit they might have received by attending on the illustrious person who had worked such wonders amongst them, would not have been so cruel to themselves, as to have presented such a petition. It is true they had left their

swine, but had received two of their countrymen and fellow-creatures; these happy men were delivered from the power of the Devil, and their country was freed from so intolerable a burden; and the benefit they might have received to their souls, by attending on our great Redeemer, and hearing his words, would have been of greater value than the *cattle on a thousand hills*.

The blessed JESUS, however, thought fit to comply with the request of the foolish Gadarenes, and soon returned to the country from whence he came. The persons who were happily delivered from the power of the Devil, desired to accompany him, but our Lord ordered them to remain in their own country, as a standing monument of his divine power and goodness: *Go home to thy friends*, said our exalted Redeemer to one of them, *and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee*.

It may be remarked on this miracle, that here we have a fuller display of the tyranny and power of the Devil, than in any other part of Scripture; and therefore it is fit to be recommended to the serious attention of those infidels, who, like the Sadducees, will not believe in the existence of spirits, and scoff at the power of the devil. Let such persons behold the picture of these unhappy men, possessed by the devils, as drawn by the evangelists: they were driven from their abodes, and from the society of men; one of them was so fierce that he could not be confined, but broke chains of iron like a burnt thread, and fetters like rotten wood; he frequented the most solitary places, and filled the desert with more dreadful howlings, than the wild beasts; he dwelt amongst the tombs, and abode in the dismal and solitary mansions of the dead, forlorn and naked, crying out day and night, cutting himself with stones, and tearing his own flesh.

If such persons would give themselves time to consider this dreadful representation of human misery, surely their scoffs would be changed into compassion for these unhappy creatures, and fearful apprehensions for themselves: surely they would no longer scoff at the power of the

Devil, nor the pains of eternal damnation. It would certainly be more worthy the superior wisdom they boast of, to be cautious and diffident; they are men, and surely they will allow, that it is possible they may be mistaken: and when their eternal interest is at stake, one would think they might condescend to consider. But if they will deride, and still persist in their unbelief, a short space of time will convince them of their fatal error; and dreadful experience, force them to confess the greatness of the tyranny, and the bitterness of the malice, of this prince of darkness against the souls of men. May they see the error of their conduct, and be enabled, by the Divine Spirit, sincerely to repent of their evil thoughts, and perverse ways, and seek the things which belong to their eternal peace.

The blessed JESUS, with his disciples, being landed in Galilee, he soon repaired to Capernaum; no sooner was his arrival known, than great multitudes resorted to him; the house where he was could not contain them, nor even the court before the door. He preached the doctrines and duties of his gospel to the listening throng, amongst whom were many Pharisees and doctors of the law, whom the fame of his miracles had brought from distant countries, to behold his person, and hear his words.

He not only, by his preaching, represented the great precepts and principles of his religion, in a plain and striking point of light, but worked such miracles amongst them, as were sufficient to convince every judicious, unprejudiced, and impartial inquirer after truth, of his divine mission; and he proved himself to be the Son of God, by those illustrious and benevolent actions, which God only could perform.

Amongst many other instances of his almighty power and Godlike benevolence, was that of his restoring a person to perfect health, who had long been afflicted with the palsy, and was reduced by that deplorable disorder, to the most melancholy and distressful condition: he was unable to move any member of his body, and was become an helpless bundle of misery and distress. In this deplorable condition, he was carried in his bed, with

design to have petitioned our Lord to take pity on his distress, and exert that healing power, for which he was so remarkable in his relief. The multitudes who surrounded our Lord, had filled the house, and pressed so close, that it was impossible to bring the sick person into his presence. The persons that carried this miserable object, perceiving the difficulty which attended their design, took the lame man to the top of the house lying in his bed. The houses in Judea had flat roofs, with battlements round them, according to the command of the law, Deut. xxii. 8. on these roofs there was a kind of trap-door, by which they came up from the house upon the roof, where they spent a considerable part of the day. It was also common to have a flight of stairs from the garden to the roof of the house, by which the persons who carried the sick must be supposed to have ascended. When they came to the roof, they found the door shut: but being resolved, if possible, to compass their design, they uncovered the roof, and by ropes let down the sick of the palsy lying on his bed, into the midst of the company before JESUS. Our Redeemer seeing the faith of the friends of the afflicted person, had compassion on him, and spake aloud, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

These words gave great offence to the Scribes and Pharisees, who said in their hearts, *This man speaketh blasphemy; for he takes to himself that which belongs only to his Maker. Who can forgive sins but God only?* They were ignorant of the high dignity of the person who pronounced the words, and they murmured against him in their hearts. But JESUS, who knew what passed in the inmost recesses of their minds, was willing to let them understand that he was endued with the Spirit of God; and to convince them that he knew their thoughts, he said unto them, *Why think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk?* By these words our Lord might have convinced them that he had really a right to forgive sins; for certainly it must be easier to forgive sins, than to remove the punishment which is inflicted on men for sin. As therefore it was apparent

our Lord had power to perform the latter, why should it be questioned whether he had a right to pronounce the former; but these haughty teachers of Israel cherished a gloomy rancour in their hearts, and, frowning, held their peace. Our Lord then turned to the diseased person, and said, *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

No sooner had our great Redeemer spoken these words, than the diseased person was perfectly restored to his former health and strength; and, to the astonishment of the surrounding multitude, arose, took up his bed, and departed to his own house, praising and glorifying God; while the affected beholders, with the highest acclamations, joined the praise, and glorified the God of Israel, *who had given such power unto man*; but the Scribes and Pharisees, however confounded they were at the miracle, still persisted in their unbelief: an instance which should fill us with the most serious thoughts, as it demonstrates that the pride of heart, which produces an haughty self-sufficiency, and generates an obstinate and determined hatred and opposition to the truth, and by suspending and stupifying all the noble powers of the soul, operates like the palsy of the mind, is a much more dreadful and deplorable disease than the palsy of the body.

Our adorable Redeemer having performed this miracle, he departed to the sea-side; and a multitude of people gathering about him, he made use of the favourable opportunity to enlighten their dark minds with the rays of heavenly truth. What were the particular points he insisted on, or what mode of instruction he chose, the evangelists have not informed us; but we may safely conclude that these discourses, like the rest delivered by this divine person, were worthy of God and advantageous to man.

Our blessed Saviour having finished his discourse, he returned to the city of Capernaum, and going by the keys where the goods which were brought by sea from various nations were landed, he saw Matthew, a rich publican, sitting in his office to receive the customs; Matthew is sometimes in the gospels called Levi, and was the son of Alphaeus. CHRIST no sooner saw him

than he called him. *Follow me*, was his mild and gracious language; which the heavenly Teacher had no sooner spoken, than the wealthy publican felt a divine power warm his heart, which overpowering every worldly consideration, he seems to have left his accounts all unfinished, and immediately obeyed. He soon, by our great Redeemer, was lead into a more honourable and important employment, and afterwards became an evangelist, as well as an apostle.

A few days after this, the new called publican made a great entertainment, to which he, with CHRIST and his disciples, invited several of his own profession; no doubt hoping that his heavenly conversation might strike their hard hearts with remorse for their wickedness and extortion, and lead them to true repentance, and amendment of life. But the haughty self-conceited Scribes and Pharisees, who concluded all men vile and sinful in comparison with themselves, and bore a particular hatred to the publicans above all others, were highly offended that a person who claimed the high dignity of a prophet, and a teacher sent from God, should so far demean himself as to be seen in such company as this. They carried their resentment so far, as, with an air of insolence and contempt, to ask the disciples of CHRIST how their Master could sit at the same table with publicans and sinners? To this insulting question our Lord immediately replied, that those who conceited themselves so righteous that they needed no forgiveness, and so wise that they needed no instruction, were not the persons who were likely to receive benefit by his conversation; as it is not the healthy, but the sick, which stand in need of the physician. The Scribes and Pharisees, by their pride and haughty self-sufficiency, and by opposing and resisting the method in which only the great King of the universe had determined to have mercy on his fallen creatures, had put themselves out of the way of receiving benefit from the Redeemer of mankind; and therefore CHRIST reminds them, that in the gospel dispensation God *will have mercy, and not sacrifice*; and as those who confessed themselves sinners were the only proper objects of that mercy, our Lord declared that he





MARK, V. 28 &c.

A Woman miraculously HEALED of a BLOODY ISSUE.

was not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and to blame him for conversing with publicans and sinners was as great a piece of absurdity as to blame a physician for visiting the sick. This answer from the great Friend and Redeemer of lost sinners, was far from satisfying the haughty self-conceited Scribes and Pharisees: and as they made great ostentation of their fasting and abstinence, they took this opportunity to give themselves consequence on that account; and joining with John's disciples, presumed to blame our great Redeemer because his disciples were not so frequent in this practice as themselves. To this our Lord replied, that the present was not a time for fasting, for his disciples need not fast and mourn in the presence of their Master, any more than the friends of the bridegroom need

fast and afflict themselves while they enjoyed his company. *But, said he, the day will come, when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they shall fast.* Intimating by this, that the calamities, troubles, and afflictions which they would suffer after the death of their Master, would oblige them to fast and mourn; but the corrupt nature of man, which was the cause of his coming into the world, required different treatment; the rent would not be patched up with mortification, fasting, or any external performances; such treatment as this would be like sewing a piece of new cloth on an old rotten garment, which would only make the rent worse, or putting new wine into old leather bottles, which would burst as soon as the liquor fermented.

C H A P T E R XIII.

CHRIST healeth a Woman of an inveterate Issue of Blood; Raises Jarius's daughter from the dead: Gives sight to two blind Men: Delivers a possessed Person from the evil Spirit: And, returning to Galilee, chooses his twelve Apostles out of his Disciples: Then, repairing to Capernaum, cures the Centurion's Servant.

WHILE the blessed JESUS was disputing with the Scribes and Pharisees in the house of Matthew, whom he had lately called into the number of his disciples, an afflicted father, in all the agonies of distress, hastily pressed into his presence. This was Jarius, the ruler of the Jewish synagogue in Capernaum, and the cause of his present affliction was the dangerous illness of his daughter, who lay at the point of death.

Having earnestly implored the assistance of our great Redeemer in this distressing case, the Lord of life graciously condescended to comply with his request, and accordingly accompanied the distressed father to his house; and great multitudes of people, who were desirous of beholding the miracles of Christ, crowded around and pressed to behold what the divine Instructor would do on this great occasion.

But as they passed through the streets of the city, the attention of the surrounding

multitudes were turned to a woman, who came behind the Son of God, and touched the hem of his garment. This woman had been afflicted twelve years with a terrible disorder, which had baffled the force of medicine. She had spent her whole substance on physicians, but could obtain no relief; but hearing of the miracles performed by the blessed JESUS, she was so fully convinced of his divine power, that she concluded if she could but touch his clothes she should be made whole. Nor was she deceived, for she no sooner touched the border of the garment of our great Redeemer than her issue of blood dried up; and she felt such a flow of vital spirits, and uncommon gladness warm her heart, that she was fully convinced that she had received a cure.

The blessed JESUS, who knew the hearts of all men, was not ignorant of the minutest circumstance attending this affair; he knew the woman's thoughts, and was

pleased with her faith; and, with design to begin a conversation in which he might testify his approbation, he turned about and asked who touched him? His disciples, as they were not apprised of the transaction, wondered at their Master's question. *Thou see'st*, said they, *the multitude thronging and pressing thee, and sayest thou, who touched me?* JESUS, however, persisted in the inquiry, and the woman, perceiving she could not be concealed, came to him trembling, and told him what she had done. She approached him with hesitation and diffidence, fearing he would be offended at the liberty she had taken; but the divine Physician received her with condescending goodness, spake to her in the kindest manner, and commended her faith; *Daughter*, said he, *be of good comfort, thy faith hath made the whole.*

In the midst of the surprise occasioned by this miracle, a messenger approached from Jarius's house, and informed him that his daughter was dead, so that he need not give our Lord the trouble to come any further; for they supposed it far beyond the power of this extraordinary person to overcome the mighty conqueror, Death, or recall the fleeting spirit from the eternal world. This message was received by the affectionate parent with the strongest emotions of sorrow, and bitterest agonies of distress. Our Lord took compassion on him, and desired him to be comforted with hopes that his daughter should be restored.

When our great Redeemer came to the ruler's house, he found it full of mourners, who made great lamentation, and were preparing for the funeral. Our Lord commanded them to cease their preparations; *for*, said he, *the maid is not dead but sleepeth: and they laughed him to scorn.* These words of CHRIST were used with peculiar propriety, to denote that it was determined the virgin should not continue in the cold embraces of death, but should instantly be restored to her friends, as one awakened out of sleep; and having thus spoken, our Lord approached the apartment of the dead, taking with him none but Peter, James, and John, except the father and mother of the maiden: then laying hold of the cold hand of the dead virgin, he said with a gentle voice, *Maid, arise!*

The heavenly voice was immediately obeyed, and the damsel arose, fresh as from a sound sleep, all healthful and vigorous; and JESUS commanded to give her something to eat.

Thus the great Son of God gave a full and clear manifestation of his heavenly power; and not only proved that he was the true Messiah, but gave a clear demonstration of the possibility of the resurrection of the dead: and those who have imbibed the absurd opinion of the soul's sleeping with the body till the resurrection, would do well to consider the expression of the evangelist, *Her spirit came again*, Luke viii, 55: by which it appears that the soul exists in a state of separation, when the body lies all cold and breathless in the dark chambers of the grave.

Having performed this great and benevolent miracle, our blessed Saviour left the ruler's house; and going through the streets of the city, he was followed by two blind men; they had, doubtless, heard of the great miracle which he had just performed, and supplicated his assistance in their present deplorable circumstances, well knowing that he was able to restore them to sight. The benevolent Saviour of sinners condescended to favour their request; and having entered an house to escape the crowding of the multitude, he touched their eyes, and said, *According unto your faith, be it unto you;* when immediately the great and desirable blessing of sight was restored unto them; the sacred beams of all-cheering day revisited their eyes, and filled their hearts with gladness, and their tongues with praise; and such a flood of gratitude and joy overflowed their hearts, that they could not conceal their miraculous restoration to sight, though our Lord required them to keep silence, but published our Redeemer's fame and their own happy condition, through every part of the country.

The men who had thus miraculously received their sight being departed, the multitude brought to the benevolent Saviour of Sinners a dumb man, possessed with a devil. So affecting a case attracted the compassionate regard of the blessed JESUS, who immediately cast out the foul spirit. The dumb man instantly recovered the use of speech, and spake in so sensible

and satisfactory a manner, that the whole multitude was amazed, and, with united voice, declared that such wonderous works were never wrought by the great and most eminent of the ancient prophets, *It was, said they, never so seen in Israel.*

The Pharisees, whose hearts were full of infernal rancour, and whose pride and prejudice prevented their receiving instruction from the discourses, or conviction from the miracles of our great Redeemer, beheld the miracle now performed with a scornful sneer, and put the most invidious construction upon it, that could possibly enter into the heart of man: *He casteth out devils, said they, through the prince of the devils.* The blessed JESUS, seems, at this time, to have taken no notice of this calumny: but leaving the haughty, self-conceited doctors, under the dominion of their blindness, and prejudice, he proceeded in the prosecution of the duties of his mission, and exerted himself more and more in the great work of promoting the cause of truth, and enlightening and instructing mankind. Accordingly leaving Capernaum, he took a tour through the adjacent country, bringing happiness and peace to the sons of misery and distress, *visiting all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease amongst the people.*

At his return to Galilee, he was surrounded by vast multitudes of people who expressed an earnest desire to hear his instructions, and learn the way of truth, and happiness from his lips. This tractable disposition of mind engaged the attention of the great Redeemer of sinners, and filled his heart with compassion for them, in their present deplorable state of blindness and ignorance, and excited him to exert his divine power for their relief. Indeed the state of the Jewish nation at this time was worthy of compassion; for, with respect to spiritual things, the common people might justly be compared to sheep without a shepherd. The Scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers, who ought to have instructed them, were blind, lazy guides, and their teaching tended rather to lead them aside from the paths of truth and righteousness, than to afford them any real

advantage: their teaching tended rather to magnify and exalt themselves, than promote the knowledge or worship of their Maker; and to encourage a scrupulous exactness in external ceremonial performances, rather than promote the cause of truth, purity, and virtue. In this dark and forlorn condition, our Lord had compassion on the multitude, and, in his divine wisdom and benevolence, proceeded to take proper measures for their relief. He always regarded the seed of Israel with peculiar affection; and as they were wandering on the dark mountains of error and superstition, without any to restrain their wanderings, or teach their steps to find the way of peace, he recommended their case to his disciples, and commanded them to approach the throne of God, with earnest prayers in their behalf; *The harvest, said he, truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

Nor did our great Redeemer recommend this affecting case to his disciples, without employing his own most powerful intercession with his heavenly Father; for he ascended a mountain, and continued all night in prayer to God. Having spent the night in earnest supplication, the morning no sooner returned, than he set about the important task of divine instruction. To this end, he chose twelve out of the number of his disciples, and named them apostles, *to be always with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.* These were Simon Peter, and Andrew, his brother; James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew; James, the son of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus; Simeon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot.

These twelve having been constant attendants on our Lord, having learnt his heavenly doctrine, and seen his wonderous works, and being fully qualified to preach to the world, those divine truths, which themselves had received, were sent out to preach the gospel of the kingdom; but commanded not to enter into any city of the Samaritans, or of the Gentiles, but confine themselves to the land of Israel,

and to proclaim through the nation, that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. They were also provided with miraculous power to prove the truth of their doctrine, and manifest to the world, that they came from God, and were commanded to exert those divine powers with unremitting ardour, for the advantage of mankind. The command of their divine Master was to *heal the sick; cleanse the lepers; raise the dead; cast out devils: freely, said he, ye have received, freely give*. And that they might be sensible of the care of their heavenly Father, over the most minute circumstances which concerned them, they were enjoined to make no provision for their journey, nor take any care about temporal things: *Provide, said their divine Master, neither gold nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, neither yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat*.

Probably the apostles, knowing that the whole Jewish nation was elated with the apprehension of the appearance of the Messiah, and the high expectations they had formed of his setting up a temporal kingdom, might expect to be received with honour and esteem by their countrymen, as they were going to publish the speedy approach of that kingdom which they so ardently desired, and to work such miracles, as might convince them that their declaration was true: but their Master informed them, that the event, in this case, would not be answerable to their expectation; for, instead of being caressed and honoured by their countrymen, he assured them, they should meet with derision and contempt: he informed them that they should be despised and persecuted, delivered to the rulers, and punished as wicked men. But, at the same time, he promised them the constant protection and assistance of his heavenly Father, and gave them minute and particular instructions for their behaviour on every occasion; and let them know, that whoever rejected them and their message, should be rejected, and treated with indignation and scorn, by the great judge of the world: but those who received them with kindness, attended to their preaching, and received it with honesty and openness of mind, kindly con-

tributing to their support, though they gave but a cup of cold water to the least of his disciples, should not fail of receiving a large reward.

The apostles having received this commission, visited all parts of the country, preaching the doctrine of repentance, and proclaiming the kingdom of the Messiah at hand. They confirmed the truth of their declarations, by working of miracles, healing the sick, and performing every great work which was worthy their Master's cause, and necessary to prepare the minds of mankind to receive him; while our great Redeemer continued the course of his ministry in Galilee, and, by the divine eloquence of his preaching, and the wonders he wrought, proved himself to be the Son of God.

In the eye of worldly wisdom, it must seem a very foolish and unpopular attempt, to send a parcel of illiterate, despised Galileans to reform the world: how was it possible, that such persons as these, should confound the wisdom of the wise, and baffle the power of the mighty? How was it possible, that they should overturn the many false religions which then flourished in the world, which were supported by civil government, and had established themselves by long-continuance, were deep rooted in the human heart, and maintained by the passions, prejudices, and interest of mankind. Had human prudence directed to the choice of persons to be employed on this great occasion, they doubtless would have been men of great learning, superior eloquence, and possessed of every art of persuasion and address. But the wisdom of God stoops not to be directed by the wisdom of man; his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. When his glorious gospel was sent to enlighten and enrich the world, this divine treasure was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might appear to be of God: accordingly, it appeared that the religion which these illiterate fishermen, those despised Galileans published through the world, was far superior, was more worthy of God, and beneficial to man, than the acutest reasonings, or the sublimest strains of the Greek and Roman philosophers and poets; though they were

furnished with all the stores of human literature, and spent their whole time in study and contemplation. Hence, it is manifest, that the glorious gospel of God, by it's noble simplicity, by it's own intrinsic dignity and worth, as well as by the miraculous power which attended it, and the heavenly glory which shone around it, proved itself to be wholly original and divine.

Nor was the success which attended the attempts of these weak and despised instruments, wanting to prove the divine original of the doctrine they taught; while the tenets of the philosophers were confined to their respective schools, the glorious gospel spread over the world, and was received in every country, and by men of every station; it was received by the bulk of mankind, with the highest satisfaction, and sublimest joy: as something necessary to their supreme good, which hitherto they had been seeking in vain. It was, therefore, the highest wisdom which conducted the propagation of the gospel, and made use of such low and contemptible persons; for hence, it plainly appeared, that these noble truths were not of human invention, but were the production of Infinite Wisdom, and were first advanced, and are still supported, by the mighty power of God.

After our great Redeemer had appointed his twelve apostles, he came down from the mountain, and was joyfully received by multitudes of people, who were waiting for him in the plain: and such was the heavenly virtue which attended and surrounded him, that whoever touched the border of his garment, was healed of his disease. This is sufficient to account for the great numbers of people which daily followed this illustrious person, who crowded around him, wherever he went, and accompanied him to the remotest part of the wilderness of Judea: nor was it only the vulgar and necessitous that pursued our Redeemer's steps wheresoever he went, but persons of high rank and character, came from the remotest parts to converse with him, hear his divine doctrine, and be spectators of his wonderful works, and partakers of the benefits resulting from them.

After healing the sick amongst the multitude, he proceeded to instruct them,

and delivered a divine discourse, in substance nearly the same as that which he before preached from the mountain: the chief difference in these discourses, is the threatenings which are here denounced against particular sinners, whereas the discourse recorded by St. Matthew, contains only blessings. It may not be amiss, briefly to consider these maledictions, as a large paraphrase hath been given on the former sermon.

Wo unto you that are rich, said our exalted Saviour, for you have received your consolation. Riches in this world, are no evidence of the love of God, but are frequently bestowed on the worst of men: they are not bestowed upon any as a reward for superior degrees of moral goodness, but are distributed by the great Governor of the universe, so as to answer the wise ends of his own government, and bring about his great designs: they have no tendency to promote the best interest of man, but are frequently made use of by the worst of men, to the worst of purposes, and enable them to be more extensively and desperately wicked: they are frequently a snare to the truly religious, and have a natural tendency to pervert the affections, and corrupt the heart. It requires great grace to keep them from degrading the soul; and generating a low, mean, worldly spirit; for, wherever the natural course and tendency of riches prevail, it will always remain an eternal truth, that *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

Wo unto you that laugh, for ye shall mourn and weep. It is not a joyful, cheerful, thankful, frame of spirit, which our Lord here exclaims against, but a foolish, trifling, levity of mind. The gospel of CHRIST, is particularly calculated to inspire a constant cheerfulness of temper, and Christians are commanded always to rejoice; the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, the lively hope of everlasting life, the constant pleasure which they find in communion with God, and the contemplation on heavenly things, tend to fill the mind with solid satisfaction and substantial joy. This joy will be constantly increasing, as Christians advance

in the divine life, and will be fully completed in the eternal world: but those giddy, gay sallies of mirth, and the thoughtless dissipation of mind which arises from an immoderate love of vain amusement and sensual pleasure, that gives no time for consideration, but scatters serious thoughts, and creates an utter aversion to sober reflection, will soon lead the soul into such a labyrinth of wretchedness and wo, that they shall then mourn and weep. This will certainly be their lot in this world, when their vain, delusive gratifications can please no more; and it will eternally be their lot, when they will be deprived of every gleam of hope and comfort, and consigned to the dark regions of sorrow and despair, *where will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

But our great Redeemer added, *Wo unto you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers of the false prophets.* This malediction of our blessed Saviour, is denounced against those teachers who, for fear of offending men, shall keep back the truth of God, and fear to proclaim the unpopular and humbling truths of the gospel, which are so mortifying to human pride; and by flattering the vices, and humouring the pride and passions of men, shall gain their commendation and applause. Such teachers as these, are compared to the false prophets of old, who, by humouring the vanity and flattering the pride of princes and great men, were more carested and attended to than the true prophets of God.

When our great Redeemer had finished this discourse, he departed to Capernaum, and was met by some messengers from a centurion, who desired him to come and heal a servant whom he highly esteemed, that was sick, and in danger of death. This centurion, from the character given him by the evangelist, seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The inhabitants of Capernaum spake much in his favour, and strongly recommended

his case; for they said, that *he was a lover of their nation, and had built them a synagogue.* The great Saviour of mankind, who went about doing good, graciously attended to the petition, and readily accompanied the messengers; but before he arrived at the house, he was met by a party of the centurion's friends, who expressed the high conception which that officer had of the divine power of our Redeemer, and desired he would not give himself the trouble of a personal attendance, as his word would be abundantly sufficient to accomplish the cure. Our Lord was pleased with the message, and turning to the spectators, said, *I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,* Luke vii. 9. The persons having delivered their message, returned to the centurion's house, and found the sick person perfectly recovered.

There are several circumstances attending this miracle, and that related by St. Matthew, proves that this centurion was not the same person. The centurion mentioned by St. Matthew, attended on CHRIST in person; him whose case is last related, presented his petition by the elders of Capernaum. It does not appear that the former centurion was a proselyte to the Jewish religion; but we find a very high character given of the latter: these, and several other particulars which might have been mentioned, prove that this miracle ought to be considered separate from the former.

This miracle being performed, our Lord repaired to the house of Peter, to eat bread; the place of his residence could not be concealed; great multitudes of people surrounded the house; some, no doubt, desiring to behold the wonders which he wrought, and others, to be partakers of the benefit resulting from them; they continued there some time, advancing their respective claims, in a tumultuous manner, and it was with difficulty they were persuaded to disperse.

C H A P T E R X I V .

CHRIST retires to Nain, a City of Galilee, where he raises a Widow's only Son from the Dead: He receives Messengers from John the Baptist, and gives his Testimony concerning him: After which he dines with Simon the Leper, where he is anointed by Mary, whose Affection he acknowledges and rewards.

WHILE the apostles were proceeding through the several cities of Judea, executing the commission of their Divine Master, our great Redeemer was carrying on the work of his mission in Galilee; and when they had returned to our Lord, they accompanied him and his disciples to Nain, a city near mount Tabor, where he was followed by a great multitude of people. On their approaching the gate of the city, a scene of the most affecting affliction and distress presented itself to their view: *Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.* What an affecting scene was this, and how was the affliction and distress of the mournful parent heightened by every circumstance which could make it the more bitter? A young man cut down, probably in his prime, and followed to the grave by his weeping parent. With slow and solemn steps, scarce able to bear up under the load of her woes, the mourning matron follows the dead to interment, attended by her affected friends and neighbours, who had strove in vain to comfort her for the loss of her only son; for the young man was *the only son of his mother*, on whom perhaps she depended for support; and to render her affliction to the last degree heavy and insupportable, *she was a widow.* With tender pity our great Redeemer beheld this daughter of affliction, and immediately exerted his divine power for relief. There was no need of any intercessor to prevail with the blessed JESUS to attend to such a case as this; his own compassion was sufficient to excite him to relieve her. The evangelist informs us, that *when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her*, and gently approaching, he bid her forbear to weep. But so great was her loss that it had opened all the sluices of sorrow, and it was in vain to bid her refrain from tears.

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Her husband was no more, and now she had lost her only son, the surviving image of his departed father, and the last hope of her afflicted soul. What comfort in the ordinary course of nature could be administered to this mournful widow? She had lost her husband; she had lost her son. What distress could be more deplorable? And how natural is to suppose that she should *refuse to be comforted*; and to determine to *go down to the grave with mourning.* Our Lord well knew the weight of her affliction, and the heavy pressure of her present grief, and therefore used no arguments to comfort her; but approaching the corpse, he *touch'd the bier.* The funeral procession immediately stood still, and the whole train in silent expectation awaited the event: when that powerful voice, which one day the dead shall hear, and they that hear shall live, soon uttered these remarkable words, *Young man, I say to thee, arise:* No sooner had our great Redeemer spoke, but the joyful event followed; *he that was dead sat up, and began to speak, and he restored him to his mother.* With what emotions of joy must we suppose this mournful mother would receive her only son thus unexpectedly rescued from the cold arms of death! What a flood of tenderness would burst upon the soul, and with what gratitude and joy would she behold his great deliverer, who did not make any shew of this stupendous miracle amongst the multitude of his followers and the attendants on the funeral, but immediately delivered the revived young man to his late afflicted, but now wondering and rejoicing mother, as a testimony that this great work was wrought in compassion to her distress. The surrounding multitudes beheld this wonderful event with a mixture of astonishment, pleasure, holy awe, and fear; *and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet*

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is risen amongst us, and that God hath visited his people.

If we take a review of this miracle, we may observe that it is liable to no objection, and abundantly proves the exertion of divine power. It is to be observed that it was wrought in the open field amongst a vast number of spectators. A great number of the inhabitants of the city attended the funeral; they all bewailed the disconsolate state of the afflicted widow, and had the opportunity of being satisfied that the youth was really dead. The powerful word which called the dead man to life was delivered in an audible voice before all the company; and this was done at the gate of the city, a place of general resort: every one had the opportunity of satisfying themselves that the young man was really restored to life. There was no possibility of deception, nor room for objections of any kind; and this miracle, joined with the rest wrought by the same divine person, abundantly proves that he was the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners.

The fame of the wonderful works which JESUS constantly performed, was rapidly proclaimed through the various cities of Judea, and by the disciples of John the Baptist carried to their master. This prophet, as we before related, was cast into prison by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. The cause of his imprisonment was the offence which that prince had taken at his boldly and freely blaming his conduct respecting his incestuous connexion with the Princess Herodias. John had now been confined above a year in prison, and as he was fully convinced that Christ was really the Messiah, and no doubt having imbibed the national expectation of the Jews, that the Messiah would set up a temporal kingdom, he perceived that things did not answer his expectation: for, doubtless, he apprehended that before this time CHRIST would have manifested himself, and made some advances towards his taking the reins of government. He therefore sent two of his disciples to our great Redeemer, with this question, *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* We are not to suppose by this inquiry, that John entertained any hesitation or doubt, whether

CHRIST was the true Messiah or not; for it is to be observed, that throughout the whole course of his ministry, he had borne a regular and ample testimony to the truth of his divine mission: he had been convinced by a particular revelation from heaven, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost in a visible form at CHRIST'S baptism, that he was the divine person who was to come to be the Saviour of Israel; and accordingly he made it his constant care to dispose the Jews in general, and his own disciples in particular, to receive and reverence him as the Messiah, bearing witness concerning him that he was superior to himself, and holding him up to view as *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.* It cannot therefore be supposed, as before observed, that the Baptist entertained any scruples in his mind concerning our Lord's divinity; but his design seems to be to lead his disciples into an acquaintance with our great Redeemer, that by beholding his miracles, and hearing his divine conversation, their minds might be prepared to receive him; for it is not improbable to suppose, that the prophet John might have some expectations of his own approaching death.

Nor was the conviction of his disciples, perhaps, the only view which the prophet had in sending this message to our great Redeemer; it is to be supposed that, like the rest of his countrymen, he expected the Messiah to set up a temporal kingdom. Nor is this supposition derogatory to the dignity of so great a prophet, since we are informed, that though John was *a prophet, and more than a prophet, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*; the meanest preacher of the everlasting gospel is greater than the Baptist; because he had the opportunity of being informed of the spiritual nature of CHRIST'S kingdom. As then, it is to be supposed, the great forerunner of our Redeemer ardently desired, and impatiently expected the appearance of his kingdom; and as the blessed JESUS had assumed no earthly honour or dignity, but every thing in the Jewish church and state continued the same; the Baptist might send this message gently to remind him of what was expected from him as the Redeemer of Israel.

The disciples of John brought this message from their master to the exalted Saviour of the world, while he was attending to the various distresses of the multitude which surrounded him, curing many of their infirmities, plagues, and evil spirits, and restoring sight to the blind. These miracles the disciples of John beheld, and having delivered their message, our Lord did not think proper to return them a direct answer, but referred them to the wonderful works they had now been observing, and ordered them to carry an account of these things to their master, as an answer to his inquiry: *Go your way, said he, and tell John what things you have heard and seen, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them,*

But that the multitude, from the proposal of this question, might not form an unfavourable opinion of John the Baptist, our blessed Saviour at this time thought proper to place his character in the most favourable point of light. He commended him as a person of the most invincible courage, resolution, and fortitude, who stood firm in the midst of trouble and affliction, and was not like a reed shaken with the wind; and praised him for his austere and mortified course of life, not wearing soft raiment like those in king's palaces, but maintained a manly hardiness, and abhorred all luxury, effeminacy, and dissipation. Our great Redeemer then gave a full and clear testimony to the prophetic office of the Baptist, and declared that he was the person referred to by the prophet Isaiah, in those remarkable words, *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee:* and added, that this extraordinary person was that *Elias which*, the ancient prophets declared, *was to come.*

Our Lord having done justice to the character of his great forerunner, he took occasion from thence to blame and rebuke the obstinacy and perverseness of the great men and high pretenders to religion amongst the Jews, who had rejected both his own and the Baptist's testimony. It seems, by the nature of CHRIST's rebuke, that the Scribes and Pharisees, who pretended to great fasting and mortification,

thought themselves eclipsed, and with envious vexation beheld themselves outdone by the real austerity of the Baptist. His living in the desert, and shunning the company of men and the conveniences of life, the coarseness of his clothing, the abstemiousness and plainness of his diet, and the real severities he practised, they beheld with growing rancour, and not only represented them as imprudent and unnecessary, but proceeded so far as to declare him possessed with an apostate spirit: *For John came neither eating nor drinking; and ye say, He hath a devil.*

But though these bold pretenders to superior sanctity and mortification, could exclaim against the Baptist on account of the austerity of his life, it was manifest that it was envy and not reason which promoted their unbelief: for when CHRIST, on the contrary, dwelt in cities, and conversed with mankind, enjoining no austerities nor mortification, they could make use of this conduct as a ground of reproach. *The son of man came eating and drinking:* though he could not by his most inveterate enemies be charged with any intemperance, or with encouraging or conniving at it in others; yet these determined opposers of heavenly truth could say, *Behold a man, gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners!* But, said our great Redeemer, *wisdom is justified of her children.*

He then proceeded to upbraid the several cities where his most wonderful works had been performed; they had enjoyed the opportunity of attending his heavenly discourses, and had been witness to his wonderful works; frequently had they seen him perform miracles which could not be disputed, but fully manifested the mighty power of God; they had often seen him perform wonders sufficient to have convinced the most ignorant and idolatrous nations, who were immersed in the depth of sensuality, and had imbibed the strongest prejudices against the truth: yet, so great was their obstinacy, they persisted in their unbelief; they persisted in their wickedness notwithstanding all he had done to convince and reform them. *Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida!* said our great Redeemer, *for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been*

done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works that have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. Matt. xi, 21, &c.

After having, in the most awful, affecting, and awakening manner, pronounced such woes on these unbelieving and profligate cities, our great Redeemer concluded his discourse with these gracious and reviving words, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* It is the Son of the eternal God, the Heir of all things, the almighty Judge of heaven and earth, who kindly condescends to address poor, lost, undone sinners in this affecting language; having pronounced heavy woes on the rebellious race, whose haughty self-sufficiency, inveterate prejudice, pride, and obstinacy, prevented their receiving the truth, the kind and condescending Saviour of sinners gives the most tender, heart-affecting invitation to the humble and penitent. Those who *labour and are heavy laden*; those who are conscious of their vileness and sinfulness, who are pressed with the weight of their iniquities; whose guilt lies upon them like an heavy burden, from the weight of which they ardently desire to be delivered, are here called upon and earnestly invited to come to the only person who is able to relieve them. It is not the great and noble; it is not the powerful, prosperous, and happy; it is not the exulting sons of joy, but the poor, needy, and afflicted, who are labouring under a sense of sin, and burdened with the weight of their iniquities, who are thus invited to come to our great Redeemer. The great Maker of all things, the all-wise and all-powerful Preserver, the supreme Governor and Judge of the universe, graciously condescends to call unto, and with the utmost tenderness to invite poor, heavy-laden sinners to come; he does not call upon them to come with a design to punish their of-

fences; he does not summon them to appear before his awful seat of judgment; he does not call them with a design to deride or expose their miseries; he does not call them with an intent to punish their offences, but with a design to release them from their afflictions, to release them from their burdens, to give them rest and peace, and make them eternally happy. *Come unto me*, says our great Redeemer, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*; all you who are sensible of your vileness; who are humbled under a sense of your iniquities; who see the dreadful condition to which you are reduced by your sins; who have been long groaning under the intolerable weight of your guilt, and panting for deliverance; but throughout the limits of the wide creation can find no refuge, no help, no deliverer, *Come unto me, look unto me and be saved*; trust in me as *mighty to save*; venture your all in my hands; seek no other refuge, no other help, no other deliverer; but *come unto me and I will give you rest.* It is not my design to upbraid you with the vileness and folly of your conduct; it is not my design to enter into judgment with you and punish you for your iniquities, but to lead you into the paths of peace, truth and happiness: be not afraid to listen to my words and follow my directions, but with a full reliance on my power, wisdom, and goodness, *take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Can there be a greater evidence of the corruption and depravity of the human heart than the coldness with which the degenerate sons of Adam receive so tender, so affecting, and so important an invitation. The great Creator hath formed them with strong desires of happiness, and they toil out a weary life in the eager pursuit of every appearance of good. They are lost in the pursuit, and instead of happiness, find themselves plunged in trouble, vexation, and woe; they find themselves burdened with many griefs, but will not come to him who only is able to relieve them. What blindness, stupidity, and abominable pride possess the human heart, and excite it to reject the gracious calls and invitations of the only Saviour of sinners!

After our great Redeemer had finished his discourse, he was invited by one Simon, a leper, to go to his house, and take some refreshment. The invitation he accepted, and accompanied him to his apartment, where, as he sat at meat, a woman whose course of life was known to have been loose and profligate, sat at his feet beholding him with the tenderest affection, and shed such floods of tears that they trickled down his feet, which according to the custom of the country were bare. She seeing that her tears had wet the feet of her beloved Lord, wiped them with her hair, frequently kissing them with the utmost tenderness and affection, and anointed them with precious ointment. It was doubtless the sense of her former course of life, and a deep conviction of her crimes, which caused this woman to shed such a profusion of tears; and her love to the blessed JESUS arose from the benefit she had received from his heavenly discourses.

The custom, which then prevailed in the Eastern countries, of pouring fragrant oil on the heads of those guests on whom they designed to bestow peculiar and distinguished marks of honour, seems to have brought this woman to our Redeemer at this time; and it appears to have been her original intention to have poured the ointment on his head; but being deeply humbled under a sense of her unworthiness, she could not approach her divine Instructor with so much freedom as to accomplish her first intention, but thought it more consistent with her humility and self-abasement to anoint only his feet.

The leper, who it seems was a Pharisee, had attentively observed the woman, and knowing her character, concluded that JESUS could not be a prophet. *This man*, said Simon to himself, *if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him; for she is a sinner.* And so full of pride and self-sufficiency was the man, that he was offended at, and was ready to rebuke the blessed JESUS for his deigning to take notice of and conversing with such contemptible characters: but our great Redeemer, to convince him that he was a prophet, and that he knew not only the character of the woman who had touched

him, but was acquainted with the thoughts of all who thought mean of him in their hearts, began a conversation with him on the very subject he had been revolving in his mind. He did not expose his folly to the company, by openly relating the secret thoughts of his heart, and insisting on the absurdity of them, but with the utmost delicacy pointed out to Simon himself the unreasonableness in the conclusion he had formed. *Simon*, said the blessed JESUS, *I have somewhat to say unto thee: there was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most.* *Simon* answered and said, *I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.* And he said unto him, *thou hast rightly judged.* Our divine Instructor then immediately applied this short parable to the cause of the woman, concerning whom the Pharisee had so unjustly reasoned in his heart. *Simon*, continued he, *seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*

Our Saviour having thus, with great delicacy, rebuked the unjust and injurious suspicions of the Pharisee, and vindicated his own character, as well as the conduct of the woman, whose extraordinary kindness and tender affection were in no danger of losing their reward from one who enjoyed the fine feelings of human nature in their highest perfection, now addressed the woman with the soul-reviving news, that her sins were forgiven. But while her heart expanded with the holy gratitude and joy, which was inspired by the great declaration, the Pharisees beheld both our Redeemer and the woman with rancour, disdain, and sullen contempt: they could not endure the thought, that

great sinners should be pardoned, and set on a level with themselves; nor could they be reconciled to the authority which our Redeemer had assumed; for being ignorant of his divinity, they concluded that he had infringed on the prerogative of the Almighty, who only had a right to pardon sins. But the great friend of sinners, regardless of their malicious murmurs, confirmed his gracious words, by repeating his assurances to the woman, adding, that her faith had saved her, and bidding her depart in peace.

Some little time after this, our great Redeemer departed from Capernaum, and travelled through some parts of Galilee, going through every village, preaching and shewing the glad-tidings of the kingdom of

God, Luke viii. 1. And after this short tour he prepared to go to Jerusalem, to eat the passover; this being the second feast of that kind since the commencement of his public ministry. In this journey, he was accompanied by several pious women, amongst whom were Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Susanna, Mary Magdalene, and various others, who had been dispossessed of devils, or cured of dangerous and painful diseases; some amongst them were persons of wealth, and were willing not only to acknowledge the great benefits they had received, but to make such returns as Providence had put in their power, and, therefore, they freely ministered to him of their substance.

C H A P T E R XV.

CHRIST, being at Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, heals an impotent Man, at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath-day: He healeth one possessed of a Devil, who was blind and dumb: He sheweth that Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is an unpardonable Sin; and sheweth whom he regardeth as his nearest Relations. He alledgeth scripture in excuse for his Disciples, whom the Pharisees charged with breaking the Sabbath in plucking the ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day: He appealeth to Reason, and healeth the withered hand on the Sabbath-day.

NEAR the temple in Jerusalem was a pool of water, into which ran the blood of the sacrifices, and the water which was used by the priests in preparing the victims, and on other occasions. This pool was called in the Hebrew tongue, *Bethesda*, that is, *the house of mercy*. It was surrounded by five porches, or cloisters, and these were filled with a great multitude of impotent folks, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season and troubled the water: whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had. The account of this miraculous pool is given by the evangelist John, but it is not mentioned by any more of the sacred writers: and various questions have arisen concerning these wonderful waters, which it hath been impossible to resolve, because the pool of Bethesda is not mentioned by

any other Jewish writer, sacred or profane.

For the above reasons, it cannot be precisely determined, when this miraculous power of healing first appeared in this pool; but it is almost universally agreed, that it could not be long before the coming of our Redeemer; and that the miracle was intended to lead to the Son of God, and to prepare the nation for the reception of him. Nor is it strange, that a healing virtue should attend those waters, which were strained with the blood of the sacrifices, which pointed to CHRIST, at the time when this great person was about to be manifested. The gift of prophecy, and that of miracles, had ceased amongst the Jews above four hundred years; and therefore, it must be supposed, that this miraculous event would rouse the attention of the nation, awaken every desire in their hearts for the coming of the Messiah,

and make them more circumspect in observing the tokens of his appearance. And as the Jewish nation, at this time, was under great tribulation and contempt, and suffered exceedingly from the tyranny and oppression of the Gentiles, it may be supposed, that the God of Israel graciously condescended to give them this eminent token of his favour, and gave this wonderful healing virtue to these blood-stained waters, that they might not despair of the fulfilment of his ancient promises, but have an eye to the blood of the covenant, and expect the appearance of that great person, of whom Isaiah prophesied, *He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.* And as God was pleased, at this time, to give such a wonderful healing virtue to a fountain of water, it may reasonably be supposed, that he designed to lead the minds of the devout worshippers in his temple to that great person, of whom it was prophesied that he should be *a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.*

JESUS being come to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover, he repaired to the pool of Bethesda, and took a view of the various subjects of disease, infirmity, and affliction, which crowded the porches, and waited for the troubling of the waters. Had these miserable objects applied to our great Redeemer for help, no doubt, they would all have experienced the great effects of that divine power of healing, which this illustrious person so eminently possessed: but it is to be supposed, that he was absolutely unknown amongst them, and no blessing or benefit was expected from him. This may be supposed to be the reason why our great Redeemer, did not extend his heavenly goodness to the whole number of those afflicted and diseased persons; for the general account which the evangelists give of his divine compassion on other occasions is, that *he healed all who came to him.* Such diseased persons who left their habitations, out of a persuasion of his divine power and goodness, were the first objects of his compassion, and never returned without a cure; but the sick at the pool of Bethesda, were attentive to other means of relief, and thought not of the Redeemer of Israel.

Amongst these miserable objects, was a man who had laboured under his disease no less than thirty-eight years. The long continuance, as well as the distressful nature of this man's affliction, was well known to the Son of God; and amongst the great number of diseased persons which he beheld crowding the porches that surrounded the pool, our exalted Saviour singled out this poor man as the object of his compassion; and accosted him with this question, *Wilt thou be made whole?* This question seemed designed to excite the attention of the people around, and to give the impotent man an opportunity of relating the malignant nature, and long continuance of his disease, and, of consequence, making manifest that divine power, which could instantaneously remove it. The infirm person, thinking the question of our Lord had an immediate reference to the waters of the pool, replied, *Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.* But our great Redeemer soon convinced him, that he was not to receive his cure from the healing virtue of the waters, nor to wait till the angel came down to trouble them; but would receive immediate relief, by the mighty power of the Son of God, and, accordingly, bid him *arise, take up his bed, and walk.* The powerful words had no sooner fallen from the lips of this divine person, than the great event took place. The impotent man felt a sudden warmth and vigour run through his relaxed nerves, and his feeble limbs assumed their youthful strength; when, finding himself able to perform the command of his great benefactor, he made no scruple of taking up his bed, and carrying it along the streets, though it was the Sabbath-day.

So great a miracle could not fail exciting the wonder of the spectators; and the new cured man, carrying his bed through the city on the Sabbath-day, which was a thing not practised by the Jews, and must have a strange appearance to the beholders would not fail to spread the account of this surprising event through the whole city. The man, who had so wonderfully recovered the use of his limbs, did not scruple to obey the commands of the

Divine Physician, though they were contrary to the custom of his country, and would be likely to expose him to the blame of the Jews; he well knew, that a person who could perform such wonderful works, must be a great prophet; and he supposed that such a person would not order him to perform any action which was sinful, and therefore, regardless of the reproaches he met with from the Jews, he carried his bed through the streets of the city. The Jews beheld him with mixture of indignation and contempt, and angrily told him, that it was not lawful for him to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day. But the man, elated by his happy deliverance, and holding his great benefactor in the highest esteem, thought it sufficient to answer, *He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk*, John v. 11. The Jews, not satisfied with this answer, sharply inquired, who it was that had made him whole; which question the man was not able to answer, as JESUS, as soon as he had performed the miracle, had mixed with the crowd, and was imperceptibly departed from them.

Some time after this, the person who had thus been miraculously restored, met with the Divine Physician in the temple, who took the opportunity to impress on his mind, a sense of the great benefit he had received, and the obligations he lay under to amendment of life: *Behold, thou art made whole*, said our great Redeemer, *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*. The evangelist has not informed us what effect this admonition had on the person who had been healed; but having, by this event, found out his great benefactor, he, no doubt, expecting the whole nation would revere so extraordinary a person, went to the rulers of the Jews, and told them, that *it was Jesus who had made him whole*.

This information had a very different effect than what might be expected; the pride and obstinacy of the rulers of Israel, prevented their conviction, and their inveterate prejudices blinded their eyes, so that every manifestation of divine power was lost on them: for, instead of reverencing the Redeemer of Israel, and rejoicing that God had remembered his

people, they tumultuously attacked him in the temple, and probably, carried him before the Sanhedrim, with an intention to take away his life, because he had done good on the Sabbath-day. Our great Redeemer, in answer to their calumny, observed, that by doing good on the Sabbath-day, he acted consistent with the conduct of his heavenly Father, who, as Supreme Governor of the universe, carried on the order of nature, and supplied the wants of his numerous creatures, without distinction of days; and whose providence is constantly employed in doing good to the sons of men without intermission, or regard to times and seasons. But the Jews were not to be convinced by argument, they cherished in their minds a growing rancour, and an implacable hatred to the Son of God; so that what he had observed, instead of composing their minds, only tended to irritate and inflame them: and they attacked him with mortal hatred, and all the virulence of abuse, and stood determined to take away his life, because *he not only had broken the Sabbath, but had said, that God was his Father; making himself equal with God*.

Had the Jews been wrong in this conclusion, that CHRIST, in the account which he gave of himself, made himself equal with God, no doubt that divine person, in whom dwelt eternal truth, would have set them to rights in a matter of such high importance, which so nearly concerned himself, and which he was the only proper person to explain. But we find, that the following discourse of our great Redeemer, did not tend to discredit such a conclusion, but to establish and enforce it. He begins with observing, that so close is the connexion, and such the equality between himself and the Father, that the same works which are ascribed to one may be properly ascribed to the other. *Verily, verily, I say unto you*, said our great Redeemer, *the Son can do nothing himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise: for the Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel*. From this testimony which the Son of God bears to his

own divinity, it is evident that all men should honour the Father, and that the stupendous works of creation, providence, and grace, may be justly ascribed to our dear Immanuel; and him we may adore, as the Great Maker, the All-wise and All-potent Preserver, the Great Supreme Governor, and Judge of the universe.

The Saviour of the world then proceeded to refer to those particular works which manifested him to be the Son of God, and of consequence, by their own conclusion, equal with the Father; and in this view, he mentions the manifestation of his divine power in raising the dead. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.* The evidence of the divinity of the Saviour of the world, arises not only from the divine power which he manifested in raising the natural dead, but was also abundantly manifest by his divine power, exerted in raising dead sinners; which is a work which can be affected by nothing less than the mighty power of God; and to which these remarkable words seem to allude.

But our great Redeemer proceeds further to assert and enforce his own divinity, and equality with the Father, by observing, that to him is assigned the great work of sitting in judgment, and fixing the eternal state of all mankind. *Marvel not at this, said he, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall come forth: they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. And my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of my Father who sent me.* In that great and terrible day, the fate of a falling world will be decided by Unerring Wisdom, and the invariable rules of righteousness and goodness; for the great Judge of heaven and earth, hath a full and clear perception of every action which has been performed from the beginning to the end of time: and he is absolutely impartial and unbiassed, having no inclination to satisfy, no end to pursue,

different from those of his heavenly Father.

The great Saviour of the world, as a further confirmation of his divinity, appealed to the testimony of John, to whom the Pharisees had formerly sent a deputation to know his opinion of CHRIST. Our Lord observed, that *he was a burning and a shining light*, in which, for a time, the Jews greatly rejoiced, and they had cause to rejoice, because the prophetic spirit, which had so long ceased in Israel, had been revived in that holy man; and he had given a full and clear testimony, that JESUS was the Son of God: but our Redeemer proceeded to a greater testimony than that of John, which was no other than God himself, who, by the miracles which he daily directed him to perform, was bearing a constant witness to the truth of his divinity, and had by an audible voice at his baptism, declared him to be his well-beloved Son; a voice which multitudes of people had heard, and, perhaps, some of those to whom he was now speaking.

And for a further confirmation of the great truth he had been maintaining, our Lord, as a means to strike a full conviction in the minds of the Jews, with whom he was conversing, appealed to their own Scriptures: *Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.* But, notwithstanding the clearness of the ancient prophecies, and the remarkable manner in which they described and pointed out the Saviour of sinners, that unhappy nation was so blinded by their prejudices and vices, that they could not believe. The Jews had long expected the Messiah to appear amongst them, but they had formed very different conceptions of his appearance, than the designs of heaven, or the descriptions of their prophets. The Scribes and Pharisees had long amused themselves, and filled the minds of the people, with grand and magnificent ideas of the Messiah's kingdom; they had represented him as a potent prince, who was to be adorned with all the ensigns of power, and the glory of sovereign greatness; he was to sit on the throne of his father David, and raise it in power, greatness, glory,

grandeur, and magnificence, above all the kingdoms of the earth. Hence it was, that they could not acknowledge JESUS as the Messiah; they took offence at the meanness of his appearance; and though the mighty works which he performed, fully manifested the truth of his mission, and were sufficient to convince every impartial and unprejudiced mind, that he was really the Messiah; yet the pride of that infatuated nation, could not stoop so low as to acknowledge him: nor could their teachers, who had filled their minds with such vast expectations of temporal greatness, condescend to confess themselves so much mistaken in the meaning of the prophets.

But to conclude this discourse, our Lord proceeded to observe that he himself should not be their only accuser to his Father, but they would be condemned for their infidelity by their great legislator, Moses, on whom they trusted as their invariable friend. *Do not think, said he, that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust: for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me: but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*

With such observations and arguments as these, the blessed JESUS combated the pride and prejudice of the Jewish nation, and proved himself to be the Son of God, the great Judge of the whole earth, and the Messiah promised by the ancient prophets; and so plain and convincing were the proofs and arguments he brought, that his adversaries could not reply: but though they were silenced by the wisdom of his words, their old prejudices remained; and their being baffled and overcome in every contest, filled them with a growing rancour and settled hatred to his person, which shewed itself on every occasion, and proceeded so far as to induce them to endeavour to take away his life.

Nor was it long before the proud and envious Scribes and Pharisees found a fresh opportunity to exclaim against our great Redeemer, and pursue him with their impertinent objections and cavils; for going with his train through the corn-fields on the sabbath-day, his disciples plucked the ears of corn and eat the grain, after

rubbing it in their hands, and the Pharisees with the utmost severity and bitterness exclaimed against this as a profanation of the sabbath. Our Lord, in reply to this calumny, reminded them of the conduct of David, who, in a case of necessity, when he fled from Saul, permitted his servants, and presumed himself, to eat of the shew-bread which was kept in the tabernacle, and was not lawful for any to eat but the priests; and further to convince them of the folly of their remarks, our Lord referred them to the conduct of their own priests, who constantly performed the necessary work of the temple on the sabbath-day: from whence it appears, that works of necessity had been always permitted on the sabbath-day, though it was contrary to the command of the law. Our Lord further observed, that it was necessary the Scribes and Pharisees should know that *the Son of man was Lord of the sabbath*: for as the work which himself and his disciples constantly attended to was promoting the eternal interest of mankind, they had a greater right to claim an exemption from the strict observance of the sabbath than the priests in the temple, who were only concerned in the practice of ritual observances, could pretend to. And in the conclusion of this discourse, our great Redeemer took notice that acts of mercy should always be performed, though they were attended with the violation of some of the sacred institutions of the ceremonial law; for it would be inverting the order of nature, and reversing the immutable rules of reason and the nature of things, to suppose that *man was made for the sabbath, and not the sabbath for the use and benefit of man*.

Soon after this debate with the Scribes and Pharisees, our blessed Saviour entered one of the synagogues of Jerusalem on the sabbath-day, and in the assembly there was a man whose right hand was withered.

The Pharisees rightly concluded that such an object of distress would excite the compassion of that divine physician, who had so often exerted the wonderful power he possessed in behalf of the helpless and miserable: and, observing that JESUS took particular notice of the infirm person, they watched him with all the keenness and

rancour of the most inveterate malice, concluding that they should now have an opportunity of accusing him to the people as a breaker of the sabbath. So full of pride and self-sufficiency was this hypocritical generation, and so greatly they valued themselves on the exact performance of external ceremonies, that they could openly accuse our great Redeemer of a capital offence for healing the diseased on the sabbath-day: but so blind and stupid were these doctors of the law, that they could not see that themselves were profaning and polluting that sacred day of rest, by indulging the most diabolical dispositions, and practising the most atrocious actions which could be committed. Such was their endeavouring to destroy a various and innocent person, who had never injured them, whose conduct and character demanded the highest respect, and whose life was spent in promoting the best interest of mankind.

The Saviour of the world was not unacquainted with their deadly malice, nor their present intentions to take an advantage of his heavenly goodness; he knew the rancour of their hearts; he penetrated their deepest designs; and unmoved by their impotent rage, he ordered the person to stand up in the full view of the whole congregation, and publicity avowed his design to heal him.

The hypocritical teachers of Israel exclaimed against the beneficent action he was about to perform, as an impious and unlawful profanation of the sabbath, *Is it, said they, lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?* It is not to be supposed that, by this exclamation, they designed to prevent the performance of the miracle, but rather to draw from our great Redeemer such an answer as they might take advantage of, and which might give them an opportunity to accuse him with the greater success: but our Lord answered them in such a manner as let them know that he penetrated their deepest designs, and at the same time baffled and confounded their utmost rage. *Is it, said he, lawful to do good on the sabbath-day, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?* Is it lawful for you, ye most detestable hypocrites, to harbour in your minds the most infernal rancour and hatred against me; and with the highest

injustice and cruelty to plot against my life on the sabbath-day? And is it not lawful for me to restore to his former strength this poor distressed man who stands before you? The justice and severity of this rebuke struck them dumb; and, not being able to reply, they pretended not to understand his meaning: but to leave them without excuse, our Lord made use of an argument which stupidity itself could not mistake, and which all the sophistry of these hypocritical teachers was not able to evade. *What man, said our exalted Saviour, shall there be amongst you, who shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days.*

This plain reference to their own practice was so clear and convincing, that they could not pretend to be ignorant of it; and so full that they were effectually silenced, though they were determined not to be convinced. This wicked perverseness and unconquerable obstinacy grieved the spirit of the meek and lowly, the kind and benevolent Son of God, who looking round on his enemies with a mixture of compassion and sorrow, kindly commanded the lame man to stretch out his hand: the man gladly obeyed, and instantly it was restored whole as the other.

This astonishing work our great Redeemer performed in a large congregation, in the full view of all the people, in whom the foregoing dispute had raised a curiosity to behold the event; and as, no doubt, it was performed on a person that frequented the synagogue, most of the persons there present were acquainted with the man, while he laboured under this infirmity; and as it was performed by the blessed JESUS in the midst of his most inveterate enemies, it must certainly have a great effect on the minds of the beholders, especially as they saw that it had effectually silenced the Pharisees, who had nothing to offer, either against the miracle itself, the proofs and reasonings urged for the fitness and propriety of it, or the divine power of him who had performed it.

But though these proud, envious, and hypocritical teachers were astonished at the miracles, and silenced by the arguments of

the Son of God, yet they were far from giving up their unjust and cruel institutions: for though they bore an inveterate hatred to the Sadducees and Herodians, because they presumed to differ from them in their religious sentiments, yet they could join with these persons they so much despised, and consult with them in order to take away his life.

For they well knew that if he continued the course of his ministry, and produced such incontestible evidences of divine power, the people would follow him; when their own weight and influence would quickly decline, and their preaching become contemptible. JESUS well knew their wicked designs, yet he did not think proper at this time, any further to oppose them, but retired into Galilee, to the borders of the lake of Chinnereth.

This retreat of our great Redeemer seems to have displeased some of his disciples, who had strongly imbibed the popular idea of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, and expected that he would have established his authority by force, and exerted his divine power to bear down all opposition; and they were extremely mortified to find their Master give way, and seem to decline any further contest. But the obscurity of his retreat could not conceal him from the multitudes who flocked to him from all quarters, bringing with them their sick and diseased; and his heavenly goodness healed them all. Nor would the disciples have been offended at this mild and peaceable conduct of their Master, had they attentively considered the prophecy of Isaiah, where this peaceable disposition is particularly insisted on as eminently distinguishing the character of the Messiah. *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 shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.* Matt. xii. 12, &c.

The small variations between this prophecy, as quoted by St. Matthew, and the original in the book of Isaiah, are of no consequence, as the sense is the same; and here it may be worthy of remark, that

this prophecy describes the publication of the Christian religion by JESUS CHRIST; vastly different from that of the Jewish religion by Moses. The law of Moses was published with thunder and fire, and the strongest circumstances of terror from mount Sinai, and only extended to the single nation of the Israelites: the doctrine of salvation, as published by the Messiah, was mild, peaceable, and gentle, and was extended to every nation and people under heaven. Accordingly, our Lord, by retiring to Galilee, fulfilled the first part of this famous prophecy, *He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles*; for we are informed by the evangelist that great multitudes came to him from beyond Jordan, and from Syria, and from the countries about Tyre and Sidon.

While our Lord remained in Galilee, there was brought unto him a blind and dumb man, possessed with a devil; but he, with a single word, cast out the evil spirit, and immediately restored to the poor man the noble faculties of sight and speech. An event so surprising, so miraculous, and so suddenly wrought, could not fail of exciting the astonishment of the beholders; and the honest plain-hearted part of the nation were inclined to believe. But the Pharisees, who had followed him from Jerusalem with the basest intentions, were filled with the most tormenting envy at seeing him perform such surprising miracles; and burning with all the rage of disappointed malice, contrary to all the rules of reason and the conviction of their own minds, impudently and wickedly ascribed his miracles to the power of the devil: an affirmation so horrid, abominable, and desperately wicked, could not escape the notice, or fail of exciting the sharp rebukes of the Son of God; who addressing himself both to his enemies and the surrounding multitudes, demonstrated the absurdity and impossibility of such a conclusion from the common affairs of life. *Every kingdom, said the blessed JESUS, divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?* How foolish and ridiculous is it to suppose that the Devil would act against himself, and undermine the founda-

tias of his own kingdom! To which our great Redeemer thought fit to add, *If I cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils in the Spirit of God, then is the kingdom of God come unto you.* You did not impute the miracles of your prophets to Beelzebub, but received them on the evidence of these miracles as the messengers of God: but I reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of the Devil. Is this conduct consistent; or is it possible to reconcile it to reason or common sense? These prophets therefore shall be your judges; and they shall condemn you. But if it is true, that I cast out devils by the Almighty Power and Spirit of God, it follows, that the kingdom of God so long expected, and ardently desired, is going to be established amongst you. Is not the horrid impudence of this blasphemy of yours really astonishing! But, great as your crime is, it may yet be forgiven; because fuller and more manifest evidences of the truth of my mission, may hereafter convince you of your wickedness, and excite you to believe: and the time is coming, when the Son of man shall be raised from the dead, and the gift of miracles by the power of the Holy Ghost will be bestowed on almost every believer. The nature of the Messiah's kingdom will be more fully explained, and such proofs given, as if attended to, will be abundantly sufficient to remove your prejudices, and overcome your obstinacy and prevailing unbelief. But if you then shut your eyes, and speak evil against the Holy Ghost, contrary to the conviction of your minds, maliciously ascribing the miracles wrought by his power, and his extraordinary gifts, to proceed from the prince of darkness, you have wilfully shut your eyes against the light; you have dared to insult the eternal God to his face; you have resisted, wilfully resisted, the last means which he will use to convince you: and you never will be forgiven, but shall surely fall under the fierceness of his wrath, both in this world, and that which is to come. *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. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

This awful and alarming denunciation against the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, was probably laid down by our Saviour at this time, to apprise the Pharisees of their danger, to awaken them to a sense of their obstinate and envious opposition to the truth, and make them afraid of the consequence, if they persisted in such detestable calumnies, when their own hearts told them, that they had no foundation in reason, but what flowed from malice and resentment: but the most powerful arguments, or the most awful threatenings, had no effect on this obstinate and perverse race of mortals, who sarcastically answered, *Master, we would see a sign from thee.* What astonishing stupidity! Had he not, the moment before, cast out a devil, and restored the faculties of sight and speech to the blind and dumb! Had not he cleansed lepers, raised the dead, and rebuked the tempestuous winds, and raging waves of the sea! Were not these signs sufficient to have convinced the most obstinate and bigotted mortal! What, therefore, could these stubborn doctors of the law require! Well might the great Saviour of the world call them *a wicked and adulterous generation*; for certainly they could justly pretend to no part of the faith and piety of their great father Abraham; he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: but they, by their malicious obstinacy, and determined unbelief, added sin to sin, and plunged themselves into the depth of iniquity and wickedness. Persons of such perverse dispositions, and incorrigible tempers, merited no indulgence; and, therefore, our great Redeemer told them, that no sign should be given them, but that of the prophet Jonah, who, by laying three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of the Son of God, who should continue three days and three nights in the chambers of the grave.

Our Lord then proceeded to observe, that the obstinacy, perverseness, and wickedness of that generation, was greater than

that of the most barbarous, ignorant, and idolatrous nations, who would rise up in judgment with them, and condemn them. The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah; and the queen of the South took a long journey to behold the wisdom of Solomon: but the obstinate, wicked, and unbelieving Jews, would not repent at the preaching, and repeated warnings of the Son of God, nor learn wisdom from the Eternal Fountain of Wisdom itself.

Our Lord then concluded his discourse with a parable, which shewed the great danger of wilfully opposing and resisting the truth, as such practices tend to make men habitually and desperately wicked, and, in every respect, more obdurate and abandoned than before.

During this dispute with the rulers of Israel, JESUS was informed, that his mother and his kinsmen waited without, desiring an interview with him; upon which,

with a look of the tenderest affection, stretched out his hands towards his disciples, and said, *Behold my mother and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,* Matt. xii. 49, 50. These remarkable words ought to be received with the warmest gratitude and the most exalted joy, by every Christian; since from this divine declaration, it may be learnt, that a faith in CHRIST which works by love, and produces a conformity to the precepts of the gospel gives the believer a claim to the high title of a Son of the Most High, and a near relation to his dear Redeemer: by this divine principle, the believer lays hold on the blessings and privileges which belong to his spiritual birth, he claims a kindred to the skies, he becomes acquainted with his union with the Divine Nature, and can stand before the throne of the Eternal God, and call him his Father.

C H A P T E R XVI.

JESUS delivers several Parables from a Ship, to the Multitudes that were standing on shore: He receives a second Visit from his Relations: At Evening he retires to Capernaum, and delivers more Parables to his Disciples: Afterwards, he returns to Nazareth, his own City, and sends his Apostles to preach about that Country: He then repairs to the Desert of Bethsaida and provides a miraculous Repast for the whole Multitude.

THE public debate in which JESUS was engaged with the Pharisees, and the miracle which was the occasion of it, brought together such a vast concourse of people, that, for the greater facility of instructing them, our great Redeemer repaired to the sea-side. The crowd pressed so close about him, that he was incommoded in his office of speaking, and, for the greater conveniency, he entered a ship, and put off to some small distance from the shore, while the attentive multitudes remained on dry land: being thus conveniently accommodated for public speaking, our divine Instructor proceeded to lay down several precepts of the utmost importance, which he thought proper to introduce in the para-

bolical stile. This was a mode of instruction very common in the Oriental nations, and it was the general method of the old prophets, John the Baptist, and our blessed Saviour, to inculcate divine and moral truths, in the beautiful method of allusion and fable; and sometimes so to contrive the discourse, that it had an immediate reference to those objects, which at that very time presented themselves to the view of the audience. This method of instruction was, on several accounts, particularly adapted to the designs of divine conduct, and the circumstances of the Jewish nation, at the time of the Messiah's appearance. Similitudes of this kind, are the most easy and simple methods of teaching;

they are best accommodated to the apprehensions of the ignorant and unlearned, and are very easy to be understood, remembered, and applied; at the same time, they are the finest veil for mysteries, and the best medium for concealing from the proud and obstinate, those truths which their perverseness and infidelity render them unworthy of having more clearly revealed.

These observations seem to be alluded to by our great Redeemer himself, when his disciples asked, why he taught the people in parables? *Because*, said he, *it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given: 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. Therefore, speak I unto them in parables; because, in seeing they see not; and in hearing they hear not, neither do they understand*, Matt. xiii. 11, &c. The beloved disciples, whom our Redeemer, by his divine power had made of an humble, teachable disposition, whose minds, by an heavenly influence, were become docile, apt to learn, and open to instruction, were thus addressed by the divine Instructor; and he gives them to understand, that it would be no disadvantage to them, nor to any that sincerely desired to be instructed, and attended on him in humility of heart, that the truths he delivered were clothed in parables; for such persons would carefully consider his words, and resort to him for their explanation: and the truths themselves, clothed in this beautiful veil, would be more attractive to the humble inquiring mind; and, when carefully considered, appear plain, simple, and easy to be understood.

But the proud, self-conceited Scribes and Pharisees, were so blinded by their prejudices, that they would not give themselves time to consider, but would heartily despise such methods of teaching, and condemn, as low and contemptible, the plain allusions in which the divine truths were represented. Our great Redeemer did not alter his manner of teaching, for their sakes, but dressed the great truths of the gospel in such metaphorical robes as they did heartily despise, and which

would for ever conceal them from persons of their temper and conduct. Nor need it be wondered at, the blessed JESUS further observed, that he took this method with this sort of men; for it had been prophesied of him, that he should *open his mouth in parables, and utter things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world*. And concerning the pride, obstinacy, perverseness, and infidelity of the rulers of the Jews, Isaiah had long ago prophesied to them, that, *by hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this peoples 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 heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*.

There is some little variation between the words, as quoted by our Saviour, and those found in the prophecy of Isaiah, but the meaning is the same in each, and the sense manifestly is, that the Jewish nation should hear the doctrines of the gospel, but not understand them; and see the miracles wrought in confirmation of the truth of those doctrines, but not perceive them to be wrought by the power of God: not because the evidences produced by our great Redeemer, were insufficient to convince a judicious and impartial inquirer after truth; but because the corruption and depravity of the hearts of the proud Pharisees, would not suffer them to examine and weigh these evidences; for the sins of that people had hardened their hearts, their pride and vanity had shut their ears, and their hypocrisy and bigotted adherence to tradition, and forced interpretations of the law, had closed their eyes; so that the bright rays of divine truth could not shine upon their dark minds, nor the powerful voice of heavenly wisdom, awaken their attention, or command their assent.

Such were the reasons assigned by our great Redeemer, for his teaching the people in parables; and then he proceeded to remind his disciples of the great privileges they enjoyed, in having the opportunity of learning, from his heavenly lips, those things which the prophets of

old so earnestly desired to know and understand: *But blessed, said he, are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: 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.*

The first parable which the blessed JESUS delivered to the multitude, was that of the sower, who cast his seed into different kinds of soil, the product of which was answerable to the nature of the ground; some yielding a large increase, and some none at all; by which he elegantly displayed the success of his own doctrine, amongst the several kinds of hearers to which it would be preached. *A sower, said he, went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them; but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.*

This parable was particularly proper to be considered by the multitudes who attended on the Son of God, when such vast numbers heard his discourses, and so few practised his precepts, or profited by the heavenly doctrines which he taught. Not only the multitude, but the disciples heard him with a mixture of pleasure and surprise; and, not understanding his meaning, they were impatient to hear it explained; and were very urgent to know, why he chose that method of instruction.

The last of these questions, our Lord answered in the manner before related; and then, with condescending kindness, proceeded to give them the explanation of the parable of the sower: *When any one, said he, 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 the seed by the way side.* The persons who are here represented as

hearing the word of God without understanding, are those careless hearers, whose minds are diverted from attending to those things which concern their everlasting peace, by the gay, trifling amusements, and alluring objects of sense. Such persons hear the word of God with so little attention, that they scarcely know what they hear; and, for want of an habit of serious thinking, their ideas are loose and scattered, and an universal dissipation of mind drives out all solid reflection. Such persons as these, are at all times proper objects for the great enemy of mankind to work upon; he well knows how to take advantage of the vacancy of thought, which exposes such minds to his malicious attempts; and, where he finds the mind empty, he takes care to enter there, and fill it with such furniture, as soon erases the slight impressions it may have received by hearing the word of God.

The second kind of hearers, described in the parable of the sower, are those who receive the word with a greater degree of attention, and in whom it produces an outward reformation of conduct and behaviour; but, not being impressed on the mind by the operation of the Divine Spirit, it does not effect a real change of heart. Such persons, while things go on smooth, and they meet with success and encouragement in the world, may make a profession, and appear to others, and think themselves religious; but, like seed sown on hard, stony ground, which, though it springs up, and looks green for a while, yet, when the sun shines hot and bright, soon withers for want of root; they cannot stand in the day of adversity and trouble: *for when tribulation, or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.*

The third kind of hearers, are those who seem to receive the word of God with great earnestness and attention; but however they may be delighted with it in the house of God, they do not carry a savor of it into the world. In some, the toil, trouble, care, and vexation arising from their circumstances in the world, so fill the mind, engage the attention, overwhelm the spirit, and oppress the heart, that, like a plant incumbered and surrounded with rank, poisonous weeds, the

word of God, which they have heard, cannot grow; the noble truths of the gospel cannot have their proper influence on the mind, but gradually sink and decline, till at last they are disbelieved, or totally forgotten. Others, who meet with their desired success in their worldly affairs, are so assiduous in the pursuit, and so entirely devoted to the acquisition of wealth, that every thing to them seems little and low which does not produce some temporal advantage: as riches increase, they set their hearts upon them, and a worldly spirit *chokes the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

In opposition to those unprofitable hearers of the word, a fourth sort are represented in this parable, whose hearts, by the Holy Spirit, are prepared for the reception of divine truth: for, as the best of ground, except it be ploughed, harrowed, and cleansed by the husbandman, will not receive the seed, nor produce a plentiful harvest; so the heart of man, except it be changed by divine power, will not receive the word of God, nor produce such fruit as the gospel requires: but, when the heavenly seed falls on those hearts which have been wrought upon and prepared by the Divine Spirit, the word is received with gladness, it takes deep root in the mind, it operates on all the powers and faculties of the soul, it terminates in obedience to the precepts of the gospel, and brings forth fruit to the honour and interest of the cause of CHRIST, in proportion to the capacities and circumstances of the different subjects on which it falls, *in some an hundred fold, in some sixty, and in some thirty.*

Our great Redeemer, having finished his explanation of the parable of the sower, he turned to his disciples, and explained to them, by the similitude of a lighted candle, the use they were to make of the knowledge which they would acquire by conversing with him, and receiving his divine instructions. *Is a candle, said he, brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested, neither was any thing kept secret, but it should come abroad.* By which the divine Instructor gave them

to understand, that, though now these heavenly truths were veiled in shades and figures, and taught to mankind in parables, the time would come, that they would be more clearly revealed, and as a lighted candle, exalted on high, illuminates the whole apartment where it is placed, so shall the brightness of divine truth, by their preaching, be spread abroad, and enlighten the dark nations of the earth: therefore, as the disciples of CHRIST were intended to convey the precepts of heavenly instruction to the dark, unenlightened nations of the world, our Lord reminded them, that it was a matter of the highest importance, that they should be rightly and fully taught those truths they were to bear to the remotest nations; and, therefore, it behoved them to hear him with the utmost care and attention. *Take heed, said he, what ye hear; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.*

After our Lord had been thus discoursing to his disciples, he turned to the multitude on the shore, and, addressing them in the most pleasing and powerful manner, he delivered to them the parable of the enemy's sowing tares amongst the wheat. *The kingdom of heaven, said he, is likened to a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares amongst the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the husbandman came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest, I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

This parable, as our Lord afterwards explained it to his disciples, relates to the different states of men at the end of the world. The husbandman is our great Redeemer himself; the field is the Christian

church, planted in various parts of the world; those Christians who are enabled by the Holy Spirit to love the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and bring fruit worthy their high profession, are the wheat; and those who make an empty profession, without knowing the power of true religion, are the tares. These are seduced into the paths of wickedness by the enemy of God and man, and the parable elegantly represents, the mixed state of the professing church on earth, and the deplorable end of the hypocrite and those who know not God. Such characters as these may mix with the real Christians, and may deceive for a time, by assuming the appearance of superior sanctity, and strictness of life; yet they will not fail sooner or later, to betray themselves, and make it manifest that they are but tares amongst the wheat. Yet we are taught by this parable, how sincerely soever we may wish to free the church from all corruption, both in doctrine and practice, it is not lawful for us to assume the prerogative of the great Judge of heaven and earth, by persecuting or following with any corporal punishment, any who we apprehend to be hypocrites and corrupters of true religion. The tares and the wheat are to grow together till harvest, they are not to be separated, lest by mistaking the character of the persons, we bestow those censures on the true Christian which belong to the hypocrite: but the harvest will come when they will be separated by our great Redeemer himself, and his attending angels; then the tares will be bound up in bundles and burnt, but the wheat carefully gathered into the barn. For at the end of the world, our great Redeemer will distinguish between the pretended and the real Christian; the wicked will be condemned to eternal torment, but the righteous will be received to life eternal; when they shall shine forth, as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

The next parable which our exalted Redeemer thought fit to propose to the listening multitudes, was that of the seed which sprang up and grew imperceptibly. *So is the kingdom of God, said he, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of*

itself; first the blade, and then the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. This beautiful picture represents the gradual and silent progress of the gospel in the heart of man; as the husbandman does not by any power of his own, cause the seed to grow when he has sown it; but the blade and fruit are produced by the power of the great Creator, and by those laws of nature which he hath established in the vegetable creation: so the seed of divine truth does not thrive in the heart of man by the power of the preacher, but by the silent and efficacious energy of the Spirit of God. Thus JESUS and his apostles, having preached the gospel in the world, and taught the doctrines of true religion, they gave no commission to any to use the terrors of fire and sword to propagate them, but left it to the silent and secret influence of the Holy Spirit. And it is very probable that the blessed JESUS spoke this parable to convince the Jews of their mistake, in supposing that their Messiah would set up a temporal kingdom, and advance his dominion by the means which are used in the world to rise to sovereign greatness: and also it might be intended to quiet the minds of his disciples, and prevent them from being discouraged when they saw that an immediate and rapid success did not attend their labours in the gospel.

The next parable which JESUS spake to the multitude was that of the grain of mustard seed, which in Palestine and other parts of the East, rises from a small seed to a large spreading tree. *The kingdom of heaven, said the divine Instructor, is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 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.* This may be considered as a continuation of the subject of the former parable; for though the gospel seed may at first seem small and contemptible, arising from the crucifixion of its divine Author, the inveterate hatred and final unbelief of the Jews, the mortifying nature of its precepts, the weakness of the persons employed to propagate its divine truths, and the small number and

meanness of those who first received it; yet being founded on eternal truth, and supported by divine power, it would increase to a surprising extent and greatness, filling the whole world, and affording divine instruction and comfort to persons of all nations, who should enjoy the high privileges of Messiah's kingdom, while the Jews, for their wickedness in opposing the truth, should be left in unbelief, cut off from being a nation, and scattered like chaff over the face of the earth.

Our great Redeemer then concluded his discourse with another parable of nearly the same import with the foregoing. *The kingdom of heaven, said he, is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole is leavened:* alluding to the silent and effectual spreading of the gospel, by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, and prevailing efficacy of divine truth.

While our Lord was employed in delivering these elegant and beautiful discourses, his mother and brethren came a second time, desiring an interview with him; perhaps they were unwilling that he should weary himself with the continual fatigue of preaching, and did not approve of his making himself so public, and appearing in so distinguished a character amongst such vast multitudes of people: and as it hereafter will appear in the course of this history, that his brethren did not believe in him, it is very likely they designed to take him home with them, and persuade him to attend to secular affairs. But our exalted Redeemer was not to be diverted from following his Father's work, and performing the great duties of his mission. On these grounds he appears to have declined the desired interview, with this answer, *My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God, and do it.*

Evening now approaching, the blessed JESUS dismissed the multitude, and retired with his disciples to an house in Capernaum; where, at their desire, he explained to them the parable of the tares of the field, in the manner before related; and then he proceeded to deliver to them the parable of the treasure hid in the field, and the parable of the pearl of great price. The

first of these parables holds forth the abundant glory, excellency, and value of the gospel, above all earthly possessions; and the last denotes the willingness of all those who are made acquainted with the high excellency and abundant worth of the gospel, to part with their all in this world to obtain it. But, that the disciples might be informed that a mixed multitude of people would make a profession of the gospel, and the hypocrites would be blended with the Christians in such a manner as it would be difficult to separate them, he compared the gospel church to a net, which enclosed every sort of fish, good and bad, but were carefully separated when they were drawn to land; the good were preserved, and the bad thrown away: alluding to the great day of universal and eternal decision and separation, when the righteous will be received into life eternal, and the wicked cast into hell.

Our Lord having finished these discourses, he asked his disciples if they understood them, they answered in the affirmative; and our great Redeemer added, that every teacher of the gospel ought to resemble a person whose house was completely furnished, and bringeth forth out of his treasures things new and old.

Not long after this, our great Redeemer left Capernaum, and repaired to Nazareth, the city where he had spent his younger years, and where he had dwelt with his relations till he entered on his public ministry, and preached, amongst his old friends and countrymen, the glad tidings of the kingdom. But they, though astonished at his doctrine, could not overcome the prejudices they had formerly conceived against him, on account of the meanness of his family, and therefore would not own him to be the Messiah; they could not overcome the strong national prejudice they had conceived against their promised Deliverer's appearing in a low, mean condition in the world; nor could they give up their ideas of the glory and grandeur of the Messiah's appearance, so far as to suppose it possible that JESUS should be the man. Our Lord, therefore, finding them in the same temper of mind as when he formerly visited them, did not choose to stay long amongst them,

but departed and taught in the neighbouring villages.

During our Saviour's stay at Nazareth, he sent out his disciples to preach in different parts of Galilee, and proclaim the glad-tidings that God was going to establish the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, in which he would be worshipped in spirit and truth; and that they might confirm the doctrines they taught, and convince the whole nation that they received their commission from the Son of God, they were endowed with the power of working miracles. The evangelists have not informed us how long they continued their preaching; but it is reasonable to suppose that they spent a considerable time in carrying on their work in several parts of the country.

The people perceiving such wonderful works performed by the disciples of CHRIST, were exceedingly amazed, and their expectations were raised very high; for they could not recollect that the old prophets had ever given to their servants the power of working miracles, and, of consequence, they concluded that JESUS must be greater than any of them. This extraordinary circumstance raised the attention of the nation, and spread his fame so effectually about the country, that it reached the ears of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. This prince having lately, in an unjust and cruel manner, taken away the life of John the Baptist, he heard of the mighty works performed by CHRIST, and his disciples, with the utmost uneasiness and concern. His attendants endeavoured to dissipate his fears, by telling him that one of the old prophets was risen from the dead: but a consciousness of his guilt would not permit him to rest; for he apprehended, that the illustrious person he had so basely murdered, was risen from the dead, and would doubtless be revenged on his murderer. He 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.*

It has been before related, on what occasion and in what manner the Baptist was put to death; and the news of this mournful event having reached the disciples of CHRIST, while they were preaching in

Galilee, those of them who had formerly been the disciples of John, went and paid their last respects to the remains of their master, whom having decently interred, they carried the tidings to JESUS. When our great Redeemer had heard of the death of his relation and fore-runner, he found himself disposed for retirement, and sought the silent shades of the desert of Bethsaida: he departed as private as possible, that he might not be incommoded by the multitude, and for the greater secrecy he went by sea. But every precaution was insufficient to screen him from the penetrating eyes of the multitude who followed him; and his departure was not long concealed, for great numbers repaired to the desert, and found out the place of his retreat. The miracles which he performed, the benefit which the helpless and miserable always found from his goodness, and the strain of divine eloquence which flowed from his lips, had such an effect on the honest, openhearted part of the nation, that the multitudes who had seen the wonders he performed, and heard his heavenly voice, thought no difficulties too great to surmount, no hardships too great to endure, nor no place too retired for them to penetrate, in order to attend on his ministry.

The kind and compassionate Saviour of sinners, seeing the multitude had found out his place of retreat, and beholding them crowding about him, he viewed them with tenderness and love, because they were as sheep having no shepherd; for, having none to instruct them in those things which concerned their everlasting peace, they wandered about without a guide, without a defender. Their situation indeed, was like that of a large flock of sheep wandering upon the mountains, without a shepherd to feed and defend them from the ravenous jaws of the various beasts of prey which waited to devour them. The blessed JESUS, therefore, *that good Shepherd, who came to lay down his life for the sheep*, beheld them with compassion: that same pity which brought him down from the throne of glory in heaven, for the sake of his lost and wandering sheep, now brought him to this multitude of people: his heavenly goodness healed all the sick amongst them,

and from his lips they heard the words of eternal life.

The divine Instructor continued his heavenly discourses, and attended to the great work of healing the diseased, not dismissing the people, though the day wore away, and the shades of the evening were approaching. His disciples, thinking this circumstance had escaped his notice, thought proper to remind him, that the day was far advanced, and the place a solitary desert, where neither food nor lodging could be procured: it would, therefore, be convenient to dismiss the people, that they might repair to the towns or villages on the borders of the wilderness, and provide themselves food and other accommodations; for they had nothing to eat. But our Lord informed them, that he did not intend to dismiss the surrounding multitude so hastily, for, as they were weary and faint in the wilderness, it was his intention to give them a repast: at the same time, to try what opinion his disciples entertained of his power, he turned to Philip, who was well acquainted with the country, and inquired, *Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* Philip, astonished at the proposal, considering the vastness of the multitude, and the enormous quantity of provisions which would be necessary to supply them, he apprehended it impossible to procure them in the desert; and not considering his Master's power to supply them by extraordinary means, he replied, *Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.* Our blessed Lord might justly on this, as on a future occasion, have replied, *Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me Philip!* But he did not reproach his disciples with their inattention to his former character and conduct, but commanded them to give the multitude to eat. The disciples, not yet understanding the design of their Master, repeated the objection of Philip, and proposed to go and buy a quantity of provisions: but this was not their Lord's intention, who, without making them a direct answer, asked them, how many loaves they had. It does not appear, that they had any bread in possession; for after the disciples had made a diligent in-

quiry, Andrew came and informed his Master, that there was a lad amongst the multitude, that had five barley loaves, and two small fishes, a quantity so inconsiderable, that they were ashamed to mention it: *What are they,* said the disciples, *amongst so many?* And what, indeed, would they have been among such multitudes of people, if they had not been distributed by the all-creating hand of the Son of God.

JESUS, notwithstanding the smallness of the number of loaves, and scantiness of the provision, ordered them to be brought to him; and at the same time commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and ordered his disciples to arrange them in companies at convenient distances, that their number might be ascertained, and that they might be regularly served. In obedience to his command, the people sat down as they were ordered, no doubt wondering what would be the consequence of such an arrangement, and what benevolent action our great Redeemer was about to perform.

The multitude thus seated in order, our Lord, in open view, took the five loaves and two small fishes in his hands, and the whole multitude had an opportunity of beholding what a small quantity of provisions, in the hands of the Creator of all things, were sufficient to provide a repast for such a number of persons, as were then assembled. The great master of the feast then looked up to heaven, and returned thanks to his heavenly Father, for his all-preserving and all-supporting goodness, manifested at all times to his creatures, but particularly for his paternal care, in providing for their present refreshment; he praised his Almighty Father, for the miracles which he had been enabled to perform for the benefit of mankind, and particularly for that which he was now going to perform, for the refreshment of the multitude, who had left their habitations with desires to see his mighty works, and hear his words, and followed him into the desert, where they were weary and faint for want of provisions. After which, our great Redeemer blessed the bread, and his divine blessing had so wonderful an effect, that the five small barely loaves and two

dry fishes were multiplied to a quantity sufficient to satisfy the craving appetites of ten thousand persons; for the men were five thousand, and it is very probable, the women and children might not be less. The great Master of the feast distributed to his disciples, and they served the multitude as they sat on the grass; and so plentiful were the provisions, that every one was satisfied, and such fulness crowned our great Redeemer's board, that, when all the people had eat and were satisfied, there were twelve baskets filled with the broken meat.

Thus, the great Son of God provided a feast in the desert, for the people who followed him; and though they had no canopy but the azure sky, no table but the verdant grass, no better fare than barely-bread and dried fish, and no drink but the clear spring; yet they were more honoured by the presence of the illustrious founder of the feast, than ever was a royal banquet, which was given by the Assyrian or Persian kings; and doubtless there was more heart-felt joy, and solid satisfaction at this feast, than ever was found at the noble banquet of the gorgeous Ahasuerus, or the splendid entertainment of the imperious Belshazzar.

Have we not reason to wonder at the obstinacy and perverseness of the heads of the Jewish nation, that such a manifest display of divine power would not convince them. The account of this miracle, as recorded by the several evangelists, is very plain and circumstantial; and, it may be observed, that the particular circumstances of time and place, tended to make it more wonderful, more conspicuous, and less liable to objections and cavils. The place was a desert, where no bread could be procured, and therefore, it is manifest, beyond contradiction, that it must be produced by a miracle. Had this repast been given to the surrounding multitude, at one of the towns or villages, it might have been objected, that bread had been secretly supplied: but neither the Pharisees of those days, nor the infidels of ours, can tell us, how it was possible for any deception of that kind to be practised in the desert. And it may be further observed, that this mighty work was performed in the evening, when the people had been fasting

all day, and, with the fatigue of travelling, were, doubtless, weary and very hungry. Had this repast been given in the morning, the miracle might have been depreciated, by supposing, that the people did not stand in need of refreshment, and this treat might have been represented as unnecessary: but the particular circumstances attending this wonderful work, cut off every shadow of an objection, and abundantly proved, that *God can furnish a table in the wilderness.*

The consideration of the wonderful power of the Son of God, thus manifested in procuring bread in the wilderness for so many thousands of people, ought to relieve the cares, and quiet the minds of his people concerning their daily bread. With what joy and satisfaction of soul ought we to consider, that we are under the immediate care of our heavenly Father, whose paternal goodness provides subsistence for all his creatures; and, *who openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.* It is the beloved Son of the Eternal Father, that showers down such a wide profusion of blessings on a thankless world; and, according to the beautiful language of the Psalmist, *visiteth the earth and blesteth it; who maketh it very plenteous, who watereth her furrows, and sendeth rain into the little vallies thereof; who maketh it soft with showers, and blesteth the increase thereof; who crowneth the year with his goodness, while his clouds drop fatness, making the vallies stand so thick with corn, that they laugh and sing.* With what thankfulness and praise ought we to behold the constant effects of that heavenly goodness, which supplies the whole creation with food: and how entirely ought we to rely on the paternal care of the great Parent of nature, who manifests his goodness, and displays his bounty to an undeserving world, by *giving them rain and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness.*

Nor should we be unmindful of the manifest exertion of divine power, in the constant supplies which are provided for a world of creatures, and in the abundant provision which is made for the daily support of all mankind. Is it any less a miracle, that the supreme Lord of universal

nature, should, every day, support and feed the whole race of mankind, and all the brute creation, than that he should feed ten thousand persons in the wilderness, with five loaves and two small fishes? What proportion does ten thousand persons bear to all the myriads of men on the face of the earth, who are daily fed by it's fruits? And is not the increase of those fruits as great a miracle, and as manifest an exertion of divine power, as the increase of the bread by the blessing of our great Redeemer.

If we had hearts to consider the works of God with attention and care, we should perceive the manifest exertions of his power, in the secret operations of Nature, and as clear proofs of his divinity in her regular productions, as in the most extraordinary and miraculous events. The marks of divine power are equally seen in the wine, which arises from the moisture of the earth, through the tubes of vegetation, and is received from the branches of the vine; as in that instantaneously made from water at the marriage at Cana. Nor ought they less to be regarded in the corn, gradually ripened, and made into bread for the support of all mankind; than in the bread miraculously blessed to the support of the multitude in the wilderness: but we are very prone to overlook the common operations of creative Wisdom and Power, without considering, that, if we are unaf-

fectured with the divine munificence and bounty, so manifestly and richly displayed in the works of nature and Providence, there is much reason to conclude, that outward miracles would not awaken us to a sense of our duty, nor effectually mend our hearts: we are, however, very apt to deceive ourselves in this particular, and often led to conclude, that had we been present at so stupendous a miracle, as that we are now considering, we should have adored the divine hand that wrought it, and never have forsaken the Lord of life. But, alas, if all the display of divine wisdom and goodness in the works of creation; if all the evidences of the omnipotence of the Son of God, in the constant supplies which he provides for his numerous creatures; if the constant manifestations of his goodness to ourselves, in providing for us, and feeding us the whole course of our lives; will not elevate our hearts, and raise them to himself in gratitude and joy, there is the highest reason to conclude, that, had we seen the blessed JESUS feed ten thousand men, women, and children, with five loaves and two fishes; yea, had we been partakers ourselves of this miraculous repast, we should have been like many, who really enjoyed these privileges, yet, afterwards took offence at some of his words, which they called hard sayings, and *walked no more with him.*

CHAPTER XVII.

The Multitudes, after having been miraculously fed in the Wilderness, attempt to take CHRIST by Force, and make him King: He shews their Importunity by withdrawing himself from them: He walketh on the Sea to his Disciples: He saves Peter, who desired to accompany him, but was sinking for want of Faith. CHRIST disputes with the Jews in the Synagogue of Capernaum, and declareth himself to be the Bread of Life: He goes to Jerusalem at the Passover; then returns to Galilee, and reproves the Pharisees for their Superstition.

WHEN the wondering multitudes had partook of the miraculous banquet, prepared for them by our great Redeemer, a sudden flow of gladness and elation of mind ran through the desert: every eye was fixed on the great Founder of the feast; every heart was glad, and every tongue resounded his praise.

And now, being thoroughly convinced, that he was their promised Messiah, and having no notion of the reign of the Messiah; but that of his setting up a temporal kingdom, they revered him as the great deliverer of their nation, and stood determined immediately to make him King, whether he consented to it or not. Loud acclamations resounded through the woods and wilds, and the voice of exultation and triumph ran along the side of the mountain where the miracle had been performed: the disciples seemed to join with the multitude in their desires, and every thing was preparing to proclaim him King.

JESUS, to prevent the execution of their design, without their perceiving his intention, sent his disciples away in a boat, with orders to sail to Bethsaida. The multitude were very willing to let the disciples depart, when they saw that JESUS did not go with them; perhaps, they imagined, that the disciples were sent to provide such things as were necessary against he assumed the kingdom; nor did they refuse to disperse when our Lord dismissed them, no doubt, designing to return in the morning; which, we find, was really the case.

Having thus sent the disciples, and the multitude away, JESUS ascended to the summit of the mountain alone, spending the night in heavenly contemplation,

and ardent prayers to his almighty Father.

But the disciples, meeting with a contrary wind, could not continue their course to Bethsaida, which lay about two leagues northward of the desert mountain, where the multitude had been miraculously fed. They, however, did all in their power to land as near the city as possible: but a tempest arising, they were tossed all night in the tumultuous sea, without being able to make the desired port. At the conclusion of the fourth watch, which was about five o'clock in the morning, they were advanced no further than about a league from the shore; they were tossed by the foaming waves, and opposed in their course by the stormy wind; and, though they toiled hard, had no prospect of reaching the place where they desired to land.

Our Lord had, from the mountain, beheld the distress of his disciples, and was now coming to their relief, though they had not the least expectation of his presence. Thus the Christian, when storms and tempests of trouble and affliction overtake him, is too prone to forget his almighty support, and overlook the promise of his great deliverer: but, it would be well for him to remember, that the blessed JESUS beholds every particular of his distress, and hath *not forgotten to be gracious*, but, in his own time and way will certainly appear in all his mightiness to save, and work out his deliverance. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that the time when human wisdom fails, when our distress and trouble arises to its highest pitch, when there appears no refuge, no help, no deliverer, then is the time for a God to manifest his divine power; and, at such a

time, he hath often been found to be nigh at hand, and hath brought deliverance to his people in the most wonderful and unexpected manner.

Thus the disciples, when tossed by the mighty tempest, and in danger of being swallowed up by the foaming seas, saw their divine Master at a distance, walking upon the frothy surface of the mighty waters; they saw, but they knew him not: nor were they convinced by his nearer approach, but, thinking they had seen an apparition, shrieked with fear. Their terrors, however, were soon at an end; with kind compassion, and condescending goodness, in his well-known voice, the blessed JESUS dispelled their fears with these words, *Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* No sooner had our great Redeemer uttered these words, than every fear vanished, and satisfaction and joy filled every heart. Peter was so elated with the sight of his Master, and so overjoyed to see him walking on the sea, that he felt in his mind a strong desire to accompany him; and, accordingly, begged his Master to permit him to come upon the water.

Our great Redeemer having, with condescending goodness, granted his request, he left the boat, and walked on the surface of the sea; and some small time continued the miraculous course, wondering at himself, and rejoicing in the power of his Master. But the storm increased, the whistling winds roared around him, and the wild surges tossed their raging heads on high, and dashed about their foam; so that it was with the utmost difficulty that he kept on his feet. Peter was not so strong as he imagined; his presence of mind forsook him; his faith failed; he forgot the presence of his divine Master, and he began to sink in the mighty waters. In this extremity, he looked earnestly for his divine Supporter, and, upon the brink of being swallowed up, he cried, *Lord, save me!* His kind, compassionate Master immediately relieved him; *he stretched out his hand, and caught him;* at the same time, gently rebuking his staggering resolution and wavering faith, he said unto him, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

No. 4.

The case of Peter should be a standing warning to the Christian, and excite him to be very cautious of putting a vain confidence in his own strength. Peter thought that he could endure all things in the company of his Master, and, while he felt his heart warm, he supposed, that his resolution and courage would bear him above every fear. But on this, as well as on a future occasion, which will hereafter be remarked, he found himself mistaken. When he perceived the storm to increase, and the foaming billows rage more horribly than before, his fears suggested, that either his Master would be unable, or unwilling, to support him amidst the furious blasts of the tempest. He had, on various occasions, beheld the divine power and goodness of his Master, and his fears were unreasonable, and he was justly to be blamed; because the same power which had before been so fully manifested, and which now had enabled him to walk on the sea, was able to support him there, notwithstanding all the horrors of the storm.

Peter might have reasoned thus, had he been in his right mind; but his fear prevailed, his courage and resolution, which he depended so much upon, forsook him, and he began to sink. Thus the Christian, when he enjoys the presence of his Saviour, thinks that he can *endure all things;* and concludes, that *his mountain stands strong, and he shall never be moved;* but, when affliction and trouble arise, he has very different views of things; when great dangers are before him, and the boisterous waves of disappointment, vexation, and distress, roar around him, he is very prone to be disheartened, and to think, that he shall certainly be swallowed up, that God hath forsaken him, and will be favourable no more. Such are too often his sentiments, and, if the divine hand of his Saviour did not hold him up, he would, like Peter, sink in the mighty water.

This miracle of our exalted Redeemer's walking on the sea, seems to have astonished the disciples, more than any which had been before it; for, though they had so lately seen the miracle of feeding the multitude with five loaves, it did not appear to have such an effect on their minds, as this last manifestation of

his divine power; for now, with the utmost veneration, gratitude, and joy, they *came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God.*

Nor was walking on the sea, the only miracle which our great Redeemer wrought at this time; for, we are informed by the evangelists, that as soon as their almighty Master, and his relieved disciple, were received into the ship, the vessel was instantaneously transported to its intended port. *Then they willingly received him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

It was in the country adjacent to Capernaum, that our great Redeemer landed; and, as he had not been in that neighbourhood since his visiting Nazareth, the country people flocked about him in great numbers, bringing their sick and diseased, which the Divine Physician immediately healed: and, as it had been a considerable time since he had been in that country, they crowded around him in such numbers, that he could not pay a particular attention to every object of distress; but they had so great an opinion of the healing virtue, which he so eminently possessed, that they beseeched him, *that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

It hath been before related, that after CHRIST had fed the multitude in the desert, he dismissed them; but, though they dispersed at his command, they did not return to their habitations; for, perceiving that the disciples were sent to the other side of the lake, and that JESUS staid behind, they probably concluded, that they were sent to provide necessaries for their Master's assuming the kingdom; and, though he had modestly declined that high dignity in the evening, they were encouraged to hope, that he would accept of it the ensuing day. This expectation, it may be supposed, induced them, to lodge in the solitary wilderness, and shelter themselves in caverns of the rocks and mountains, though they were very much incommoded by the raging of the storm.

When morning arrived, the multitude left the places of their retreat, and search-

ed for our Redeemer in every part of the desert mountain: they saw him ascend to the summit the foregoing evening, and were very much surprised that he could not be found; but having wearied themselves in an unsuccessful search, they probably concluded, that he had departed in some boat which belonged to the sea of Tiberius, that had been forced by the storm to take shelter in some creek, at the foot of the mountain. With this expectation, they departed to Capernaum, where they found him in the Synagogue, teaching the people; and, with a mixture of surprise and joy, asked him *Rabbi, when camest thou hither?* To this question, our great Redeemer answered, that they did not follow him because they were convinced by his miracles of the truth of his divinity, but because they had been miraculously fed: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, said he, ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* Hereby our great Redeemer intimated, that their views in following him, were low, selfish, and sordid, and far below what might be expected from the Messiah's kingdom. Food for the body is of small consequence, when compared with those things which promote the welfare of the immortal soul. It was not mere animal food which the Son of God came down from heaven to bestow, but that divine wisdom and grace which would lead the immortal mind in the paths of eternal happiness; and, therefore, he exhorted them not to follow him for common food, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life. *Labour not, said he, for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

The Jews, if they had attentively considered the writings of their prophets, where divine wisdom and knowledge are frequently held forth, under the metaphors of meat and drink, might easily have understood what our Saviour meant by *the meat which endureth unto everlasting life.* But their popular notions of a temporal dominion, led them into the idea of some corporeal food, which the Messiah would give them to enable them to pursue the

designs, and establish the glories of his kingdom. It is, therefore, no wonder that this discourse so affected their minds, that they asked him, what they should do to erect the Messiah's kingdom and obtain that wonderful bread which he said, God had commissioned him to bestow.

The minds of the Jews were filled with vast conceptions of the splendour and glory of the Messiah's reign, and, as they expected that CHRIST was about to establish his great empire, doubtless, they imagined he would have given proper directions for their rising against, and opposing the Roman power; as the first step towards raising that dominion which had been so long promised to their nation. But our great Redeemer, to convince them of their mistake, and inform them what God really required of them, in order to erect the Messiah's kingdom, told them, that the way to obtain the favour of the God of Israel, was to believe in the person whom he had sent. The Jews were exceedingly offended at this unexpected answer, and seemed determined not to receive CHRIST as their Messiah, because he declined all means of establishing a temporal kingdom: as therefore, he appeared in a character so contrary to their expectations, of the manifestation of the Messiah, they required him to produce some signs, which might demonstrate that he was greater than Moses, or any of the old prophets. As to the miracle of feeding the multitude, they supposed, that such a pre-eminency could not be gathered from thence, because Moses had fed their whole nation with manna in the wilderness, which, they insinuated, was a greater miracle than CHRIST'S feeding ten thousand persons in the wilderness. *What sign shewest thou then,* said they unto him, *that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.* To this objection, our Lord replied, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

The manna which sustained the Israelites in the wilderness, was not the production of Moses, but the gift of God; it was not

sent as an evidence of Moses being a great prophet, but was intended to carry on the designs of Divine Providence, in the support of that peculiar people, and to be an emblem, or representation of that true spiritual, heavenly bread, which God hath given for the spiritual life of all who believe in his Son.

Some of the audience, who had listened with great pleasure, to the description which our Lord had given of the celestial bread, were possessed with an earnest desire to be partakers of so great a blessing: and immediately cried out, *Lord, evermore give us this bread.* To which, the divine Instructor replied, *I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* But, continued our great Redeemer, as I have often said, your nation obstinately and resolutely resists the light, and continues in unbelief, notwithstanding the manifest and glaring evidences of divine power, which you have seen, and the glorious fruits which would follow on your believing; but think not, that your unbelief will prevent the rising glories of my spiritual kingdom; for many there are which my Father hath given me, these shall be induced by the power of his spirit to come unto me, and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out: for I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that, of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

As the greatest part of the Jews were desirous only of temporal privileges and advantages from the Messiah's kingdom, it is no wonder they should be offended at this doctrine; they could not bear the thought, that a man who declined all earthly honours, should be supposed to be the Messiah: nor could they tell what he meant by calling himself the bread of life, and asserting, that he came down from heaven. With murmuring and discontent, therefore, they hastily exclaimed, *Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father*

and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

To these degrading expressions, our Lord thought fit to reply, that no objections arising from the meanness of his birth and education, could invalidate the testimony of the miracles which he had wrought, or excuse their obstinacy and unbelief. But it was not strange, that they should oppose and resist the truth, for it required the agency of divine power to teach them to understand what he meant by declaring himself the bread of life: and also it must be the mighty power of God, which enabled them to receive him, and live upon him as such. A believing in the Son of God, as the only Saviour of sinners, and resting upon him for life and salvation, and thereby partaking of the divine nature, and receiving spiritual nourishment from him, as the body does from corporeal bread, was not within the reach of the natural abilities of the unbelieving Jews, nor any of the human race, without divine assistance; and, therefore, our Lord told them, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.* And he further proceeded to inform them, that it was related in their prophets, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, that all the subjects of the kingdom should *be taught of God, Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* But, continued our great Redeemer, you are not to suppose, that men will be so favoured, as to see God with their corporeal eyes; *for him none hath seen, or can see:* but the happiness and glory of that kingdom will consist in believing on me, in such a manner as to receive me as the true bread of life: by this the believer will obtain a vital union with me, and draw spiritual nourishment from me; and, by that means, grow up to everlasting life.

Our Lord, having thus declared himself to be the bread of life which came down from heaven, and shewn the way in which it is to be obtained, proceeded to examine the comparison between himself, considered as the bread from heaven, and the manna, which in the time of Moses, the Israelites eat in the wilderness. *Your fathers,* said he, *did eat manna in the*

wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Though the Jews were no strangers to a figurative way of speaking, yet such was their blindness and perverseness, that they understood those words, and the rest of CHRIST'S declaration in a literal sense, and inquired, with the utmost astonishment, *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* But our Lord, knowing what manner of persons he was conversing with, did not think proper to explain his meaning in any other way of speaking; but continuing in the same figurative way of expression, he repeated, and affirmed what he had before asserted, *Verily, verily, I say unto you,* said he, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;* meaning, that no person can obtain that eternal life, which the gospel of CHRIST makes known, but by a vital faith, which receives the Son of God, and, partaking of his divine nature, draws spiritual nourishment and life from him. *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

Our Lord proceeded to inform them, that this is the bread which he had before told them came down from heaven, infinitely superior, in its nature and consequences, to that bread which their fathers eat in the wilderness; *for they eat the manna and are dead; but whoso eateth this bread shall live for ever.*

Such was the conference which our Saviour had with the Jews, in the Synagogue at Capernaum, which took its rise from the miraculous repast which he had so lately provided for the multitude in the desert, and thence naturally turned on bread. Though the Jews were no strangers to a figurative way of speaking, and

might have found the same mode of expression in their own prophets, yet they had no clear idea of his meaning, *eating his flesh, and drinking his blood,* they still understood literally; and, as it was a thing prohibited in the law of Moses, and abhorred by the most barbarous nations, they looked upon it with the utmost astonishment and aversion; and many of his disciples, with a mixture of dissatisfaction and surprise, said, *This is an hard saying; who can hear it?* Our Lord, perceiving their discontent, said, *Are ye offended because I told you my flesh was meat, and my blood was drink; what would you think if ye saw the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* Thus, our Lord further explained the meaning of what he had before advanced; as much as if he had said, *When you see me ascend with this body into heaven, you will be convinced that I really descended from thence; and you will also perceive that you cannot eat my flesh, or drink my blood in a corporeal manner; I never intended you should think my words had any such meaning: my flesh, in such case, could not be of any advantage to the sons of men; but the great blessings I have been relating, arise from receiving the doctrines I preach; to reveal these, I laid aside the glory which I had with my Father; I took upon me the veil of flesh, and assumed the nature of man: it is, therefore, entering into the spirit of these doctrines, which will bring you to eternal life; but I know your hearts are so wicked, and your prejudices so strong, that you will not receive them; nor am I disappointed in you; for, I have told you before, that *no man can come unto me, except it be given him of the Father.**

The Jews were so puzzled, confounded, and offended at this discourse, that many who had professed themselves the disciples of CHRIST, departed out of the synagogue, and followed him no more. They did not understand his views, nor like his method of preaching; nor could they perceive how a temporal kingdom, that idol of Jewish vanity, was likely at this rate to be established: and, therefore, they could no longer acknowledge JESUS to be the Mes-

siah, whose appearance and reign they expected so vastly different.

When the Jews were departed, our Lord turned himself to his disciples, with a look of endearing kindness, and said, *Will you also go away?* To this Peter answered, *Lord, to whom shall we go! thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

This declaration of Peter, was spoken in allusion to what JESUS had before been asserting, that he was the bread of life; and contained a full declaration of his faith in his Master, as the Son of God, and the Redeemer of Israel. JESUS was well pleased with the profession of faith which Peter had made for himself, and the rest of the apostles; and, to let them see that he knew the thoughts of the heart, and was acquainted with the inmost recesses of the soul, he informed them, that there was one amongst them who was a wicked man, and would be guilty of the basest, vilest, and most abominable actions: which prediction was fully accomplished, when Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, wickedly betrayed his great Lord and Master.

The third passover, since our Lord's public ministry, was near at hand, and JESUS went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast: but the Jews, who were offended at his discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, followed him with such furious and implacable resentment, that they sought to take away his life. Our Lord, therefore, not choosing to stay in Jerusalem, departed from that city, and returned into Galilee.

The Pharisees knew that he was so much in the favour of the people, that they did not make any violent attempts on his person, while he continued in that country; but they followed him with design to lay hold on some of his words or actions, whereby they might accuse him to the people, as a breaker of the law. They carefully watched every opportunity, and, at last, they publicly attacked him, and branded his conduct as highly blameworthy, because he permitted his disciples to eat with unwashen hands, which was contrary to the tradition of the elders. This practice was not forbidden in the law, but was an article of great consequence in

the tradition of the elders, by which the Pharisees explained the law of Moses. Several instances of legal uncleanness were particularly stated, and forbidden by the Jewish legislature: but these, and other ceremonial performances, were multiplied in the most extravagant and ridiculous manner in those traditions, which were held in such high veneration by the Pharisees. These people, who valued themselves on an exact and scrupulous performance of every tittle of the law, considered it as a notorious offence to eat bread with unwashen hands, though at the same time, they were scandalously careless in things of the highest importance.

To shew the stupidity and folly of this conduct, our Lord answered the question of the Pharisees, by retorting on them the wickedness of their conduct in a scrupulous exactness and punctuality, in the observance of human traditions, and, at the same time, neglecting the positive commands of God. *Why do you also, said he, transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother: let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me: that is, whatever I might have spared for the relief of my parents, I have dedicated to God, and thus suffers his parents to want not honouring his father and mother, he shall be free.* Thus have you, continued our great Redeemer, set aside the immutable duties of natural religion, and dared to oppose and contradict the positive commandments of God, by your ridiculous and contemptible traditions: *Ye hypocrites, said he, well did Isaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me: but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Our Lord having thus sharply rebuked the Pharisees, he turned to the people, and explained to them the nature of the argument, and desired them to reflect on the absurdity of the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees. *Not that which goeth into*

the mouth defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, that defileth a man, said he; and appealed to the common sense and understanding of mankind, for the apparent truth of this observation, desiring them to judge what contemptible hypocrites those persons must be, who could professedly neglect the great duties of morality, which are of universal and eternal obligations, and, at the same time, value themselves on the exact and scrupulous performance of such a trifle as washing of hands.

The Pharisees were highly offended at our Lord, because he spake in a degrading manner of their traditions, of which having complained with some warmth, the disciples came and informed their Master. Jesus replied, that they need not give themselves any pain about the offence which that set of men had taken at his words, nor need they be afraid of their anger; for both themselves and their doctrine would soon be destroyed, for neither of them were of God. *Every plant, said he, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.*

But the disciples themselves did not fully understand, nor were they entirely satisfied with this doctrine; and Peter having desired his Lord to explain it to them, the divine Instructor proceeded to inform them, that meats being of a corporeal nature, could not defile the spirit of a man or render him polluted in the sight of God: no real guilt can be contracted this way, except the meats are used to excess, or in direct contradiction to the command of God; and then the pollution proceeds from the man, who suffers himself to be prevailed on to transgress a positive command, and not from the meat, which, as the good creature of God, is lawful to be received. Thus, that which entereth in at the mouth, doth not defile the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, proceeding from a wicked heart, such as *evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands, defileth not a man.* Discourses like these could not

fail of exceedingly offending the proud, self-conceited Pharisees, and raising their resentment to its highest pitch: for these, and such like observations of our Lord, tended to strip them of that outside shew of sanctity and superior strictness, with which they veiled their deformity, and rendered themselves so venerable in the esteem of the vulgar Jews. These discourses, therefore, and the general opposition the

proud Pharisees met with from the Son of God, excited them, with the utmost pride and envy, not only to oppose his doctrine and degrade his miracles, but to attack his reputation and plot against his life. Our great Redeemer thought it unnecessary to continue the contest with such hardened hypocrites, and determined opposers of the truth, and immediately departed out of the country.

C H A P T E R X V I I I .

JESUS, at the repeated Request of the Woman of Canaan, cures her Daughter: Restores the Faculty of Speech to a dumb Man at Decapolis: Miraculously feeds the Multitude a second Time in the Desert: Warmly exhorts his Disciples to beware of the Leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees: Restores Sight to a blind Man, near the City of Bethsaida: After which, he departs into the Towns of Cæsarea-Philippi, where he approves and commends the Faith of Peter,

THE Lord of life having departed from Galilee, to evade the cruel and malicious designs of the Pharisees, he retired to the borders of Palestine, and approached near to those two famous maritime cities Tyre and Sidon: but so great was the veneration of the common people, such the fame he had acquired by his kind and beneficent actions, and so many the benefits which multitudes had received from his all-healing goodness, it was not possible he should be concealed. And, though he was now in the territories of the Gentiles, he soon found himself solicited to lend that assistance to the helpless and miserable, for which he was so famous in the land of Israel.

The first, amongst the inhabitants of these Heathen cities, which implored the assistance of the Son of God, was an unhappy parent, whose only daughter had an unclean spirit, and was *grievously vexed with a devil*. Various were the discouragements which lay in the way of the afflicted matron: she was a Canaanite, one of that detested race with which the Jews would have no dealings, and with whom they disdained to converse, and had every reason to fear, that her petition would be disgusting to one of the most eminent of

the sons of Israel; but, notwithstanding all these circumstances, she, as an humble petitioner, threw herself upon the tender mercies of the benevolent Son of God: strong necessity urged her on, grief and growing distress caused her to be importunate; such dreadful sorrow, such pressing distress surrounded her, it is no wonder that she would take no denial, but pursued, with repeated petitions, the only person who was able to help. Accordingly, in the deepest humility of mind, with the most respectful reverence and submission, and the most ardent, earnest, and powerful address, she came and fell at the feet of our great Redeemer; she besought him, and cried, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David*. The earnestness of this woman's petition, and her calling our Lord the *Son of David*, plainly indicate, that she believed him to be the Messiah; she seems to have received that faith, which was always honoured by the Son of God, and always recommended the persons who possessed it, to his first regard; and one would have expected, that such a petition would not have been rejected by that bountiful and merciful Redeemer, who *went about doing good*, and who kindly invited the weary and heavy-

laden, to come to him with the promise of relief.

This woman, being a native of Syro-phœnicia, was, no doubt, educated in all the idolatrous superstition of the Greeks ; but had been enabled to believe in the Son of God, and earnestly and vehemently to apply to him for relief. And there is no reason to doubt, but that divine Person, who had enabled her to believe his ability to heal her daughter, and thus, with all her heart and soul, to implore his assistance, beheld her with an eye of tender pity and stood determined to grant her request.

But we find, that our Lord did not think proper to let her know his kind intentions towards her at first. He made no reply to her petition, nor did he seem to take the least notice, either of her, or her distress : but this silence, and seeming disregard, did not intimidate her so far, as to induce her to desist ; but excited her to press her petition with the more earnestness. She continued her cries with a vehemence which would take no denial, till the disciples were affected with her grief, and became her advocates ; and they, however strongly they had imbibed the prejudices of their nation against the Gentiles, besought their Master to dismiss this troublesome petitioner, to grant her request, and send her away.

But JESUS soon silenced his disciples, with an answer agreeable to their own prejudices ; *I am not sent, said he, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* To this, the whole train readily assented, they had an high opinion of the peculiar privileges, and high prerogatives of the Jews, and looked upon the Gentiles as absolutely unclean, and unworthy of the least favour from the God of Israel : so that they were entirely satisfied with this answer, and urged the matter no further.

But the woman herself was not so easily prevailed on to give up her request : it was her own cause ; she had no hopes of relief from any other quarter ; and that divine power which had wrought faith in her heart, and given her a full persuasion, that JESUS was the Messiah, and able to help her, had also given her strength and perseverance in her request. She took some encouragement, from observing herself the subject of conversation between CHRIST

and his disciples ; and, though conscious of her unworthiness to approach so illustrious a person, yet fully convinced of his divinity, she worshipped him, and prayed, *Lord, help me.*

Our Lord now condescended to speak to this humble and earnest petitioner : but his words were seemingly sufficient to have discouraged every future attempt ; and, though she had conceived so high an opinion of the person and condescending goodness of our Lord, his reply seems sufficient to have inspired her with bitter dislike and aversion. *It is not meet, said he, to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* Intimating, that the Jews were the children of God, to whom all the privileges and blessings of the covenant of Abraham belonged ; and, as the Gentiles were vile and contemptible, they could not expect to share those blessings with the sons of Israel. This answer, however severe, did but speak the language of the petitioner's humility, and, therefore, it did not excite her resentment, or cause her to go murmuring away ; but, acknowledging the justice of his remark, she meekly replied : *Truth, Lord ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* Thus, continuing the similitude which our Lord had laid down, she artfully introduced her own case, and beautifully and meekly urged her petition at a time when, it might have been expected, she would have declined it with murmuring resentment.

Our Saviour, having thus given the woman an opportunity of manifesting the strength and steadiness of her faith, and declaring what just notions she had of her own unworthiness, and the power and goodness of our great Redeemer, he now beheld her with a gracious smile, commended her faith, and wrought the cure which she had so warmly and successfully solicited in behalf of her daughter ; *O woman, said he, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* These gracious words were no sooner spoken, than the great event followed ; and the affectionate parent had reason to rejoice, for *her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

This affecting and interesting relation, should excite every person in distress, especially those who are in distress of soul, to be ardent, constant, and persevering in their addresses to our great Redeemer. Whatever may be the nature of our distress, and however impossible it might seem to us, that our comfort should be restored; yet there is the highest encouragement to seek to that great Person, who is *mighty to save*, and in his own time and way, will deliver all that commit their case to him, that believe in his name, and come to him for deliverance. Nor ought we to be discouraged by the most humbling views which we may have of our own unworthiness: the Syrophenician woman was an Heathen and an idolater, but yet she was not prevented by those considerations, from imploring the pity of the Son of God: she sought it perseveringly, and she found it. Thus, how lost soever we may suppose our condition to be, how desperate soever our case, we ought not to despair: the most humbling and abasing sense of our unworthiness, ought not to keep us from the great Saviour of sinners, but rather urge us to follow him with our petitions, and ardently and vehemently implore his relief.

And further, from the success of this afflicted parent, we may be excited to perseverance in our petitions, though we do not meet with the desired relief, after a long continuance in our supplications: the person whose case we are considering, for some time met with no answer, and was afterwards repeatedly denied; but still she persisted, and at last prevailed: so, though the Lord stands at a distance from us, leaves us to our sorrows, and does not answer our prayers in the time, or the way we might expect: still we are encouraged to continue our address: he is not offended at our importunity, he is not angry at our wants, nor weary of our cries; but the language of his word is, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint. Nor ought we to be weary of this pious practice, though the Lord may seem to deny our request; though, instead of removing our affliction and distress by his gracious smiles, he seems to frown upon us, and lays fresh burdens on our souls; though, at the time when we expected de-

liverance, we meet with new distresses; and, though the Lord follows us with stroke after stroke, and lays one affliction upon another; still we ought to continue our petitions, to lay them at his feet, to take no rest till he answers our prayers, and to determine, that we will not let him go until he bless us. And we may rest assured, that whosoever is enabled, like the Canaanitish woman, thus ardently, vehemently, humbly, and perseveringly, to continue their supplications to the Son of God, will sooner or later, like her, find the desired relief.

JESUS being returned from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and taking a tour through the region of Decapolis, a man was brought to him who was deaf and dumb. The divine Physician was always ready to relieve such objects of affliction and distress as applied to him: but, as the multitude thronged about him, expecting he would soon set up his kingdom, he thought proper to take the diseased person and his relations aside from the throng; he then put his fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue, that the deaf man, who could not be informed by language, might mark the great person who was his benefactor. He then *looked up to heaven, and sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened: and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them, that they should tell no man.*

This injunction, however, was very little regarded; for, the man and his relations were so elated with the benefit they had received, and the miraculous manner in which that benefit had been conferred, their hearts were so full of gratitude to the great person from whom this unspeakable favour had been received, that they published it in every part of the country; doubtless, thinking they could not be too lavish in the praises of so great a benefactor, especially as the modesty in which he performed the miracles, fully manifested the uprightness of his intentions, and shewed, that he did not aim at popular applause, but only sought after the real benefit of mankind.

The vast crowds that gathered about our exalted Redeemer, were such as it

was a trouble to bear: he, therefore, to avoid such prodigious numbers of people as the fame of his miracles had brought together, retired to a desert mountain near the sea of Galilee. But the solitary shades of the wilderness could not long conceal the great Benefactor of the human race: multitudes who were related to helpless objects of distress, soon discovered the place of his retreat, and brought to him from all quarters, the sick, the lame, the blind, the dumb, and the maimed. The compassionate Saviour of sinners was moved at the sight of so many piteous objects; he graciously released them from their several complaints, and restored them to health and strength. Miracles like these could not fail of exciting the veneration and wonder of the numerous spectators: but, above all, the restoring the dumb to the faculty of speech, filled the beholders with astonishment; for, it must be observed, that he not only conferred on these persons the faculty of hearing, and pronouncing sounds, but instantaneously conveyed into their minds the whole language of their country: they were instantly acquainted with the various words it contained, their significations, their forms, their powers, and their uses, and, at once acquired the habit of speaking properly and fluently. This surely was sufficient to have convinced the most ignorant and stupid of the human race, that such works could be effected by nothing less than the mighty power of God; and, we are informed, 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 they glorified the God of Israel.*

The attending to the various cures our great Redeemer performed, detained the multitude three days in the desert; during which time, they had consumed all the provisions which they brought along with them into this solitary retreat: no refreshment was to be procured in the desert, and the kind, compassionate JESUS would not send them away fasting, lest any who had followed him so far from their habitations, should faint by the way; and, therefore, he again exerted his almighty power to feed the multitude in the wilderness.

With this view, our exalted Saviour 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 by the way.* The disciples, though they had lately had so plain a manifestation of divine power on a like occasion, seemed to wonder at the proposal: *Whence said they, should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?* Their divine Master did not rebuke them for their unbelief, but calmly asked them, *How many loaves have ye?* To which they replied, *Seven, and a few small fishes.* Our great Redeemer then *commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.* And he took the seven loaves, and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude; and they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat, were four thousand men, besides women and children.

It is not unworthy of remark that the blessed JESUS, during the course of his public ministry, very frequently wrought his wonderful works, and published his divine discourses in the silent retreats of the wilderness, and the solitary shades of the desert. Here he was followed by great numbers, who were diseased either in body or mind, and who came after him with a sincere desire of receiving benefit, either from the miraculous powers of healing which he possessed, or from the heavenly doctrines which he taught: and, it is not to be supposed, that those who were not sincerely desirous of receiving instruction, would endure the hardships to which they were frequently exposed in the wilderness, where they were sometimes two or three days without food: so that we may observe the wisdom of our great Redeemer, who took this method to collect together, the honest plain-hearted part of the nation, who were more likely to be affected with his miracles, and profit by his instructions, than the proud rulers of the people, or the haughty and opulent inhabitants of the crowded cities. And it may be further remarked, that our heavenly Instructor chose these desert places

and obscure retreats, that he might have the opportunity of conveying his divine doctrines to the persons whose hearts were prepared to receive them, without opposition from the proud self-conceited Scribes and Pharisees. How happy were people, who thus sat under the divine instructions of the Son of God! who left the busy, bustling scenes of folly and dissipation in the crowded city, and retired to the silent and solitary shades of the desert, to attend to those things which concerned their everlasting peace; thus exchanging the loud roar of laughter and folly, for the calm dictates of eternal wisdom; and giving up the *bread that perisheth*, for that *which endureth to everlasting life*.

After having miraculously fed the multitude, JESUS departed to the territory of Magdala, and appeared in a province of that country, called Dalmanutha. The Pharisees, having heard that he had again fed the multitude, followed him there; for they feared that the common people would be convinced by his miracles, and acknowledge him to be the Messiah; and they were determined to oppose him with all their might, and openly and publicly confute whatever he advanced, with a view to prevent the nation from owning him under that character.

In order to this, they boldly demanded of him a sign from heaven, to make it plain, beyond all contradiction, that he was a greater prophet than Moses. JESUS replied, by rebuking their blindness and folly, who, by observing the face of the sky, could distinguish the signs of fair and rainy weather, with a precision, which was fully manifested by the event; but, at the same time, they were so blind and foolish, they could not perceive the evident manifestation of the fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the Messiah, nor distinguish the signs of those times which they so ardently expected and desired. Had the Pharisees duly attended to the evidences which our Lord produced to prove his divine mission, and examined them with the same care as they did the face of the sky, when they perdicted the fairness or foulness of the weather, they would doubtless have been convinced of the truth: but their obstinate and inveterate preju-

dices, prevented their receiving the Redeemer of Israel, and filled their hearts with so much pride and envy, that our divine Instructor would not attempt their information and conviction; but fetching a deep sigh, because of the hardness of their hearts, he declared, that their expected sign should never be given them; and further observed, that the only sign which Divine Providence would allow them, was that of his own resurrection from the cold regions of the dead, in which dark abodes he should be no longer held, than the prophet Jonah was in the belly of the whale. This miracle of our Lord's resurrection, was a sign greater than any which had formerly been shewn by the antient prophets, and was justly insisted on by our great Redeemer, to prove that he excelled and was far superior to them all: *A wicked and adulterous generation, said he, seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.*

Having given this answer to the Pharisees, our Lord departed with his disciples, and went by sea to Bethsaida. During this short voyage, he cautioned his disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, which he introduced under the metaphor of leaven, to describe its wide-spreading contagion, and pernicious influence on the minds and actions of men. These hypocrites, valued themselves for their zealous attachment to a religion, which consisted in the scrupulous observance of frivolous traditions, while they neglected the immutable duties of natural religion, as well as the weightier and more important precepts of the law: but the disciples, having forgotten to take bread with them in their voyage, thought our Lord introduced the discourse of leaven, to caution them against procuring it of the Heathens, or Samaritans; for though their master had so lately fed the multitude in the desert, they had forgotten his miraculous power, and seemed not to be sensible, that he who had fed ten thousand persons with five loaves, was able, at all times, to provide for their necessities.

Having crossed the lake, and landed at Bethsaida, there was brought to our Lord a blind man, and he was earnestly in-

treated to restore him to sight. He received the petition with his usual kindness, and taking the man by the hand, he led him out of the city; then he spit in his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, and asked him, if he saw any thing: to which, the man replied, *I see men as trees, walking*: which words very properly express the indistinctness of his sight: JESUS then laid his hands on him a second time, and he was immediately restored to clear, distinct, and perfect sight.

It is proper in this place to be remarked, that the inhabitants of Bethsaida, had, by their ingratitude, impenitence, and unbelief, greatly provoked our great Redeemer; and it may be said of this city, as it was of another, *he would not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*: and this, no doubt, was the reason why he would not perform this miraculous cure in the city, but led the blind man into the fields: and soon after departed into the territory of Cæsarea-Phlippi.

Being retired into this country, our Lord thought proper to try the faith of the apostles; not that he did it for his own information, but that it might be manifest to themselves, that they believed in the Lord. With this view, he asked them, *Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?* In answer to this question, the disciples replied, *Some say, that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.* The people in general, were convinced that JESUS was a great prophet; but, though they were convinced of this, they did not acknowledge him as the Messiah. The reason of their mistake is very apparent: they expected that the Messiah, when he appeared, would assume the honours, grandeur, and power of a temporal kingdom; but, as JESUS disclaimed and declined all earthly honours, they could not receive him under that character. JESUS, therefore, gave the disciples an opportunity of declaring what their conceptions were of his person and character; and, with this view, he asked them, *But whom say ye that I am?* To this question, Peter immediately replied, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* With a condescending smile, our Lord accepted the title, and, to testify his approbation of Peter's

faith, immediately replied, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* Our great Redeemer, then alluding to the name of Peter, which signifies a rock, led him, and the rest of the disciples, to a view of that eternal Rock, on the faith he had before expressed, and the whole church of CHRIST rests, as on a sure foundation. *And I say also unto thee,* said he, *that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

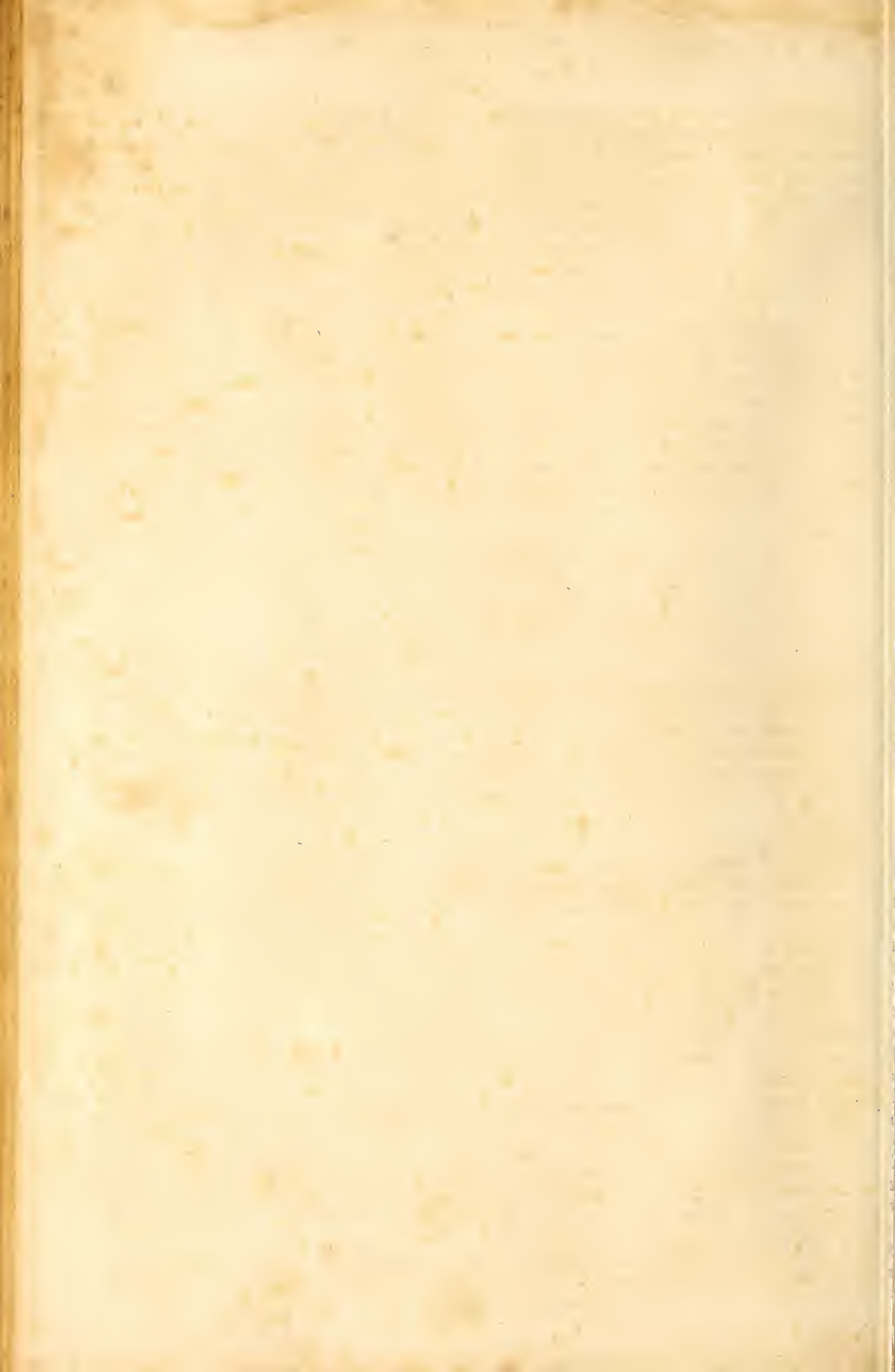
It cannot, without great absurdity, be concluded, that Peter was the rock on which CHRIST declared he would build his church: weak indeed, and easily assaulted and overcome by the powers of hell, would the noble fabric be, if it rested on any creature; and much more so, was it supported by a weak, mutable, and fallible man: it is therefore manifest, that CHRIST himself is the Rock, on which his universal church, containing the whole number of his redeemed, is erected; and this is a foundation which will stand for ever: not all the powers of earth and hell, can shake the immoveable basis of this rock: and whoever is so happy as to be fixed on this foundation, need not fear the dreadful earthquake, the rushing inundation, the raging tempest, or the devouring flame: not all the rage and confusion of a tumultuous world, can hurt such a person as this; but he may stand secure amidst the last convulsions of expiring nature, and behold, without fear, "the wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds."

But our Lord proceeded to shew the favourable regard which he had for his disciples, and the gifts which he would bestow upon them; and, therefore, he adds, *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,* Matth. xvi. 19. As Peter had spoken in behalf of himself and the rest of the apostles, so our Lord lays down these gifts which were common to all; for the same words, with very little variation, are applied to the whole number, in Matt. xviii. 18. and in John xx. 23. They cannot be supposed to contain



Scoles. sc.

OUR *Blessed* SAVIOUR'S Charge to PETER
concerning his Church.



a declaration of any superiority assigned to Peter over the rest of the apostles; for, it is evident, that, when they afterwards disputed on this head, and held any contention amongst themselves, who should be greatest, they were always reproved by their Master: nor can we find, that the rest of the apostles ever confessed any such superiority, or that Peter ever claimed it.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven being given to the apostles, by a very easy and beautiful figure, represents the success of their ministry. The kingdom of heaven, in the language of the evangelists, is the kingdom of grace, or the dispensation of the glorious gospel: and what can be more natural, than to say, that the

keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to them who open those noble truths to the sons of men. And when it is said, that whatsoever the apostles bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; it evidently relates to the divine approbation of those regulations and restrictions, which the apostles should establish in the church; for binding and loosing, are frequently used in the talmudical language, to represent allowing or forbidding particular sentiments and practices: so that, from the whole, we may conclude, that however our Lord approved or applauded Peter's faith and zeal, he did not, by these declarations, intend to give him any pre-eminence or authority over the rest of the apostles.

C H A P T E R X I X .

CHRIST informs his Disciples of his Sufferings and Death: He declares, that he shall judge the World, and gives a description of the Last Judgment: He is transfigured in the Presence of three of his Apostles: At the Foot of the Mountain of Transfiguration, he cures a Youth, who had a dumb and deaf Spirit; And, returning to Capernaum, pays the Roman Tribute, with a Piece of Money, taken out of the Mouth of a Fish by Peter, agreeable to his Master's direction.

THE disciples, as they still retained their expectations of a temporal kingdom, were, doubtless, highly elated with the discourse of their Master, which they had lately heard; giving them the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and enabling them to bind and loose with such authority, were very agreeable to them; and it is to be supposed, that they explained these grants to mean some great temporal powers and honours they were to be invested with. Their divine Leader, to abate their high swelling conceits, and to lead them into clearer views of the nature of his kingdom, and the final issue of his ministry amongst the Jews, informed them, that it was appointed in the eternal counsels of his Father, that he should be rejected by the rulers of Israel, persecuted with the utmost malice, followed with false accusations, and, at last, put to death as a male-

No. 5.

factor, with circumstances of the greatest cruelty and public shame.

The disciples were exceedingly alarmed at this prediction of their Master; he had just before accepted the title of the Messiah, and declared, that he would bestow high honours, peculiar privileges, and extraordinary powers on his apostles; and his now declaring, that he should be arraigned, condemned, and put to death as a malefactor, was so contrary to their expectations, that they thought it impossible to be true. Peter, who was of a warmer temper than the rest, heard his master talk of dying at Jerusalem with the utmost astonishment, and could not forbear hinting, that he did not believe it to be true; and he proceeded to blame his Master, for mentioning any such thing. For this boldness, our Lord sharply rebuked him: *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an*

B b

offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

It was the faalse notions of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom which Peter had imbibed, and his love to the world, and desires after its grandeur and glory, which induced him to utter that imprudent language, which brought so severe a rebuke from his Master. It was, therefore, a lesson, which our Redeemer, at this time, thought peculiarly proper to inculcate, that all who would afterwards obtain that glory which belonged to the subjects of his kingdom, must deny themselves; that is, they must always be ready to give up every worldly pleasure, every thing which tends to gratify the senses, and even life itself, whenever the cause of CHRIST required it. And he informed them, that whosoever pursued the glory and blessedness of his kingdom, in such a way as to be likely to obtain it, must expect to meet with trouble, vexation, disappointment, affliction, and distress: for, our Lord declared, that he who would be his disciple, must take up his cross daily, and follow him.

Our Lord thus opened to his disciples the true nature of his kingdom, and let them know, that it was quite the reverse of what they had expected: for, though they had undergone many afflictions, difficulties, and trials, there were greater and more severe exercises of their patience and fortitude still to come; these it would be in vain to attempt to shun or evade, for they must follow their Master in the footsteps of his affliction, which, if they attempted to shun, they would fall into greater evils; but those who preserved in the way of their duty with patience and fortitude, though they might loose their temporal lives, they would certainly gain an happy immortality: *For whosoever, saith he, will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall loose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 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?*

Our great Redeemer, having explained to his attentive disciples, the usage they must expect to find from the world, and the reproach, trouble, affliction, and va-

riety of distress which they must expect to go through; he then thought proper to change the scene, and represented to them the grandeur, glory, dignity, and majesty in which he should appear, when those sufferings were at an end: *For the Son of man, said he, shall come in the glory of his Father; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.* This consideration might have been abundantly sufficient to quiet their minds, and reconcile them to the various difficulties, troubles, and afflictions which lay before them. Then their despised Master will appear in greater glory and dignity than the most pompous earthly prince; he will assume the birth-right of the skies, and sit as the supreme judge of heaven and earth: then will his enemies meet with the punishment which they have so justly deserved, and his friends most assuredly receive their eternal reward; but those who, through fear of the difficulties and troubles which lay before them, have deserted his cause, will find themselves deserted, and finally rejected at that awful day; for, said our great Redeemer, *Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

As this is the first time which our exalted Redeemer mentioned this great event to his disciples, it may not be amiss to take a short view of this grand, magnificent, awful, and most interesting scene. As the Son of God is the exalted person who shall judge the world in righteousness, let us, for a moment, contemplate the glory, grandeur, and dignity in which he will appear: he himself declares, that he will appear *in the glory of his Father, and with the holy angels*: he will appear arrayed in the majesty of that God, who dwells in light, and whose glory no mortal can approach; not the blessed inhabitants of that heavenly world, can bear the blaze of that boundless glory which surrounds the eternal throne, but veil their faces in the presence of that God who dwells in light, and fills the heavenly regions with the boundless blaze of uncreated brightness. How small, how dim a speck is the sun, when compared with the Eternal

Fountain of Light, or with the brightness of that God, who pours the beamy radiance from world to world, and could, with one ray of glory darted from his throne, light up a thousand suns.

In this boundless brightness, and majestic pomp, will the Son of God appear. Ah! how unlike the despised Galilean; how unlike the person, who groaned and bled on Calvary! Not now attended with twelve weak disciples, twelve mean, illiterate fishermen; but surrounded with myriads of celestial spirits, and numberless hosts of mighty angels. With what celestial pomp, with what unutterable brightness, they descend through the sky, while the sun, overpowered with excessive light, shrinks and disappears; and the whole bright assembly descends from heaven *with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.* The trumpet, with tremendous roar, resounds, through the regions of the dead: the dead awake and rise; some exulting with joy at the sight of their Saviour, and others terrified, confounded, and filled with inexpressible horror, at the sight of their Judge: the great and mighty, the rich and noble, warriors, captains, princes, and potentates who ruled the world, and did what they pleased amongst the sons of men, now have lost all their honours and command, and are filled with the utmost consternation, amazement, and dismay: they cannot bear the brightness of the Judge, they would plunge into eternal darkness, to avoid his piercing eye, and they call upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, *and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

However reluctant, they are forced to appear: urged by strong necessity, and driven by frowning angels, they crowd to the bar, and stand, trembling and astonished, on the left-hand of their Judge. The elect of God, gathered by angels from the uttermost parts of the earth, are placed on the right-hand; they lift up their heads with joy, and, beholding the great Judge of heaven and earth, with exultation and transport can say, *This is our God, we have waited for him; we will be glad and*

rejoice in him. And now the time is come, when flagrant outrageous vice shall be thrown down and despised, oppressed, afflicted virtue shall be exalted; now is the time, when the mysteries of Providence shall be unveiled, when all the clouds and darkness which surrounded the ways of God, will be cleared away, and the wisdom, justice, and goodness of divine conduct, fully vindicated, both in those who are saved, and those who perish: now the church of CHRIST, his spotless bride, purchased with his blood, shall appear in all her glory and beauty, all vain hypocritical pretenders will be exposed, and every thing that offendeth, done away.

An awful silence is proclaimed; the books are opened; the secrets of all hearts, and every dark deed which had been carefully concealed, are brought to light: and then the exalted King of the universe, who sits in Judgment, proceeds to pass that sentence, which must stand for ever. With looks of the most kind, condescending goodness, and unspeakable complacency and delight, he first beholds the happy heirs of life and glory, who had been enabled, by his grace, to believe in him for life and salvation, and bring forth such fruits of righteousness, as were honourable to his cause: these happy souls look up to their Judge, with such emotions as are above description, and, with inexpressible joy, hear him pronounce this heart-expanding sentence, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 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; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

The redeemer of the Lord, with ineffable joy, receive the approbation of their Judge: but their meek and humble hearts will not take any praise to themselves, nor ascribe the happiness they are going to receive, to any thing done by them; and, therefore, they meekly reply, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto*

thee? Our Lord approves and commends their humility, but at the same time, to let the whole assembled world know, how kindly he accepted of every instance of the kindness and benevolence they had shewn to his people, he adds, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

The Judge then changes his countenance, and, with a look of indignation and rising wrath, which pierces through the inmost soul, he beholds the guilty wretches, who stand trembling at his left hand: filled with conscious guilt, and all the agonies of raging despair, they stand expecting their final doom, while these accents break from the lips of their angry Judge: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; 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.* The wicked, however conscious of guilt, not recollecting the precise acts of unkindness and contempt of the Son of God, here literally specified, are emboldened to reply, *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?* However willing they may be to justify themselves, our Lord well knows the naughtiness of their heart, and is fully acquainted with their evil deeds, and, therefore, he confounds them for ever with this reply; *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

The final and eternal sentence thus passed, the execution immediately succeeds: a legion of mighty angels drive the black, horrid train of trembling sinners from the judgment-seat; and, caught in a fiery tempest, they are precipitated into their dreadful place of punishment: the gulph of eternal horror and despair stretches wide its burning jaws to receive them at their fall; and they are *tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.*

Mean while, the frienes and favourites of the Eternal King, are conducted to the paradise of God, and safe lodged in the realms of eternal blessedness and rest: these happy realms, formed by the Eternal God, for the abode of his people, contain every thing which can satisfy the pure desires of an immortal spirit, and fill the soul with holy and ever-growing delight: now every fear, every sorrow, and every sin is done away; and the happy inhabitants of this glorious place, drink full streams of bliss, and partake of those joys which proceed from the throne of God, and of the Lamb: now the redeemed of the Lord, forming one vast, one happy society, dwell in that splendid city, where the full glory of the Eternal God is manifest in that exalted Saviour, who is emphatically styled, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* Here every happy believer in the Son of God, dwells in the presence of his Saviour; beholds this supreme object of his love, face to face, and is clothed by him in the beauty and glory of immortality. But all description fails: the human mind, in its present beclouded state, cannot bear the blaze of immortal glory, nor receive any adequate ideas of that boundless bliss, which the Lord will bestow on his people: *For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him.*

As this doctrine of CHRIST'S being appointed the universal Judge of heaven and earth, might seem incredible to the disciples; especially, as our Lord had but just before given them the humbling account of his sufferings and death; he proceeded to inform them, that some who heard him speak, should see so much of his glory and his kingdom while they lived, as should convince them, that his declaration was true: *Verily, I say unto you, said he, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.* Agreeable to this prediction, the disciples lived to see the transfiguration of their Master, and to be witnesses of his glorious resurrection, and his triumphant ascension into heaven; they lived to see the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the doctrines of the gospel

propagated in various remote parts of the world; and some of them lived to see that awful and ample display of divine vengeance, manifested in the destruction of that unbelieving race, who were the professed enemies and murderers of the Lord of life, and that wicked city where he was crucified.

The first of these great events succeeded the declaration in about six days, when our great Redeemer being with the multitude in the country of Cæsarea-Philippi, he left them in the plain, and, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, ascended an exceeding high mountain. In this solitude, while our Lord was praying he was transfigured; his face assumed a glorious radiance, and emitted a beamy brightness, not inferior to the sun shining in its strength; his garments shone with a snowy whiteness, far beyond any thing which human art could produce, and, like the fair beams of the morning light, glowed with a sweet refulgence, not inferior to the brightness of his countenance. Thus, for a short time, the Son of God appeared in his native glory, and the majestic brightness of his divinity shone through the veil of his human nature. To heighten the solemnity and grandeur of the sence, Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, the great prophet of the Lord, and supporter of the law, appeared in the beauties of immortality, and shone in those robes with which the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem are adorned.

It appears that the disciples, being heavy with sleep at the time of prayer, did not see the beginning of this glorious scene; they, however, awaked in the utmost surprise, to behold the place shining with heavenly glory; they had lost the first part of this bright display of our Redeemer's divinity, and of the conversation he held with the two great prophets, who came down from heaven on this great occasion; but they heard so much, as gave them to understand, that these glorious persons had been talking of those things which their Master had lately informed them of. His sufferings and death, which would soon be accomplished at Jerusalem, though they appeared to them of such a humbling nature, and contrary to the character of the Messiah, they found were not unworthy

the contemplation of the greatest personages of the heavenly world; and though the mentioning them, had lately given such offence to Peter, he perceived that they were spoken of by persons of superior dignity and understanding, as highly honourable to the character of his Master. But the feeble nerves of the three disciples could not bear the blaze of heavenly glory; they were amazed, confounded, and terrified, and scarce knew where they were, or how they ought to behave: but the forwardness of Peter's disposition prompted him to say something on the occasion, though he considered not the propriety or tendency of it: *Master, said he, it is good for us to to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

Peter having beheld such glory, as never before darted on mortal sight, and seen his Master assume an appearance of grandeur and majesty, far beyond his most sanguine expectations, he concluded, no doubt, that JESUS had now taken upon him his proper dignity, and that the temporal kingdom, which he had so ardently desired, and impatiently expected, was now actually begun; especially as Elias, according to the prophecy of Malachi the prophet, had made his appearance; he, no doubt, concluded that he was come from heaven to assist in rearing the Messiah's kingdom: Peter, therefore, thought it highly necessary to provide some accommodation for his Master, and his noble companions; perhaps, he intended to bring the rest of the disciples, and the multitude, who were waiting below, to behold the peerless glory of their Master, and his august assistants; this, he thought, would be much better, and more honourable for him, than being put to death at Jerusalem, or suffering those things which had been the subject of the late heavenly conversation; the design of which Peter, at this time could not comprehend: but *while he yet spake, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

When the three disciples heard the voice, which was vastly different to any they had heard before, and, at the same time that it seemed soft as the southern breeze, yet

it was awful and majestic as the thunder's roar; impressed with trembling awe, they fell with their faces to the ground, and continued in that posture, till their compassionate Master came to them, and gently touching them, bid them arise, and not be afraid. They immediately looked about them, but the heavenly scene was withdrawn, and no person was seen but their divine Master, in the plain and unadorned form in which he appeared before they ascended the mountain.

Our Lord, having continued on the summit of the mountain all night with his three disciples, he early in the morning descended to the plain, and charged them to conceal what they had seen, till he was risen from the dead. He was well aware, that the world, and even his own disciples, were strangers to his spiritual kingdom, and had no idea of his ascending to heaven, and being highly exalted at the right-hand of God: therefore, they could not comprehend the design of his transfiguration, and it was unnecessary to publish it before his resurrection, as it could not be described, and, perhaps, would not have been believed: and the present appearance of our Redeemer, joined with the afflictions, persecutions, sufferings, and sorrows which lay before him, might still tend to prejudice the minds of the people, and prevent them from believing any account of his exaltation and glory.

Nor were the disciples, at this time, able to understand the doctrine of CHRIST'S resurrection; they had never learnt that the Messiah was to die, nor had they any conception of his rising from the dead; for they were fully persuaded that he was to abide for ever, and that his kingdom was to have no end. They seemed very much surprised at the departure of Elias, and at their Master's ceasing to shine in the glorious manner they had so lately beheld on the mountain: nor could they comprehend the meaning of the prophet Malachi, who had prophesied of the coming of Elias, which their readers of the law explained to refer to a time, prior to the appearance of the Messiah. After long debating amongst themselves, they concluded to apply to their Master, to solve the difficulty, and therefore asked him, *Why say the Scribes, that Elias must first come?*

To this inquiry, our Lord replied, that the Scribes had rightly explained the prophecy of Malachi, by declaring that Elias must come before the appearance of the Messiah; but, at the same time he informed them that this great prophet had made his appearance, and had been used by that perverse generation, in the same manner as the prophets of old had been treated by their fathers: *But I say unto you, said he, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed: likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake to them of John the Baptist.*

When JESUS descended to the foot of the mountain, attended by his three disciples, he saw a great multitude surrounding the nine, who had continued with the people while our Lord had been transfigured, and the Scribes disputing with them. The people seeing JESUS approach, ran to him with exultation and joy, and saluted him with the warmest gratitude, and the most respectful reverence. Our Lord having joined the company, he immediately asked the Scribes, what was the subject of their debate with his disciples? To which one of the company answered, *Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake unto thy disciples, that they should cast him out, but they could not.*

This answer seems to indicate, that the Scribes had been reproaching the disciples, on account of their inability to restore the afflicted youth: and, no doubt, they rejoiced, that, at last, a devil had appeared who was too hard for them, and, perhaps, would not submit to their Master. That something like this had been the subject of their conversation, is evident from our Saviour's reply: *O faithless generation, said he, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?* After having spoken in this manner to the proud, self-conceited, sceptical Scribes, our Lord turned to the father of the afflicted young man, and said, *Bring thy son hither.* The afflicted father obeyed; but no sooner was the youth brought into the presence of the

great Ruler of earth and heaven, than the evil spirit attacked him with double fury: *the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.*

It is not to be supposed, that the blessed JESUS could not have prevented this furious attack; but he was pleased to suffer it, probably, that the minds of the spectators might be the more affected with the deplorable condition of the sufferer, and have the more just and lively ideas of that wisdom, power, and goodness, which should give him relief; and, it is probable, with the same views, he asked the mournful father, how long his son had been in this pitious condition? To which he replied, *Of a child. And oft times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him: but, if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*

It seems, that the inability of the disciples to cast out this evil spirit, had greatly discouraged the afflicted father; and the exquisite torture and apparent agonies of his son, and the remembrance of their long continuance, had dispirited him so much, that he began to fear, that this possession was too strong for the power of JESUS himself, as the Scribes had affirmed; which was the reason of his expressing himself with so much hesitation and doubt, when he told our Lord, how long his son had been afflicted. But JESUS, to make him sensible of his mistake, as well as gently to reprove him for his unbelief and groundless fears, said unto him, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* The father, affected with this declaration, and joy, at the supposed possibility of the relief of the son, replied with tears, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* The vehement manner in which the afflicted parent spoke these words, caused the crowd to gather about him; when *Jesus rebuked the foul spirit, and said unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him.*

The awful voice, at which all the devils tremble, had no sooner pronounced these words, than the devil, with an hideous howling, and convulsing the tormented youth in the most frightful manner, came out; leaving the youth, in a manner, sense-

less and motionless, as one dead. Our Lord then, taking him by the hand, restored him to life, and delivered him perfectly recovered, both in body and mind, to his father.

The nine disciples, who had unsuccessfully attempted to drive out this obstinate dæmon, remained most attentively silent during this transaction: doubtless they were glad to find, that this dreadful and powerful devil, was not an over-match for their Master, however they were mortified to find, that he was too hard for them. They were very desirous to know the reason, why they could not dispossess this dæmon, as they had done others, but did not chuse to ask their Master in the hearing of the multitude; but when he had retired, they asked him, why they failed in their attempt to restore the possessed young man? Our Lord informed them, it was because of their unbelief, *For, said he, 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 nothing shall be impossible to you.*

Our Lord then retired to the unfrequented parts of Galilee; and in this solitary retreat, he again instructed his disciples in the nature of his kingdom, and the design of his coming into the world; laying before them a view of his sufferings, death, and speedy resurrection. There, doubtless, was a necessity of inculcating these disagreeable and unpopular truths frequently on their minds; for, though they must remember how sharply Peter was reprov'd for opposing the declaration of these events, yet our Lord's predictions concerning this matter, were very slowly received; and the national prejudices which the disciples had so strongly imbibed, which represented the grandeur, glory, and perpetuity of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, would not permit them to believe it possible that he should die.

After having abode a short time in the desert part of Galilee, our Lord returned to Capernaum, the place of his general abode. Soon after his arrival at that city, the tax-gatherers applied to Peter, inquiring if his Master would pay the tribute: Peter promised them that his Master would satisfy their demand; but, on fur-

ther consideration, was afraid to mention the thing to him: perhaps he thought it derogatory to the dignity of so great a person to pay tribute to any potentate on earth. But, however cautious Peter might be of mentioning the affair, it was no secret to his Master, which our Lord soon apprised him of, by proposing the following question; *What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or strangers?* Peter saith unto him, *Of strangers.* Jesus saith unto him, *Then are the children free.* Peter, by this question, was fully satisfied, that our Lord knew his thoughts, and had fully penetrated the affair which was in agitation; he was also convinced, that, as the Son of God, and Heir of all things, he was under no obligation to pay tribute to the greatest monarch on earth: but our Lord, to avoid giving offence, condescended to submit to the claim; and proposed to Peter the following miraculous method of raising the money: *Go thou to the sea, said he, 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 it unto them for me and thee.*

Our Lord, by this miraculous manner of paying that tribute, which he was under no obligation to pay; teaches us, that in all common cases, we should avoid giving offence to the civil power; and rather submit to a demand, which may seem burdensome and oppressive in a small degree, than offend our brethren, or disturb the tranquility of the estate. And surely it becomes the children of the Prince of peace to avoid all occasions of contention and discord, and rather give up some small part of their property, than give the rulers of the state any reason to complain. It may further be observed, that this miracle is a manifest proof of the omnipresence of the Son of God: no less a person than he, who knows all things, and is present in all places, could know that the fish had the piece of money in it's mouth, while it was covered with the rolling surges of the sea; and that this same fish, still holding the piece of money, would come to Peter's hook. These are most surprising events, and with the rest of the miracles wrought by our great Redeemer, blaze out like a bright constellation, adorn his royal crown, and proclaim him the great King of the universe, the supreme Lord of heaven and earth.

CHAPTER XX.

CHRIST reproves his Disciples for their foolish contention about Superiority: He answereth the Petition of the Mother of Zebedee's Children, and checketh the Indignation of the other Disciples thereat: He teacheth how to treat an offending Brother, and how oft to forgive him, by the Parable of a King, who punished one of his Servants for refusing that Mercy to his Fellow, which he had experienced from his Lord in a large Degree: He then goeth to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles, where he teacheth in the Temple: The Rulers send Officers to apprehend him, who being struck with his Discourse, return without him, and are rebuked by the Pharisees, who chide Nicodemus for taking his Part. CHRIST afterwards letteth go, uncondemned, the Woman taken in Adultery.

THOUGH our blessed Saviour had lately given his disciples an affecting account of his sufferings and death; and though their minds seemed to be very much cast down and dispirited at the expectation of events, so mournful and distressing in themselves, and so contrary to their expectations; yet their grief seems to be of no long continuance, nor had they yet given up their favourite notion of the Messiah's temporal kingdom: for, not many days after, they had so far forgot the predictions of their Master, that they were engaged in a warm dispute concerning the polts of honour in that kingdom. On what grounds several of the disciples advanced their pretensions to be greatest, is not related by the evangelists; but it is very plain, that those claims did not originate from any intimations given them by their Master, of his design to advance any of them above the rest; for he very severely rebuked them for their pride and folly, and they were fearful of letting him know what subject they had been disputing about.

Our Lord did not directly proceed to reprimand his disciples on account of the above conversation, but first asked them, what they were disputing about by the way? They were confounded at the question, and, as they knew it would be in vain to attempt, either to evade a discovery, or to conceal the truth, they feared to return an answer. JESUS, perceiving their confusion, soon gave them to understand, that he well knew the subject of their debate, and that he highly disapproved it: having commanded their par-

ticular and earnest attention to what he was going to advance, he said, *If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last, and servant of all.* And then, to teach them the useful lesson of humility, he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: *Verily, I say unto you,* said he, *except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

As our Lord, at this time, thought proper to discountenance all pretensions to superiority amongst his disciples, it is evident, that he had given no supremacy to Peter, when he declared his approbation of his declaration of faith, as before related. Had he, when he told that disciple that he gave him *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, designed to exalt him above the rest of the disciples: or had they understood his words in that sense, they could not possibly have been at any loss to know who was to be the greatest; nor is it likely they would have contended about an affair which had, in the presence of them all, been finally settled by their Master: neither is it possible to suppose, that, if our great Redeemer had given the pre-eminence to Peter, he would have blamed his disciples for talking about it, and not on this occasion have confirmed his former grant.

The justice of this remark is further confirmed by the answer which our great Redeemer gave to the wife of Zebedee, when she presented a petition to him in behalf of her sons; she had strongly imbibed the national error of the Jews, re-

specting the Messiah's kingdom; and, as she supposed that her sons, from their near relation to our Lord, might claim a peculiar share in his favour, she presented her request, that one might sit on his right-hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom. To this petition, our Saviour replied, *To sit on my right-hand and on my left-hand, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.*

The rest of the disciples having heard the request, and remarked our Redeemer's reply, were much offended at the pride and vanity of the brothers, and could not see any reason, why they should expect so peculiar and distinguished a mark of favour. To put an end to all contention on so weak and frivolous an account, our Lord called his disciples in such a manner, as to engage and fix their attention, and aid unto them, *Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them: but so it shall not be amongst you; but whosoever will be great amongst you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all.*

Such is the language of our great Redeemer, who is sole King and Lawgiver in his church; and may we not justly conclude, that the pretences of the church of Rome to infallibility and supremacy, which she would have us believe have descended from the apostle Peter to the pope, as his successor, have no foundation in Scripture or reason, but are an unjust and arbitrary usurpation, designed to advance and enrich the priesthood, and impoverish, abuse, and enslave mankind.

The exalted Saviour of mankind, having thus gently rebuked his disciples for their eager and unabating desires after worldly grandeur, John, one of the sons of Zebedee, perhaps to give a turn to the conversation, informed his Master, that they had seen one casting out devils in his name, and had forbidden him, because he had not joined himself to their company. To which our Lord replied, that they ought not to have forbidden him, because no person would attempt to work miracles in his name, who did not entertain a very just conception of his divi-

nity. *Forbid him not, said he; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.*

By this language our Redeemer exhorted them to consider, that whosoever did not oppose him, may be considered as his friends; and the casting out devils in his name, would advance his reputation, and promote his interest, though the devils themselves, and the persons who rejected them, might design the contrary: he further informed them that the least degree of friendship and respect shewn to his cause, though it was no more than a cup of cold water given to his disciples, when they stood in need of such a favour, was acceptable to him, and would certainly find it's full reward hereafter. *Whosoever, said he, shall give you a cup of cold water in my name, because you belong to Christ; verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.* At the same time, our Lord gave them to understand, that the least discouragement to his servants in their duty, would be remarked, and punished with the greatest severity: *And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.*

From hence our great Redeemer took occasion to remark, that it was better and more advantageous to us, to deny ourselves the enjoyment of those things which are most pleasing to our sense, and which our corrupt affections might be as loth to part with, as with an hand, a foot, or an eye, than by any indulgence or sensual gratification, to give offence to the disciples of CHRIST, or prevent the success of his gospel: and, as the disciples of CHRIST were appointed to preach the glorious gospel to a wicked world, to shew all nations the stupidity and folly of their idolatry, to teach the uncorrupted worship of the true God, and the practice of every virtue, Jesus exhorted them to be particularly careful of their conduct and behaviour; for, if their lives were dishonourable to the cause of the gospel, they would be useless and despised, like salt which had lost it's savour. But amongst all the vices which prevail in the hearts of mankind, there is none more contrary to the nature and genius of the religion of JESUS, or

more likely to prevent the usefulness of the preachers of his gospel, than a spirit of pride; of this, therefore, our Lord particularly cautioned his disciples to beware; for, he assured them, that the meanest person is an object of the paternal care of the great Creator, and is supported and defended by his particular providence; such, therefore, are not to be despised; for our Lord declared, *that their angels do always behold the face of his heavenly Father.*

And to shew the particular notice and care which his Eternal Father takes of his people, and with what tender regard he always beholds the believers in his Son, our great Redeemer proceeded in this manner, *How think ye, said he, 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? And if it be, that he finds it, verily, I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

Our Lord having declared the heavy vengeance which would certainly fall on all who injured his disciples, and opposed the propagation of his gospel; and observed the tender care with which his Almighty Father beholds his people, and their certainty of protection and defence; he proceeds to warn them of taking their cause into their own hands, and pursuing, with hasty and unreasonable resentment, any who had offended them. *If thy brother, said he, 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. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican.*

Our Saviour then proceeds to inform them, that the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth will interest himself in their behalf, when they are justly offended, and the sentence which they pass on such of-

fenders will be ratified in heaven: *Verily, I say unto you, proceeded he, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* The meaning of this is, that if the method you take with an offending brother is blessed to the end you designed, and he is brought to a real repentance, he is loosed from the guilt of his sin, and stands acquitted at the bar of Supreme Justice: but, on the other hand, if all methods are used in vain, and the offender still continues impenitent, and persists in his evil ways, he is bound by the chains of his guilt, and cannot escape deserved punishment.

Our blessed Saviour then proceeded to lay down some considerations, which ought to encourage good men to use their utmost endeavours to convince finners of the error of their ways, and bring them to sincere repentance, and to offer up their earnest and persevering prayers to the God of all grace, for his divine assistance in so great a work, by which only it can be effected: for our Lord informs them, that his heavenly Father would always hear their prayers, and grant their petitions, if consistent with the designs of his providence, and the methods of his grace. *Again, I say unto you, said he, 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: for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

Peter had carefully attended to the doctrine of forgiveness of injuries, as inculcated by his Master; doubtless, he saw the beauty and dignity of such a rule of conduct, and desired it to be further explained: *Lord, said he, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?* It seems by this question, that, however great and noble he apprehended this rule of conduct to be, he thought it was necessary to observe some restrictions in the practice of it; but his Master informed him, that it must not be limited to seven times, but carried on to seventy times seven, if the case required it.

In order to shew the beauty and dignity of this excellent moral precept, and the necessity of forgiving the greatest injuries

in every case, where the offending person is sensible of his fault, and promises amendment; our Lord, by way of illustration, proposed the parable of two servants, debtors to one lord: *Therefore, said he, is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. 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. The servant, therefore, fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 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. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 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: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him unto the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

By this affecting narrative, our Lord beautifully displays the extent of divine forgiveness, and the obligations which the sons of men, to whom God hath forgiven so much, are under to forgive one another. God is the great king and sovereign of all creatures, to him all are accountable, as servants are to a master; he keeps a register of their actions, as a tradesman keeps an account of his debts, and a day will surely come, when they will be called to a reckoning. The servant who owed ten thousand talents, represents every man that lives in the world: the enormous debt which men owe to their Creator, is but faintly described by that prodigious sum; for the sins of thought, word, and deed,

which the most correct and regular of mankind commit, exceed all conception, and may justly be compared to the stars of heaven for multitude, or the sand on the sea shore. The plea of the insolvent debtor, *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*, is an elegant description of the expectations of men in general, to obtain the divine forgiveness, by their future good behaviour, and thinking to perform such good deeds as may make amends for their former guilt: but the lord, knowing how impossible it was for this servant to pay this enormous sum, had compassion on him, and freely forgave the debt. Hence, we learn the freeness of divine forgiveness; it is not on account of any thing which has been done, or can be done by the sons of men, that the great Jehovah is induced to pardon their iniquities; but his forgiveness flows freely from the rich fountain of his own infinite mercy, that mercy which he hath magnified, and fully manifested to the world in the gospel of his Son: and whoever is made partaker of the rich blessing of divine forgiveness, is laid under the highest obligations to forgive his fellow-creatures, and to extend that forgiveness, if required, beyond the limits prescribed by our Lord, even beyond the number of seventy times seven: but such is the corruption and depravity of the human heart, that we are too prone to forget, or carelessly overlook the mercies received, and consider not how unjustly the great Judge of heaven and earth might call us to a strict account for our numerous offences, while we are pursuing our fellow-creatures with implacable resentment; nor do we consider how much we are indebted to the Supreme Lord of universal nature, while, like the unmerciful servant, we take our fellow-creature by the throat, with, *Pay me what thou owest*. But whosoever duly considers the vast debt they owe to God, and are enabled to rely on his infinite mercy for forgiveness; if they have a just view of their unworthiness and insolvency, and are enabled to seek forgiveness in the way which God hath appointed, will, in a greater or less degree, be careful to cultivate a placable forgiving frame of mind; especially when they consider those remarkable words with which our Lord concludes this narrative: for having declared,

that the lord delivered the cruel servant to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him, he adds, *so likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not one another your trespasses.*

Having delivered these precepts, our great Redeemer departed into Galilee, passing through the country beyond Jordan; by that means giving the Jews which inhabited that country an opportunity to hear his heavenly discourses, and to receive the benefit of his all-healing power: and after having taken a tour through those distant parts, he returned to his own city Nazareth.

The feast of tabernacles now approached, when the males of the Jewish nation, capable of travelling, repaired to Jerusalem, and dwelt seven days in the tabernacles, or booths made of boughs of trees, in commemoration of their fathers having had no other habitation during their forty years sojourning in the wilderness. Some of the kinsmen of the blessed JESUS, being about to take a journey to the capital on this occasion, they desired him to accompany them thither, and openly shew himself to the whole nation of the Jews. They did not believe, that he was really the Messiah so long expected by their nation, and they condemned his conduct, as unnatural and absurd, from a person who made such pretensions: they could not conceive what induced him to spend so much of his time in deserts, and remote parts of the kingdom, while he assumed so public a character as that of the Redeemer of Israel. Jerusalem, the seat of power, the habitation of the great men of the nation, and the place of general resort, was, in their opinion the properest place for him to publish his doctrines, and work his miracles in: these, they thought, being exhibited in public, before the great and learned men of the nation, might have a better effect, than being performed in obscure retreats amongst the ignorant and illiterate. The decision of the doctors of the law, and the great men of the nation in his favour, they thought would increase the number of his disciples, and be a means of inducing the whole nation to own him for the Messiah, wether he were really that great person or not; *Depart hence,* said they, *and*

go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest: for there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

But our Lord was no stranger to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and, therefore he did not think proper to reside amongst them any longer than was absolutely necessary: he well knew their inveterate prejudices, their obstinacy and perverseness, and their prevailing unbelief; and was fully convinced, that they would not receive his doctrines, nor be induced, by his miracles, to believe in him, but would be more likely to use all their power to destroy him, before he had finished the work which he assumed our nature to perform: for which reasons he did not choose to accompany his relations to the feast, or go in a public manner to Jerusalem: *My time,* said our great Redeemer, *to these unbelieving relations, is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but - me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast: for my time is not yet full come.* This was as though he had said, it is not expedient that I should go to Jerusalem before the feast begins: you may advance to the city whenever you please, there is nothing to make you afraid; the Jews are your friends, you have never offended them, nor have you done any thing to displease them: but the purity of the doctrine I have preached amongst them, and the plainness and freedom of speech with which I have opposed their foolish traditions, and reprov'd their hypocrisy, and other enormous vices, have raised their resentment and provok'd their malice to the utmost height; and, therefore, as the time of my suffering is not yet come, it is not proper for me to go so soon to Jerusalem.

Perhaps there might be another reason why our Redeemer did not choose to accompany his relations to the feast of tabernacles at this time: the vast concourse of people which annually attended this solemnity, would fill all the roads to the capital, and these gathering around him, and attending him to Jerusalem, would have made a noise in the city, and have given fresh offence to his enemies, which might

have exasperated them to that degree, that they might, as they had done before, have attempted his life, and their cruelty and rage might have prevented his doctrine and miracles having their proper effect: he, therefore, chose to continue in Galilee till the crowd were gone up to the feast, when he followed, *as it were in secret*, neither preaching nor working miracles by the way; so that no crowd followed him, nor was there any rejoicing at his approach.

As JESUS did not go publicly to Jerusalem, so neither did he, on his arrival, repair to the temple, and there preach openly to the people. This gave rise to several disputes amongst the Jews concerning his character and conduct; some affirmed that he was a true prophet, and his not coming to the feast could only arise from some accident, which had prevented him; others maintained that he was an impostor and deceiver, and though he assumed the sacred character of the prophet, he did not keep the law, nor regard the institutions which they had received from heaven.

But about the middle of the feast, JESUS appeared openly in the temple, and publicly taught the people, delivering his divine discourses with energy, force, and spirit, and such strength of reasoning, joined with such elegance of expression, that his enemies were astonished, as they knew he had not enjoyed the benefit of a learned education. *Now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* To this the exalted Saviour of mankind replied: My doctrine was not produced by human wisdom; the learned men and sages of this world were not my instructors; but I received it from heaven, and it is the doctrine of the Great, Supreme, Eternal Father of the universe, whose Messenger I am: *My doctrine*, said he, *is not mine, but his that sent me.* And our Lord further observed, that it might be gathered from the manner of his teaching, that his doctrine was really divine; he sought not the praise of man, he did not stand candidate for popular applause, he did not seek to advance his own interest, but the eternal interest of mankind, and the glory of his

heavenly Father: *He, that speaketh of himself, said he, seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true. and no unrighteousness is in him.*

Some of the Jews presumed to call JESUS a false prophet, because, in the porches of the pool of Bethesda, he had healed an impotent man on the Sabbath-day, which, they pretend was a violation of the law of Moses, and what a good man would not be guilty of. In answer to which, our great Redeemer told them, that however they might pretend to reverence the authority of Moses and his law, they made no scruple to violate the most sacred and essential of his precepts; this was manifest in their conduct towards himself: contrary to all the principles of justice and humanity, and every law of God and man, they had resolved to put him to death; and, in order to execute their black, horrid, and infernal scheme, they were now laying plots against his life.

To this charge the Jews replied, *Thou hast a devil: Who goeth about to kill thee?* To which JESUS answered to this effect, I have performed a miracle, in favour of a distressed poor man, on the Sabbath-day: this you think contrary to the character of a good and pious man, and wonder how I could undertake it; but I can give you an example out of your own law, in the case of circumcision: Moses gave you that law, and you make no scruple of performing the institution on the Sabbath-day: you think yourselves justified in this, because it is a precept both of Moses and the fathers. Since therefore, ye think yourselves bound to dispense with the strict observance of the Sabbath, in order to perform a ceremonial precept, can you be angry with me because I, on the Sabbath-day, have fulfilled the most sacred and immutable part of the moral law, by curing a man who was infirm in all the members of his body, and have not exerted so much bodily labour as you do in the practice of the rite of circumcision: consider therefore, the nature of the thing, be not blinded by prejudice, be no longer attached to foolish traditions, or superstitious opinions; but make use of your reason, shew yourselves men, and judge impartially: *Moses*, said

our great Redeemer, *therefore gave unto you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers); and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

Though the Jews could not answer this argument, they would not be convinced, but objected to JESUS being the Messiah, because they were acquainted with his parents and relations: they apprehended, that when the Messiah appeared, his pedigree and relationship would not be known: and they founded their opinion on a passage in the prophet Isaiah, *Who shall declare his generation?* They were full of resentment and malice, and some of them were desirous that he should be apprehended; but Divine providence would not permit them to accomplish their cruel purpose, because the time of his sufferings was not yet come. But though his enemies beheld him with rancour and contempt, yet many of the people, convinced by his miracles, affected by his divine discourses, and satisfied with the unanswerable reasons which he had advanced in support of his character, believed on him, and publicly in the temple affirmed that he was the Messiah. The evangelist informs us, that *many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?* John vii. 31.

The Scribes and Pharisees beheld the attachment of the common people to the Saviour of sinners, with the highest indignation and contempt, and were so provoked, that they could bear it no longer; and, accordingly, on the last and great day of the feast, they met in council to consider on some means to prevent his growing popularity: the result of their deliberations, was a determination to apprehend him; and, accordingly, the proper officers were dispatched from the council to arrest him, and bring him before them. While these things were in agitation in the council, JESUS was teaching in the temple, and he exhorted the people to give a diligent and unabating attention to his discourses; not only because the subject matter of

them was of the utmost importance, but he informed them that their opportunity of hearing him would soon be over: *Yet a little while, said he, am I with you; and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and ye shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

Not understanding that our Saviour alluded to his death, resurrection, and ascension to the right-hand of God, whither no person in the body could follow him, the Jews were very much puzzled with this declaration, and could by no means understand the meaning of it: they could form no other conjecture concerning the meaning of these words, than that our Lord designed to leave Judea, and go amongst the Gentiles, to preach amongst their brethren who were dispersed in the neighbouring nations: but they were aware, that this conjecture did not answer to the latter part of our Lord's declaration: for though he should go amongst the Gentiles, it would not be impossible for them to follow him: they, therefore, in the utmost confusion, reasoned amongst themselves, and inquired, *Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed amongst the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.*

While our exalted Redeemer was teaching in the temple, according to the annual custom, the water of the pool of Siloam was brought in. Part of this was drank in the temple with loud acclamations, in commemoration of the great deliverance wrought for their fathers, who were miraculously relieved and preserved by a stream which flowed from a hard dry rock, and revived the nation which was fainting with thirst: the other part was poured out as a drink-offering, accompanied with their prayers to the Almighty, for the former and latter rain to fall in their season; which ceremony was concluded by the whole congregation, singing this passage out of the prophet Isaiah, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation,* chap. xii. 3.

It was the constant mode of instruction which our great Redeemer pursued, to accommodate his discourses to the particular occasion and circumstances of his hearers,

and to engage and fix their attention, by alluding to occurrences and objects actually in view; and, accordingly, he took this opportunity of representing the rich blessings which sinful creatures would receive from him, under the metaphor of water: and, in allusion to the ceremony which they had seen performed, *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

While our Lord was thus speaking to the people, with a beautiful simplicity, and heart affecting strength and energy, such as never were joined before, the officers sent from the council to apprehend him came into the temple: before they proceeded to the execution of their commission, they staid a few moments to hear his discourse; to this they were excited by their curiosity, but his divine eloquence overcame their resentment, removed their prejudices, and melted away their rage: the harmony of his pronunciation, the beautiful simplicity and plainness, and the amazing strength, energy, and clearness of his reasoning, displayed the beauties of divine truth, and caused them to shine on the understanding with resistless brightness; even his enemies, who were sent from the council to apprehend him, were astonished and overcome: the greatness of the subject affected their minds, and its importance filled their understandings: the warmth and tenderness with which he delivered his discourses, fixed their attention, and penetrated their hearts; they felt new and uncommon emotions, and overwhelmed with the greatness of their admiration, were fixed in silent astonishment; they were absolutely overcome, and could not think of executing the commission which brought them to the temple; they blamed themselves for having undertaken it, and returned to the rulers of Israel without performing it.

If we consider the remorseless disposition of the persons who are usually sent about such business, and the nature of the subject which employed our great Redeemer's eloquence, we shall have reason to join the officers in their admiration, and to acknowledge that our great Redeemer's elocution was superior to all praise: such surely that

discourse must be, which addressed to others, and on a divine subject, could disarm the resolution of the most determined enemy, and penetrate the recesses of the most unfeeling heart.

Nor were the officers the only persons who were affected with this divine discourse: for the surrounding multitude were sensible of very remarkable impressions, and expressed their wonder in various conjectures; many of them declared he must certainly be one of the old prophets, and others, that he could be no less than the Messiah himself; others, led away with the common mistake, that he was born at Nazareth, asked, with sneering disdain, if the Messiah was come out of Galilee, when the Scripture had absolutely declared, that he was to be born in Bethlehem, that native town of his father David. Thus we are informed, *Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth, this is the prophet: others said, This is the Christ: but some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?* This dispute was carried to such an height, that some of them, knowing that the officers were sent to apprehend our Redeemer, threatened to lay hands on him: but Divine Providence would not permit them to execute their cruel design; for though *some of them would have taken him, yet no man laid hands on him.*

The officers now returned to the council, and were asked, with warmth, Why they had not brought JESUS of Nazareth, whom they were sent to apprehend? They endeavoured to excuse themselves, by relating the manner in which they were overcome, and disarmed by his eloquence: *No man, said they, spake like this man.* But if they thought to soften the resentment of the council, by declaring what a wonderful man JESUS CHRIST was, and what an heart-affecting strain of divine eloquence flowed from his lips, they were very much mistaken: the prejudices of the rulers of Israel were too deep-rooted, and their rancour and malice too inveterate to be so easily overcome: their pride scorned to submit to the dictates of the unpopular and unlearned, and, with indignation and scorn, they re-

plied, *Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.* They thought it a piece of the most unparalled impudence, that the common people should presume to acknowledge JESUS to be the Messiah, when the great doctors of the law, the chief priests and Pharisees, and learned men of the nation, publicly opposed his preaching, defamed his character, and determined to destroy him.

But their pride and envy soon received a severe reprimand from Nicodemus, who had formerly attended on JESUS by night; and was convinced that he was the Messiah, though he did not openly confess him, for fear of the Jews. On this occasion he rebuked the pride and self-sufficiency of the enemies of JESUS, by inquiring, *Does our law condemn any man before he is heard?* They had just now condemned their officers for being ignorant of the law, when it appeared that themselves were more ignorant, by pretending to condemn a person before they had proved him guilty: they were acting directly contrary to the fundamental principles of the law of equity, at the same time, that they boasted their superior knowledge of, and closest attachment to, it's precepts.

This sharp reproof of Nicodemus, so highly exasperated the whole council, that, with an air of indignation and contempt, they asked him, if he also was one of those mean persons who had joined together to support the pretensions of a Galilean, though the Scriptures had plainly declared, that Bethlehem was the place of the Messiah's nativity: to which they added, that, if he refused to listen to them, he should search the Scriptures, and he would soon be convinced, that the great prophet, mentioned by Moses, was not to be born in Galilee: *Art thou also of Galilee? said they. Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

The council soon broke up after making this answer to Nicodemus, and our Lord, well knowing their malicious intentions, retired to the Mount of Olives, where he spent the night with his disciples; but early the next morning he returned to the temple and taught the people.

The Scribes and Pharisees pursued him with unabating resentment, and were determined either to render him odious to the people, or an offender in the eye of the Roman governor. Accordingly, they brought before him, a woman who had been taken in the act of adultery: desiring him to declare what punishment she ought to suffer: *This woman, said they to our great Redeemer, was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law, commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?* Had JESUS presumed to pardon the adulteress, and inflicted no punishment on her, they would, doubtless, have represented him as a person who contradicted the law, and favoured adultery, which would certainly have rendered him odious in the eyes of the people. On the other hand, had he ordered her to be stoned, it would have afforded an opportunity of accusing him to the Roman governor, as a person who stirred up the people to rebellion; the Romans having, at that time, taken the power of life and death out of the hands of the Jews. But JESUS well knew their wicked intentions, and therefore made them no answer, *but stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.* They, not satisfied, still continued pressing him to give an answer; when, at last, JESUS, in allusion to the law, which ordered that the hands of the witnesses, by whose testimony a criminal was convicted, should first be upon him, said, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* Our Lord well knew the hearts, and the secret crimes of these furious accusers, and he delivered these words in such a manner, as convinced every person present, that he was acquainted with their secret lewdness and debauchery. This sudden rebuke had such an effect on them, that they could not reply, but immediately departed, no doubt, fearing if they had staid, JESUS would have exposed their most secret transactions, and abominable crimes: they, therefore, *durst not proceed in their accusation, but, being convicted by their own consciences, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, who had been standing in the midst.* JESUS had

been, all the while the Jews were retiring, stooping down and writing on the ground, as though he did not perceive what they were about; but now rising up, and looking upon the woman, who stood alone, he asked her, if she had been condemned? To which she answered in the negative.

Our Lord saw her covered with shame, and knowing her repentance was sincere, he looked upon her with an eye of pity and forgiveness, and dismissed her with these gracious words, *Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.*

CHAPTER XXI.

CHRIST declareth himself to be the Light of the World, and justifieth his Doctrine against the Pharisees: He promiseth Freedom, through Knowledge of the Truth, to those Jews who believed on him: Confuteth their vain boast of being Abraham's Seed, and the Children of God: Answereth their reviling, by shewing his Authority and Dignity; and, by Miracle, rescueth himself from their Attempts to stone him: He restoreth to Sight, a Man that was born blind, who relateth to his Neighbours the means of his Cure; and he is brought to the Pharisees, who examine strictly into the Fact, and are offended with his Acknowledgment of the divine Mission of the Author; they excommunicate him: he is received of JESUS, and confesseth him. **CHRIST** taxeth the Pharisees with spiritual Blindness: He declareth himself to be the Door, and the good Shepherd: Divers Opinions concerning him. **CHRIST** reproveth the fiery Zeal of James and John against the Samaritans, who would not receive him; and proposeth terms to three Persons, who offer to follow him: He sendeth out the seventy Disciples, a second Time, to work Miracles and to preach: He pronounceth a Woe against Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum: The seventy return with Joy; **CHRIST** sheweth them wherein to rejoice: He thanketh his Father for having revealed his Gospel to the Simple only: He teacheth a Lawyer how to attain eternal Life; and, by the Parable of the good Samaritan, sheweth whom we are to consider as our Neighbour.

JESUS having, by an amazing display of his wisdom and penetration, defeated the malice, and mortified the pride of the Scribes and Pharisees, and they being sent away ashamed, under a full conviction that he knew the secrets of their hearts and lives; our Lord having, by his superior wisdom, made use of their own consciences to defeat their cruel and villanous designs, he turned to the people, and, with the utmost propriety declared, that he was *the light of the world*; that light which could penetrate through the darkness of the human heart, and discover and bring to light the dark designs and wicked devices of the sons of men; that light which could pierce through the outside shew of sanctity and holiness, and discover the secret abominations of the most proud and accomplished hypocrite; and that light which could discover the paths of darkness and error, and lead those who are enabled to

follow our Redeemer, in the road to eternal blessedness and rest. Hence, our blessed Saviour declared, *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* John viii. 12.

Some of the enemies of our Lord were amongst the people who heard this declaration, and they were so highly provoked, that they told him, he must be a deceiver, because he boasted of himself: *Thou bearest record of thyself, said they; thy record is not true.* To this, the great Saviour of sinners replied, that he did not call himself the light of the world, from a principle of pride and falsehood, but it was a title that justly belonged to him, which they would acknowledge, had they conceived true ideas of the Messiah's kingdom: but their carnal views had blinded their eyes, and corrupted and depraved their judgments, so that they did not know from what au-

thority he had received his commission, nor whether he should return when he had executed it: *Though I bear record of myself, said he, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go: but ye cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.* Nor, added he, is there any truth or justice in your remark, that I bear witness of myself, and have none to witness for me: for, let it be known, that my Father is with me; and joins me in whatsoever I say or do: *And yet if I judge, said he, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me, beareth witness of me.*

The Jews then inquired, Where is thy Father, the other witness to whom thou appealest? To which our Lord replied, that their conduct and foolish inquiries, sufficiently demonstrated, that they were strangers, both to him and to his Father: for, had they known who he was, they would certainly have been at no loss to know who it was that he called his Father: had they known that he was the Messiah, they must have understood that his Father was the Great JEHOVAH, that all-wise and all-powerful Being, who was the great Maker, the all-wise and all-potent Preserver, the supreme Governor, and King of the universe: *Ye neither know me nor my Father, said our great Redeemer; if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*

This discourse, the evangelist informs us, was held in the treasury, where the chests were placed for receiving the offerings of all who came up to worship in the temple, and must, therefore, have been a place of great resort, being frequented by all sorts of people: but, notwithstanding the public manner in which our Lord advanced his claim to the character of the Messiah, and the pride and rage of the Scribes and Pharisees, no man attempted to seize him; Divine Providence did not permit them to put their cruel designs into execution, because his hour, or the time of his sufferings and death, was not yet come.

After this discourse was ended, JESUS repeated what he had before told them,

declaring that he should shortly depart from them, and that then they should seek him, and not be able to find him: *I go my way, said he, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go, ye cannot come.* Perhaps, in these words, he might allude to the state of the Jewish nation after his death, and may be supposed to say, I soon shall depart from amongst you, and such miseries and calamities will overspread the land, that you will be glad of a prophet to direct your conduct, and to pray for you: the Roman armies will spread such devastation and horror over the face of your country, that you will then earnestly wish for the coming of the Messiah, in expectation of being delivered, by his power, from your cruel enemy: but ye shall then find your mistake, ye shall die in your sins, and be for ever excluded the realms of blessedness and rest.

But the Jews were very far from understanding what he meant by going from them, they were so foolish as to imagine, that he designed to put an end to his life with his own hands; for they thought the only retreat where they could not find him, must be the dark and silent chambers of the grave: *Will he kill himself, said they, because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.* To this, the blessed JESUS replied, your base insinuation betrays, at once, the wickedness of your hearts, and the corruption and depravity of your natures: ye are from the earth, and are partakers of all the corruption and depravity consequent on the fall of man; and from the evil passions which arise in your own wicked hearts, you form your conceptions of me; and, thinking me like yourselves, conclude, that I can be capable of committing so horrid a crime as self-murder: but you are mistaken in me; my extraction and my disposition are very different from yours: I am not of this world; I am no partaker of the evils consequent on sin; I have no propensity to corrupt and evil passions; my mind is not tainted with the corruption of human nature, the source of temptation, and the fountain of all evil; I came from above, and, if you believe in me, you will find a remedy for those evils which flow from the bitter fountain of the fall of man, and will be cleansed from

that pollution which flows from your earthly origin; but, if ye still continue in unbelief, *ye shall die in your sins.*

The Jews, in order to vindicate themselves, inquired what sort of a person he was. or who he pretended to be? To which our Lord replied, *Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning; meaning the light of the world, which he had stiled himself in the beginning of this discourse: adding, I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.* However plain this discourse may appear, it was not understood by the stupid Jews; they did not perceive, *that he spake to them of the Father.* But JESUS told them, that when they had crucified him, they would be convinced by the miracles attending that awful hour, his resurrection from the dead, the descent of the Holy Spirit on his disciples, and the destruction of the Jewish nation, both who he was, and who the Father was that sent him: *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, said he, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please him.*

As he spake these words, many of the Jews believed him to be the Messiah; perhaps, by his being lifted up, they did not understand his crucifixion, but his being exalted to the throne of David: but JESUS told them, if they persevered in the belief of his word, they should really become his disciples, and being fully instructed in every doctrine of the gospel, they should not only be freed from the slavery of sin, but also from the ceremonial part of the law of Moses: *If ye continue in my word, said he, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

The Jews, on hearing him declare, that they should be made free, hastily and warmly replied, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man.* This assertion, if taken in a literal sense, was absolutely false, the whole nation being, at that very time, in bondage to the Romans; nor were their ancestors any strangers to bondage and slavery, having

severely felt the tyrannical yoke of the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonish kings. It must therefore be supposed, that the expression was meant in a metaphorical sense and alluded to spiritual bondage: in this sense, it was a freedom in respect to religion which they asserted, and they meant, that they were the descendants of illustrious ancestors, who, in the worst of times, had preserved sentiments in religion and government worthy the posterity of Abraham; nor had the hottest persecution of the Assyrian kings, been able to compel them to embrace the religion of the Heathens; in respect to truth, they were never in bondage to any man, and they asked our Redeemer, *How sayest thou, ye shall be made free.*

In answer to this question, JESUS replied that they who gave themselves up to a vicious course of life, and to the gratification of their sensual appetites, were the worst of slaves, and it was highly necessary for them to consider whether that character did not belong to themselves: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, said he, whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.* And, as a slave cannot be assured of the continuance of his master's favour, nor of abiding in his house continually, so our great Redeemer observed, that his Father might justly, for their sins, deprive them of the external privileges which they had so grossly abused: as their sins had rendered them bond-slaves to Divine Justice, they might expect to fall under the severest marks of his displeasure, except they prevented the dreadful evils consequent on their wickedness, by believing on his Son, and receiving him, who alone was able to make them free indeed, and place them in the heavenly Jerusalem. Our Lord then proceeded to inform them, that though, in a natural sense, they were the seed of Abraham; yet, in a moral sense, they were the offspring of Satan, which was fully manifested by their unjust and cruel design to destroy their great Deliverer: *I know, said he, that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which you have seen with your father.* To this the Jews hastily and angrily, replied, *Abraham is our Father:* but our Redeemer informed them

that it appeared from their conduct, that they were of another original: *If, said he, ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.*

Our Lord having declared to the Jews, that it was manifest from their deeds, and their wicked inclinations, whose children they were; they, willing to justify themselves, replied with some warmth: *We be not born of fornication: we have one Father, even God.* By these expressions, the Jews did not mean a natural, but a spiritual lineage, and by their not being born of fornication, their being free from idolatry, which, in the language of the prophets, is represented as fornication and adultery: they were not idolaters themselves, nor born of idolatrous parents, and therefore, they stiled themselves the children of God. But JESUS gave them to understand, that if they were the children of God, they would manifest their relation by their love to his Son; *If God were your Father, said he, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me:* but ye, continued our great Redeemer, are of your father the Devil; ye appear in his likeness, and continue to gratify the evil inclinations, and diabolical passions which ye have learnt of him, and derived from him; falsehood, pride, and cruelty, are the passions which he constantly inspires, and these are abundantly manifested in your temper and conduct; he delights in murder and blood, and you are plotting against the life of the innocent; falsehood and lies are natural to him, and he never speaketh the truth but to put off some lie which he hath joined to it: *Ye are, said the exalted Saviour of sinners, of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

Our Lord then publicly challenged all his enemies, to prove him guilty of any falsehood: *Which of you, said he, convicteth me of sin?* Are any of you able to shew

that I have done any thing which renders me unworthy of belief? Can you prove that I have taught false doctrine? Have I reproved you unjustly for your actions? Have I charged you with crimes you were not guilty of? And can any of you prove me guilty of any sinful action, or prove any part of my conduct to be inconsistent with the character I have assumed? If none of you can do this, but must confess that my doctrine and life are such as might be expected from a messenger sent from God: *Why do ye not believe me?* But the reason is plain, you do not belong to God, ye have no interest in his favour, nor are partakers of his grace: *He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

This declaration exasperated and enraged the Jews to the highest pitch, and, with a mixture of disdain and contempt, they replied, *Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* His calling the descendants of Abraham the children of the Devil, they thought was a sufficient proof, that either he must be a profligate wretch, which they meant by calling him a Samaritan, or else must be instigated by some evil spirit. But JESUS replied, that he was not under the dominion of any evil spirit, but spoke the words of eternal truth; he was not in league with hell, nor in alliance with the prince of darkness: on the contrary, he honoured his Father, by speaking the words of truth, which he sent him to deliver: *I have not a devil, said he; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.* Our great Redeemer, by these words, gave them to understand, that he did not court their applause, or fear their reproaches: for there was one concerned, that was able to vindicate his honour, and severely punish all who should dare to attack him with unjust and malignant reproaches.

Our great Redeemer, having vindicated his character, proceeded to make a declaration, which very much surprised the Jews with whom he was conversing, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, said he, if a man keep my words, he shall never see death.* The Jews, thinking these words had reference to a natural death, cried out with an air of triumph. *Now we know that thou hast a*

devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead; whom makest thou thyself? John viii. 52. 53. To this our great Redeemer replied, that as they had lately objected to the testimony which he bare of himself, he should not rest the cause on that foundation, but refer it to his father, whom they acknowledged to be the supreme Lord of heaven and earth: but, though they pretended to worship the true God, they were totally ignorant of him; they neither formed just conceptions of him, nor worshipped him in the manner they ought; they were not the persons by whom he required to be worshipped, and whom he always accepted: on the contrary, JESUS declared, that he formed just ideas of God, and obeyed his precepts; if he was to say he did not know him, he would be a liar, like the Jews with whom he was conversing. And as to the patriarch Abraham, of whom they boasted so much, he earnestly desired to see the day of the Messiah, and had so much of it revealed to him, as filled his heart with gladness: *If I honour myself, said our great Redeemer, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, he is your God, yet ye have not known him, but I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. You father Abraham rejoiced, or desired, to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

The Jews understanding these words in a natural sense, concluded that he affirmed, that he was before Abraham, and knowing that he was under fifty years old, they considered this declaration as absolutely impossible and highly ridiculous. They had no conception of his divine nature, though he had so often told them he was the Son of God, and, of consequence, existed with the Father before the commencement of time. This gross stupidity and perverseness, induced our great Redeemer to assert his dignity in the plainest terms; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.* This declaration so enraged the Jews, that they rushed upon him with the utmost violence and fury; and, as no-

thing less than his immediate death would satisfy them, they took up stones to stone him: but JESUS, either rendering himself invisible, or filling the minds of his enemies with confusion and absence of thought, passed immediately and imperceptibly through the crowd, and departed out of the temple.

While JESUS remained in Jerusalem, he saw in one of the streets of the city, a man who had been blind from his birth: the sight of so distressed an object, soon excited the compassion of the kind and benevolent Saviour of sinners; the various affronts and indignities which he had so lately received from the Jews, could not prevent him from the exertion of his omnipotence in favour of such objects as these though they belonged to that cruel, malicious, and unbelieving nation: he was not to be provoked by their crimes, so far as to withhold his blessings from them. Accordingly, he beheld this poor blind man, not with a short and careless view, but with a steady and fixed attention; he cast on him the eyes of his divine compassion, and determined to afford him unexpected relief.

The disciples, remarking their Lord's attention to this distressed, helpless person, and doubtless, imagining that as he had engaged the pity of the only person who was able to help him, he would soon, by divine power and goodness, be restored to sight, asked their Master, what was the cause of his blindness: and they were the more solicitous to be satisfied in this matter, as the disorder had commenced before his birth: they had learned from the law, that sin was the cause of affliction and bodily distemper, and that the Lord visits the iniquities of the fathers upon their children; and therefore, they enquired of their Master, *who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* To this question, our Lord replied, that this disorder was not the immediate consequence of the man's own sin, nor that of his parents, but that he was born blind, *that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

By this reply, our blessed Saviour has taught us, that a curious inquiry into the cause of those afflictions and distresses of particular persons, which seem very extra-

ordinary, and are peculiarly affecting, and unaccountably deplorable, is impertinent and vain; and our censure of such persons as the greatest of sinners, and bringing down remarkable vengeance from heaven on their wickedness, is cruel and unjust; the designs of the great Governor of the universe are not open to our view; he is perfectly and immutably wise; we are full of blindness and folly; he knows how to answer the ends of his own government, and accomplish the design of his grace by the afflictions and distresses, which he sometimes permits to fall upon his own people, while the narrowness of our hearts, and our foolish pride and vanity, are prone to ascribe those afflictions to a man's own personal vices, which are for the glory of God, and intended to work out the superior good of the suffering person, or some way or other to promote the real advantage of mankind.

Our blessed Saviour having declared the cause of this man's blindness, namely, *that the works of God should be made manifest in him*, further declared, *I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work*: declaring to his disciples, and all the world, his unwearied labour, and ceaseless attention and care in the work of his Almighty Father; in this he laboured incessantly, both day and night, during the time of his sojourning in the flesh; to this only he directed his thoughts, with unwearied ardour, and unremitting diligence; this he esteemed even as his meat and drink, and suffered the neglect of his ordinary food, that he might finish the great work which he came into the world to accomplish, and bring about the salvation of lost perishing sinners: to accomplish this he left that glory which he had with his Father in the highest heavens, came down into a world of labour and sorrow, and went about doing good.

As it was now the Sabbath-day, and our Lord was about to perform an act of mercy and benevolence which required some little labour, it appears, that the above declaration had some references to this, and seems to intimate that as his time for such acts of mercy was now so very short, it was not proper to defer it till the day of rest was over.

But before our Saviour proceeded to the miracle of restoring sight to the man who was born blind, he took occasion to speak of himself, as a person appointed to illuminate the minds of men, which lay involved in darkness, more deplorable than that which so many years had beclouded the poor object before him: *As long as I am in the world*, said he, *I am the light of the world*.

Hence it may be observed, that the miracles wrought by our great Redeemer, were not only plain proofs of his mission, and full evidences of his being the Messiah, but had a reference to the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and were emblems of the various parts of his divine character and victorious deeds. Thus, his miraculously feeding the multitudes with common bread, was a plain indication, that he came into the world to feed the believers in his name with the bread of life, that all-nourishing food for the soul. His restoring sight to the blind, was a lively emblem of the tendency of his doctrine, and efficacy of his power, to dispel the darkness of the soul, and illuminate the blinded understanding of men. His healing their bodies, represented his power to heal the soul, and was an evidence of his authority to forgive sins, as all bodily disorders are the consequences of sin; and a removal of the punishment, strongly implied a power equal to the removal of the guilt. His casting out devils, was an earnest of his final victory over the prince of darkness, and his future triumph over all the powers of hell. His raising particular persons from the dead, was the beginning of his triumph over death, and a demonstration of his ability to accomplish a general resurrection. And finally, his curing all, promiscuously, who applied to him, shewed that he was the friend of sinners, and that none who came to him would be rejected, let their sins be ever so numerous, or their case ever so deplorable. Such are the spiritual truths which may be collected from the miracles of the Son of God; and accordingly, we find, that this exalted person himself, at, or soon after the performing his miracles, while the great events were fresh on the memory, often turned his discourse to the spiritual things they represented.

Our blessed Saviour having declared, that he was the light of the world, *he spit on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and wash'd, and came seeing.*

There is no doubt but our blessed Saviour could have performed this miracle without any external means; indeed the means he used on this occasion, were so far from being likely to effect the cure, that they seemed calculated to produce a contrary effect. We must therefore conclude, that these means were designed to direct our attention to higher mysteries, and to shew us that it can be no other power than that which first created man out of clay, that enlightens the dark mind of the dead sinner, and gives spiritual light to those eyes which are closed by the thick darkness of guilt.

Whether the blind man, whose case we are now considering, was acquainted with the name and character of our Redeemer, the evangelists have not informed us: but as his miracles had been published in Jerusalem so often, as well as in all the country round, it cannot be supposed, that this man, who resided at Jerusalem, could be totally ignorant of them; and it seems, by his ready obedience to the directions of the Son of God, though the means directed seemed to have no tendency to promote the cure, that he knew who it was that gave him those directions: and we find, that he was amply rewarded for the readiness of his obedience, by receiving the gift of sight.

So wonderful an event, could not fail of engaging the attention, and exciting the surprise of all that beheld it; and those who had often seen the blind man in his dark and deplorable condition, it may be expected, would be very particular in their inquiries into the means of so singular and surprising an event: it was, doubtless, the subject of general conversation: and one would have thought, it might have been the cause of general conversion: but the obstinacy and perverseness of the Jewish nation was not to be overcome; their unbelief and hardness of heart would not give way to the clearest evidence. Great

was the surprise of the neighbours and friends of the restored person: *They which before had seen him, that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, this is he; others said, it is like him: but he said, I am he.*

The poor man's heart was full of gratitude and joy, and therefore, perceiving his neighbours to doubt the identity of his person, he proclaimed himself to be the very same whom they had lately seen begging in total darkness; I am he, thus wonderfully blessed with sight by the mighty power of God, said he; I am the man who was blind from my birth, whom ye have all seen, and many of you have relieved in my deplorable distress; I am he who was even from my mother's womb, involved in pitchy darkness, but now with joy and wonder, which I cannot express, behold the beautiful beams of day.

On hearing so frank and full a declaration, they were anxious to know how this great event was produced; and they hastily inquired, *How were thine eyes opened?* To which the man replied, *A man, that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and wash'd, and I received sight.* They then asked him where the person was who had performed so wonderful, merciful, and beneficial a work? To which the man replied, *I know not:* for JESUS had retired while the man went to wash in the pool of Siloam; perhaps our Lord chose to retire, to avoid the applause of the people, which would naturally follow so stupendious a work and which, we frequently find in the gospels, he was particularly careful to shun.

The persons who were witnesses of this wonderful event, either out of envy against JESUS, or being desirous to search the affair to the bottom, brought the man who was the subject of this miracle, before the council, as proper judges of the matter: accordingly, as soon as he was placed before the assembly, the Pharisees began, in a brow-beating way, to question him how he recovered his sight? However awful and terrible such an assembly might be to a poor beggar, the man boldly mentioned the name of JESUS, and positively declared, *He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.* The Pharisees, having heard

this account of the miracle, maliciously declared, that the person who had performed it, was a deceiver: for, if he was a prophet, he would be an observer of the law, which he had openly violated, by working this work on the Sabbath-day. But some in the council, with a spirit of greater candour and moderation, gave it as their opinion, that no deceiver could work so great and beneficial a work; for no wicked man would have either inclination or power to perform it.

The court, being thus divided in their opinion with regard to the character of JESUS, they asked the man what he thought of the person who had restored him to sight? To which he boldly and plainly replied, *He is a prophet.* But the Jews, still hoped to invalidate the miracle, and therefore insinuated, that it was not true, that this man was really born blind: to come to the bottom of this matter, they sent for his parents, and asked them, whether he was their son, and if he really was born blind, and by what means he had received his sight? To which they answered, that he was most certainly their son, and was born blind; but by what means he had received his sight, or what person had conferred this great blessing upon him, they could not tell: but as their son was of age to answer for himself, they referred them to him: *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the Synagogue.*

In the conduct of the parents of this poor man, we may behold the great evil of the fear of man, and how powerfully this slavish principle acts on the mind; they well knew by what means their son had received his sight; and, like him, they should, with gratitude and joy, have confessed the divine hand which had wrought this wonderful work; and dared to have acknowledged this extraordinary person before all the world, whatever the consequences of such conduct might have been. Let us hence learn the wickedness of human nature, and never presume too much on our own strength, but implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit at all times, and not love the praise of men more than the favour of God.

The Pharisees, finding all their attempts to disprove or lessen this miracle did but tend to establish the matter of fact, and make it shine with greater lustre, proceeded to their old method of calumniating the divine author of it: *They called again the man that had been born blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.* To which the man answered, *Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.* This answer was not sufficient to satisfy the proud and envious opposers of the Son of God, but they sought to confound the poor man, who had thus plainly and boldly affirmed the truth, respecting a matter of fact, in which it was impossible he should be mistaken, with a multiplicity of questions, and would meanly lead a poor simple beggar into all the windings of sophistry; and with this view asked him, *What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?* These questions they had asked before, and received plain and positive answers to each: but they seem now to repeat them with design that the man, by repeating the manner in which he received the cure, might be sensible that JESUS had, by effecting this miracle, violated the Sabbath, and must, of consequence, be an impostor. Thus the enemies of our Redeemer would have persuaded the person who had received the invaluable blessing of sight, to join with them in the judgment they formed of the great person who had been his generous benefactor: but their obstinacy and perverseness appeared so plain to him, that he boldly answered, *I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?*

This answer was received by the council with indignation, scorn, and contempt; for they reviled him, and said, *thou art his disciple, but we are Moses's disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not whence he is.* The poor beggar was surprised, that so extraordinary a person, and one who possessed such wonderful powers, and exerted them for the good of mankind, should be unknown to the rulers of Israel, *Why herein is a marvellous thing,* said he, *that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened*

mine eyes : we know that God heareth not sinners ; but if a man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, it was not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

Such was the plain and powerful reasoning of this poor man ; his inference was just and natural, and founded on a plain matter of fact, and principles which could not be denied : they all knew, nor durst they deny, that *God heareth not sinners* : they all knew, that God had heard JESUS ; the miracle which he had just now wrought, and which could not be denied, plainly proved this ; for it was a miracle which never had been performed by any man since the beginning of the world ; it was far above the reach of the powers of nature, or the attainments of human art ; and, therefore, it's origin must be truly divine. It therefore undeniably followed, that JESUS was not a sinner, but sent from God, otherwise he could do nothing.

The Pharisees were not ignorant, that this argument was conclusive ; they felt it's whole force, and well knew that it could not be resisted : accordingly, they did not attempt to answer it, but had recourse to punishment, and abusive language : *Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us*, said they : thou impudent illiterate mortal, whose understanding is as dark as thy body lately was, dost thou presume to judge and determine, and dissent in opinion from the wise and learned ! Thou, who wast born under the heaviest punishment of sin, dost thou pretend to instruct the rulers of the people, who are eminent for their knowledge of the law ! Having thus vented their pride and envy in reviling the poor man, the evangelist adds, *they cast him out* ; that is, they passed on him the sentence of excommunication, which is the highest punishment it was in their power to inflict : but, though he was cut off from the Jewish synagogue and society, he was received into a society, whose privileges are greater, and from which he could never be excluded by any unjust sentence, by any body of men, however powerful : he was united to a society whose members are never cut off, but will unite in

happiness, love, joy, and glory, during a boundless eternity.

That this poor man was received amongst the number of the disciples of CHRIST, is manifest from the conversation which soon after passed between the restored person and our great Redeemer : *Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe in the Son of God.*

The man did not know how to answer this question, till he knew who was the great person which JESUS had mentioned to him ; and therefore, he inquired, *Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him ?* Our great Redeemer would not keep him in suspense, but immediately and explicitly replied, *Thou hast both seen him, and it is he who talketh with thee.* The poor man answered, with gratitude and joy, *Lord, I believe ; and he worshipped him.* Our Lord graciously accepted of his adoration, and glancing at the pride and perverseness of the Pharisees, he said, *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not, might see ; and that they which see, might be made blind.* Some of the Pharisees, which were with him, heard these words, and, perceiving the reference to themselves, they asked, *Are we blind also ?* To which our Lord replied, *If ye were blind ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth.*

Our Lord then, to shew the disparity between himself, and those proud, hypocritical teachers, assumed the character of a shepherd, and displayed his love, tenderness, and care for his chosen followers, by the similitude of the care and watchfulness of a good shepherd over his flock ; while such false pretenders, and hypocritical teachers as the Pharisees, might fitly be compared to a gang of thieves, whose only view is to disturb and destroy : *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy : I am come that the sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

And further to shew the absolute necessity of believing in him, and receiving his doctrine, our great Redeemer compared himself to a door : *Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All*

that ever came before me are thieves and robbers. He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Though these similitudes contained a very severe reproof, directed to the false teachers of Israel, they did not understand the meaning of them, and the people were much divided in their sentiments concerning him and his teaching; some said, *He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?* Others said, *These are not the words of one that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*

From the pride, envy, obstinate perverseness, and implacable resentment of the Pharisees, we should learn to contemplate the crafty insinuation and subtle endeavours of the enemies of the cross of CHRIST in these latter times: nor need we be surprised, if we find the same malicious insinuations in different shapes levelled against ourselves, if we are enabled to embrace the truths of the gospel, and to confess before all men the glory, honour, and dignity of him who hath opened our eyes, and brought us *out of darkness into his marvellous light*. It is contrary to the nature of the world, or worldly-minded men, to love our Lord JESUS CHRIST, or to esteem those who profess to know him, and bear witness concerning the world, that it's works ere evil. Let us not, therefore, be discouraged if we find the world to hate us, and load us with unjust reproaches for our attachment to the cause of our dear Redeemer; but, like the blind man, whose case we have been considering, let us openly and boldly profess the truth, and declare the power of that God, who hath illuminated our dark minds, and led us in the paths of everlasting light and happiness.

The feast of dedication now drew near, and our Lord prepared to go to Jerusalem, to be present at the solemnity. This feast was not appointed by Moses, but by that noble warrior, and heroic reformer, Judas Maccabeus, in commemoration of his having cleansed the temple, and restored it's worship. after both had been prophaned and polluted by that abominable tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes.

But though this feast was of human institution, our Lord chose to be present at it, although he knew that fresh attempts would be made against his life: his time on earth he knew was short, his public ministry was drawing to a period, and, therefore, he would not omit any opportunity of preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and doing good to the children of men; nor did he now, as he had formerly done, travel in private, but openly declared his intention of going to Jerusalem.

The road to the capital from Galilee, to which our Lord had retired after the miracle of restoring sight to the blind man, lay through Samaria. The inhabitants of this country, entertained the most inveterate hatred against all who worshiped in the temple at Jerusalem: JESUS was no stranger to this disposition of the Samaritans, and therefore he sent messengers before him, that they might find reception for him in one of the villages: but the Samaritans being informed, that the intention of his journey was to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, they suffered their old national prejudice to prevail so far, as to induce them to refuse him admittance.

The messengers who had been sent on this business returned, and gave an account of the inhospitable treatment they had received; which so exceedingly offended the disciples, that they prevailed on James and John to propose to their Master the calling down fire from heaven to destroy them, pleading the example of the prophet Elijah for such precipitate and violent proceedings: *Lord, wilt thou, said they, that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

But the blessed JESUS, whose meekness on all occasions was beyond example, rebuked them for entertaining so hasty and unbecoming a resentment: *Ye know not, said he, what manner of spirit ye are of; ye are ignorant of the sinfulness of the disposition which ye have now expressed, nor do ye consider the difference between the dispensation of the law and the gospel: the severity of the prophet Elijah was a just punishment to a wicked and cruel, as well as idolatrous king, and a people who had consented to his crimes, and had forsaken the worship of the God of their fathers; it*

was a punishment very proper for the times, and what the nature of the offence required; it was consistent with the character of the prophet, and not unsuitable to the Mosaic dispensation: but the gospel breathed a very different spirit; the design of our Redeemer's coming into the world not being to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Behold here, ye despisers of the gospel dispensation! Ye advocates for the purity and dignity of human nature, and despisers of the cross of CHRIST! Behold here an instance of patience under an unprovoked injury, which cannot be matched amongst all the boasted heroes of antiquity; an instance of patience which expressed infinite sweetness of disposition, worthy to be imitated by all the human race, especially by those who call themselves the disciples of CHRIST.

Entertainment and reception being denied by the inhospitable inhabitants of this Samaritan village, our great Redeemer, with his disciples, directed their way towards another; and as they were on the way, he was met by a stranger, and accosted with this language, *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.* The blessed JESUS, to whom the hearts of all mankind were open, well knowing that it was only the riches and honours of the Messiah's expected temporal kingdom, which excited this person to make the declaration; he thought proper at first to undeceive him; *Foxes have holes, said he, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head;* alluding to the conduct of the inhospitable Samaritans, and foretelling what they must expect to suffer, who espoused the cause and joined the train of our great Redeemer.

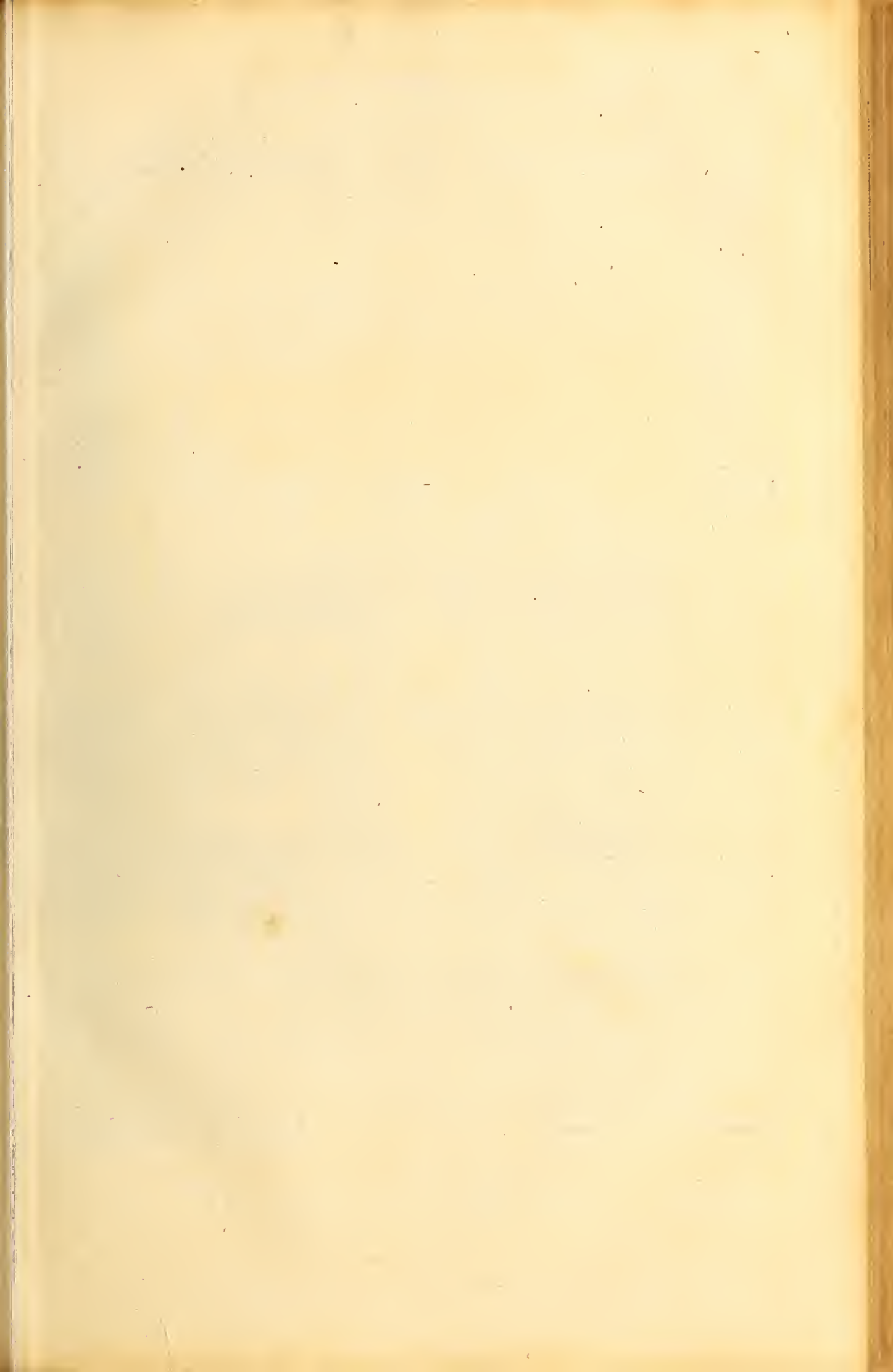
Soon after, our blessed Saviour met with one who had formerly been his disciple, and commanded him to disengage himself from worldly concerns, and join in his train; but this person excused himself, under pretence of filial piety, and a desire to attend on, and administer relief to, his aged parents: *Lord, said he, suffer me first to go and bury my Father:* but our great Redeemer replied, *Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.* Let those who are immersed in

worldly affairs, follow the concern of the world; but let those who have received the great truths of the gospel, and made a profession of our Redeemer's name, do every thing in their power to spread the glad tidings of salvation over the whole earth.

A third person proposed to follow our Lord, but desired liberty to return to his house, and take his leave of the family: but though our Lord would not by any means discourage prudent care in the domestic affairs of life, yet he gave this person to understand, that the salvation of the soul was the principal concern, and required our first and chief regard; and we should by no means let the concerns of time and sense have such an influence on our minds, as to make us lose sight of this great object. Great is the danger of coldness and declension in our spiritual affairs; for our Lord himself declared, in answer to this person's objection: *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

As our blessed Saviour's ministry was, from this time till it's final period, to be confined to Judea, and the countries beyond Jordan, it was necessary that some messengers should be sent to every town and village, to prepare his way; accordingly, he called his seventy disciples, and gave them proper instructions concerning their behaviour, and the doctrines they were to preach. Having laid before them the particular duties of their mission, he sent them into different parts of the country and ordered them to visit those particular cities, towns, or villages, where he intended himself to follow them, and preach the doctrines of the everlasting gospel to the inhabitants.

The reason which our great Redeemer assigned, for sending these seventy disciples on this important message, was the same which he had before advanced for the mission of the twelve: *The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few.* And being never more to preach in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, the cities wherein he usually resided, and where he had so often delivered his heavenly discourses, and displayed his miraculous power and divine benevolence, in many wonderful works; he was naturally led to reflect on the reception which himself and





Scoles. sc.

CHRIST *given Instructions to his Disciples.*

his doctrines had met with, from those wicked, impenitent cities. He was sensible of the terrible evils which would flow from rejecting the Son of God, and persisting in the obstinacy of unbelief, notwithstanding the mighty works which they had seen, and all the opportunities which they had for instruction and improvement; and, though he was grieved for their obstinacy and perverseness, he pronounced the following sentence against them: *Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! For, if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you. and thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.* To this our exalted Redeemer added, as a consideration which ought to administer comfort, and give encouragement to his disciples: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*

This kind and encouraging declaration was particularly calculated to comfort and support the disciples he was now sending out, under the contempt and ill-usage they would meet with in executing the duties of their mission: they could not be ignorant, that the preaching of CHRIST himself had often been unsuccessful, and that he had been opposed, reviled, and despised; and, therefore, they had no reason to conclude, that they should find a welcome reception, and be received, honoured, and esteemed: but it would, at the worst of times, afford them great consolation to reflect, that the Eternal God was on their side, and, however they might be despised and rejected by man, they were sure to be received, honoured, and esteemed by their Maker.

The seventy disciples, having received their commission and instructions, and being, by their Master, invested with the power of working miracles, they departed and preached according to the tenor of their commission, in the cities and villages of Judea and Perea; and, after visiting several places, publishing the glad-tidings of salvation, and working many miracles in confirmation of the truth, they returned

to their Master with great joy, saying, *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through thy name.*

From these expressions, it seems reasonable to conclude, that the disciples, when they set out on this journey, did not know that their power extended so far as to cast out devils, and they were, no doubt, pleasingly surprised, to find that the apostate spirits trembled at their Master's name, To this our great Redeemer replied, *I beheld Satan, as lightening fall from heaven:* as much as to say, You need not be astonished at the subjection and dismay of the apostate spirits, their prince is fallen, I saw him fall as swift as lightening from heaven; I have triumphed over him, I came down from heaven, and was manifest in the flesh, to destroy his works; and he knows I shall finally conquer him and all his legions, and put them down for ever.

Our Lord then, for the further encouragement of his disciples, informed them, that he would enlarge their power, and increase their authority, not only over evil spirits, but over whatever, in this world, had power to hurt or annoy them: *Behold,* said he, *I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and scorpions, and over all the powers of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.* At the same time, our Lord was pleased to inform them, that these miraculous powers were the least part of their privilege, and the consequences attending them, not so much to be rejoiced in, as their title to that eternal reward, which he would bestow on all his faithful followers: *Notwithstanding,* said he, *in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, that your names are written in the book of life.*

Nor could the blessed JESUS reflect on the wisdom and goodness of the divine dispensations, and the particular care and tenderness which the Supreme Governor of the universe manifests to the objects of his love, however mean and despised they may be in the eyes of the world, without feeling extraordinary joy; so that his benevolent heart overflowed with streams of gratitude and praise: *I thank thee,* said he, *O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight*

The disciples being returned from their tour, JESUS left Samaria, and journeying into Judea, he was met on the road by a certain lawyer, who, in the language of the New Testament, is a person whose employment is the expounding and explaining the law of Moses. This person was desirous to know whether the doctrine which JESUS advanced, were the same as the precepts of the law; and, with this view, he asked our Redeemer what he must do to inherit eternal life. Such was the pride of this teacher of Israel, that it seems by the sequel, that he asked this important question to tempt, and not to be instructed: but, though our Lord well knew the secrets of his heart, he did not answer him with such a rebuke as he deserved, but in such a manner as to turn his base design, and sophistical evasions against himself: *What, said he, is written in the law? How readeft thou?* The Scribe answered, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.*

This reply our Lord received with approbation, and said to the lawyer, *Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live:* if thou art able to fulfil these great precepts of the law, thou mayest claim an interest in the divine favour, on the footing of the eternal rules of righteousness; and as a right to that happiness which is assigned to the keepers of the law: for *on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

The lawyer now perceived himself taken in his own snare; his conscience could not acquit him of violating these great duties; he was at a loss and confounded, and knew not what to reply: but yet, being willing to say something to justify himself, he inquired, *And who is my neighbour?* A question very natural to be asked, by a bigoted Jew, whose narrow, selfish conceptions led him to despise all who were not the children of Abraham.

To correct the low littleness of such a private party spirit, to open and enlarge the heart to a more generous and noble way of thinking, to shew them the only foundation of true love, and the extensive

relation which they and all mankind stood in to each other, our Lord delivered the following most beautiful and instructive parable.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell amongst thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

By this well-chosen, and most elegant and affecting parable, our exalted Saviour beautifully inculcated an open and generous disposition and greatness of mind, which lays aside all selfish views, and diligently exerts itself in the great work of doing good to mankind, readily relieving all objects of distress, let their national quarrels, and religious disputes be what they will. No persons were more hated by the Samaritans than the Jews; for which reason, our Lord represents a Samaritan relieving and succouring a distressed Jew, when a priest and Levite, of his own nation and religion, had forsaken him. And this affecting parable our Lord laid down as an answer to the question proposed by the lawyer, *Who is my neighbour?* and then put it to his own feelings to determine the matter: *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, said he, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?* The case was so plain, that the lawyer could not but reply, *He that shewed mercy on him.* To which our Redeemer immediately returned, with a look which gave the lawyer to understand that he knew he was silenced, *Go and do thou likewise.*



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Edition of the Bible.



J. Seymour sculp.

MARTHA.

C H A P T E R XXII.

JESUS journeying to Jerusalem to be present at the feast of Dedication; lodges at Bethany, and is entertained by Mary and Martha; When he arrives at Jerusalem, he attendeth at the Feast, and disputes with the Jews in Solomon's Porch: The Feast being over, he retires beyond Jordan, and teacheth his Disciples to pray: He casteth out a Devil: He dines and disputes with the Pharisees, whom he reprehendeth for their outward Shew of Holiness, and pronounceth woes against them and the Scribes and Lawyers. CHRIST teacheth his Disciples to avoid Hypocrisy, and not be fearful in publishing his Doctrine: He refuseth to be Judge in a civil Cause, and warneth the People to beware of Covetousness, by the Parable of the rich Man, who boasted himself in his multiplied Stores: He exhorted his Disciples to lay up Treasure in Heaven by giving Alms; and to be always ready against their Lord's Coming.

AFTER our blessed Lord had effectually silenced the cavilling lawyer, he continued his journey towards Jerusalem, to be present at the feast of dedication. In the evening he retired to Bethany, a small village about two miles from Jerusalem. In this village dwelt Martha and Mary, two pious sisters, who dwelt together in the same house with their brother Lazarus. In this little family, our great Redeemer took up his abode, and was joyfully received by the religious young man and his virtuous sisters. Whether any former acquaintance had subsisted between this family and our great Redeemer, the evangelists have not informed us: but it seems they were not unacquainted with his character, for he was kindly received and generously entertained. JESUS, as his custom was, wherever he went, took the opportunity of dispensing his divine instructions, and teaching his hospitable friends those things which concerned their everlasting peace. Martha was desirous of expressing her regard to her noble guest, by providing a grand entertainment: but Mary, being of a contemplative disposition, was taken with his divine discourses, and, sitting at the feet of our great Redeemer, she listened to his words with the most earnest and steady attention: Martha, being greatly fatigued with the burthen of the service, was offended at her sister, because she did not help her, and complained to our Lord of her omission: *Lord, said she, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.*

But JESUS, by his answer to this discontented sister, gave her to understand, that it was more pleasing to him when persons attended on his instructions, and listened to his words, than all their endeavours to provide sumptuous entertainments for himself and his disciples: he was not insensible of any regard which persons had for him, nor unthankful for their kindness, in what way soever it was expressed; but as the good of mankind was his constant endeavour and care, he always approved those expressions of kindness best, which were most conducive to that end: nor could he esteem himself being fed with the food which perisheth, of equal consequence with his bestowing on others, that which endureth to everlasting life: *Martha, Martha, said he, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her.*

From this little village JESUS departed to Jerusalem, and attended at the feast of dedication. Being in the temple, and standing in Solomon's porch, he was accosted by the Jews, who desired him to tell them plainly, whether he were the Messiah or not? Well knowing, that they did not ask this question for information, but to gain an opportunity of accusing him to the Romans as a seditious person, who pretended to be the great son of David, promised by the prophets, and, by this means, designing to stir up the people to rebellion, and seize on the kingdom; our great Redeemer told them, that they must

form a judgment of him from his actions: *I told you, said he, and ye believed not: the works I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.* It is in vain to dispute, or lay down reasons and arguments to persons of your temper and spirit; you are under the dominion of your headstrong passions and wicked hearts, and your inveterate prejudices will not be overcome; you are not of the number of those whom my Father, by his powerful grace, will bring unto me, and cause to believe in my name; these happy persons are assisted by power from on high, they carefully and candidly examine the proofs I have given of my mission, and they believe in me, and receive me, with all their hearts: nor will these my followers and friends lose their rewards; for I will willingly receive them, and make them partakers of eternal life and glory: these persons I will support and defend; I look upon them as my own, and however industrious or assiduous the wicked of this world, or the powers of darkness may be to deceive and destroy them, they shall never effect their purpose; for I stand determined to bring them safe to my heavenly kingdom, and all their enemies may rage in vain: my Father hath given them to me: all power, both in heaven and earth, is in his hand, and his omnipotence is engaged in their defence: none is able to contend with him, to prevent the accomplishment of his will, or to hurt the persons whom he defends: none is able to contend with me, or wrest my people from me; for I and the Great Eternal Father of the universe are one: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. A stranger they will not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers. And I give unto them eternal life; they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.*

These words highly provoked the Jews, they considered them as blasphemous, and were so enraged, that they took up stones to stone the exalted Saviour of sinners; they thought they acted in conformity to the law, which commands, that all blas-

phemers shall be stoned; but JESUS asked them, which of the benevolent miracles he had wrought amongst them, deserved such treatment; *Many good works, said he, have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me.* As if he had said, I have fed the hungry in the desert, I have restored strength to the lame, I have cleansed the lepers, I have healed the sick, I have cast out devils, I have raised the dead; for which of these works are ye going to stone me? Do such miracles as these admit of the supposition, that the author of them is an impostor? Can you be so stupid as to imagine, that the All-powerful and All-wise Governor of the world, would permit any person to perform such works, with no other intention than to deceive mankind, and to propagate falsehood and error? The Jews replied, we do not suppose, that thou deservest punishment for any good work which thou hast performed; the punishment which we are preparing, is designed to chastise thee for thy blasphemous speeches; for thou, though a weak mortal like ourselves, arrogantly assumest the power and majesty of the Most High, and, by claiming the incommunicable attributes of Deity, makest thyself God: *For a good work, said they, we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* JESUS replied, Has not the Scripture expressly called those *gods*, and the *sons of God*, who were commissioned to govern God's people, and who by the communication of his Holy Spirit, were qualified for the important office with which they were invested; can you, therefore, impute to that person whom the Almighty hath sanctified, and sent into the world, on the most important business that ever any person was sent into the world to execute, no less than the salvation of lost sinners; can you, I say, impute blasphemy to this person, for taking on himself the title of the Son of God? If my own declaration be not sufficient to induce you to believe, consider the works which I have performed, and let them speak for me: is it not abundantly evident, that they must be the works of the Most High, as only Omnipotence could perform them? Is it not then fully manifest, that I and the Eternal God are so united, that what-

ever I say or do is approved by him? *Is it not written in your law, said our great Redeemer, I said, Ye are gods. If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

This argument, however plain and conclusive, was far from satisfying the Jews; their wicked hearts were hardened against the truth, and their deep-rooted prejudices were not to be overcome: so that what might have convinced an honest, impartial inquirer after truth, had no tendency but to enrage them the more; and our Lord well knowing that it would be to no purpose to reason with so obstinate and envious a race, he, either by rendering himself invisible, or casting confusion on their minds, departed imperceptibly from amongst them, and so escaped their evil designs.

The feast of dedication being over, our Redeemer departed from Jerusalem, and retired into the country beyond Jordan, where he was received in a far different manner than he had been at Jerusalem. The people in these parts had attended on the preaching of John the Baptist, and, no doubt, remembered the character he gave of the Messiah, who was shortly to appear; and finding the predictions of the Baptist fully answered, and fulfilled in JESUS, great numbers were excited to believe.

How long our exalted Saviour, with his train, continued in this country, cannot be clearly determined; but we have no account of his leaving these parts till he was sent for to Bethany, to raise Lazarus from the dead: perhaps, the inhabitants of this country enjoyed the unspeakable blessing of the presence of the Son of God for a considerable time; and we are informed by the evangelists, that while he continued in this country, he prayed with such fervency, that one of his disciples, who was exceedingly affected both with the matter and manner of his address, begged he would teach them to pray. It is probable this

disciple was not with JESUS in the beginning of his ministry, when he gave his directions to his disciples concerning their devotions: our Lord, however, gave them the same form of words as he had done before, and gave them some directions respecting their conduct, and exhorted them to constancy and fervency in their prayers: *And I say unto you, said he, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

And, for their encouragement in the great duty of prayer, he referred to their own feelings with respect to their children, and called upon them to judge by these, of the readiness of their heavenly Father, to hear and grant their petitions: *If, said he, a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy spirit to them that ask him?*

After these things, our great Redeemer was applied to by the friends of one who was possessed with a devil; he graciously condescended to grant the request, and cast out the evil spirit, restoring the disordered person to perfect tranquillity of mind: but some of the envious and unbelieving Jews were present, and, as the Pharisees had formerly done, ascribed this stupendous work to the power of the devil. The evangelist informs us, that *he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb; and it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.*

However weak and frivolous this argument may seem, and however inconsistent and absurd it may appear to impartial judges, it had considerable influence and effect on the ignorant and illiterate, especially on such whose prejudices and interests it favoured. The Pharisees were exasperated at our great Redeemer's conduct, in exposing and condemning their foolish traditions, and indulged a fixed and habitual hatred against him: these traditions were

considered, by the learned men and teachers of the age, as the very essentials of religion; and by his opposing these, and exposing them to ridicule and contempt, they concluded, that he must be a very wicked person.

They had inspired the common people with the highest veneration and reverence for these external ceremonious performances, and, therefore, it is no wonder that they were ready to join them in their resentment, and oppose and persecute a person who had spoken lightly of things which they esteemed so sacred: the great men and leaders of the Jews, had also a notion, that a false prophet had the power of working signs and wonders, and received this power from, and exerting it by, the assistance of wicked spirits; and, therefore, they were very ready to believe that our Saviour was in league with hell, and performed his miracles by the assistance of the prince of darkness, with design to seduce the people with lying wonders, and turn them from the worship of the true God.

And what induced them the more readily to embrace this opinion, was the testimony of the devils themselves, who, when they were cast out, very frequently and without hesitation confessed that JESUS was the Son of God; which the Pharisees supposed they would not have done, except it was to carry on the deception: the blinded rulers of Israel, not perceiving that the devils were forced to confess the Messiah, and to submit to superior power. How absurd and ridiculous soever this argument appears to the judicious and impartial, yet as it coincided with the prejudice of the Jews, it had great influence on their minds, and tended to fix them in final unbelief: and however we may be surprised that such weak reasons should have any effect, considering what multitudes were witnesses to the many miracles which the blessed JESUS performed, and considering the nature of those miracles was such, as it is not easy to suppose the Devil would have any hand in performing; yet experience hath abundantly convinced us, that such kind of arguments, joined with their own prejudices and superstitious opinions, had a great influence in fixing that obstinate people in their infidelity.

But though some amongst the multitude of spectators were content to ascribe this miracle to the power of the Devil, others were not willing so hastily and inconsiderately to form so base a conclusion, but desired to suspend their opinion till other proofs might be produced, or our Redeemer might have an opportunity to establish his character by a different kind of evidence; and, therefore, they desired him to prove himself the Messiah, by giving them a sign from heaven. But Jesus knowing their thoughts, and being privy to the rancour and wickedness of their hearts, refused to grant their request; but told them that they were a wicked race of mortals, and discovered a very obstinate and perverse disposition, by seeking a sign from heaven, after such a number of miracles had been performed, as were sufficient to convince any impartial and unprejudiced mind. He therefore informed them that no sign should be given them, but that of the prophet Jonas, *This*, said he, *is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.*

When JESUS had ended his discourse, one of the Pharisees present invited him to dine with him; our Lord accepted the invitation, though probably it was not love and good-will which excited the Pharisee to make it; he accompanied the inviter to his house, and sat down at the table without performing the ceremony of washing, so carefully observed by the other guests; an omission of this kind could not fail of surprising the Pharisee, as JESUS thereby shewed an open contempt of their traditions. Our Lord, who well knew the thoughts of this bigotted self-conceited Pharisee, said unto him, you Pharisees are remarkably careful to keep every thing clean which touches your food, lest, by eating it, your bodies should be polluted; but you take no care to cleanse your minds from the pollution of wickedness. You cannot be ignorant that he who created the body, also formed and inspired the soul; and can you imagine that the Almighty, who approves of purity of body, because it is the work of his hands, and because it conduces to the health thereof, will not also insist on a greater purity of the soul, which is doubtless the far noblest part pos-

seffed by man. Instead therefore, of that scrupulous care and exactness in washing your hands when you sit down to meat, ye should be careful to cleanse your hearts from all pollution, and fervently pray to the God of Israel to purify your minds; this will render it impossible for any external thing to defile you, and will at all times be looked upon with complacency and delight by the God of purity. *Now, said he, do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup or platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness, Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.*

Such was the language of the Son of God, but the proud self-conceited Pharisees would not hear; however clear and convincing, however mild and persuasive, the reasonings of our Redeemer were, the inveterate prejudices and rooted unbelief of these men prevented these excellent discourses from having their proper effect. Our blessed Saviour therefore treated them with more severity, and denounced against them the most heavy woes for their hypocrisy, which was manifest in their scrupulous exactness in the performance of the minutest part of the ceremonial observances contained in their traditions, while they were most scandalously careless and negligent in the weightier matters of the law: *Wo unto you, Pharisees! said he, for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto you Pharisees, for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greeting in the markets. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.*

Though this discourse was principally designed to affect the Scribes and Pharisees, a certain lawyer, who sat at the table, thinking that this rebuke affected persons of his profession, was very much offended; but our great Redeemer, who regarded not the persons nor professions of men, plainly told him what was his real character: *Wo unto you also, ye lawyers!* said he, *for ye lade*

men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

The blessed Jesus also blamed the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees for building the sepulchres of the prophets, whom their fathers had murdered; because they did not erect these edifices so much out of respect to the memory of the deceased worthies, as to exhibit the utmost ostentation of piety, and make themselves admired for their noble sentiments; while, by their constant line of conduct, they gave reason to conclude, that they secretly entertained the same hatred to reproof, and unconquerable obstinacy and perverseness, which excited their fathers to the most unreasonable and cruel of their actions: *Wo unto you!* said he, *for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build them sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. As our Redeemer well knew that this hardened and unbelieving generation, would spill the blood of the Son of God, and of consequence be guilty of the blackest, and most impious and horrid martyrdom which could be committed; he might justly represent them, as the most black, horrid, and hateful race of murderers, as guilty in themselves, as much to be abhorred, and equally deserving peculiar and distinguished vengeance, as if they had shed all the innocent blood which ever had been spilt in the world.*

Our great Redeemer, after pronouncing these woes, turned his discourse against the lawyers, and condemned them for filling the minds of the people with wrong notions, arising from forced interpretations of the Scriptures; by which means the minds of the people were prejudiced against the gospel, and prevented from receiving the truth: *Wo unto you, lawyers!* said he,

for ye have taken away the key of knowledge : ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

However just and reasonable these discourses were, the severity of the rebukes contained in them was highly provoking to those Scribes and Pharisees ; they were conscious of being guilty of the crimes laid to their charge, but their pride could not bear the thoughts of being sunk in the opinion of the people who heard these remarks ; their minds were agitated with conflicting passions, but pride and envy urged them to the most base and despicable actions ; their rising resentment studied revenge, and they were so mean as to urge our exalted Redeemer to discourse on various subjects, with no other view than to ensnare him, and by that means render him obnoxious, either to the Roman government, or to the common people amongst the Jews. The evangelist informs us, that, *as he said these things unto them, the Scribes and Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, laying in wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.*

Our great Redeemer baffled all their attempts, and leaving the house of the Pharisee, he went amongst the multitude which was waiting at the door ; so great were the numbers, and so hard did they press to get near the exalted person of our Saviour, that they trod one upon another. The first discourse he held with the multitude, after he had left the Pharisee's house, was to warn them against the pernicious poison of the Pharisee's example, who appeared in disguise, and pretended to be the most strict in the observance of the law, the most simple in their manners, and pure and spotless in their conversation, when, at the same time, they were privately guilty of the most gross and scandalous vices : our Lord, therefore, exhorted the multitude to be very careful not to do any thing which would not bear the light, but let the whole of their behaviour be honest, open, and upright ; for the time would come, when all secrets will be revealed, and all the works of darkness brought to light : *Beware ye,* said he, *of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed ; neither*

hid, that shall not be known. Therefore, whatever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light, and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house tops.

Our Redeemer proceeded to observe, that an open, honest course of conduct, above hypocrisy, and disdaining all disguise, would enable them to put their trust in their Maker ; while the contrary conduct tended to fill the mind with that fear of man, which is so prejudicial to the welfare of the soul : he therefore exhorted them, not to fear the malice or power of any of the sons of men ; these can extend no further than the death of the body, but cannot touch the immortal soul, which may bid defiance to the impotent rage of the gloomy tyrant, and never tremble at the fury of the oppressor : such weak and feeble creatures as man are not to be feared, but the wrath of the Eternal God ought rather to be dreaded ; he is able, after he hath destroyed the body, to confine the soul in eternal torments. How happy are the persons who are under his holy protection : all things are in his power, nothing can escape his notice, nor any thing happen without his permission : *And I say unto you, my friends,* said our great Redeemer, *be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God ? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore ; ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

The blessed JESUS thought fit to add, that the fear of man would be a snare to great numbers, and prevent them from confessing the truth ; but whoever were overcome by this prevailing principle, and were ashamed to acknowledge our Saviour, would be finally rejected at the awful day, when he would sit in judgment, and own and reward all his faithful followers : and whoever were induced to speak evil of the Spirit of God, the grand agent in carrying on the Messiah's kingdom in the hearts of men, our Redeemer informed them, should be punished with peculiar and distinguished

vengeance, by a justly-provoked, sin-avenging God: *Also I say unto you, said he, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.*

Having shewn the necessity of boldly confessing him before men, he proceeded to encourage his disciples with the promise of immediate assistance, when they were brought before princes and the great men of the earth; which divine assistance would deliver them from all embarrassment, respecting what they should answer, when they were examined concerning their faith: *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how, or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour, what ye ought to say.*

While the blessed JESUS was delivering these exhortations to his disciples, a person amongst the surrounding multitude begged that he would interpose his authority with his brother, in order to oblige him to divide the paternal inheritance with him; but, as this decision properly belonged to the magistrate, our blessed Saviour, who did not come into the world to settle worldly affairs, but to attend to those things which concerned the immortal soul, declined the task, with this reply, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* He took occasion, however, from hence, in the most solemn manner, to caution his hearers against covetousness; for he observed that neither the length nor the happiness of life, depended on the largeness of possessions: *Take heed, said he, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

And to enforce this important exhortation, he placed before them, in the strongest and most alarming point of light, an example of the bewitching influence of wealth, in the parable of the rich glutton, who was suddenly cut off in the midst of his projects, and became a dreadful example of the folly of amassing the riches of this world, and depending on the goods of this life, without any regard to the

government of God, or the interests of the immortal soul. This wretched man, forgetting his mortality, made preparations for a long and luxurious life, pleasing himself with the thoughts of a long succession of sensual enjoyments: but, alas! whilst he was providing repositories for his vast riches, he was arrested by the king of terrors, and hurried, without time for consideration, into the eternal world. The parable which our great Redeemer put forth on this occasion, is contained in these words: *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*

What an awful summons was this! How unexpected, how alarming, how dreadful! The man lying on his bed, full of anxiety, care, and solicitude, not to acquire wealth, but how to make room to lodge it, and how to enjoy it: doubtless he thought, that riches gave him a title to every gratification and enjoyment which the world can afford, or the sense and appetite of man partake of; his restless thought ranges through the wide fields of dissipation and pleasure, and such numerous scenes of imaginary delight press on his ravished senses, he knows not where to fix. In the midst of this pleasing perplexity, a strange messenger strikes at his breast. Who is it that thus alarms him? It is the great king of terrors, he comes commissioned to destroy; the case admits of no refusal or delay. Is there no refuge! is there no deliverer! Call the Physicians: they instantly attended, but with looks solemn and sad. What! is there no hope? So often as you have partook of my bounty, and such obligations as you are under to me. They all, with grief, declared the case beyond their art.—Then say, how long I have to live.—The compass of the night concludes your earthly race.—How short the warning, and with

what hasty steps the dread destroyer advances to stop my breath! But is there no way to appease him, and engage him to hold his hand? Will he not be persuaded? He makes no agreement or league with any. Will not pity excite him, or petitions move him? He knows no pity, and he hears no prayers. Will not my riches bribe him? Riches are unavailable in the hour of death; nor will mountains of gold delay the awful stroke one moment. But how many wretched creatures are there, who would be glad of his friendly aid to destroy a loathed existence? Why then should he attack one who had such vast prospects of pleasure and delight before him and gloried in the expectation of many happy years to come? He acts according to his commission from above, and the awful stroke no mortal can escape or evade a moment. Then all is over! let me think who shall be my heir. But reason failed; and, before that important point could be settled, the poor deluded mortal expired. And now, instead of a long succession of sensual delights, an awful eternity presents itself to view, and the poor soul is terrified and plunged into the depths of despair and horror, at the prospect of judgment to come. A dark night of horror in an instant overwhelms that soul, which had promised itself so much ease and pleasure; and, instead of eating, drinking, and making merry; instead of gay scenes of dissipation, and a variety of sensual delights; eternal tortures, unspeakable thirst, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, must be the portion of this miserable being to all eternity.

So is he, added our great Redeemer, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Thus shall he be taken away from all that his soul desireth; thus shall he be torn from all his temporal prospects and pleasures; none of his beloved enjoyments shall follow him; naked as he came shall he depart out of the world; nor could all his riches, could he take them with him, be able to procure him the least comfort or respite in this world of horrors. How should this reflection awaken us from our pleasing dreams of comfort and happiness, in this world of misery, this vale of tears: how should it convince us of the uncertainty of all sublunary good, and the

utter impossibility of the things of this world to satisfy the soul, or make us truly happy: how should it alarm us, when, planning fancied schemes of worldly pleasure or advantage, without the least consideration of the great Disposer of all events, how should it reconcile us to the disposal of Infinite Wisdom, when our portion of temporal things is small and scanty; and we are surrounded with difficulties and troubles: without the assistance of the great King of the universe, all our promises of security are vain and foolish; he can render all our labours abortive; and the richest and most opulent person, when they think themselves secure, and are planning schemes of pleasure and gratification, may, in a moment, be stripped of all their possessions, and torn from all their comforts; when the soul, naked and defenceless, and clothed in all its guilt, will enter into an awful eternity, and be brought, trembling and astonished, to the throne of its offended Maker.

Our blessed Saviour, having delivered this awakening parable, proceeded to apply it to his disciples; and from hence took occasion to warn them of an oversolicitous care, concern, and desire after the things of this world. He rather advised them to trust in God, whose fatherly care extends itself over all his creatures: the fowls of heaven are fed by his bounty, and the lilies are clothed in brighter hues, and more glorious raiment than the greatest monarch. If, therefore, argued the blessed JESUS, the great Governor of all things so carefully provides for the inferior part of his creation; if he feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies; surely the children of men have the highest reason to depend on his all-preserving, and all-supporting goodness; especially those who have the well-grounded hopes, that the great Eternal Maker and Supporter of all things, has appointed them to happiness in a future state, have little reason to doubt that he will not provide them all that is necessary for their comfort and support in this: *Fear not, said he, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* At the same time, he gave his disciples another precept, particularly calculated for those times, in which the profession of the gospel exposed men to the loss of their substance:

Sell that ye have, said he, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: for where your treasure is there will your hearts be also.

Having thus exhorted them to the disengagement of their affections from the things of this world, he advised them to be at all times ready for the discharge of their duty: *Let, said he, your Loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

This was spoken in allusion to the customs of the eastern countries, where

anciently great entertainments were made in the evening; and, on these occasions, servants demonstrated their diligence, by watching, and keeping their loins girded, that they might be ready to open the door on the first knock of their master: nor was it uncommon for the master, in order to reward such a servant, to order him a repast, and sometimes even to give it him with his own hand. In allusion to which custom, our blessed Saviour added, *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

C H A P T E R X X I I I .

JESUS remarks the Ignorance and stupidity of the Jews, in not discerning the Times: and sheweth the Danger of neglecting the Means of Reconciliation offered them: He sheweth, that temporal Calamities are no sure Signs of Sinfulness, but that others should take Warning by them, and repent: He delivers the Parable of the Fig-Tree, that was ordered to be cut down for being fruitless: He healeth a Woman that had been long bowed together, and putteth the hypocritical Ruler of the Synagogue to Silence. CHRIST being asked of the number of the saved, he exhorteth to strive to enter in at the straight Gate: He is warned to leave the Dominions of Herod, but will not be diverted from his Course through Fear; and lamenteth over the approaching Desolation of Jerusalem: He healeth the Dropsy on the Sabbath, and justifieth his doing so: He recommendeth Humility; and Hospitality towards the Poor: And delivers the Parable of the Marriage-Supper, and of the Guests, who making excuses were excluded, and their Rooms filled by others.

HAVING concluded his instructions to his disciples, our Lord then addressed the multitude, and remarked the prevailing infidelity of the Jewish nation, and observed, that the evidences of his being the Messiah were clearer and stronger than those marks in the sky, which denominated fair or rainy weather to be approaching: and though the people were very acute and sagacious in the one, they were unaccountably blind and undiscerning in the other: *When ye see a cloud rise out of the West, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat: and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites,*

ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

But he proceeded to let them know, that their blindness, obstinacy, and rebellion, should be severely punished, and that he would come in as unexpected a manner, as a thief cometh in the night: he therefore exhorted them to a speedy reformation, telling them that they ought to consider well what way their peace was to be expected, and diligently attend to those things which would preserve them from the consequences of their rebellion. *When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give dili-*

gence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison: I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Some of his hearers thought proper to confirm this doctrine, by giving what they thought an example of it: *There were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; thinking that these persons had been guilty of some extraordinary crime, for which Providence had permitted this dreadful punishment to befall them: but our blessed Saviour expressly told them, that they were much mistaken in this conclusion, for this deplorable calamity was no indication that these Galileans were greater sinners than their countrymen. At the same time, he exhorted them to improve such instances of calamity and misery, as incitements to their own repentance, assuring them that if they neglected so just and necessary a work, they should all perish: And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

He further illustrated this doctrine, by remarking, that this way of interpreting the dispensations of Providence, would lead them to erroneous conclusions, whenever they heard of unexpected and dreadful evils falling on the sons of men; and instanced the case of the eighteen persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and crushed them to pieces: *Or, said he, those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Our Lord also endeavoured to rouse them to the consideration of their state, by the parable of the fig-tree, which the master of the vineyard, after finding it three years barren, ordered to be destroyed, but at the earnest request of the dresser of the vineyard, it was spared one year longer: *A certain man, said he, had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

By this parable, our Lord represented the goodness and forbearance of his Almighty Father, manifested towards the Jewish nation, where his Son had now been about three years, preaching the kingdom of God: and though they might be justly destroyed for their obstinacy and perverseness, yet the awful stroke was delayed, and space was given them for repentance; but he gave them a strong intimation, in this parable, that if they persisted they must expect that vengeance will not always sleep, but, after all the divine forbearance had been abused, would awake to their sudden and dreadful destruction.

When our Lord was teaching in one of the synagogues in Perea, on the Sabbath-day, he observed a woman, who for the space of eighteen years, had not been able to stand upright. A person labouring under so dreadful a disorder, could not fail of exciting the compassion of the benevolent Saviour of sinners; he beheld this affecting object with pity, and he removed her complaint; she who came to the synagogue bowed down to the ground with an infirmity, returned to her house upright, being, by the all-powerful Son of God, restored to perfect health.

This benevolent action, which surely deserved the thanks of the whole congregation, so highly offended the master of the synagogue, that he openly testified his displeasure, and reproved the people, and represented them as Sabbath-breakers, because they came that day to be healed: *There are six days, said this surly, self-conceited ruler to the people, in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.*

But our Lord soon silenced this self-conceited Pharisee, by observing that he had not deviated from their own avowed practice: they made no scruple of loosing their cattle, and leading them to the water on the Sabbath-day, because the mercy of the action sufficiently justified them for

performing it; and surely his action of loosing, by a single word, a woman, a rational creature, a daughter of Abraham, who had been bound by an incurable distemper, the tedious space of eighteen years, was abundantly justified: nor could this bigotted ruler have thought otherwise, had not his reason been blinded by his superstition. Such was the sentiment of the Son of God, who answered him with this severe rebuke, *Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath, loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*

From this instance we may remark the evil effects of superstition, and a bigotted attachment to customs and ceremonies, which have no foundation in reason nor the revealed will of God; these pernicious principles oppose the use of the faculties, root compassion out of the heart, and destroy the feelings of humanity.

Our Lord having silenced the proud ruler of the synagogue, and received the acclamations and applauses of the people: he reflected with pleasure on the truth, reason, and divine power from above, which support his kingdom; and, on this occasion, he repeated the parables of the grain of mustard-seed, and the leaven, to shew the future success of the gospel, and the power and influence of his religion on the hearts and lives of men, and its rapid progress through the world notwithstanding the opposition of the great men of the earth, and the fury of the unthinking multitude.

Our Lord having thus sown the seeds of the gospel in the country of Perea, he crossed Jordan, and proceeded by slow and short stages towards Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in every village, and publishing the glad-tidings, of salvation to the inhabitants of the countries he passed through.

While he was thus prosecuting the great work of instructing mankind, one of the persons who accompanied him, inquired, *Lord, are there few that be saved.* Pro-

bably the person who proposed this question, had heard our Lord describe the success of the gospel, by the parables of the mustard-seed, and the leaven; and had no further views of the kingdom of the Messiah, than the setting up a temporal dominion. These notions were entertained by the Jews in general, and induced them to conclude, that CHRIST hereby meant no more than a temporal salvation. But JESUS, to convince this curious inquirer, and the rest of the Jews, that he had no intention to erect a secular kingdom, answered his question in a spiritual manner, by which he gave the Jews to understand, that very few of them would be partakers of the honour and happiness of his kingdom: and he exhorted them to use their utmost efforts to know the truth, and become members of the church and heirs of glory, by improving the means which were afforded them; for the time would soon come, he assured them, when the means which they now enjoyed would be taken away, and they would perceive their state to be finally and irrevocably determined, and then, however earnestly they might desire such opportunities as they now enjoyed, they should not be able to attain them: *Strive, said he, to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not whence you are. This sentence, our Lord informed them, would be final, and not to be altered by their most earnest petitions and expostulations: Then, added our great Redeemer, shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

Soon after our blessed Saviour had delivered these sentiments, some of the Pharisees thinking to intimidate him, and cause him to depart out of the country, came to him and pretended that Herod had a design against his life. It is not likely that Herod, who had suffered so much remorse on account of his having put John the Baptist to death, should so soon attempt the life of one whose works declared him to be a greater prophet; perhaps, that prince might wish JESUS to depart out of his territories, though he durst not use force against him: nor is it unlikely that the Pharisees were desirous of his departure out of the country, because his discourses tended to expose their hypocrisy, and lessen them in the opinion of the people. The answer which our great Redeemer made to this message, is contained in the following words: *Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*

Having returned this answer to the Pharisees, and considering the treatment which the prophets had met with from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and well-knowing the wickedness of that unbelieving city, and their designs against his life, he pathetically lamented their obstinacy and perverseness, and the terrible desolation which would soon overtake them for their sins: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, said he, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come, when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

One of the chief of the Pharisees, soon after our Lord had made this pathetic exclamation, invited him to his house to take a repast: JESUS well knew, that this invitation did not proceed from hearty goodwill; but, as he never shunned an opportunity of doing good, even to his most implacable enemies, he thought fit to accept it. It was the Sabbath-day, and when he

had entered the Pharisee's house, a man was brought before him who was diseased with a dropsy. The Pharisees well knew the benevolent disposition of our great Redeemer, and they thought so miserable an object would not fail of exciting his compassion, and cause him to work a miracle on that day, which would give them the opportunity of accusing him as a profaner, of the Sabbath. JESUS, who knew the secret thoughts of their hearts, asked the Pharisees and lawyers, *Whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?* But they refusing to give any answer to the question, our Lord laid his hand on the diseased person, and immediately his body was reduced to it's former dimensions, and his health and strength returned. So kind, so salutary and benevolent, as well as wonderful an action, ought to have convinced the Pharisees, that the person who wrought it must be endowed with power from on high, as no less than the mighty power of God could produce such events; or if they could suppose that wicked agents had the power, this is not the way in which they might be expected to exert it: but these hypocritical wretches, instead of being persuaded that JESUS was sent from God, and exerted his miraculous powers for the good of mankind, were labouring to turn this miracle to his disadvantage.

But our Lord soon put an end to their wicked designs, by proving, that according to their own allowed practice, he had done nothing but what was lawful: *Which of you said he, shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?* Our Lord's argument stood thus, If a misfortune happens to one of your beasts, you make no scruple of assisting it on the Sabbath, though the action be attended with considerable labour; and surely, I may relieve a descendant of Abraham, when nothing more is required, than touching him with my hand. This reasoning was so strong, forcible, and conclusive, and, at the same time, so simple and easy, that the most illiterate of mankind must see it's propriety and feel it's force, and the most prejudiced could not contradict it. This was manifest from the profound silence with which these remarks of our Lord were

heard, and which continued after he had done speaking. None of his adversaries, however inveterate their malice, or hot their resentment, durst at this time appear against him, for they could not answer again to these things.

Before they sat down to meat, our blessed Saviour had an opportunity of remarking the pride of the Pharisees, which manifested itself by an anxious and eager desire to obtain the most honourable place at the table; nor did he fail, on this occasion, to give them such a rebuke, as their ridiculous behaviour deserved. To make them sensible of their folly, our Lord called upon them to consider, that pride generally exposes the person to frequent mortifications; and many affronts while an humble deportment is a sure way to honour and respect: *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, said he, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

Having directed this discourse to the Pharisees in general, our Lord turned to the master of the house, and said unto him, *When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: limit not thy hospitality to the rich and great, but let the poor and needy be partakers of thy bounty: and thou shalt be blessed,* added our Lord, *for they cannot*

recompense thee: but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

While our Lord was thus discoursing, one of the Pharisees, seeming to be ravished with the delightful prospect of the happiness which good men will enjoy in the heavenly world, cried out, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* Our Lord, in answer to this, took occasion to deliver to the company at the table, the parable of the marriage-supper: *A certain man, said he, made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have brought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant. Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled: for I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.*

By this parable, our Lord elegantly and beautifully described the infidelity of the Jews and their final rejection of the heavenly message, while the poor, blind, despised Gentiles, brought by powerful grace, like the persons who were compelled to come in from the highways and hedges, would be enabled to believe in the Son of God, and become thereby partakers of those blessings which the unbelieving Jews rejected and despised.

C H A P T E R XXIV.

JESUS being surrounded by vast Multitudes of People, he adviseth those who are willing to be his Disciples, to examine beforehand their Resolution in Case of Persecutions. The Pharisees murmur at CHRIST for receiving Sinners: He delivers the Parable of the lost Sheep, and Piece of Silver; of the Prodigal Son, and of the unjust Steward. CHRIST reproveth the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were covetous, and derided him: and delivers the Parable of the rich Man and Lazarus the Beggar.

AFTER our blessed Saviour had departed from the Pharisee's house, great multitudes of people thronged about him, to hear his doctrine, and to behold his wonderous works: but the people in general, mistook the nature of his kingdom; for it was the general expectation that he was going to establish the Messiah's throne in Jerusalem, and from thence to conquer all the nations in the world, and render them tributary to his power.

As our Lord well knew that the people followed him with such expectations, he took the first opportunity to undeceive them, and to declare in the plainest terms, that his kingdom was not of this world, and, of consequence, those who followed him for temporal advantage, would be sure to find themselves mistaken; for, on the contrary, his disciples must expect to be persecuted from city to city, and hated of all men for his name's sake. And he further observed, that it was necessary for all who would be his true followers, to prefer his service to the riches, grandeur, and pleasures of the world, and to manifest by their conduct, that they had a greater value for him, than for the dearest objects of their affections: *If any man come to me, said he, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

And to shew the folly of expecting to partake of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, while they preferred their worldly attachments to our great Redeemer, he compares the case of such persons to that of an unthinking builder, and of a rash and forward warrior: the former was

obliged to leave his structure unfinished, because he had foolishly begun the building before he had computed the cost; and the latter reduced to the disgrace either of being shamefully defeated, or meanly suing for peace, because he had rashly declared war before he had compared his own strength with that of the enemy: *So likewise, added our great Redeemer, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

The fame of the miracles which JESUS daily wrought, and the divine discourses which he delivered, being spread in the most obscure and unpolite parts of the country, several persons of infamous lives and abandoned characters came amongst the crowds which pressed to hear him. These persons, conscious of their unworthiness, approached our great Redeemer with the highest reverence, and heard him with the most respectful and steady attention. This opportunity was readily embraced by the great Saviour of sinners, who far from upbraiding them with their former wickedness, or spurning them from him with contempt, kindly condescended to instruct them in those things which concerned their everlasting peace, and not only taught them in the fields, but went with them to their houses, and kindly condescended to teach them the nature of his kingdom, and lead them in the way of eternal life and happiness.

This condescending goodness in our great Redeemer was highly offensive to the proud, self-conceited, self-righteous Pharisees; they wanted to be accepted on the footing of their own worthiness, and could not bear the thoughts of the infinite mercy of God, manifested to the greatest of sinners; and, therefore, with hearts full of en-

vious pride, they advanced it as a ground of reproach against our great Redeemer, that, *this man receiveth, sinners, and eateth with them.* Their pride could not bear the thought, that these persons whom they so much despised, should be looked upon by our Saviour with more kindness than themselves, and they thought his condescension unworthy the character of a prophet. They had no other views of divine acceptance, than such as had an immediate reference to the law; and the infinite mercy of God to sinners, manifested in the gospel of his Son, was what they could not understand; our great Redeemer, therefore, to convince them of their ignorance, to check their abominable pride and self-sufficiency, to display the extensive and abundant mercy of God to sinful man, and to vindicate his own conduct in conversing with the meanest and most contemptible persons, proposed three parables to their consideration.

The first of these parables was that of the lost sheep, which the Divine Instructor delivered in the following words: *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost:* Thus, by the natural turn of the human mind, which is restless and uneasy under the mortification of losing part of its property, and fixes with such eager attention on that which it has lost, that it overlooks those valuable objects which it has in possession, our great Redeemer describes the regard which God has to his people while they wander from him in a lost perishing condition; and by the joy which expands the human heart, when that which had long been given up for lost is recovered, our Lord displays the kind reception which the worst of sinners will find when they are made sensible of their evil ways, and are enabled to believe in the Son of God for life and salvation. And in this elegant well-chosen parable he further describes the joy of the heavenly inhabitants, when any of the sheep of Christ, who have long

wandered from his fold, are convinced of their desperate condition, humbled under a sense of their unworthiness and wickedness, and are enabled to return: *I say unto you, said he, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

There is no person on earth so just and holy, and whose conduct hath been so regular, and uniformly correct, as to need no repentance; but the proud Pharisees, to whom our Lord directed these parables, would fain have been esteemed by the world as such persons; and these are particularly referred to in this representation, which was intended to display the amazing and infinite extent of divine forgiveness.

A second parable which our great Redeemer published with the same view, was that of the lost piece of silver: *Either, said the Divine Instructor, what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently till she find it? and when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

This parable is founded on the same principles, and published with the same design as the former, only the case and circumstances are varied; and our great Redeemer condescends in various forms and methods of address to inculcate the same truth. The infinite mercy of God to sinners, and the kind reception they will find, when they are enabled to repent and return, is the great doctrine which runs through his gospel, and this is the great design of all his undertakings; to accomplish this, to remove every difficulty which attended it, to overcome and subdue every power which opposed it, and to publish the glad-tidings to a sinful world, he left the glories of the heavenly regions, he laid aside the dignity and glory of his heavenly nature, and condescended to become man; he was a partaker of the evils consequent on sin, that sinful men might be delivered from them; he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that we might be

partakers of substantial and eternal joy; and he died that we might live. To publish this great truth, and to prevail on the world to receive it, was the whole design of his ministry; every doctrine he advanced, every miracle which he wrought, had a natural tendency to promote this benevolent design; and this great end, in various forms of instruction, and various methods of address, he invariably pursued during the time of his abode on earth.

And that no method of address, no form of instruction, might be omitted, which would powerfully operate on the mind and prepare it for the reception of a truth, so worthy of God, so friendly to man, our Lord condescended to appeal to the feelings of humanity; and from the natural affection which an offended father feels for a repenting son, he urged the certainty and the extent of his divine forgiveness.

The parable which our great Redeemer proposed with this view, is the finest picture of nature; it contains all the beauties of just description, and is particularly calculated to engage the attention and effect the heart; the evangelist Luke hath given it in the following words: *A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have*

sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his eldest son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come: and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. Luke xv. 11. to the end.

The design of this parable is manifested at first sight, and stands a beautiful and unfading memorial of the fulness, the freeness, and extent of divine mercy to the greatest of sinners; it not only declares that it is the fixed determination of heaven to forgive, and that mercy is an essential attribute of deity, the brightest star in the eternal crown; but it shews that this glorious disposition of heaven to forgive, entirely coincides with the feelings of humanity; for the eternal God condescends to appeal to that paternal tenderness which he hath planted in the human breast, in vindication of his own conduct in pardoning sinners, and in explanation of the nature and extent of his mercy.

If this parable be applied to the particular case with which it stands connected, it contains a reproof which the blessed Jesus directed to the Pharisees for their murmuring at his condescending kindness to





Tanner

our Blessed SAVIOUR'S Parable of Lazarus the Beggar: & who was fed with the crumbs which fell from the Rich Man's Table.

publicans and sinners; and hereby they are taught that if they would resemble the holy and happy inhabitants of the cœlestial regions, they would not murmur and complain, and look down with envious pride and sullen contempt while he conversed with those who were noted for being habitually and prevailingly wickep, but would rejoice to see such persons pursue those methods which might tend to their reformation and final salvation; nor would the gladness of heart they might express on this occasion, be any reproach to that strictness and purity which they value themselves upon; for there is *joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*

Our Lord having thus vindicated his own conduct, in his condescending kindness to publicans and sinners, by shewing the vast extent of divine mercy, and the pleasure which the happy inhabitants of the heavenly regions take in the pardon of the worst of sinners, and their restoration to divine favour; he then delivered a parable to impress on the minds of his hearers the necessity of attending to the concerns of futurity. This he exemplified in the case of an unjust steward, who being warned by his lord to give up his stewardship, took such measures as were likely to procure him a subsistence when he had lost his present employment: *There was, said our great Redeemer, a certain rich man, which had a steward: and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his Lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him,*

*Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light. The scope of our Lord's argument in this passage, is apparently this: as a prudent thought for futurity, and a steady pursuit of those means which tend to prevent apprehended evils, though those means may not be approved as lawful in themselves, are sufficient to demonstrate a person wise, with what earnest attention, and unremitting application, ought those who have eternity in view, to pursue the precepts of heavenly wisdom, and to make all lesser events subservient to the great end of obtaining eternal happiness: And I say unto you, added our great Redeemer, *make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.**

The Pharisees, whose hearts were set upon the things of this world, and who had but very feeble and contracted views of eternal things, derided this doctrine of our great Redeemer; but he, after giving them a seasonable reproof, proceeded by a striking and most remarkable parable, to shew the vanity of riches, and the vast importance of eternal things: *There was, said he, a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar nam'd Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you, there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which*

would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

This parable is the most awful and alarming, and the most fully demonstrative of the immortality of the soul, and it's existence in a separate state, of any we meet with in the sacred volume: the imagery is so beautiful, and it is drawn in such lively colours, that it has rather been looked upon as an history than a parable in all ages of the church; many of the most affecting, the most awful and important lessons may be learned from it, and such sentiments are here displayed as are not to be found in any other part of the gospel.

In the first place, we may learn the shortness and uncertainty of the present state, and how little the attainment of vast possessions, in this world, conduces to the best interest of mankind. We have here held up to our view, a rich man in all the grandeur, glory, and profusion of opulence, surrounded with all the honours, and partaking of all the pleasures which earth can give: *The rich man's wealth*, the wisest of men informs us, *is his strong city: and as an high wall in his own conceit*. The rich man thinks that his riches entitles him to every honour, and to the participation of every thing which can be enjoyed: but how is he pained to find himself most deplorably mistaken, when the mind, satiated with enjoyment, and surfeited with pleasure, grows sick of delight: amidst the abundance of riches, the soul starves, it finds nothing that is consistent with it's spiritual nature, and would pine for want of solid enjoyment in the possession of a whole material world.

But how short and uncertain are those sickly joys, those surfeiting pleasures which the rich man is able to partake of: *The rich man*, we are informed, *died and was buried*. The pomp and pageantry, the luxury and all the consequence in the world which riches give their possessor, will not enable him to face the great king of terrors, Death: and as the utmost profusion of riches, cannot enable their possessor to face the pale tyrant with composure, neither can they bribe him to one moment's delay: *No man hath power to retain the spirit in the day of death*: the soul, all black and horrid with guilt, trembles at the approach of the eternal world, and with vast amazement and terror, strives to evade the awful stroke, but all in vain; *there is no discharge in that war*: the case admits of no refusal or delay: the unhappy mortal falls, and all that his riches can do, is only to carry him with prodigious pomp and splendour to the grave.

From this awful and affecting parable, we likewise learn the state of the dead, and the capacity of the separated soul to receive happiness or misery before the resurrection of the body; *The rich man died, and was buried*, we are informed, and what then? Did he enter into rest, or did he remain in a state of insensibility until the day of resurrection? Neither of these; but *in hell he lifted up his eyes*. The unhappy mortal's pleasures and sensual gratifications are all past; and now, all naked, defenceless, and forlorn, he falls headlong into the depths of misery and woe: the black regions of horror and despair are now his portion: he lies in inexpressible torment, and, amidst these fiery regions, sees nothing but what tends to increase and aggravate his woes; *He lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*. The poor beggar that lay at his gate all covered with sores, died and was buried, and in the dust lost all his meanness, and was equal to the richest man on earth: there is no pre-eminence in the grave; *for the small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master*. But how great the difference between the poorest saint and the richest sinner; Lazarus, at his death, was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, while the rich man descended into hell, and lifted up his eyes in torment.

Thus having reprimanded the Pharisees, he took occasion to speak of affronts and offences, described their evil nature, and their dreadful punishment: *It is impossible, said he, but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*

Our Lord spake also against a quarrelsome temper in his servants, especially in the ministers and teachers of religion, prescribed a seasonable and prudent reprehension of the fault, accompanied with forgiveness on the part of the person injured, as the best means of disarming the temptations that may arise from thence: *Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

This discourse on forgiveness, uttered at a time when the Pharisees had just upbraided him, by calling him a false teacher, sufficiently proves how truly he forgave them all the personal injuries they had com-

mitted against him; and should be a powerful recommendation of that amiable virtue, the forgiveness of injuries.

However beautiful these discourses of our Saviour appear, when examined with attention, they seem to have staggered the faith of his disciples and followers; perhaps they still imagined, that he would shortly erect a temporal kingdom, and distribute among them the rewards they expected for their services. If so, they might well desire their Master to *increase their faith*: as discourses like these had a very different tendency from what might naturally have been expected from one who was going to establish the throne of David, and extend his sceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth; but however this be, our Saviour told them, that if they had the smallest degree of true faith, it would be sufficient for overcoming all temptations, even those, which seem as difficult to be conquered, as the plucking up trees and planting them in the ocean: *If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.* Luke xvii. 6.

C H A P T E R X X V .

The Sickness and Death of Lazarus: JESUS receives an account thereof: and, in his way to Bethany, he heals ten Lepers in a Village of Samaria: He arrives at Bethany, and raiseth Lazarus to Life, after he had been dead four days: Many Jews believe: The Pharisees hold a Council against CHRIST: Caiaphas prophesieth: JESUS retireth to Ephraim, a City on the Borders of the Wilderness, where he sheweth the spiritual Nature of the Kingdom of God, foretelleth the Destruction of the Jewish State, and instructeth his Disciples concerning the Coming of the Son of Man. JESUS delivers the Parable of the unjust Judge and importunate Widow, and that of the Pharisee and the Publican: He answereth the Question of the Pharisees concerning Divorces: He receiveth the little Children with Tenderness, that were brought unto him, and blesteth them.

SHORTLY after our blessed Saviour had finished these discourses, one of his friends, named Lazarus, fell sick at Bethany, a village about two miles from Jerusalem, but at a great distance from the countries beyond Jordon, where JESUS was now preaching the gospel. The sisters of Lazarus, finding his sickness was of a dan-

gerous kind, thought proper to send an account of it to JESUS; being firmly persuaded, that he who had cured so many strangers, would readily come and give health to one whom he loved in so tender a manner: *Lord, said they, behold he whom thou lovest is sick: they did not add, come down and heal him, make haste and save*

him from the grave; it was sufficient for them to propose their necessities to their Lord, who was both able and willing to help them in their distress.

When Jesus heard that, he said, *This sickness is not unto death*: words which were doubtless carried to Martha and Mary, and must strangely surprise them, and exercise both their's and his disciples faith; since it is probable, that before the messenger arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had expired. Soon after, JESUS positively assured his disciples, that Lazarus was dead.

St. Luke, in the beginning of his account, tells us, that JESUS loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; and that after he had received the message, he abode two days in the same place where he was. His design in this might be to insinuate, that his lingering so long after the message came, did not proceed from a want of concern for his friends, but happened according to the counsels of his own wisdom: for the length of time which Lazarus lay in the grave, put his death beyond all possibility, of doubt, removed every suspicion of fraud, and consequently afforded JESUS a fit opportunity of displaying the love he bore to Lazarus, as well as his own almighty power, in his undoubted resurrection from the dead. His sisters, indeed, were by this means kept a while in painful anxiety, on account of their brother's life, and at last pierced by the sorrow of seeing him die: yet they must surely think themselves abundantly recompensed, by the evidence accruing to the gospel from this astonishing miracle, as well as by the inexpressible surprise of joy they felt, when they again had their brother restored from the dead.

At the expiration of two days, JESUS said to his disciples, *Let us go into Judea again*, John xi. 7. His disciples were astonished at this proposal, and the recollection of his late danger in that country alarmed them: *Master*, said they, *the Jews of late thought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Wilt thou hazard thy life amongst those who desired nothing more than to find an opportunity of killing thee? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light*

of this world: but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

Thus he intended to inform his disciples, that they had no reason to fear, seeing his day was appointed, and the light of the Almighty was in him; that he could not stumble nor fall, before the night of his passion approached, but that night was coming when no man could work. JESUS having thus removed their groundless apprehensions, and strengthened their faith, that he might clearly explain to them the cause of his going into Judea again, told them, *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep*. The disciples understanding his discourse in a literal sense, replied, *Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well*; his distemper is abated, and he in all probability is recovering. It would be, therefore, highly unreasonable in us to take two days journey only to awake him out of his sleep. Thus they covered their fears, and hinted to their Master, that it would be far safer to continue where they were, than to take a hazardous journey into Judea. They were, however, mistaken; for the evangelist informs us, that he *spake of his death, but they thought, that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep*. JESUS, therefore, to remove any doubts, said plainly to them, *Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent that you might believe*: I am glad for your sakes, that I was not in Judea before he died; for had I been there, and restored him to his health, your faith in me, as the Messiah, must have wanted the great confirmation it shall now receive, by your beholding me raise him thus miraculously from the dead.

JESUS CHRIST having thus given his disciples a proof of his divine knowledge, and of the designs of Providence in the death of Lazarus, added, *Nevertheless let us go unto him*, Thus JESUS, who could have raised Lazarus without opening his lips, or rising from his seat, leaves his place of retirement beyond Jordan, and takes a long journey into Judea, where the Jews lately attempted to kill him; because his being present in person, and raising Lazarus again to life, before so many witnesses at Bethany, where he died, and was





*Our Blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST
cleansing the Ten Persons afflicted with Leprocy.*

so well known, would be the means of bringing the men of that, and of future ages, to believe in his doctrine, so well fitted to prepare them for a resurrection to eternal life; an admirable proof, as an emblem of which, he gave them in this miracle.

Our Lord having thus declared his resolution of returning into Judea, and Thomas conceiving nothing less than destruction from such a journey, yet unwilling to forsake his Master, said, *Let us also go, that we may die with him.* Let us not forsake our Master in this dangerous journey, but accompany him into Judea, that if the Jews, whose inveteracy we are well acquainted with, should take away his life, we may also die with him.

This journey being thus resolved on, JESUS departed with his disciples, and in his way to Bethany, passed through Samaria and Galilee: *And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed.* Luke xvii. 12, &c.

One of these miserable objects, was a native of the country, who perceiving that his cure was completed. came back praising God for the great mercy he had received; he had before kept at a distance from our Saviour, but being now sensible that he was entirely clean, approached his benefactor, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle, and fell on his face at his feet, thanking him in the most humble manner, for his condescension in healing him of so terrible a disease. JESUS, in order to intimate, that those who were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, ought, at least, to have shewn as great a sense of piety and gratitude as this Samaritan, asked, *Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that have returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*

Our Saviour and his disciples now continued their journey towards Bethany, where he was informed by some of the inhabitants of that village, that Lazarus was not only dead, as he had foretold, but had

now lain in the grave four days. The afflicted sisters were overwhelmed with sorrow: so that many of the Jews from Jerusalem, came to comfort them on the occasion.

It appears, the news of our Lord's coming had reached Bethany before he arrived at that village; for Martha, the sister of Lazarus, being informed of his approach, went out and met him, but Mary who was of a more sedate and contemplative disposition, sat still in the house. No sooner was she come into the presence of JESUS, than, in excess of grief, she poured forth her complaint: *Lord, said she, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.* If thou hadst complied with the message we sent thee, I well know that thy interest from heaven had prevailed, my brother had been cured of his disease, and delivered from the dark chambers of death.

Martha entertained a high opinion of our Saviour's power; she believed that death did not dare to approach his presence; and, consequently, if JESUS had arrived at Bethany before her brother's dissolution, he had not fallen a victim to the king of terrors: but imagined, that it was not in his power to heal the sick at a distance, though, at the same time, she seemed to have some dark and imperfect hopes, that our blessed Lord would still do something for her: *But I know, said she, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.* She thought that JESUS could obtain whatsoever he desired by prayer, and, therefore, did not found her hopes on his power, but on the power of God, through his intercession. She doubtless knew, that the great Redeemer of mankind had raised the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son of Nain, from the dead; but seems to have considered her brother's resurrection as much more difficult, because he had been longer dead.

But our blessed Saviour, who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith of Martha, answered, *Thy brother shall rise again.* As these words were delivered in an indefinite sense, with regard to time, Martha understood them only as an argument of consolation drawn from the general resurrection, and accordingly answered, *I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection*

at the last day. She was firmly persuaded of that important article of the Christian faith, *the resurrection of the dead*; at which important hour she believed her brother would rise from the chambers of the dust. And here she seems to have terminated all her hopes, not thinking that the Son of God would now call her brother from the sleep of death. JESUS, therefore, to instruct her in this great truth, replied, *I am the resurrection, and the life. I am the author of the resurrection, the fountain and giver of that life they shall then receive; and therefore can, with the same ease, raise the dead now as at the last day: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?* To which Martha answered, *Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* I believe that thou art the true Messiah, so long promised by the prophets, and therefore believe thou art capable of performing, by thy power, every thing thou art pleased to undertake.

She now seemed to entertain some confused expectations of her brother's immediate resurrection; and leaving JESUS in the field, ran and called her sister, according to his order, being willing that both Mary and her companions should be witnesses of this great miracle.

Mary, accordingly, no sooner heard that JESUS was come, than she immediately left her Jewish comforters, who only increased the weight of her grief, and flew to her Saviour: and the Jews, who suspected she was going to weep over the grave of her brother, followed her to that great prophet, who was going to remove all her sorrows. Thus the Jews who came from Jerusalem to comfort the two mournful sisters, were brought to the grave of Lazarus, and made witnesses of his resurrection.

Mary having approached the great Redeemer of mankind, fell prostrate at his feet, and in a flood of tears poured out her complaint, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* No wonder the compassionate JESUS was moved at so affecting a scene: on this side stood Martha pouring forth a flood of tears, at his feet lay the affectionate Mary, weeping and

lamenting her dear departed brother; while the Jews, who came to comfort the afflicted sisters, unable to confine their grief, joined the solemn morning, and mixed their friendly tears in witness of their love for the departed Lazarus, and in testimony to the justice of the sisters grief, for the loss of so amiable, so deserving a brother. JESUS could not behold the affliction of the two sisters and their friends, without having a share in it himself; his heart was melted at the mournful scene, *he groaned in spirit, and was troubled.*

However, to keep them no longer in suspense, he asked them, where they had buried Lazarus; not that he was ignorant where the body of the deceased was laid: he who knew that he was dead, when so far distant from him, and could raise him up by a single word, must know where his remains were deposited: to which they answered, *Lord come and see.* The Son of God, now to prove that he was not only God, but a most compassionate man, and to shew us, that the tender affections of a human heart, when kept in due bounds; that friendly sorrow, when not immoderate, and directed to proper ends, is consistent with the highest sanctity of the soul, joined in the general mourning: he wept, even at the time that he was going to give the most ample proof of his almighty power.

Thus the Jews were convinced that he loved Lazarus exceedingly; but some of them interpreted this circumstance to his disadvantage: for according to their mean way of judging, they fancied that he had suffered him to fall by the stroke of death, for no other reason in the world, but for want of power to rescue him. And thinking the miracle, said to have been wrought on the blind men at the feast of tabernacles, at least as difficult as the curing an acute distemper, they called the former in question, because the latter had been neglected: *Could not this man, said they, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*

But JESUS took no notice of their questions; but grieving at the hardness of their heart, and blindness of their infidelity, groaned again within himself, as he walked towards the sepulchre of the dead.

At his coming to the grave, he said, *Take ye away the stone.* To which Martha answered, *Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days:* or, as the passage may be better rendered, hath lain in the grave four days. She meant to insinuate that her brother's resurrection was not now to be expected. But JESUS gave her a solemn reproof, to teach her that there was nothing impossible with God; and that the power of the Almighty is not to be circumscribed within the narrow bounds of human reason, *Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

Martha's objections being thus obviated, she with the rest, waited the great event in silence; and in pursuance of the command of the Son of God, took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. JESUS had, on many occasions, publicly appealed to his own miracles, as the proofs of his mission, though he did not generally make a formal address to his Father before he worked this miracle; but being now to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed for his resurrection, to convince the spectators that it could not be effected, without an immediate interposition of the divine power: *Father, said he, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me:* I entertained no doubt of thy empowering me to do this miracle, and therefore, did not pray for my own sake; I well knew that thou hearest me always: I prayed for the sake of the people, to convince them that thou lovest me, hast sent me, and art continually owning the work I am come to do.

Having returned thanks to his Father, for this opportunity of displaying his glory, *He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.* This loud and efficacious call of the Son of God, awakened the dead; the breathless clay was instantly re-animated, and he who had lain four days in the chambers of the tomb, obeyed immediately the powerful sound: *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-cloths; and his face was bound about with a napkin: Jesus saith unto them, Loose*

him, and let him go. It would have been the least part of the miracle, had JESUS, by his powerful word, unloosed the napkins wherewith Lazarus was bound; but he brought him out in the same manner he was lying, and ordered the spectators to loose him, that they might be better convinced of the miracle: for, in taking off the grave clothes, they had the fullest evidence both of his death and resurrection. As, on the one hand, the manner which he was swathed, must soon have killed him, had he been alive when buried; and consequently demonstrated, beyond all exception, that Lazarus had been dead several days, before JESUS called him again to life.

Besides, in stripping him, the linen offered, both to their eyes and smell, abundant proofs of his putrefaction; and, by that means, convinced them that he had not been in a trance, but was really dead; on the other hand, by his lively countenance appearing, when the napkin was removed, his fresh colour, and his active vigour, they who came near and handled him, must be convinced, that he was in perfect health, and had an opportunity of proving the truth of the miracle, by the closest examination. There is something extremely beautiful in our Lord's behaviour on this occasion; he did not utter one upbraiding word, either to the doubting sisters, or the malicious Jews, nor did he let fall one word of triumph or exultation: *Loose him, and let him go,* were the only words we have recorded: he was in this, as on all other occasions, consistent with himself, a pattern of perfect humility and self-denial.

Such was the blessed work wrought by the Son of God at Bethany. And in the resurrection of Lazarus, thus corrupted, and thus raised by the powerful call of JESUS, we have a striking emblem, and a glorious earnest of the resurrection of our bodies from the grave at the last day; when the same powerful mandate, which spoke Lazarus again into being, shall collect the scattered particles of our bodies, and raise them to life.

So astonishing a miracle performed in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, before a multitude of spectators, many of them his enemies, could not fail of being the com-

mon topic of conversation, and of producing different effects upon different persons. Many believed that JESUS could be no other than the great Messiah so long promised; while others, who still expected a temporal prince, and therefore unwilling to acknowledge him for their Saviour, were filled with indignation, particularly the chief priests and elders. But this miracle, as well as all the rest he had wrought in confirmation of his mission, was too evident to be denied; and, therefore, they pretended that his whole intention was to establish a new sect in religion, which would endanger both their church and nation: *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

The common people astonished at his miracles, will, if we do not take care to prevent it, certainly set him up for the Messiah; and the Romans, under pretence of a rebellion, will deprive us both of our liberty and religion. Accordingly, they came to a resolution to put him to death: this resolution was not, however, unanimous; for Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and other disciples of our Saviour, then members of the council, urged the injustice of what they proposed to do, from the consideration of his miracles and innocence: but Caiaphas the high priest, from a principle of human policy, told them, that the nature of government often required certain acts of injustice, in order to procure the safety of the state: *Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

The council now having determined to put JESUS to death, deliberated, for the future, only upon the best methods of effecting it; and, in all likelihood, agreed to issue a proclamation, promising a reward to any person who would deliver him into their hands. For this reason, our blessed Savior did not now go up to Jerusalem though he was within two miles of it; but returned to Ephraim, a city on the borders of the wilderness, where he abode with his disciples, being unwilling to

go too far into the country, because the passover, at which he was to suffer, was at hand.

While our Lord abode in Ephraim, the Pharisees asked him, when the kingdom of the Messiah was to begin. We have more than once observed, that the Jews had very grand ideas of the kingdom they expected this great Son of David would establish, the number of his subjects, the strength of his armies, and the pomp and magnificence of his court. It is therefore no wonder, that they were very desirous of having that empire speedily erected: but our Saviour, to correct this mistaken notion, told them, that the Messiah's kingdom did not consist in any external pomp of government, erected in some particular country, by the terror of arms, and desolation of war; but in the subjection of the minds of men, and in rendering them conformable to the laws of the Almighty, which was to be effected by a new dispensation of religion, and this dispensation was already begun. It was therefore needless for them to seek in this or that place for the kingdom of God, as it had been already preached among them by CHRIST and his apostles, and confirmed by innumerable miracles: *The kingdom of God, said he, cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for; behold, the kingdom of God is within you, Luke xvii. 20, &c.*

Soon after speaking these words to the Pharisees, he addressed himself to his disciples, and, in the hearing of the people, prophesied the destruction of the Jewish state: whose constitution, both religious and civil, was the chief difficulty that opposed the erection of his kingdom: but because love and compassion were eminent parts of our Saviour's temper, he mentioned that dreadful catastrophe in such a manner, as might tend to the reformation and profit of his hearers. He informed them, that the prelude to this final destruction would be an universal distress; when they should passionately wish for the personal presence of the Messiah to comfort them, but would be denied their request: *The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.* He next cautioned them against deceivers, which in this time

of affliction, would endeavour to draw the people after them, in order to support their own power: *And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightening that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.*

But the coming of the Son of man shall be sudden and unexpected: he will come in his own strength, and with great power; he will throw down all opposition, destroy his enemies with swift destruction, and establish his religion and government in a great part of the world, as suddenly as lightening darts from one part of the heaven to the other: but before these things come to pass, he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

And, notwithstanding this sudden destruction and calamity that was to overwhelm the Jews, he told them their stupidity would be like that of the old world, at the time of the deluge, or that of Sodom before the city was destroyed: *And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.*

A better example than that of Lot's wife could not have been produced: for if any of his hearers, through an immoderate love of the world, should be prevailed on, in order to save their goods, after they were admonished from heaven of their danger, by the signs which prognosticated the destruction of Jerusalem; or if any of them, through want of faith, should think, that the calamities predicted to fall on the nation, would not be either so great or

sudden as he had declared, and did not use the precaution of a speedy flight; they might behold in Lot's wife, an example both of their sin, and of their punishment: he added, that those who endeavoured to save their lives, by flying into the city, should meet the destruction they were endeavouring to avoid; whereas, those who retired into the open towns and defenceless villages, should be safe: *Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it.*

Our Blessed Lord, after making these predictions, spake the following parable, in order to excite them to a constant perseverance in prayer, and not to be so weary and faint in their minds, as to neglect this necessary duty.

There was in a city, said our Lord, a judge, who, being governed by atheistical principles, had no regard to the precepts of religion; and, being very powerful, did not regard what was said of him by man: so that all his decisions were influenced merely by passion or interest. In the same city was also a widow, who, having no friends to assist her, was absolutely unable to defend herself from injuries, or procure redress for any she had received. In this deplorable situation, she had recourse to the unjust judge, in order to obtain satisfaction for some oppressive wrong she had lately received: but the judge was so abandoned to pleasure, that he refused, for a time, to listen to her request; he would not give himself the trouble to examine her case, though the crying injustice pleaded so powerfully for this distressed widow. She was not, however, intimidated by his refusal: she incessantly importuned him, till, by repeated representations of her distress, she filled his mind with such displeasing ideas, that he was obliged to do her justice, merely to free himself from her importunity: *Though, said he to himself, I fear not God, nor regard man; yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her; lest, by her continual coming, she weary me.*

The sentiment, conveyed by our blessed Lord in this parable, is very beautiful: we hence learn, that the cries of the afflicted will, by being incessantly repeated, make an impression, even on the stony hearts of wicked men, who glory in their impiety,

and laugh at all the precepts of justice, virtue, and religion; and therefore, cannot fail of being regarded by the benevolent Father of the universe, who will listen to the petitions of his faithful servants, and pour on them the choicest of his blessings. *Hear, said our gracious Lord, what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily.* Arguments of this kind, taken from the feeble goodness, or even from the imperfections of men, to illustrate the superior and infinite perfections of the Almighty, were often made use of by the blessed JESUS, and with great success in working the conviction designed. It was indeed hardly possible to withstand such powerful appeals; they force their way directly into men's hearts, bear down all opposition, and make a lasting impression on men's minds.

Our blessed Lord having thus enforced the duty of prayer, in this expressive parable, asked the following apposite question, *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* As if he had said, notwithstanding all the miracles I have wrought, and the excellent doctrines I have delivered, shall I find at my second coming, the faith among the children of men, there is reason to expect? Will not most of them be found to have abandoned the faith, and wantonly ask *Where is the promise of his coming?*

Our Lord having delivered these discourses he next addressed himself to those who were righteous in their own conceit, and despised others: but as these particulars are better illustrated by their opposites, he placed the character of this species of men, in opposition to those of the humble, describing the reception each class met with from the Almighty, in the parable of the Pharisee and publican, who went up together to the temple at the time when the sacrifice was offered, to direct their petitions to the God of their fathers.

The Pharisee, having a great opinion of his own righteousness, went far into the court of the temple, that he might be as near the place of divine residence as possible, here he offered his prayer, giving God the praise of his supposed righteous-

ness; and had he been possessed of any, he would have acted properly: *God, said he, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Having thus commended himself to God, he wrapped himself up in his own righteousness, and giving the poor publican a scornful look, walked away, perhaps, to transgress some of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, justice, and truth, and to devour the houses of distressed widows and helpless orphans. But how different was the behavior of the humble publican! Impressed with a deep sense of his own unworthiness, he would not even enter the courts of the temple, but standing afar off, he smote upon his breast, and in the bitterness of his soul, earnestly implored the mercy of Omnipotence: *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner.*

Our blessed Lord added, I tell you, however ye may judge from external appearances, and whatever preference ye may give to this haughty Pharisee; I, who know and see the heart, declare unto you, that the publican retired from the temple accepted by his God, and blessed with the mercy which he implored, while the proud Pharisee was disregarded.

The present parable sufficiently indicates, that all the sons of men stand in need of mercy; both the strict Pharisee and the despised publican, with the whole race of mankind, are sinners; and consequently all must implore pardon of their benevolent Creator: we must all ascend to the temple, and there pour forth our prayers before the throne of grace; for there he has promised ever to be present, to grant the petitions of all who ask with sincerity and truth.

These parables were spoken in the town of Ephraim; and during our Lord's continuance in that city, the Pharisees asked him, Whether he thought it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Our Saviour had twice before declared his opinion of this particular, once in Galilee, and once in Perea; it is therefore probable, that the Pharisees were not ignorant of his

sentiments, and that they asked the question then, to find an opportunity of incensing the people against him, well knowing that the Israelites held the liberty which the law gave them of divorcing their wives as one of their chief privileges: but however that be, JESUS was far from fearing the popular resentment, and accordingly declared the third time against arbitrary divorces. The Pharisees then asked him, why they were commanded by Moses to give a writing of devorcement, and to put her away? Innuating, that Moses was so tender of their happiness, that he gave them liberty of putting away their wives, when they saw occasion. To which JESUS answered, *Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so: as unlimited divorces were not permitted in the state of innocence, so neither shall they be under the gospel-dispensation. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall 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.*

At which decision the disciples were greatly surprised; and though they held their peace while the Pharisees were present, yet they did not fail to ask our Lord the reason on which he founded his determination, when they were returned home: *And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*

No. 7.

Unlimited divorces being prevalent among the Jews, gave great encouragement to family quarrels, were very destructive of happiness, and hindred the education of their tender offspring; besides, it greatly tended to make their children lose that reverence for them which is due to parents, as it was hardly possible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel. Our Saviour's prohibition, therefore, of these divorces is founded on the strongest reasons, and greatly tends to promote the welfare of society.

Our Lord having, in the course of his ministry, performed innumerable cures in different parts of the country, several persons thinking, perhaps, that his power would be as great in preventing as in removing distempers, brought their children to him, desiring that he would put his hands upon them and bless them. The disciples, however, mistaking the intention, were angry with the persons, and rebuked them for endeavouring to give this trouble to their master. But JESUS no sooner saw it, than he was greatly displeas'd with his disciples, and ordered them not to hinder parents from bringing their children to him: *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.* That is, the church militant on earth, and that triumphant in heaven, are composed of persons who resemble little children in humility and meekness. Accordingly, taking them up in his arms, he blessed them with his usual benevolence.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

CHRIST departs from Ephraim, and, in his Journey to Jerusalem by the Way of Jericho, he instructeth a young Man how to attain eternal Life, and how to become perfect: He sheweth how hard it is for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God: and promiseth great Rewards to his Disciples, and to all who have forsaken ought to follow him: He delivers the Parable of the Labourers who were hired at different Hours to work in the Vineyard: He foretelleth his own Death and Resurrection; and putteth by the ambitious Suit of the Sons of Zebedee.

THE time of our dear Lord's passion drawing near, he departed from Ephraim, and repaired by the way of Jericho, towards Jerusalem: but before he arrived at Jericho, a ruler of the synagogue came running to him, and kneeling down before him, asked him, *Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Mat. xix. 16. Though this young ruler pretended to pay great honour to our dear Redeemer, yet the whole was no more than a piece of hypocrisy: for though he stiled him *good*, yet he did not believe that he was sent from God, as sufficiently appears from his refusing to observe the counsel given him by JESUS; nor could his artful insinuations escape the piercing eye of the great Saviour of the world; he well knew his secret intentions, and beheld the inmost recesses of his soul; and accordingly rebuked him for his hypocritical address, before he answered his question: *Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.* But as he had desired the advice of our blessed Saviour, who never refused it to any of the sons of men, he readily answered his question, by telling him, that he must observe all the moral precepts of the law; there being a necessary connection between the duties of piety towards the Almighty, and of justice and temperance towards men, the latter of which were much more difficult to counterfeit than the former; *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* 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, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The young man saith unto

him. *All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

These commandments were, doubtless, understood by the young ruler, in the vague sense put upon them by the doctors and interpreters of the law; and, therefore, the character he here gave of himself might be very just: for though he was far from being a person of true probity and virtue, he might have appeared, in the sight of men, as a person of a very fair character: and having maintained that character, notwithstanding his great riches, he certainly deserved commendation; and therefore, might be loved by that benevolent person who left the bosom of his Father, to redeem lost mankind: but he was, at the same time, very faulty with regard to his love of sensual pleasures, a sin which might have escaped even his own observation, though it could not escape the all-seeing eye of the Son of God. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, willing to make him sensible of this secret desire of possessing the riches of this world; told him, that if he aimed at perfection, he should distribute his possessions among the poor and indigent, and become his disciple: *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

The young man did not expect this condition, he was astonished at it, and, without making the least reply, retired, filled with sorrow, being very unwilling to part with his large estates: *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

The pernicious influence of riches over the minds of the children of men, being thus melancholy instanced, our blessed Sa-

viour cautioned his disciples against fixing their minds on things of such dangerous tendency, by shewing how very difficult it was for a rich man to procure an habitation in the region of eternal happiness: *Verily, I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, 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. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*

By this it appears, that if man be not assisted by the grace of God, it will be impossible for him to obtain the happy rewards of the kingdom of heaven; but, by the assistance of grace, which the Almighty never refuses to those who seek it with their whole heart, it is very possible.

But the disciples of our blessed Lord were far from being satisfied with this answer, as they had, doubtless, often reflected with pleasure on the high posts they were to enjoy in their Master's kingdom. Peter seems particularly to have been disappointed; and therefore addressed his Master in the name of the rest, begging him to remember, that his apostles had actually done what the young man had refused: they had abandoned their relations, their friends, their possessions, and their employments, on his account: and, therefore, desired to know what reward they were to expect, for these instances of their obedience. To which JESUS replied, That they should not fail of a reward, even in this life: for immediately after his resurrection, when he ascended to his Father, and entered on his mediatorial office, they should be advanced to the honor of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; that is, of ruling the church of CHRIST, which they were to plant in different parts of the earth: *Verily, I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Our Lord having given this answer to Peter, he next mentioned the rewards his

other disciples should receive, both in this world, and in that which is to come: they, said he, who have forsaken all for my sake, shall be no losers in the end: their benevolent Father, who intends to give them possessions in the heavenly Canaan, will not fail to support them, during their long and painful journey to that happy country, and raise them up friends who shall assist them with those necessaries they might have expected from their relations, had they not left them for my sake. Divine Providence will take care that they have every thing valuable that can be given them by their relations, or they could desire from large possessions: they shall, indeed, be fed with the bread of sorrow, but this shall produce joys, to which all the earthly pleasures bear no proportion; and, in the end, obtain everlasting life: they shall leave this vale of tears, with all its pains and sorrows, behind them, and fly to the bosom of their Almighty Father, the fountain of life and joy, where, for all the sufferings they have undergone in this world, they shall be infinitely rewarded.

According to this, many who are by their fellow-mortals, considered as the last of mankind, because of their sufferings, self-denials, and mortifications, shall be really first, not only in point of future reward, but even with regard to present satisfaction: *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

It seems these words were spoken to keep the disciples humble, as, in all probability, they at first understood the promise of their sitting on twelve thrones in a natural sense; so they were ready to construe every expression to a temporal kingdom, which they still expected their Master would erect upon earth. Our blessed Lord, therefore, to remove all thoughts they might entertain of this kind, told them, that though he had described the rewards they were to expect for the ready obedience they had shewn to his commands, and the pains they were to take in propagating the gospel amongst the children of men; yet these rewards were spiritual, and not confined to the Jews alone, but extended also to the Gentiles, who in point of time, should excel the Jews, and universally embrace the gospel before that nation was converted,

Our great Redeemer illustrated this doctrine with the parable of the householder, who, at different hours of the day, hired labourers to work in his vineyard; *The kingdom of heaven, says our blessed Saviour, is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning, to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a-day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 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. So, when even was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen* Matt. xx. 1—16.

Our blessed Saviour delivered the parable of the householder in such a manner, as, from the application he has made of it, it would not be difficult to interrupt it. The dispensations of religion, which God gave to mankind in different parts of the world, are represented by the vineyard: the Jews, who were early members of the true church, and obliged to obey the law of Moses, are

the labourers which the householder hired early in the morning: the Gentiles, who were converted at several times, by the various interpositions of Providence, to the knowledge and worship of the true God, are the labourers hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hour: and the invitation given at the eleventh hour, implies the calling of the Gentiles in every country, to live piously and virtuously. The law of Moses was a heavy yoke; and, therefore, the obedience to it's precepts was very elegantly represented, by bearing the heat and burden of the whole day: but the proselyted Gentiles paid obedience only to some particular precepts of the law, bore but part of it's weight, and were, therefore, represented by those who were hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours; while those Heathens, who regulated their conduct by the law of nature only, and esteemed the works of justice, piety, temperance, and charity, as their whole duty, are beautifully represented as labouring in the cool of the evening only one hour.

The time being come when each labourer was to receive his wages, they were all placed on an equal footing; these rewards being the privileges and advantages of the gospel. The Jews, who had borne the grievous yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies, murmured when they found the Gentiles were admitted to it's privileges, without being subject to their ceremonial worship: but we must not urge the circumstance of the reward, so far as to fancy that either Jews or Gentiles 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 it's blessings, was bestowed entirely by the free grace of God, and without any thing in men to merit it: besides, it was offered promiscuously to all, whether good or bad, and was embraced by persons of all character. The conclusion of the parable deserves our utmost attention; we should often meditate upon it, and take care to make our calling and election sure.

Our Lord having finished these discourses, he continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where the chief priests and elders, soon after the resurrection of Lazarus, issued a proclamation, promising a reward

to any one who should apprehend him. In all probability this, was the reason why the disciples were astonished at the alacrity of our Lord during this journey, while they themselves followed him trembling. JESUS, therefore, thought proper to repeat the prophecies concerning his sufferings, in order to shew his disciples that they were entirely voluntary; adding, that though the Jews should put him to death, yet, instead of weakening, it should increase their faith, especially as he would rise again the third day from the dead: *Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things that are written by the prophets, concerning the Son of man, shall be accomplished: for he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again,* Luke xviii. 31, 32, 33.

It must have given the greatest encouragement to our Lord's disciples, had they understood and applied this prediction, which was built upon the ancient prophecies, in a proper manner; but they were so ignorant in the Scriptures, that they had no idea of what he meant: *And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*

But the sons of Zebedee were so ignorant, that they thought their Master, by his telling them he would rise again from the dead, meant that he would then erect his empire; and, accordingly, begged that he would confer on them the chief posts in his kingdom, which they expressed, by desiring to be seated, the one on his right-hand, and the other on his left, in allusion to his placing the twelve apostles upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.

Ever since our Saviour's transfiguration, the sons of Zebedee had conceived very high notions of his kingdom, and possibly of their own merit also, because they had been admitted to behold that miracle: but

No. 7.

JESUS told them, they were ignorant of the nature of the honour they requested; and since they desired to share with him in his glory, asked them, if they were willing to share with him also in his sufferings: *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?* Matt. xx. 22. The two disciples, ravished with the prospect of the dignity they were aspiring after, replied without hesitation, that they were both able and willing to share any hardship their Master might meet with in the way to his kingdom. To which he answered, that they should certainly share with him his troubles and afflictions; but that they had asked a favour which was not his to give: *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 it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

The indignation of the rest of the disciples being raised by this ambitious request of the two brothers, they thinking themselves equally deserving the principal posts in the Messiah's kingdom, were highly offended at the arrogance of the sons of Zebedee. JESUS, therefore, in order to restore harmony amongst his disciples, told them, that his kingdom was very different from those of the present world; and that the greatness of his disciples did not, like that of secular princes, consist in reigning over others in an absolute and despotic manner: *Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be administered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

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C H A P T E R XXVII.

JESUS, being arrived at Jericho, giveth Sight to two blind Men near that Place: He visiteth Zaccheus the Publican, and delivers the Parable of a Nobleman who left Money with his Servants to trade with in his Absence: The Rulers give Orders to apprehend him: Being arrived at Bethany, Mary anointeth his Feet; Judas murmureth at the Cost. CHRIST rideth into Jerusalem upon an Ass, amidst the Acclamations of the Multitude, and weepeth over the city.

OUR Lord, with his disciples and the multitude that accompanied him, being now arrived at Jericho, in their way to Jerusalem, a famous city of Palestine, and the second in the kingdom. Near this town JESUS cured two blind men, who sat by the road begging, and expressed their belief in him, as the Messiah: *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. 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, Matt. xx. 29, 30, 31.*

The Son of God stood still at this importunate request of the two men, and called them to him, that, by their manner of walking, spectators might be convinced that they were really blind. As soon as they approached him, he asked them, what they requested with such earnestness? To which the beggars answered, that they might receive their sight: *What will ye, that I shall do unto you? They say, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* This request was not made in vain: their compassionate Saviour touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight, and followed him, glorifying and praising God. After conferring sight on these beggars, Zaccheus, chief of the publicans, having often heard the fame of our Lord's miracles, was desirous of seeing his person; but the lowness of his stature preventing him from satisfying his curiosity, *he ran before, and climbed up a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.* As JESUS approached the place where he was, he looked

up, and saw him, and said unto him, *Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house, Luke xix. 5.*

At which condescension of our Lord, the publican expressed his joy, carried him to his house, and shewed him all the marks of civility in his power. But the people, when they saw he was going to the house of a publican, condemned his conduct, as not conformable to the character of a prophet. Zaccheus seems to have heard these unjust reflections; and, therefore, was willing to justify himself before JESUS and his attendants: *And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him four-fold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*

Further to convince the people that he acted agreeable to his character, in keeping company with publicans and sinners, our Lord told them, that the true intention of his coming was to recover those who had wandered from the paths of virtue, and restore them to God the rightful owner: *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.* While JESUS continued in the house of Zaccheus the publican, he spake a parable to his followers, who supposed, at his arrival in the royal city, he would erect the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah: *A certain nobleman, said he, went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered to them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not*

have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

We have the characters of three sorts of men in this parable delineated by our blessed Saviour himself; namely, the true disciples of the Messiah, the hypocrites, and the openly prophane: and the treatment these servants met with, represents the final sentences that will be passed upon them by the awful Judge of the whole earth. The true disciples shall be rewarded with the honours and pleasures of immortality, the hypocrites stripped of all the advantages they so often boasted, and loaded with eternal infamy, and the open enemies of CHRIST, in proportion to the degree of their guilt, shall suffer severe punishment.

Although this be the general sense of the parable, yet it has also a particular relation

to the time when it was spoken; and was intended to teach the disciples, that though they might imagine that the Messiah's kingdom was speedily to be erected, and they were soon to partake of its happiness, yet this was not to happen before the death of their Master; that they themselves must perform a long and laborious course of services, before they received their eternal reward. That after his resurrection, when he had obtained the kingdom, he would return from his seat of majesty, and reckon with all his servants, and reward every one according to the improvements he had made in the trust committed to his care; and that he would execute, in an exemplary manner, his vengeance on those who refused to let him reign over them, and did all in their power to hinder the erection of his kingdom among others. After speaking this parable, JESUS left the house of Zaccheus the publican, and continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where he proposed to celebrate the passover; and was earnestly expected by the people, who came up to purify themselves, and who began to doubt whether he would venture to come to the feast. This delay, however, was occasioned by the proclamation issued by the chief priests, promising a reward to any one who would discover the place of his retirement: Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him. John xi. 57.

JESUS arrived at Bethany, six days before the passover, and repaired to the house of Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead: there they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor

always ye have with you ; but me ye have not always.

Bethany being not above two miles from Jerusalem, the news of our Lord's arrival was soon spread through the capital, and great numbers of the citizens came to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, together with the great prophet who had wrought so stupendous a miracle ; and many of them were convinced both of the resurrection of the former, and the divinity of the latter : but the news of their conversion, together with the reason of it, being currently reported in Jerusalem, the chief priests were soon sensible of the weight so great a miracle must have on the minds of the people ; and therefore determined to put both JESUS and Lazarus to death, if possible.

Our dear Lord was not ignorant of what the chief priests and elders had determined against him, but was so far from declining to visit Jerusalem, that he even entered it in a public manner. When they *were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, 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. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them ; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way : others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. 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. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee, Matt. xxi. 1—11.*

This circumstance of our Lord has given more occasion for profane wit and ridicule, than any before : we reckon an

ass to be a contemptible creature, and a man, especially a man of character, riding upon an ass, a ridiculous figure. These are prejudices of our own times and country. And when they, who look no further than the manners and customs before them, examine this part of the sacred story by the standard of modern prejudices, they see, or think they see, something quite inconsistent with the gravity and dignity of the person, pretending to be the king of the Jews, when Christ is represented entering in triumph into Jerusalem, sitting on an ass. But however contemptible an ass, or a man riding on that creature may be at present, it was not so from the beginning. In many countries, and particularly in Judea, persons of the highest distinction usually rode upon asses. The governors of Israel are described in the song of Deborah, as riding on white asses, Judg. v. 10. And the thirty sons of Jair, who was judge and prince over Israel twenty-two years, are said to ride on thirty asses, ch. x. 4. And another judge is recorded to have had forty sons, and thirty nephews, that rode on seventy ass colts, ch. xii. 14.

However, it may be asked, that supposing it was an usual thing to ride on an ass, why should this common practice be mentioned in relation to the Messiah, as a mark of distinction ? Might not the prophet, upon this supposition, as well have said, he shall come walking on foot ? And would he not have been as well known by one character as by the other ? Besides, if we turn to the book of Zechariah, where this prophecy is to be found, we shall see the person, there described, to be a king, a just king, and one having salvation : and what is there in this character, of riding on the foal of an ass, that is peculiar to a king, to a just king, and to one who was to bring salvation and deliverance to his people ?

However difficult these questions may at first sight appear, they are easily answered ; not by considering the state and condition of kings in general, but that peculiar to a king of Israel, on which is founded the propriety of this character.

We shall generally find, if we look into the history of the rise and fall of nations, that their prosperity and success were proportionable to their force and power, and to

the conduct and ability of their leaders. But with the Jews, who from slaves in Egypt became a powerful people, the case was very different. The best and greatest of their kings, and he who carried their empire to it's greatest height, has left us another account of their affairs: *The people, says he, got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them,* Psalm xlv. 3.

We are apt to ascribe these and other similar passages, to the piety and devotion of the Psalmist; to consider them only as acknowledgments of God's general providence in the affairs of the world; and hence are apt to overlook, or not sufficiently consider, the historical truths they contain. It is true, indeed, that all success, in the strictest sense, may be ascribed to God; that it is he who giveth victory unto kings; but he generally maketh use of natural means, and it is no offence to his providence, that kings lift their thousands of horse and foot to secure themselves and their dominions. But with the Jews it was very different: they were never so weak as when they made themselves strong; never so certainly ruined as when their force was great enough to create a confidence in themselves. For God had taken the defence of Israel upon himself: and, the people were sure to be undone when ever they took it out of his hands to place it in their own.

God was so tender of his honour in this respect, and so concerned to justify his promise to protect Israel in the eyes of the world, that he would not always permit natural causes to interfere in their deliverance, lest the people should grow doubtful to whom they ought to ascribe their victories. And for the same reason it was, that he commanded the people to have neither horses nor chariots of war for their defence: not because they were thought useless in war; for it is well known that they were the strength of the ancient kingdoms; but because God himself had undertaken their defence, and he wanted neither horse nor foot to fight their battles.

It is evident from the Jewish history, that this law was observed for near four hundred years; namely, till about the middle of

Solomon's reign. And while David swayed the sceptre of Israel, when the kingdom was carried to it's utmost height, he himself rode on a mule, and provided no better equipage for his son, on the day of his coronation: *Cause Solomon my son, said David, to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gibon; and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel,* 1 Kings i. 33, 34. And when that pious prince looked back, and contemplated this state of things, he might well say, *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God,* Psalm xx. 7.

But things quickly changed their aspect in the reign of Solomon: he married the daughter of the king of Egypt, and opened a commerce between that country and his own; by which means he soon acquired an immense number of horses and chariots; and all his successors, when they had it in their power, followed his example. But what did the kingdom gain by this change? They were before a rich and flourishing people; but after breaking this law of the Most High, their wealth and power gradually declined, till at last, their habitations were laid waste, their temple and cities burnt with fire, and they themselves carried captive into a strange land.

Perhaps it may be asked, wherein the guilt of having a country full of horses consisted? There is certainly no moral crime in purchasing and keeping these creatures; but the kings of Israel were exalted to the throne, on condition that they should renounce the assistance of chariots and horses, and depend upon God for success in the day of battle.

Thus having considered this law, and the consequences that resulted from the breach of it, let us now look back to the prophecy relating to the Messiah: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem,* Zech. ix. 9, 10.

The descendants of Jacob were to be saved by such a king: and what sort of a king could be expected? Is it possible to imagine that God would send a king to

save them who should be like the kings which had undone them? Is it not more reasonable to think, that he would resemble those who had been deliverers of their country? Kings who feared God, and therefore feared no enemy; who, though mounted on asses, and colts the foals of asses, were able to put to flight the thousands and ten thousands of chariots and horses that came against them.

The king, foretold by the prophet, was also to be just, meek, and lowly; but how could he have deserved that character, had he appeared in the pride and pomp of war, surrounded with horses and chariots, in direct opposition to the law of God? Or, as he was to bring salvation to the people, could he make use of those means which God never had prospered, and which he declared he never would?

By this it appears, that it was essential to the character of a king of Israel, who was to be just and lowly, and to bring salvation with him, that he should come riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass; but if any doubt can yet remain, let the prophet himself explain it, who immediately after the description of the promised king, adds, *and I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem*: plainly intimating, that the character given of the Messiah, that he should ride on an ass, was in opposition to the pride of their warlike kings, who had ruined themselves and their people, by their great strength in chariots and horses.

We have thus undeniably shewn the intention of the prophet, when he foretold, that the Messiah should ride on an ass; and from hence it appears, that the enemies of revelation have not the least reason for turning this transaction into ridicule. Was it any reproach to CHRIST to ride into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, when David, the greatest of his ancestors, and Solomon the wisest, as long as he was wise, rode in the same manner? Can the Jews object to this circumstance, and yet talk of the glories of David, and the magnificence of Solomon, who in the midst of all that glory and magnificence did the very same thing? Or can they stumble at this character of the Messiah, without forgetting by what princes their ancestors were saved, and by what undone?

But to return. The prodigious multitude that now accompanied JESUS filled the Pharisees and great men with malice and envy, because every method they had taken to hinder the people from following JESUS, had proved ineffectual: *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after him,* John xii. 19.

As our blessed Redeemer drew near the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, notwithstanding the many affronts he had there received, he beheld the city; and with a divine generosity and benevolence, which nothing can equal, wept over it; and, in the most pathetic manner, lamented the calamities which he foresaw were coming upon it, because it's inhabitants were ignorant of the time of their visitation: *If, said he, thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation,* Luke xix. 42, 43, 44.

Ye wandering mortals, behold here an example and generosity infinitely superior to any furnished by the heathen world; an example highly worthy for them to imitate and admire!

When our Lord entered Jerusalem, surrounded by the multitude, the whole city was moved on account of the prodigious concourse of people that accompanied him, and by their continual acclamations. JESUS rode immediately to the temple; but it being evening, he soon left the city, to the great discouragement of the people who expected he was immediately to have taken into his hands the reins of government: *And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve,* Mark xi. 11.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JESUS curseth the barren Fig-Tree: He driveth the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, and healeth the Diseased there: His Reply to the Pharisees who took Offence at the Praises of the People: The cursed Fig-Tree is dried up: CHRIST exhorteth to Faith in prayer, and to Forgiveness of Enemies: Certain Greeks desire to see him: He sheweth the Benefit of his Death to Believers; prayeth to his Father; is answered by a Voice from Heaven; signifieth the Manner of his Death; and exhorteth to make good Use of the present Light. The Generality of the Jews believe not; yet many chief Rulers believe, but dare not confess him: He urgeth Faith in his divine Mission: He silenceth the Priests and Elders who questioned his Authority: He delivers the Parable of the two Sons whom their Father sent to work in his Vineyard; the Parable of the Vineyard let out to wicked Husbandmen; and the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, wherein is shewn the Unworthiness of those that were first bidden, that others were called in their Room, and the Punishment of one that came without having on the Wedding-Garment.

EARLY the next morning, our dear Lord left Bethany, to visit again the capital of Judea: and, as he pursued his journey, he saw at a distance a fig-tree, which, from it's fulness of leaves, promised abundance of fruit. This inviting object, induced him to approach it, in expectation of finding figs; for he was hungry, and the season for gathering them was not yet arrived: but, on his coming to the tree, he found it to be really barren; upon which our blessed Lord said to it, *Let no fruit grow on thee for ever*, Matt. xxi. 19.

This transaction of our Lord which was purely emblematical, and prefigured the speedy ruin of the Jewish nation, on account of it's unfruitfulness, under all the advantages it then enjoyed, has, by the enemies to revelation, been represented as an action unbecoming the Redeemer of mankind: but, if they had fully considered it's intention, they would have been convinced, that, like the rest of his miracles, it was done with a gracious intention; namely, to awaken his countrymen from their lethargy, and prevent the total ruin of their church and nation, by repentance.

Our blessed Saviour, being disappointed in finding fruit on this fig-tree, pursued his journey to Jerusalem; and, on his arrival, went straightway to the temple, the outer court of which he found full of merchandise. A sight like this, vexed his meek and righteous soul: so that having

made a small scourge of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer any vessel to be carried through the temple; saying unto them, *Is it not written, my house shall be called of all nations, a house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

This is considered by St. Jerom as one of the greatest of all our Saviour's miracles; and it must be owned that the circumstances are very extraordinary, that one man should undertake so bold, and execute so hazardous a task; one man, without a commission from Cæsar, without any countenance from the Jewish rulers, without any arms, either to terrify the multitude, or defend himself; that he should cast out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers, wrest from those worshippers of wealth their darling idol, and trample under foot their great Dianna; and all this without tumult or opposition: not one of the sacrilegious rabble daring to move the hand, or open the mouth.

According to tradition, a certain bright and dazzling lustre flashed from his eyes, which the people were unable to bear, as they formerly could not behold the face of Moses, for the glory that surrounded him: but as the Scriptures take no notice of this transcendent lustre, we must only adore the greatness of the fact, and, at the same time,

so improve this miracle to our spiritual advantage, as to secure, by accepting his grace, the power of this Mighty Reformer on our sides, that when he shall come in glory, we may be safe under the shadow of his almighty wings, while he takes fearful vengeance on those who have defiled his holy temple, and made it a den of thieves; and those who have robbed Omnipotence of his due, will then find their souls deprived of their everlasting rewards in the happy mansions of a blessed eternity.

The temple being thus cleared by our blessed Lord, of this avaricious tribe of dealers, the people brought unto him the blind, the lame, and the diseased, who were all healed by the Son of God; so that the very children proclaimed him to be the great Son of David, the long expected Messiah, when they saw the many miraculous cures he performed.

The Pharisees were highly provoked at these transactions, but they feared the people, and therefore only asked him, if he heard what the children said? insinuating that he ought to rebuke them, and not suffer them thus to load him with the highest praises. But JESUS, instead of giving a direct answer to their question, repeated a passage out of the eighth Psalm: *Have ye never read, said the blessed JESUS, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise?* Giving them to understand, that the meanest of God's works are so formed, as to declare the greatness of his protection; and that if the Father does not refuse the praise which arises from the least of his creatures, so the Son did not disdain that offered him by children. In the present juncture, praise was peculiarly acceptable, as it implied, that his miracles were so exceedingly illustrious, that they led the tender minds of children, illuminated only with the dawning of reason, to acknowledge him for the Messiah so earnestly desired, and so long expected, by all the descendants of Jacob.

In the evening, our Lord with his disciples, left the city and retired to Bethany, where his benevolent miracle, in raising Lazarus from the dead, had procured him many friends, among whom he was always in safety. The next morning, as they were returning to Jerusalem, the disciples were astonished at beholding the fig-tree that had

been but the morning before declared barren, *dried up from the roots*: they had, in all probability, forgotten what our Saviour had said to this fig-tree, till its dry and withered aspect brought it again to their memory. Peter, on seeing this astonishing phenomenon, said unto JESUS, *Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away!* To which JESUS, answered, that whoever hath faith in the Almighty, or thoroughly believed in his miracles, should be able to do much greater things than the withering of the fig-tree: *And Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe, that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith, Mark xi. 22, 23.*

He also added, that whatsoever they should ask by faith, they should receive; and concluded, by giving them directions concerning prayer, which was necessary to increase the faith he mentioned: *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven, forgive your trespasses.*

During our dear Redeemer's continuance in the temple, certain proselyted Greeks, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, desired to see him, having long cherished expectations of beholding the promised Messiah. Accordingly, they applied to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, who mentioned it to Andrew, and he told it to JESUS. Upon which our blessed Saviour told his disciples, that he should soon be honoured with the conversion of the Gentiles: *The hour is come, said he, that the Son of man should be glorified.* But declared, that before this glorious event happened, he must suffer death; illustrating the necessity there was of his dying, by the similitude of casting grain into the earth: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit, John xii. 24.* Adding, that since it was absolutely necessary for him, their Lord and Master, to suffer the pains

of death before he ascended the throne of his glory; so they, as his followers, must also expect, to be persecuted and spitefully used for his name-sake; but if they persevered, and even resolved to lose their lives in his service, he would reward their constancy with a crown of glory. And at the same time he tacitly insinuated, that the strangers, if their desire of conversing with him proceeded from an expectation of obtaining temporal preferments, would find themselves greatly disappointed: *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

Thus having surveyed his own sufferings, and proposed them as an example to his disciples, the melancholy prospect so greatly moved him, that he uttered in a very pathetic manner his grief, and addressed his heavenly Father for succour in his distress: *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

We should learn by this example of our Lord, that prayer is the only method of easing the mind overwhelmed with distress; but, at the same time, to be always resigned to the Divine Will: for, though the weakness of human nature may shrink when persecutions or sufferings of any kind appear in all their hideous forms; yet, by reflecting on the wisdom, goodness, and power of God to deliver us, we ought to support every trial, however severe, with patience, as he doubtless proposes some happy end by these afflictions.

Our dear Redeemer, having given vent to his melancholy reflections, and made a short prayer to his heavenly Father, begged of God to demonstrate the truth of his mission, by some token which could not be resisted: *Father, glorify thy name.* Nor had the great Saviour of mankind hardly uttered these words, before he was answered by an audible voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* The miracles thou hast already performed have glorified my name; and, by other miracles to be wrought before the sons of men, I will still continue to glorify it.

This voice was evidently preternatural, resembling thunder in loudness, but sufficiently articulate to be understood by those who heard our blessed Saviour pray to his heavenly Father. And JESUS told his disciples, that it was not given for his sake, but to confirm them in their faith of his mission: *This voice, said he, came not because of me, but for your sakes.* It came to confirm what I have told you relating to my sufferings, death, resurrection, and the conversion of the whole Gentile world to the Christian religion,

A prospect like this, could not fail of being agreeable to that compassionate Being, who came down from heaven to redeem lost and undone mankind, and of removing the melancholy thoughts that afflicted his spotless soul: and accordingly he communicated this comfortable reflection to his disciples, telling them that the time was at hand when the kingdom of Satan should be destroyed, and the sons of men exalted with himself into the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan: *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

But the people on hearing our blessed Redeemer affirm, that he was to suffer death on the cross, or as he termed it, *be lifted up from the earth,* could not reconcile what he said with the prophecies made concerning the Messiah, whom they supposed was never to taste of death: *We have heard, said they, out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?* To which our blessed Lord replied, that they should soon be deprived of his presence and miracles, and therefore they would do well to listen attentively to his precepts, firmly believe the doctrines he delivered, and wisely improve them to their eternal advantage; for otherwise they would be soon overtaken with spiritual blindness, and rendered incapable of inheriting the promises of the gospel: that while they enjoyed the benefit of his preaching and miracles, which sufficiently proved the truth of his mission from the Most high, they should believe on him, for by that means alone they could become the children of God: *Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you*

have the light, lest darkness come upon you : for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

Having spoken these words to the people, our dear Lord retired privately from Jerusalem, probably to Bethany ; but, notwithstanding the many miracles our great Redeemer had wrought in the presence of this perverse and stiff-necked people, the generality of them refused to own him for the Messiah ; being filled with the vain expectations of a temporal prince, who was to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, and place his throne in Jerusalem. Some, indeed, even of the rulers, believed on him, though, valuing the good opinion of men above the approbation of the Almighty, they thought it prudent to conceal their faith, lest they should, like the blind man, be excommunicated, or put out of the synagogue.

But our Redeemer being willing to cherish the least glimmerings of faith, wherever it appeared, he soon returned to Jerusalem ; and to inspire such as believed on him with courage, he cried in the temple, *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.* As if he had said, the doctrine I preach to the children of men, is so evidently from God, that he who believeth on me, believeth more properly on the Almighty, who sent me into the world, and by whose authority alone I preach the gospel : adding, he that seeth the miracles I perform, seeth the operations of that omnipotent Power by which I act : I am the Sun of Righteousness, whose beams dispel the darkness of ignorance in which the sons of men are involved, and am come to deliver all who believe on me, out of that palpable darkness. You must not however expect, that I will at present execute my judgments upon those who refuse to embrace the doctrines of the gospel ; for I am not come to condemn and punish, but to save the world, and consequently to try every gentle and winning method to reclaim the wicked from the error of their ways, and turn their feet into the paths of virtue, which lead to the happy mansions of my Father's kingdom : they shall not, however, escape unpunished who neglect the instructions and offers of salvation now

made to them ; for the doctrine I have preached, shall bear witness against them at the awful tribunal of the last day ; and as it has aggravated their sin, so it shall then heighten their punishment. I well know, that the doctrines and precepts which the Father hath commanded me to preach, are the only conditions of eternal life ; and, therefore, I have proposed them with the greatest faithfulness, perspicuity, and confidence ; consequently I am worthy of credit, both with regard to my mission, and the faithfulness with which I have executed the commands of the Most High.

A deputation of priests and elders was sent from the supreme council, while our Lord was thus preaching in the temple, to ask him concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted, whether it was as prophet, priest, or king, as no other person had a right to make any alterations either in church or state ; and, if he laid claim to either of those characters, from whom he received it ? But our blessed Saviour, instead of giving a direct answer to the question of the Pharisees, asked them another ; promising, if they resolved his question, he would also answer theirs : *I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like manner will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it ? from heaven or of men ?* Matt. xxi. 24, 25.

The Priests were reduced, by this question, to an inextricable dilemma : they considered, on the one hand, that if they said it was from God, it would oblige them to acknowledge the authority of JESUS, John having more than once publicly declared him to be the Messiah ; and, on the other, if they peremptorily denied the authority of John, they would be in danger of being stoned by the people, who, in general, considered him as a prophet : they therefore thought it the most eligible method to answer, that they could not tell from whence John's baptism was. Thus, by declining to answer the question asked them by JESUS, they left him at liberty to decline giving the council the satisfaction they had sent to demand : and, at the same time, they plainly confessed, that they were unable to pass any sentence on John the Baptist, notwithstanding he claimed the character of a messenger from

God, and they had sent to examine his pretensions. This was, in effect, to acknowledge, that they were incapable of judging of any prophet whatsoever; well, therefore, might the blessed JESUS say, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.* You have no right to ask, since you have confessed you are unable to judge; and, for that reason, I shall not satisfy your inquiry.

This deputation of the elders having said that they were ignorant from whence the baptism of John was, our blessed Saviour sharply rebuked them, conveying his reproof in the parable of the two sons commanded to work in their father's vineyard; and made them condemn themselves, by asking their opinion of the two.

A certain man, said he, had two sons: and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. But this ungracious youth very roughly answered the kind command of his father, and, without the least preface, or appellation of respect, answered, *I will not:* but, after reflecting on the impropriety and indecency of such behaviour to his kind and indulgent father, he repented of what he had done, and went to work in the vineyard. The father having met with so harsh a reply from the former son, had recourse to the other, and in the same manner, ordered him to work that day in his vineyard. This son was very different from the former, and in a very dutiful manner said, *I go Sir.* But, notwithstanding this seeming obedience, he delayed to do as his father desired; he did not go to work in the vineyard. The temper and behaviour of this second son were exactly conformable to that of the Pharisees: they gave the Almighty the most honourable titles, and professed the utmost zeal for his service, in their prayers and praises; but at the same time refused to do any part of the work that he enjoined them. In the character of the other son, the disposition of the publicans and harlots is well described. They neither professed or promised to do the will of their Creator; but when they came to reflect seriously on their conduct, and the offers of mercy which were so kindly made them, they submitted to our Saviour, and amended their lives in consequence of their faith.

Our Lord having thus finished the parable, asked the Pharisees, *Whether of them twain did the will of his Father? They say unto him, the first.* They did not immediately perceive, that by this answer they condemned themselves, till our Saviour made a just application of the parable, in this sharp, but just rebuke: *Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, nor entered into your father's vineyard, though like the second son, you promise in the most fair and candid manner: but the publicans and the harlots believed him, repented of their former disobedience, and entered into the vineyard.*

Our blessed Lord did not rest satisfied with shewing the Pharisees the heinousness of their sin in rejecting the Baptist, but he thought proper also to represent the crime of the nation in rejecting all the prophets which had been sent since they became a nation, and among the rest, the only begotten Son of the Most High; warning them, at the same time, of their danger, and the punishment that would inevitably ensue, if they continued in their rebellion. The outward œconomy of religion, in which they gloried, would be taken from them; their relation to God, as his people, cancelled; and the national constitution destroyed: but because these topics were extremely disagreeable, he delivered them under the veil of the following parable: *There was, said he, a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.*

We frequently find in the sacred Scriptures, the comparison of the church to a vineyard; but this particular parable, for the fuller conviction of the Jews, is expressly taken from the fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, with which they could not fail of being well acquainted, nor ignorant of its meaning, as the prophet at the end of it adds: *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.* Our Saviour, therefore, continued the meta-

phor, telling them ; *That when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.* The Almighty sent the prophets to exhort the Jews to entertain just sentiments of religion, and tread the paths of virtue ; but the Jews, extremely irritated at the prophets for the freedom they used in reproving their sins persecuted and slew them with unrelenting fury. Their wickedness, however, in killing these messengers, did not instantly provoke the Almighty to pour down his vengeance upon them ; he sent more prophets to exhort and reclaim them, but they met with no better fate than the former. His mercy however still continued ; and that no means might be left untried, he sent unto them his own son, whose authority, being clearly established by undeniable miracles, ought to have been acknowledged cheerfully by these wicked men : but how different was the consequence ? *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. When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen ? They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

On hearing this answer made by the Pharisees, the people said, *God forbid ; surely these husbandmen will not proceed to such desperate iniquity ; surely the vineyard will not thus be taken from them.* But, to confirm the truth of this, our Saviour added a remarkable prophecy of himself, and of his rejection, from the 118th Psalm : *Did ye never, said he, 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 marvellous in our eyes.*

The rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and the reception he met with among the Gentiles, all brought to pass by the providence of God, are wonderful events : and therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The chief priests, perceiving the drift of our Saviour's parable, were highly incensed, and would gladly have apprehended him ; but they feared the people, who acknowledged him as the Messiah while they surrounded him in the temple.

But as the rulers were afraid to apprehend JESUS, he was at liberty to proceed in the offices of his ministry ; accordingly he delivered another parable, wherein he described on the one hand, the bad success which the preaching of the gospel was to meet with amongst the Jews ; and, on the other, the cheerful reception given it among the Gentiles. This gracious design of the Almighty, in giving the gospel to the children of men, our blessed Saviour illustrated by the behaviour of a certain king, who, in honour of his son, made a great feast, to which he invited many guests : *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king ; which made a marriage for his son.* This marriage-supper, or great feast, signifies the joys of heaven, which are properly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquisiteness and duration ; and are here said to be prepared in honour of the Son of God, being bestowed on men as a reward for their obedience.

But before the supper was ready, the servants were sent forth to call the guests to the wedding ; that is when the fulness of time approached, the Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were first called to the great feast of heaven by John the Baptist, and afterwards by CHRIST himself ; but they refused all these benevolent calls of mercy, and rejected the kind invitations of the gospel, though pressed by the preaching of the Messiah, and his forerunner. After our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, the apostles were sent forth to inform the Jews, that the gospel-covenant was established ; that mansions in heaven was prepared ; and that nothing was wanting but their cheerful acceptance of the honour designed them : *Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner : my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready : come unto the marriage.* But

these messengers were as unsuccessful as the former. The Jews undervaluing the favour offered them, mocked at the message; and some of them, more rude than the rest, insulted, beat, and slew the servants that had been sent to call them to the marriage-supper, of the lamb: *But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.* This branch of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called here the armies of the Almighty, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance on that once favourite, but now rebellious people.

The benevolent calls of the gospel being thus rejected by the Jews, the king again sent forth his servants into the countries of the Gentiles, with orders to compel all that they met with to come in to the marriage. This was immediately done, and the wedding was furnished with guests: but when the king came into the apartment, *he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: for many are called, but few are chosen, Matt. xxii. 11.*

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No. 8.

The latter part of the parable represents the final judgment, and teaches us, that though the Gentiles obeyed the call of the gospel with more alacrity than the Jews, yet they should not all be saved. And by the conclusion of the parable we learn, that the profession of the Christian religion will not save a man, unless he lives in a manner conformable to it's precepts. Let us, therefore, who have obeyed the call, and are by profession the people of God, think often on that awful day, when the King will come in to see his guests, when the Almighty will, with the greatest strictness, view every soul that lays claim to the joys of heaven; let us think of the speechless confusion that will seize such as have not on the wedding-garment, and of the inexorable anxiety with which they will be consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth; and let us remember, that to have seen for a while the light of the gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more sensible horrors to these gloomy caverns. On the other hand, to animate and encourage us, let us think also on the harmony, pomp, and beauty of heaven, that will add to the solemnity, the magnificence, and the joys of the happy time, when the marriage-supper of the Lamb shall be celebrated.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

Our Saviour answers the insidious Question of the Pharisees concerning paying Tribute to Cæsar: He confuteth the Sadducees who questioned him touching the Resurrection: He sheweth which are the two great Commandments of the Law: He proposeth to the Pharisees a Question concerning himself: He exhorteth to observe the Doctrine, but not to follow the evil Examples, of the Scribes and Pharisees; and particularly, not to imitate their Ambition; He pronounceth divers Woes against the Scribes and Pharisees for their Blindness and Hypocrisy; and prophesieth the Destruction of Jerusalem.

THE parable of the marriage-supper incensed the Pharisees in such a manner, that they immediately concerted with the Herodians or Sadducees on the most proper method of putting our Lord to death. It is sufficiently evident, that their hatred was now carried to the highest pitch, because the most violent enmity which had so long subsisted between the two sects, was on this occasion suspended, and they joined together to execute this cruel determination on the Son of God: they, however, thought it most eligible to act very cautiously, and endeavour, if possible, to catch some hasty expression from him, that they might render him odious to the people, and procure something against him, that might serve as a basis for a prosecution. Accordingly, they sent some of their disciples to him, with orders to feign themselves just men, who maintained the greatest veneration for the law, and dreaded nothing more than the doing any thing inconsistent with it's precepts; and, under this specious cloak of hypocrisy, to beg his determination of an affair that had long lain heavy on their consciences; namely, the paying tribute to Cæsar, which they thought inconsistent with their zeal for religion. This question was, it seems, furiously debated in our Saviour's time; one Judas, a native of Galilee, having inspired the people with a notion, that taxes to a foreign power were absolutely unlawful. A doctrine so pleasing to the worldly-minded Jews, could not fail of friends, especially among the lower class; and therefore, must have many partizans amongst the multitude that then surrounded the Son of God. The priests, therefore, imagined, that it was not in his power to

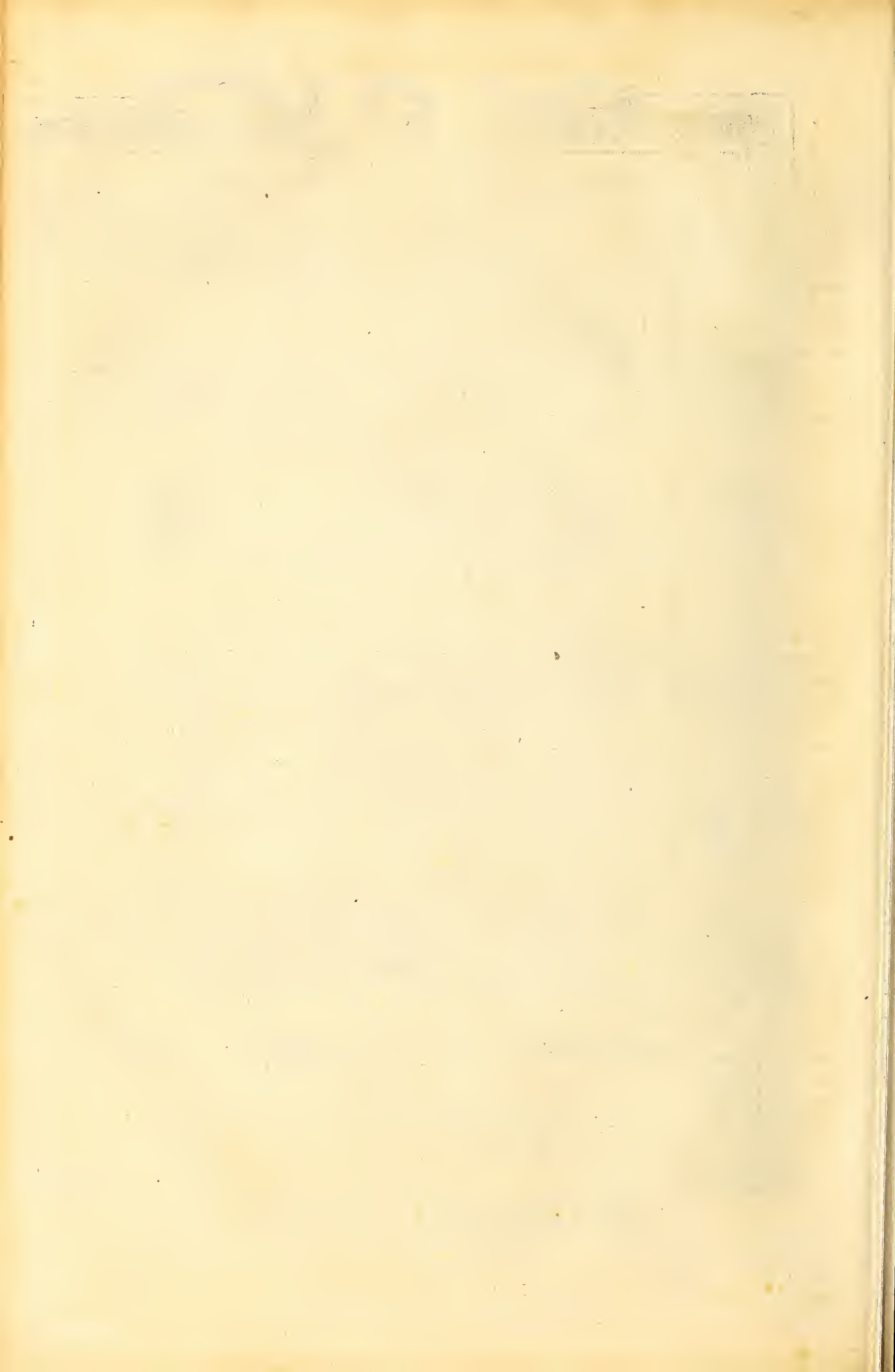
decide the point, without rendering himself obnoxious to some of the parties: if he should say it was lawful to pay the taxes, they believed, that the people in whose hearing the question was proposed, would be incensed against him, not only as a base pretender, who, on being attacked, publicly renounced the character of the Messiah, which he had assumed among his friends, but also as a flatterer of princes, and a betrayer of the liberties of his country, one who taught doctrines inconsistent with the known privileges of the people of God: but if he should affirm, that it was unlawful to pay tribute, they determined to inform the governor, who, they hoped, would punish him as a fomentor of sedition. Highly elated with their project, they accordingly came; and, after passing an encomium on the truth of his mission, his courage, and his impartiality, they proposed this famous question: *Master, said they, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou, is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?*

However, though they had artfully laid the scheme, they could not deceive our blessed Lord, who beheld the inmost recesses of their hearts: he saw their secret intentions; and accordingly called them hypocrites, to signify, that though they made conscience, and a regard for the divine will, their pretence for proposing this question, he saw their design, and knew that their intention was only to ensnare him.

Nevertheless, our blessed Saviour did not decline answering their question, but



The Conference of CHRIST with the Pharisees concerning the Tribute Money.



previously desired to see a piece of the tribute money. The piece was accordingly produced, and proved to be coined by the Romans. Upon which our dear Lord answered them, since this money bears the image of Cæsar, it is his; and by making use of it, you acknowledge his authority: if so, I leave it to yourselves, to judge whether tribute ought not to be paid towards the support of that government which ye have acknowledged which ye cannot shake off, and by which your tranquillity is preserved: but, at the same time that you discharge your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never forget the duty you owe to your God; but remember, that as you bear the image of the great, the omnipotent King, you are his subjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of yourselves, serving him to the very utmost of your power.

Under a pretence of religion, the Pharisees and their followers 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, however opposite their commands might be to the divine law. Our Lord, therefore, adapted his answer to them both, exhorting them in their regards to God and the magistrate, to give each his due; as, when their rights only are insisted on, there can be no inconsistency between them.

JESUS, by so unexpected an answer, confuted them on their own principles, and shewed, that the rights of God, and those of the magistrate, do not in the least interfere; because magistrates are God's deputies, and rule by his authority: this quite disconcerted and silenced these crafty enemies; they were astonished both at his having discovered their design, and his wisdom in avoiding the snare they had so artfully laid for him: *When they heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way, Matt. xxii. 22.*

But the miscarriage of this scheme did not intimidate others from renewing the attack; enemies came against him from every quarter. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of a future state: together with the existence of angels and spirits, first returned to the charge; proposing to him their strongest argument

against the resurrection, which they deduced from the law given by Moses, with regard to marriage: *Master, said they. Moses wrote unto us: If a man's brother die having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore, seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children and died. Last of all the women died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife, Luke xx. 28—33.*

But the Sadducees, believing the soul to be nothing more than a refined matter, were persuaded, that if there was any future state, it must resemble the present; and the being in that state material and mortal, the human race could not be continued, nor the individuals rendered happy, without the pleasures and conveniences of marriage: and hence considered, that every man's wife should be restored to him, as a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, or a future state.

But our blessed Saviour soon confuted this argument, by telling the Pharisees they were ignorant of the power of God, who had created spirit as well as matter, and who can render man completely happy in the enjoyment of himself. He also observed, that the nature of the life obtained in a future state, made marriage altogether superfluous, because in the world to come, men being spiritual and immortal, like the angels, there was no need of natural means to propagate or continue the kind: *Ye do err, said our dear Lord, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, Matt. xxii. 29. Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, Luke xx. 36.* Hence we may observe, that good men are called the children of the Most High, from their inheritance at the resurrection, and particularly on account of their being adorned with immortality.

Having thus shewn their ignorance of the true nature of a future state, and the difference between corporal and spiritual

beings, our dear Lord proceeded to shew that they were also ignorant of the Scriptures, and particularly of the writings of Moses, from whence they had drawn their objection: for he demonstrated, from the very law itself, the certainty of a resurrection, at least that of just men, and consequently quite demolished the opinion of the Sadducees, who, by believing the materiality of the soul, affirmed that men were annihilated at their death, and that their opinion was founded on the writings of Moses: *Now, said our Saviour, that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him, Luke xx. 37, 38.* As if he had said, The Almighty cannot properly be called God, unless he has his people, and be Lord of the living. Since, therefore, Moses called him the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, long after these venerable patriarchs were dead, the relation denoted by the word *God* still subsisted between them: consequently they were not annihilated as you pretend, but are still in being, and continue to be the servants of the Most High. This argument was conclusive; it affectually silenced the Sadducees, and agreeably surprised the people, to see the objection, hitherto thought impregnable, totally abolished, and the sect they had long abominated, fully confuted: *And when the multitude heard this they were astonished at his doctrine Matt. xxii. 33.*

Though the Pharisees had joined with the Sadducees, in order to put our blessed Saviour to death, they could not fail of being pleased to see their inveterate enemies put to silence, and the famous argument they had so often proposed with ostentation, as unanswerable, fully confuted. Nor could they refrain from giving the Saviour of mankind the praise due to his superlative wisdom; for one of the Scribes desired him to give his opinion, on a question often debated among their teachers; namely, which was the great commandment of the law. The true reason for their proposing this question, was to try whether he was as well acquainted with the sacred law, and the debates that

had arisen on different parts of it, as he was in deriving arguments from the inspired writers, to destroy the tenets of those who denied a future state.

In order to understand the question proposed to our blessed Saviour by the Scribe, it must be remembered, that some of the most learned Rabbins had declared, that the law of sacrifices was the great commandment; some, that it was the law of circumcision; and others, that the law of meats and washings best merited that title. Our blessed Saviour, however, shewed that they were all mistaken; and that the great commandment of the law is the duty of piety; and particularly mentioned that comprehensive summary of it, given by Moses: *Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment, Mark xii. 29, 30.*

Here I cannot help observing, that this summary of piety begins with an emphatical assertion of there being only one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and the possessor of all perfections, in order to induce us to use the utmost diligence in obeying his precepts; the first and chief of which is, to give him our hearts. The Divine Being is so transcendently amiable in himself, and hath by the innumerable benefits conferred upon us, such a title to our utmost affection, that no obligation 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 love, founded on a clear and extensive view of the Divine perfections, 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 that beauty be matter of sensation or reflection; that we frequently, and with pleasure, reflect on the benefits conferred on us by the object of our affections; that we have a strong desire of pleasing him, great fear of doing any thing to offend him, and a sensible joy in thinking we are beloved in return. Hence the duties of devotion, prayer, and praise, are

the most natural and genuine exercises of the love of God: nor is this virtue so much any single affection, as the continual bent of all the affections and powers of the soul; consequently to love God is as much as possible to direct the whole soul towards him, and to exercise all it's faculties on him as it's chief object.

Accordingly, the love of God is described in Scripture, by the several operations of the mind, *a following hard after God*, namely, by intense contemplation; a sense of his perfections, gratitude for his benefits, trust in his goodness, attachment to his service, resignation to his providence, the obeying of his commandments, admiration, hope, fear, joy, &c. not because it consists in any of those singly, but in them altogether: for to content ourselves with partial regards to the Supreme Being, is not to be affected towards him in the manner we ought to be, and which his perfections claim. Hence the words of the precept are, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*; that is, with the joint force of all thy faculties; and, therefore, no idol whatsoever must partake of the love and worship that is due to him alone. But the beauty and excellency of this state of mind is best seen in it's effects; for the worship and obedience flowing from such an universal bent of the soul towards God, is as much superior to the worship and obedience arising from partial considerations, as the brightness of the sun is to any picture that can be drawn of that luminary. Thus, for example, if we look upon God, only as a stern law-giver, who can and 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 perform it in it's 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 that constitutes the highest perfection and happiness of the creature, and, therefore, the most excellent that can be conceived, and the most to be desired.

We should always earnestly desire to be blessed with the presence of the Most High, our souls should pant after him, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, and even thirst for the Living God. Again, this commandment requires us to fear God; and certainly we cannot love the Lord our God, unless we fear and reverence him: for as the love, so the fear of God, is the sum of all the commandments, and, indeed, the substance of all religion. If we acknowledge there is a God, it is but reasonable we should fear his essential greatness and glory; for you open a passage for a deluge of villany and wickedness, if you take away the fear of a Deity, and that of a Supreme Power, that can reward and punish the actions of men.

It is not enough that we love and fear the Most High, we must also call upon the name of God in our prayers and praises: love and fear respect the inward worship of God in our hearts, and by this act of outward worship, we give an express testimony that we love and fear him: prayer and praises are the tribute and homage of religion, by the one we acknowledge our dependance upon God, by the other we confess, that all our blessings and comforts are from him. Such, therefore, as neither pray to God nor praise him, cannot be said to have a God, for they acknowledge none, but are gods to themselves; and as the love and fear of God are often used in Scripture for his whole worship and service, so is this calling upon his name; *Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that have not called upon thy name*, Jer. x. 25.

But to return.—Our blessed Saviour having thus answered the question put to him by the Scribe, added, that the second commandment was that which enjoined the love of our neighbour. This had, indeed, no relation to the lawyer's question concerning the first commandment; yet our blessed Lord thought proper to shew him which was the second, probably because the men of his sect did not acknowledge the importance and precedency of love to their neighbours, or because they were remarkably deficient in the practice of it, as JESUS himself had often found in their attempts to kill him: *And the second*

is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Our natures must be brought to a temper that is all love and goodness, if we would become like God, who is love; and if our souls dwell in love, then we dwell in God, and God in us. This principle will be also fruitful in every good work; it will make us readily perform the duties of all relations in which we stand: and because love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore it is the fulfilling of the law; for it will prompt us to a cheerful and ready performance of every office, whether of justice or charity, that we owe to our neighbour: all the best things we can do, if destitute of this principle, will appear to be either the effect of hypocrisy, or done to procure the esteem of men: without love, a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others only as a sort of merchandize, trading for our own advantage: it is love only that opens our hearts to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather on account of God, who is love.

Those who possess the effects of this excellent temper, well deserve our consideration: they have a constant calm within, and are not disturbed with passion, jealousy, envy, or ill-nature: they observe and rejoice in the happiness of others, they are glad to see them easy, and share with them in their joy and felicity, not fretting or complaining, though they enjoy less than their neighbours. It is true, love has a very different effect; for the same temper will render many so considerate of the misfortunes of others, as to sympathize with them in their distress, and be greatly affected with such objects of compassion as it is not in their power to assist: but there is a real pleasure even in this compassion, as it melts us into the greatest tenderness, and proves us to be men and Christians. The good man, by the overflowings of his love, is sure that he is a favourite with his Maker, because he loves his neighbour: his soul, therefore, dwells at ease; there is a sweetness in all his thoughts and wishes: this makes him clear in his views of things; no vapours, no clouds darken him, but an inward serenity reigns in his mind, and such a liveliness in all his thoughts, as

spreads a cheerfulness in his looks, and renders him grateful to all about him.

A constant disposition for prayer, is also maintained in him who has this charitable temper: a calm mind is easily recollected; but nothing dissipates the thoughts more, and renders them less fixed and attentive than passion. A charitable man, who has had occasions to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares, with an humble assurance, to lay claim to mercy and pardon: for though he is ready to acknowledge, he is many talents indebted to his Maker; yet being of a forgiving temper, he has an argument to plead for mercy and forgiveness, and to conclude that *much will be forgiven him, because he loveth much*. There is such a likeness and sympathy between the spirit of love, and the spirit of true devotion, that they have a sensible influence upon each other, and the one will rise or fall in proportion to the other.

But to return from this digression, which we flatter ourselves has not been disagreeable to the reader, we shall go back to the Scribe, who was astonished at the justness of our Saviour's decisions, and answered, that he had determined rightly, since there is but one Supreme God, whom we must all adore; and if we love him as much as we are able, and without a rival, and our neighbour as ourselves, we worship him more acceptably than if we sacrifice to him all the cattle upon a thousand hills. And our Lord declared, that the person who made this reflection, was not far from the kingdom of God, and highly applauded the piety and wisdom of it.

During the course of our Saviour's ministry, the Pharisees having proposed to him many difficult questions with an intention to prove his prophetic gifts, he now, in his turn, thought proper to make a trial of their skill in the sacred writings. For this purpose, he asked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Messiah's pedigree: *What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David*, Matt. xxii. 42. I know, answered JESUS, you say, CHRIST is the son of David; but how can you support that opinion, or render it consistent with the words of David, who himself calls him Lord; and *how is he his son?* It seems, that the

Jewish doctors did not imagine that their Messiah would be indued with any perfections greater than those that might be enjoyed by human nature; for though they called him the Son of God, they had no notion that he was God, and therefore could not pretend to solve the difficulty.

The latter question, however, might have convinced them of their error; for if the Messiah was only to be a secular prince, as they supposed, and to rule over the men of his own time, he never could have been called *Lord*, by persons who died before he was born: far less would so mighty a prince as David, who was also his progenitor, have conferred on him that title. Since, therefore, he not only rules over the vulgar dead of former ages, but even over the kings from whom he was himself descended, and his kingdom comprehends the men of all countries and times, past, present, and to come; the doctors, if they had thought accurately upon the subject, should have expected in their Messiah a king different from all other kings whatever: besides, he is to sit at God's right-hand, *till all his enemies are made his footstool*. Numbers of CHRIST'S enemies are subject to him in this life; and they who will not bow to him willingly, shall be reduced by punishment, like the rebellious subjects of other kingdoms.

He returned such clear and solid answers to the ensnaring questions of his adversaries, that they gave the people an high opinion of his wisdom; and shewed them, how far superior he was to their most renowned Rabbins, whose arguments to prove their opinions, and answers to the objections which were raised against him, were, in general, very weak and trifling: nay, his foes themselves, from the repeated proofs they had received from the prodigious depth of his understanding, were impressed with such an opinion of his wisdom, that they judged it impossible to entangle him in his talk. Accordingly, they left off attempting it, and troubled him no more with their insidious questions from that day.

Our blessed Saviour silenced his most virulent opposers by this means; but having mentioned the final conquest and destruction of his enemies, who were to be made

his footstool, agreeable to the prediction of the royal Psalmist, he turned towards his disciples, and in the hearing of the multitude, solemnly cautioned them to beware of the Scribes and Pharisees; insinuating thereby, who the enemies were whose destruction he had mentioned: *The Scribes and the Pharisees*, said he, *sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*, Matt. xxiii. 2, 3. While they teach the doctrines before delivered by Moses, observe all they say, but by no means imitate their practices; for they impose many precepts on their disciples, which they never perform themselves: *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, But all their works they do for to be seen of men*. The difficult precepts they impose on others are never regarded by these hypocrites, and any good action they may happen to perform, is vitiated by the principle from whence it proceeds: they do it only with a view to popular applause, and not from a regard to God, far less from a love of goodness: they are proud and arrogant to excess, as is plain from their affected gravity in their clothes; from the anxiety they discover, lest they should not obtain the principal seats in the public assemblies, and from their affecting to be saluted in the streets, with the sounding titles of Rabbi and Father: *They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi*.

The proper meaning of the word *Rabbi*, is *great*, and it was given to those men who had rendered themselves remarkable for the extent of their learning; it is therefore no wonder that the proud and supercilious Pharisees were so fond of a title, which gave them great authority with their disciples, and highly complimented their understandings.

But our Lord's followers were to decline this title, because the thing signified by it belonged solely to their Master, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge; and because they owed no part of their knowledge to themselves, but derived it entirely from him who came down from heaven: *But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ: and all ye are brethren. And call no man your Father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven,* Matt. xxiii. 8, 9. Life, with all its blessings, comes from God, and men wholly depend upon him; all praise and thankfulness, therefore, should ultimately be referred to him; so that if any one teacheth rightly, not the teacher, but the wisdom of the Almighty is to be praised, which exerts and communicates itself by him.

The disciples of our blessed Saviour were likewise enjoined not to accept of the title of *master* or *leader*, which the Jewish doctors also courted; because in point of commission and inspiration they were all equal: neither had they any title to rule the consciences of men, except by virtue of the inspiration which they had received from their Master, to whom alone the prerogative of infallibility belonged: *Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*

However, our blessed Saviour did not intend by this to insinuate, that it was sinful to call men by the stations they held in the world; he only intended to reprove the simplicity of the common people, who loaded their teachers with praises, and forgot to ascribe any thing to God; and to root out of the minds of his apostles, the Pharisical vanity, which decked itself with honours belonging solely to the Creator of the universe. Accordingly, that he might instil into their hearts humility to dispose them to do good offices to one another, as occasion offered, he assured them, it was the only road to true greatness: for, by assuming what did not properly belong to them, they should be despised both by God and men; whereas, they should enjoy a high degree of the divine favour, who did not disdain to perform the meanest offices of love to their brethren.

The Scribes and Pharisees were greatly incensed at the above discourses; and, as they were pronounced in the hearing of many of that order, it is therefore no wonder that they watched every opportunity to destroy him: but this was not a

time to put their bloody designs in execution; the people set too high a value on his doctrine to suffer any violence to be offered to his person; and, as this was the last sermon he was ever to preach in public, and as all his mild persuasions had hitherto proved ineffectual, it was necessary, that he should now use some severity.

He accordingly denounced in the most solemn manner, dreadful woes against them, not on account of the personal injuries he had received from them, but on account of their excessive wickedness. They were public teachers of religion; and therefore should have used every method in their power to recommend its precepts to the people, and to have been themselves shining examples of every duty it enjoined: but, on the contrary, they abused every mark and character of goodness for all the purposes of villany; and, under the cloak of a severe and sanctified aspect, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious: in a word, instead of being reformers, they were the corrupters of the people, and consequently their wickedness deserved the greatest reproof that could be given by the great Redeemer of mankind: *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves,* Matt. xxiii. 13, &c.

You shall suffer a punishment that will be terribly severe, because ye have given a wrong interpretation of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, and done all that is in your power to hinder the people from repenting of their sins, and believing the gospel; because you have committed the grossest iniquities, and, under the cloak of religion, have devoured the substance of widows and orphans, hoping to hide your villanies by long prayers: because ye have expressed the greatest zeal

imaginable in making proselytes, not with a view to render the Gentiles more wise and virtuous, but to acquire their riches, and a command over their consciences; and instead of teaching them the precepts of virtue and the moral duties of religion, you confine their duties to superstitious and ceremonial institutions, and hence they often relapse into their old state of heathenism, and become more wicked than before their conversion, and consequently liable to a more severe sentence.

Our Lord also mentioned, in a particular manner, their doctrine concerning oaths; and declared, in opposition to their abominable tenets, that every oath, if the matter of it be lawful, is obligatory; because, when men swear by any part of the creation, it is an appeal to the Creator himself; for, in any other light, an oath of this kind is absolutely ridiculous, the object having neither knowledge of the fact, nor power to punish the perjury: *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! Ye fools and blind, whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty! Ye fools and blind, for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

Our blessed Saviour also upbraided them with their superstitious practices, in observing the minutest parts of the ceremonial precepts of the law, and at the same time utterly neglecting the eternal and indispensable rules of righteousness: *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tythe of mint, and anise, and cummin and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

The Son of God also took notice of their hypocrisy: for they spared no pains

to appear virtuous in the eyes of the world, and maintain an external conduct that should require the praises of men; but, at the same time neglected to adorn their souls with the robe of righteousness, which is the only ornament that can render them dear in the sight of their Maker: *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.* Cleanse first thy mind; thy inward man, from evil dispositions and affections, and thy outward behaviour will of course be virtuous and praiseworthy.

Our dear Lord also animadverted upon the success of their hypocrisy: they deceived the simple and unthinking part of mankind, with their pretended sanctity, appearing like whited sepulchres, beautiful on the outside, while their internal parts were full of uncleanness: *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

He also censured them for the pains they had taken in adorning the sepulchres of the prophets, because they pretended a great veneration for their memory, and even condemned their fathers who killed them, saying, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have opposed such monstrous wickedness; while, at the same time, all their actions abundantly proved, that they still cherished the same spirit they condemned in their fathers, persecuting the messengers of the Most High, particularly his only begotten Son, whom they were determined to destroy: *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*

Our blessed Saviour added, that the Divine Being was desirous of trying every method for their conversion, though all these instances of mercy were slighted; and therefore, they must expect such terrible vengeance, as should be a standing monument of the divine displeasure against all the murders committed by the sons of men, from the foundation of the world.

Thus having laid before them their heinous guilt and dreadful punishment; he was, at the thought of the calamities which were soon to fall upon them, exceedingly moved, and his breast filled with sensations of pity to such a degree, that, unable to contain himself, he brake forth into tears, bewailing the hard lot of the city of Jerusalem; for as it's inhabitants had more deeply imbrued their hands in the blood of the prophets, they were to drink more deeply of the punishment due to such crimes: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

This exclamation of the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, is such as can hardly be read without a tear, and conveys a very strong idea of his love for that ungrateful nation. How often had the Almighty called upon them to return from their evil way, before he sent his only begotten Son into the world! How often, how emphatically did the compassionate JESUS entreat them to embrace the merciful terms now offered them by the Almighty! And with what unconquerable obstinacy did they refuse the benevolent offers, and resist the most winning expressions of the divine love! By the word *house*, our blessed Saviour meant the temple, which was from that time to be

left unto them desolate; the glory of the Lord, which Haggai had prophesied should fill the second house, was now departing from it: adding, *I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* As if he had said, As ye have killed the prophets, and stoned them whom the Father hath sent from the courts of heaven, and will shortly put me, who am the Lord of the temple, to death; your holy house shall be left desolate, and your nation totally deserted by me; nor shall you see me any more till the whole nation is converted to Christianity, when all the descendants of Jacob shall, with one voice, cry out, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, as the multitude lately did.

In this manner, the blessed JESUS stripped the Scribes and Pharisees of their hypocritical mask. He treated them with severity, because their crimes were of the blackest dye; and hence we should learn to be really good, and not flatter ourselves that we can cover our crimes from that piercing eye to which nothing is concealed, with the cloak of hypocrisy.

At these discourses, the people could not fail of being astonished, as they had always considered their teachers as the most righteous among the sons of men; nay, the persons themselves, against whom they were levelled, were confounded, because their own consciences convinced them of the truth of every thing laid to their charge. They, therefore, knew not what course to pursue; and they let JESUS depart without making any attempt to seize him, or inflict on him any kind of punishment, being prevented from putting their wicked purposes in practice, until the work was finished for which he was sent of his Father into the world to do.

C H A P T E R X X X .

CHRIST valueth the poor Widow's two Mites above all the gifts of the rich: He foretelleth the Destruction of the Temple; sheweth what Signs and Calamities should go before, and what should happen at the time of his coming: He delivers the Parable of the ten Virgins; and of the Talents, which a King distributed among his Servants, to be improved by them: and in a third Parable, delivered at the same Time, he gives a Description of the last Judgment.

AFTER our dear Lord had exposed the secret practices of the Scribes and Pharisees, he repaired with his disciples into the court of the women, called the treasury, from several chests being fixed to the pillars of the portico surrounding the court, for receiving the offerings of those who came to worship in the temple. While he continued in this court, *He beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.* Mark xii. 41, 42, 43, 44.

This poor widow's offering was, in itself, very small, yet, in proportion to the goods she enjoyed, it was remarkably large; for it was all she had, even all her living. In order, therefore, to encourage charity, and shew that it is the disposition of the mind, not the magnificence of the offering, that attracted the regard of the Almighty, the Son of God applauded this poor widow, as having given more in proportion than any of the rich. Their offerings, though great in respect of her's, were but a small part of their estates, whereas, her offering was her whole stock. And from this passage of the gospel, we should learn, that the poor, who in appearance are denied the means of doing charitable offices, are encouraged to do all they can; for how small soever the gift may be, the Almighty, who beholds the heart, values it, not according to what it is in itself, but according to the disposition

with which it is given. On the other hand, we should learn from hence, that it is not enough for the rich, that they exceed the poor in their gifts of charity, they should bestow in proportion to their fortune; and they would do well to remember, that a little given, where a little only is possessed, appears a much nobler offering in the sight of the Almighty, and discovers a more benevolent and humane temper of mind, than a greater sum out of the abundance of the rich.

Our Lord having declared, at the conclusion of his pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem, that the temple should not any more be favoured with his presence, till they should say, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:* which declaration greatly surprised his disciples; and, therefore, as he was departing from that sacred structure, they desired him to observe the beauty of the building, insinuating, that they thought it strange he should intimate an intention of leaving it desolate; that so glorious a fabric, celebrated in every corner of the earth, was not to be deserted rashly; and that they should think themselves supremely happy, when he, as the Messiah, and descendant of David, should take possession of it, and erect his throne in the midst of Jerusalem: *And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here!* The eastern wall of the temple, which fronted the Mount of Olives, whither the disciples, with their Master, were then retiring, was built from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height, with stones of an incredible bulk, firmly compacted together, and, therefore, made a very grand appearance at a distance. This eastern wall is supposed to have been the only remains of

Solomon's temple, and had escaped when the Chaldeans burnt it: but this building, however costly or strong it appeared, our Saviour told them should be totally destroyed: *Seest thou, said he, these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down,* Mark xiii. 2.

This venerable structure which you behold with wonder, adorned with huge stones of amazing beauty, shall be razed to the very foundation. The disciples, therefore, when they heard their Master affirm, that not so much as one of these enormous stones, which had mocked the fury of Nebuchadnezzar's army, and survived the destructive hand of time, was to be left one upon another, they perceived that the whole temple was to be demolished, but did not suspect that the sacrifices were to be taken away, and a new religion introduced, which rendered the temple unnecessary. They, therefore, flattered themselves, that the fabric then standing, however glorious it might appear, was too small for the numerous worshippers who would frequent it, when all the nations of the world were subject to the Messiah's kingdom, and was, therefore, to be pulled down, in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan, suitable to the idea they had conceived of his future empire. Filled with these pleasing imaginations, they received the news with pleasure, meditating, as they walked to the mountain, on the glorious things which were shortly to come to pass.

As soon as they arrived at the Mount of Olives, and their Master had taken his seat on some eminence, from whence they had a prospect of the temple and part of the city, his disciples drew near, 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: *And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Matt. xxiv. 3.

It is probable the disciples meant what signs should precede the erection of that extensive empire, over which they supposed the Messiah was to reign; for they

still expected he would govern a secular kingdom. They, therefore, connected the demolition of the temple with their Master's coming, though they had not the least notion that he was to destroy the nation, and change the form of religious worship. They, therefore, meant by *the end of the world*, or, as the words should have been translated, *the end of the age*, the period of the political government then executed by Heathen procurators, and considered their Master's coming to destroy the constitution then subsisting, as a very desirable event: they also thought the demolition of the temple proper, as they expected a larger and more superb building would be erected in its stead, in proportion to the number of the Messiah's subjects.

It will sufficiently appear, that this is the real sense of the disciples question, if we consider, that they were delighted with the prospect; whereas, if they had meant by the end of the world, the final period of all things, the destruction of the temple would have exhibited to them a melancholy prospect, which they could not have beheld, without a deep concern, in their present temper of mind.

Therefore, our blessed Lord was careful to convince them of their mistake, by telling them, that he was not come to rule a secular empire, as they supposed, but to punish the Jews for their perfidy and rebellion, by destroying both their temple and nation: *Take heed, said he, that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.* This caution was far from being unnecessary, because, though the disciples were to see their Master ascend into heaven, they might take occasion from the prophecy, to think that he would appear again on earth, and, therefore, be in danger of seduction by the false Christs that should arise: *And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet.* Before this nation and temple are destroyed, terrible wars will happen in the land; *For nations shall rise against nations, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

These things are but the beginning of a long series of calamities, which shall fall

upon this nation : at the same time you shall meet with hot persecutions ; walk therefore, circumspectly, and arm yourselves both with patience and fortitude, that ye may be able to perform your duty, through the whole course of these persecutions ; for you shall be brought before the great men of the earth for my sake : *But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought before hand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate : but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye ; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost,* Mark xiii. 11.

Our Lord told them, during this time of trouble and confusion, the perfidy of mankind shall be so great towards one another, that *brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son ; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.* The unbelieving Jews and apostate Christians, shall commit such crimes, that the very idea of which shall excite horror in the most barbarous nations. It is, therefore, no wonder that the perfidy and wickedness of such pretended Christians, shall discourage many disciples, and greatly hinder the propagation of the gospel : but he who supports his faith during these persecutions, and is not led astray by the seduction of false Christians, shall escape that terrible destruction, which will overflow the land like a deluge.

My disciples shall be scattered by these persecutions and tribulations, and shall preach the gospel in all parts of the Roman empire ; and then shall the period you now enquire after arrive : then shall the Almighty arise to vengeance, and consume, in his anger, this stiff-necked generation.

At the time when Jerusalem shall be surrounded with armies, Pagan armies, bearing in their standards the images of their gods, the *abomination of desolation*, mentioned by the prophet Daniel ; then let him who readeth the predictions of that prophet understand, that the end of the city and sanctuary, together with the ceasing of the sacrifice and oblation there predicted, is come, and, of course, the final period of the Jewish government.

Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains ; and let them which are in

the midst of it depart out, Luke xxi. 21. *Let him which is on the house-top, not come down to take any thing out of his house : neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes,* Matt. xxiv. 17, 18. For the Almighty will now punish this nation for it's sins ; these are the days of his vengeance, when all the threatenings of the prophets, especially those of Daniel, shall be inflicted on this obstinate and rebellious people.

The women who are with child, and they who have infants hanging at their breasts, shall be particularly unhappy in those days of vengeance, because they cannot flee from the impending destruction : *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, when the badness of the roads, and the rigour of the season, will render speedy travelling very troublesome, if not impossible ; neither on the Sabbath-day, when you shall think it unlawful ; for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be.* This is confirmed by what Josephus tells us : for he says, " that no less than eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege."

Our dear Lord added, that except these days of tribulation should be shortened, none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, of whom he was then speaking, should escape destruction. And accordingly Josephus tell us, that the quarrels which raged during the siege, were so fierce and obstinate, both within the walls of Jerusalem, and without in the neighbouring country, that the whole land was one continued scene of horror and desolation : and had the siege continued much longer, the whole nation of the Jews had been totally destroyed, according to our Lord's prediction : *But, added our blessed Saviour, for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.* By the elect are meant, such of the Jews as had embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and those who were brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles particularly.

During this time of universal confusion, it was natural to think, that the expectations of the whole nation would be turned towards their Messiah ; for if he was ever to appear, it must be then, to deliver them

from impending destruction. Our blessed Saviour therefore cautioned his disciples not to listen to any pretences of that kind, as many false Christs would arise, and deceive great numbers of the people. A prediction that was fully accomplished during the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans: for Josephus tells us, that many arose pretending to be the Messiah, boasting that they would deliver the nation from all its enemies. And the multitude, always too prone to listen to deceivers who promise temporal advantages, gave credit to those deceivers, became more obstinate in their opposition to the Romans, and thereby rendered their destruction more severe and more inevitable. And what still increased the insatiation of the people, was their performing wonderful things during the war; and accordingly Josephus calls them magicians and force-ers. Hence we see the propriety of the caution given by the Son of God, who foretold that *they should show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. But take ye heed: behold I have foretold you all things.*

But as it was likely the partizans of the false Christs would pretend that the Messiah was concealed awhile for fear of the Romans, and the weaker sort of Christians, without this warning, might have imagined, that Christ was actually returned to deliver the nation in its extremity, and to punish their enemies, who now so cruelly oppressed them; and that he would shew himself as soon as it was proper, our blessed Saviour thought it needful to caution them against this particular: *Wherefore, if they should say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 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,* Matt. xxiv. 26, 27.

As lightning is swift and destructive, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. But he will not come personally, his servants only shall come, the Roman armies, who shall destroy this nation, as eagles devour their prey, by his command.

Thus having given them a particular account of the various circumstances

which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, he next described that catastrophe itself, in all the pomp of language and imagery made use of by the ancient prophets, when they foretold the destruction of cities and kingdoms: *But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*

These expressions are figurative and lofty, and signify the decaying of all the glory, excellency, and prosperity of the nation, and the introduction of universal sadness, misery, and confusion. The roaring of the sea and the waves must justly be considered as metaphorical, as the signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars are plainly so. And by the powers of heaven are meant the whole Jewish polity, government, laws, and religion, which were the work of heaven; these our blessed Saviour tells us should be shaken.

As the disciples, in conformity to the repeated questions of the Pharisees during his ministry, had asked what would be the signs of his coming. Our blessed Saviour told them, that after the tribulation of those days, when the sun should be darkened and all the enemies of the Messiah should mourn, they should see the accomplishment of what Daniel foretold, by the figurative expression of *the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven*; for they should behold the signal punishments executed on the Jewish nation, by the Roman armies sent for that end by the son of man, who shall thus gloriously demonstrate the greatness of his power, and the extent of his dominion: *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.*

The disciples were to consider the time of their redemption, from the oppression under which they then groaned, as near at hand when these things came to pass: and that they might be certain

this prophecy would not long wait for its accomplishment, he told them that the present generation should not all be laid in the chambers of the dust, before these terrible calamities should fall upon Jerusalem. Adding, that his disciples might sooner expect the dissolution of the whole frame of nature, than that one single circumstance of this prophecy should fail of its accomplishment: *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

If we take the pains to compare the prediction of our Saviour with the history Josephus wrote of the war, we cannot fail of being struck with the wisdom of CHRIST, and acknowledging that his prediction was truly divine. For as the Jewish nation was at this time in the most flourishing state, the event here foretold was altogether improbable. Besides, the circumstances of the destruction are very numerous and surprisingly particular; and the whole delivered without any ambiguity. It is therefore a prophecy of such a kind as could never have been uttered by any impostor, and consequently the person who delivered it, was truly divine, and acquainted with the secret counsels of heaven.

But it has been demanded with some assurance, by the enemies to revelation, why should CHRIST order his disciples not to flee from Jerusalem, till they saw it encompassed with the Roman army, when it would then be impossible for them to make their escape? But persons, before they propose such questions, would do well to read attentively the history Josephus has given us of these terrible calamities: because they would there find a solution of that difficulty. That historian tells us, "That Cestius Gallus, surrounded the city with his army, and at the time when he could easily have taken the city, suddenly withdrew his forces, without any apparent reason. He adds, "that as soon as the siege was raised, many eminent Jews fled from it; as from a sinking ship." In all probability many of these were Christians, who being warned by this prophecy of their great Master, saved themselves by flight,

as he had directed. Thus we see what frivolous objections are made by the free-thinkers of our age, against the truth of the sacred writings, and how easily they are answered. And I cannot help observing, that this conduct of the Roman general, so contrary to all the rules of prudence, must have been brought to pass by the providence of God, who interposed for the deliverance of the disciples in this manner.

Having given this description of the destruction of Jerusalem, our blessed Saviour enumerated a great variety of particulars that were to precede or accompany it, assuring his disciples, that it would be very unexpected, and thence urged the necessity of a watchful vigilance, lest they should be surprised, and have a share in these terrible calamities: *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be, Matt. xxiv. 37. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping, Mark xiii. 35, 36.*

As men were to undergo, at the destruction of Jerusalem, nearly the same miseries, and as the passions which its approach would raise in their minds were similar to those which will happen at the destruction of the world and the general judgment; it was natural for our blessed Saviour, on this occasion, to put his disciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful discharge of their duty, from the consideration of the suddenness of his coming to call every individual to account after death: *Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour, as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. As if he had said, you who are the ministers of religion, ought to be particularly careful to discharge the important trust committed to your care: you are the stewards to whose care the whole household of the church is committed; and you would do well to remember, that*

your example will have a great effect upon the minds of those employed under you. It is your duty to be well acquainted with the stores of the evangelical truths, and to understand how they may be applied to the best advantage: you should also be careful to know the characters of the different persons under your direction, that you may be able to give every one of them his portion of meat in due season: and if I find you thus employed at my coming, I will 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. But, on the other hand, if you behave like unjust stewards, who, because their Lord delayeth his coming, abuse their fellow servants, and riot in excess; 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 upon you unexpectedly, and make you dreadful examples of mine anger, by the severe punishments which I will inflict upon you: *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 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, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Having thus mentioned the rewards and punishments of a future state, it was easy and elegant for our Lord to pass from that subject to the consideration of the general judgment; when those rewards and punishments should be distributed in their utmost extent. This could not fail of animating his disciples to a vigorous discharge of their duty; and, by the striking representation of the last judgment here given, must greatly tend to rouse the consciences of men from their lethargy, and consider, before it be too late, *the things which belong to their peace.*

Then shall the kingdom of heaven, the gospel-kingdom, in the last dispensation of it, when the kingdom of grace is going to be swallowed up in the kingdom

of glory be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish; they that were foolish, as a proof of their stupidity, took indeed their lamps, but put no oil in their vessels, while the wise, as an instance of their prudence and foresight, took both their lamps and oil in their vessels, knowing that it was uncertain when the bridegroom would arrive, and that they might in all probability, wait long for his coming. Nor were they mistaken, for the bridegroom did not come so soon as they expected: And while he tarried they all slumbered and slept, and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

To understand this parable aright, we must remember that it alludes to the customs of marriages among the eastern people. It was usual with them for the bridegroom to bring his bride home in the evening, sooner or later, as circumstances might happen; and that she might be received properly at his house, his female acquaintance, especially those of the younger sort, were invited to come and wait with lamps, till some of his retinue, dispatched before the rest, informed them that he was near at hand; upon which they trimmed their lamps, went forth to welcome him, and conducted him with his bride into the house; for which they were honoured as guests at the marriage-feast, and shared in the festivities.

Our blessed Saviour compares the candidates for the kingdom of heaven, to ten such virgins; he mentions ten, because

this was the general number appointed to wait on the bridegroom; and to these, all Christian professors may be likened, who, taking the lamp of the Christian profession, go forth to meet the bridegroom; that is, prepare themselves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and desire to be admitted into the happy mansions of immortality, with CHRIST, the celestial Bridegroom.

The case of Christians is represented to us by this of the virgins, half of whom only were wise, the other half being foolish. And we must remember, that there always was, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad in the church, till the great day of separation arrives. The weakness of the foolish is represented by their taking no oil in their vessels with their lamps; that is, the foolish Christians content themselves with the bare lamp of a profession, and never think of furnishing it with the oil of divine grace, the fruit of which is a life of holiness. Whereas the wise, well knowing that a lamp, without the supply of oil, would be speedily extinguished; that faith, without love and holiness, will be of no consequence, take care to supply themselves with a sufficient quantity of the divine grace, and to display in their lives, the works of love and charity. While all those virgins, though differently supplied, waited the coming of the bridegroom, they all slumbered and slept; that is, all Christians, both good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrite, all lie down together in the sleep of death; and while the bridegroom delayeth his coming, slumber in the chambers of the dust.

There is a tradition among the Jews, that CHRIST'S coming to judgment will be at midnight, which agrees with that part of the parable, *At midnight there was a cry made, Go ye out to meet him.* But however this be, whether he will come at midnight, or in the morning, it will be awfully sudden and alarming; the great cry will be heard to the ends of the earth; the trumpet shall sound, and the mighty archangel's voice pierce even to the bowels of the earth, and the depths of the ocean: *Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.* All that are in the graves must then awake, and come

forth; and all will then begin to think how they may prepare themselves to find admittance to the marriage-supper of the Lamb: *Then all those virgins awoke, and trimmed their lamps.* But the foolish soon perceived their folly their lamps were gone out, totally extinguished, and they had no oil to support the flame: in like manner, the hypocrite's hope shall perish. But the wise were in a much happier condition; they had oil in their vessels sufficient for themselves, but none to spare: for when the foolish virgins would have procured some from them, they denied their request, fearing there would not be enough for both.

We have here a representation of nominal and sincere Christians; the former having only the bare lamp of a profession, have neglected to live agreeably to the precepts and examples of their Master, and have not been solicitous to gain the oil of divine grace, by a constant use of the means assigned; those who have been contented with a mere negative righteousness, with such a justice and honesty as Heathens boasted of, to whose charge no heinous crimes can be laid, while at the same time no good can be spoken of, as an effect of their faith; and such will fare like the foolish virgins: while the latter, whose wife conduct and zealous endeavours to stock their lamps with divine oil, will, like the wise virgins, enter into the joy of their Lord.

Those that were foolish, going to purchase oil, missed the bridegroom, and behold *the door was shut.* They at last however, reached the gate, and with great importunity cried *Lord, Lord, open unto us.* But he answered, and said, *verily, I say unto you, I know you not.* You are strangers to me; you did not attend me at my coming, and now the door is shut, and entrance for ever denied; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.

Therefore, how justly did our blessed Saviour bid us all watch, that we may be found ready whenever he cometh, or commands, by the king of terrors, our attendance before his judgment-seat. Let us not refuse this kind invitation of being constantly prepared to meet the heavenly Bridegroom: let us fill our lamps with oil that we may be ready to follow our great

Master into the happy mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

However, as this duty was of the utmost importance, our blessed Saviour, to shew us more clearly the nature and use of Christian watchfulness, to which he exhorts us at the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins, he added another, wherein he represented the different characters of a faithful and slothful servant, and the difference of their future acceptance. This parable, like the former, is intended to stir us up to a zealous preparation for the coming of our Lord, by diligence in the discharge of our duty, and by a careful improvement of our souls in holiness; and, at the same time to expose the vain pretences of hypocrites, and to demonstrate, that fair speeches and outward form, without the power of godliness, will be of no service in the last great day of account.

The Son of man, with respect to his final coming to judge the world, may be likened unto a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and straightway took his journey.

He that had received the five talents lost no time, but went immediately, on his master's departure, and traded with the same, and his increase was equal to his industry and application; he made them other five talents. He that had received two talents, did the same, and had equal success. But he that received one, very unlike the conduct of his fellow-servants, went his way, digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money, idle, useless, unemployed, and unimproved.

But after a long time, and at an hour when they did not expect it, the Lord of those servants returned, called them before him, and ordered them to give an account of their several trusts. Upon which he that had received five talents, as a proof of his fidelity, produced other five talents, saying, *Lord thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gained beside them five talents more.* His Lord, highly applauding his industry and fidelity, said

to him, *Well done, thou 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.*

In like manner also, he that had received two talents, declared he had gained two others: upon which he was honoured with the same applause, and admitted into the same joy with his fellow-servant; their master having regard to the industry and fidelity of his servants, not to the number of the talents only, and the greatness of their increase.

Then he that had received the one talent, came, and with a shameful falsehood, to excuse his vile indolence, said, *Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not sowed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.* This dishonourable notion, which the servant entertained of his Lord, greatly aggravated his crime; and, accordingly, his Lord was wroth, and answered, *Thou wicked and slothful servant thou knowest, that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not sowed: thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

This was the parable of the talents, as delivered by our blessed Saviour; a parable containing the measures of our duty to God, and the motives that enforce it, all delivered in the plainest and simplest allusion: but it's views are so extensive and affecting, that while it instructs the meanest capacity, it engages reverence and attention from the greatest, and strikes an impression on the most improved understanding. We are to consider God as our Lord and Master, the author and giver of every good gift, and ourselves as his servants or stewards, who, in various instances and measures, have received

from his goodness such blessings and abilities, as may fit us for the several stations and offices of life to which his providence appoints us: but then we are to observe, that these are committed to us as a trust or loan, for whose due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourselves of this probationary charge, we shall receive far greater instances of God's confidence and favour; but if we are remiss and negligent, we must expect to feel his resentment and displeasure.

A time will come, and how near it may be, none of us can tell, when our great Master will demand a particular account of every talent he hath committed to our care. This time may, indeed, be at a distance, for it is uncertain when the king of terrors will receive the awful warrant to terminate our existence here below; yet it will certainly come, and our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it; so that we should have it continually in our thoughts, and engrave it, as with the point of a diamond, on the tables of our hearts. But this is not all we are to learn from this instructive parable; the Divine Author has adapted every incident of the relation to convey some spiritual instruction. We hence learn, that Infinite Wisdom hath intrusted men with different talents, and adjusted them to the various purposes of human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, none can, with justice, complain, since whatever is bestowed, be it more or less, is a favour entirely unmerited. Each then should be thankful, and satisfied with his portion; and, instead of envying the more liberal endowments of others, apply himself to the improvements of his own. And it should be attentively observed, that the difficulty of the task is in proportion to the number of talents committed to each. He who had received five, was to gain other five; and he who had received two, was to account for other two. Surely then, we have no reason to complain, if our Master has laid on us a lighter burden, a more easy and less service than what he has on others; especially as our interest, in the favour of the Almighty, does not depend on the number

of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them: so that the moral design of this parable, is to engage our utmost attention, to improve such talents as our heavenly Father has thought proper to bestow upon us. By these talents are principally meant the communications and graces of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows in different measures, *dividing to every man severally as he will.* And subordinate to these, are all the means, opportunities, and abilities to exercise or improve these graces; all the advantages of station, fortune, education, and whatever may enable us to do good; for we, having received all we enjoy from God, are strictly obliged to promote the wise ends for which he bestows his favours. And here let us take a short and imperfect view of what God has done for us: he has given us reason and understanding, to discern good from evil, and to enquire into the causes, relations, and consequences of things, to collect from them proper rules of judgment and action. Indeed, since the fall, this faculty has been much obscured; but still it remains an universal gift of God to men; and though not equal to all, yet it is given to every man in such measure, as is sufficient for their direction. In the knowledge of our duty, and the pursuit of our happiness, God has, by the gospel, so graciously supplied the defects of reason, that the meanest understanding may know how to be happy: such assistances of divine grace attend every Christian, if he will apply to God for it, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his passions, and subdue his corrupt affections. These talents are, in some degree, common to all men; and, by the improvement of that grace which is conferred on every one, all have sufficient to conduct them through the several stages of life, if they will use but proper diligence and application.

But regard must be had to all the means for cultivating those gifts of nature and grace, such as all opportunities of instruction, the ministry, and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and examples of good men, the occasions offered, and the abilities given for the exercise of virtue:

all these are talents or gifts of God, deposited with us, to be diligently made use of, and for which we are accountable to him. I shall, therefore, proceed to shew what duty is required from us, in the improvement of these talents. It is here supposed that these talents are improvable, or otherwise they would be of no use or value; and, indeed, we are bound by the command of God to improve them, who has threatened to inflict severe penalties if we neglect it: and, if they are not improved, they will not continue long with us, but be lost; the finest parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preserved without use and exercise, and the same holds with regard to moral accomplishments. It requires great care and attention to form a virtuous habit, and much more to preserve it in its vigour: unless we co-operate with the goodness of God's grace, and cultivate it by use and application, its impressions will gradually wear out and be lost: *The Spirit of God will not always strive with man.* He gives us a stock to manage, equal to the service he expects from us; but if we are slothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purposes for which it was given, he will recall the useless gift: *Take from him, says he, the talent, and give it to him, that hath ten talents.* Let us, therefore, diligently improve every talent committed to us, because this will be required of us in the day of account, and, if not improved, will be immediately taken from us; what this improvement implies, and how we may discharge this duty, is an inquiry of the nearest concern to us. The proper improvement of all God's gifts, is the employing them, so as may best promote his glory: this is the end the Almighty has proposed in our creation, in all the powers he has endued us with, and in all the aids of grace he has vouchsafed to us. Whatever other improvements we make of them, they will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity in the day of reckoning: we may cultivate our understanding by learning and study, and extend our knowledge through all the subjects of human inquiry; but if our end be only

to gratify our curiosity or our vanity, we are not serving God, but ourselves; we may increase our portion of God's outward gifts, but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniences, we are not making the improvements our Master expects: we may take pleasure in our knowledge and fortune, rejoice in them as our portion and instruments in our present possession; but we must still remember, that in our reckoning with God, all these improvements of our capacities and abilities, will be added to our account; and the only use God will admit us to set in balance of our debt to him, is to employ them as means of increasing and multiplying our virtues, or as instruments of exercising them in the works of religion and piety.

From this parable we may learn, that the divine justice, in this scrutiny, will estimate and reward every one's fidelity in proportion to the improvements and returns they have made. An account will be demanded of every talent; nor will it be sufficient, that we have made some improvement, it must be proportional to the number and value of our gifts. Let us therefore live and act under a serious habitual regard to that day, when our great Master shall come and reckon with us; remembering that such as have been idle, and made no use of the talents given them by the Almighty, will be *cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* A prospect surely sufficient to awaken such from their slumber, quicken them to an immediate and vigorous application to duty; that by a double improvement of the time yet remaining, they may redeem what their indolence has lost. But far worse, and more difficult to be retrieved is his case who has squandered away the stock itself, suffered his gifts to perish for want of use; or by abusing them to the service of sin, has provoked the Almighty to take them from him.

How shall the prodigal recal the fortune he has spent and appease the anger of his Judge? The terrors of the Lord may justly terrify him; but it should not extinguish his endeavours in despair: he has lost many excellent talents, but he

he who gave can restore. Indeed, the most circumspect person will, in the great day of account, want much to be forgiven; and must expect his reward from the mercy of his judge, not from the merit of his service. Let us then do all in our power to bring forth fruits meet for repentance: for though the awful day of the Lord may be at a great distance, yet the time allotted us to prepare for it, is limited by the short space of human life: the night of death cometh when no man can work: to-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us be diligent in the work of the Lord, correct our errors, and finish what is imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election sure, before we go hence, and are seen of men no more,

We have endeavoured to explain the parable of the talents after this manner, and shall now return to the third parable delivered at the same time by the blessed JESUS, namely, that of the last judgment: *When the Son of man, said he, shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left, Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33.*

It is common in the Old Testament to compare good men to sheep, on account of their innocence and usefulness; and wicked men to goats, for their exorbitant lusts. Our blessed Saviour, however, does not pursue the allegory further, but describes the remaining, and indeed the greatest part of this awful scene 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 exhibited; and the particulars of which these awful trials are to proceed, displayed by the great Judge himself. Here we learn that we shall be condemned or acquitted, according as we have neglected or performed works of charity; works which flow from the great principles of faith and piety, and which the very Heathens are, by the light of nature, invited to perform. But we must not understand, that such works merited this favor from the Judge; no, all

who are acquitted at that day, shall be acquitted solely on account of the righteousness of CHRIST, the true, the only meritorious cause, as well Heathens as Christians:

Who can read the following sentence passed upon the righteous, without feeling the warmest love and gratitude to the great Author of all good; and what a noble motive to perseverance in well-doing does it afford: *Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Good men can at best but consider their present state as a banishment from their native country. A state in which they are often exposed to innumerable temptations, to persecutions, to poverty, to reproach, to contempt. But the consideration that they are travelling towards the heavenly Jerusalem, a city prepared for them, when the foundations of the world were laid, will be abundantly sufficient to support their spirits and render them *more than conquerors*. The glory laid up for them in the mansions of eternity, and which the great Judge will, at the awful day of account, confer upon them, will animate them to bear the violence of their oppressors, and even defy the malice of men and devils. Nay, they will behold with contempt the flourishing prosperity of the wicked, and look forward to that glorious and immortal crown which will be given them by their great Redeemer. Then shall the King say unto them on the right hand, *Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me, I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me, Matt. xxv. 34, 35, 36.*

Being astonished to hear the great Judge declare, that all the good offices they have ever done to their bretheren in affliction was done to him, they ask with great reverence and humility, when they performed these services? as they never saw him in want, and therefore could never assist him: *Lord when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty and gavest thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And*

the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. This is truly astonishing! The united wisdom of men and angels could never have discovered a more proper method to convey an idea of the warmth and force of the divine benevolence to the sons of men, or offer a more forcible motive to charity, than that the Son of God himself should, from his seat of judgment, in the presence of the whole race of mankind, and all the hosts of blessed spirits from the courts of heaven, declare that all good offices done to the afflicted, are done to himself. During the time of his dwelling with human nature in this vale of tears, he suffered unspeakable injuries and afflictions; and therefore he considers all the distressed virtuous, as members of his body, loves them with the utmost tenderness, and is so greatly interested in their welfare, that he grieves when they are distressed, and rejoices when they are happy.

Perhaps in this representation of the last judgment, it may seem strange that the inquiry should solely turn on the performance of duties, without any regard to the commission of crimes. Perhaps the true reason is, that men, generally speaking, consider the neglect of duties as a matter of no great consequence, but dread the commission of crimes. And hence it happens, that while they keep themselves free from the latter, they easily find excuses for the former. And as there is not a more pernicious error with regard to religion and morality than this, the blessed Jesus thought proper to give such an account of the judgment, as should prove the most solemn caution against it. But as the inquiry turns wholly on the performance of duties, it has been asked why the offices of charity only are mentioned, and no notice taken of the duties of piety; though the Judge himself upon another occasion declared these to be of more importance than the duties of charity so highly applauded in this parable? But those who ask this question would do well to remember, that piety and charity cannot subsist separately: piety, and its origin faith, always producing charity; and charity wherever it subsists, necessarily presupposing piety.

There is such a connection between pie-

ty and charity, as it will evidently appear, if it be rightly considered, that no man can be truly benevolent, and merciful, without loving those dispositions: consequently, he must love benevolence in God, that is, he must love God; for piety, or the love God; is nothing else but the regard we cherish towards God, on account of his perfections. Piety and charity being thus essentially connected together, it was abundantly sufficient to examine the conduct of men with regard to either of those graces. 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. It is common for hypocrites, by a pretended zeal in the externals of religion, to make specious pretences to extraordinary piety, and at the same time are totally deficient in charity; are covetous, unjust, rapacious, and proud, and, consequently, destitute of all love for their Creator. But none can assume the appearance of charity, but by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed, and performing other benevolent offices to their brethren. The works of charity may indeed, in some particular cases, flow from other principles than those of a pious and benevolent disposition, as from vanity, or even views of interest; but then it should be remembered that a common degree of hypocrisy will hardly engage men to undertake them: they are by far too weighty duties to be sustained by those false principles, and therefore are seldom counterfeited. Consequently, we may conclude, that the love of God reigns in perfection, wherever a genuine, extensive, and permanent charity is found.

Therefore, this parable teaches us, in the plainest manner, that however loud pretensions we may make to piety, they will stand us in no stead at the awful tribunal of the Son of God, if we are deficient in works of charity. At the same time, if we consider it in its true light, it will give us no reason to hope well of ourselves, if we are wanting in our duty to God; and will shew us, that we should not only be charitable, but grateful; also, just, temperate, and blameless, in all our dealings with mankind: for we should remember, that the duty we owe to the Almighty is no other than what is due from all men in all circumstances, and

which it would be unjust in us to neglect. It consists in dispositions and actions, the same in kind, but different in degree, proportionate to the perfection of the object. He who loves and admires holiness, justice 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 he receives all the good things he enjoys: and since ingratitude in men is nothing more than forgetting the benefit received, and the benefactor who conferred the favour; how can we acquit ourselves from the charge of ingratitude to God, if we forget the obligations we lie under to him, and are at no pains to return him thanks; that is, if we wholly neglect the external and internal exercises of devotion. Since, therefore, the duty we owe to God is the same in kind with that we owe to man, it will undeniably follow, that true morality can never exist where piety is wanting; and that a person renders himself ridiculous, who pretends to morality and is destitute of piety.

Thus having endeavoured to shew that justice and piety cannot subsist separately from each other, I shall now return to the remaining part of the parable, which exhibits a scene enough to terrify the most hardened sinner. The awful judge himself has told us; that after he has passed the happy sentence on the righteous; he will pronounce the following sentence of condemnation upon the wicked: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked, and ye*

cloathed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they 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? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me, Matt. xxv. 41—46.

Our blessed Saviour has told us, that the fire of hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels, as well as for the wicked; and that the kingdom of heaven was prepared for the righteous. Perhaps he intended to teach us, that the original design of Omnipotence was to render man happy, not miserable: a state of consummate felicity was formed for the human race, at the time they were created: but the fire of hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels immediately after their fall. And as wicked men join with devils in their sin of rebellion against the Almighty, they are doomed to share with them in their punishment; a punishment of the heaviest kind, a punishment of devils.

Our Saviour having represented the sentences that are to be passed on the righteous and the wicked, he closed the parable in the following manner: *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* An expression short indeed, but awful beyond expression! And were it fully understood, it must surely make an impression on the most hardened sinner; as it indicates, that when the sentence is passed, the scene is closed for ever, and everlasting punishment, or life eternal, must be the lot of every individual of the human race.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHRIST again foretelleth his own Death; The Rulers conspire against him: A Woman poureth precious Ointment upon his Head: Judas covenanteth with the Council to betray his Master for thirty Picces of Silver: Peter and John sent to prepare the Passover: CHRIST eateth it with them, and washeth his Disciples' Feet. He comforteth them with the Promise of a heavenly Mansion: He professeth himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life: He foretelleth the Treachery of Judas, and pointeth him out to John by a Token.

AFTER our blessed Saviour had finished the before-mentioned parables, he added a short account of his own death, in order to fortify the disciples against the greatest trial they had yet met with; namely, the sufferings of their Master: *And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. 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, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people, Matt. xxvi. 1—5*

Our blessed Saviour, with his disciples, repaired to Bethany in the evening, and entered the house of Simon the leper, probably one who had experienced the healing efficacy of his power. But while he sat at meat, a woman, who had also doubtless been an object of his mercy, poured a box of precious ointment upon his head. This action displeased the disciples, who knew their Master was not delighted with luxuries of any kind; and therefore they rebuked the woman, imagining that it would have been more acceptable to the Son of God, if the ointment had been sold, and the money distributed amongst the sons and daughters of poverty and affliction. But their benevolent Master said, that it had pleased the Divine Providence to order, that there should always be persons in necessitous circumstances, that the virtuous might never want occasions for exercising their charity; but that those who did not now testify their love to him, would never more have an opportunity of doing it, as the time of his ministry was near its period, when the king of terrors should

enjoy a short triumph over his body; and therefore this woman had seasonably appointed him for his burial. And to make them sensible of their folly, in blaming the woman for this her token of love to him, he assured them, that her memory should live to the latest period of time, and that she should be highly celebrated for this action in every part of the world.

But Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, having been more forward than the rest, in condemning the woman, thought the rebuke was peculiarly directed to him. Stung with the guilt of his own conscience, he rose from the table, went immediately into the city, to the high-priest's palace, where he found the whole council assembled. His passion would not suffer him to reflect on the horrid deed he was going to commit: he immediately promised to betray into their hands his Lord and Master, for the paltry reward of thirty pieces of silver.

Thus having engaged with the rulers of Israel, to put into their hands a person who had been long labouring for their salvation, and had often invited them in the most pathetic manner, to embrace the benevolent terms of the gospel offered by the Almighty, he sought an opportunity to betray him in the absence of the multitude. Ye monsters in the human form, how could you plot so detestable a crime! Surely, you have forgot how mercy, with her charming voice, spake in all he uttered! How did benevolence pour her choicest stores in all his actions! Ye rulers of Israel, did ever compassion look so amiably soft, as in those melting tears, which swelled his eyes and poured down his cheeks, to soften your hard and stony hearts? Was it possible for patience to assume a form so lovely, as that sweetly winning conduct, that endured the contradic-

tion of finners; which besought the guilty not to die, and intreated the obstinate to be reconciled.

The apostate Judas was thus bargaining with the chief priests and elders, to betray his Master, while the benevolent JESUS was preparing to celebrate the passover, before he suffered, with his disciples. He was now going to finish the mighty work for which he came into the world; and therefore would not neglect to fulfil the smallest part of the law of Moses. He therefore sent two of his disciples into the city, to prepare a lamb and make it ready, for eating the passover; telling them that they should meet a man, bearing a pitcher of water, who would conduct them to his house, and shew them a large upper room furnished, where they were to make ready for him. He was willing, in this last transaction, to convince his disciples, that he knew every thing which should befall him; that his sufferings were all premeditated by the Almighty; and that they were all submitted unto voluntarily, on his own account.

As soon as night approached, JESUS left Bethany; and every thing being ready for him, at the time he entered into the city, he sat down at the appointed hour. But knowing that his sufferings were now near, he told his disciples, in the most affectionate manner, that he had greatly longed to eat the passover with them before he suffered, in order to shew them the strongest proofs of his love. These proofs were to give them a pattern of humility and charity, by washing their feet; instructing them in the nature of his death, as a propitiatory sacrifice; instituting the sacrament in commemoration of his sufferings; comforting them by the tender discourses recorded in John xiv, xv, xvi, in which he gave them a variety of excellent directions, together with many gracious promises, and recommending them to the kind protection of his heavenly father: *With desire, I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, Luke xxii. 15. 16.*

After our Lord had thus spoken, he arose from the table, laid aside his garments like a servant, and, with all the circumstances of an humble minister, washed the feet of his disciples without distinction, though

one of them, Judas Iscariot, was a monster of impiety, that they might at once behold a conjunction of charity and humility, of self-denial and indifference, represented by a person glorious beyond expression, in their great Lord and Master. He chose to wash their feet rather than their head, that he might have an opportunity of displaying a more humble posture, and a more striking instance of his charity. The omnipotent Son of the Father lays every thing aside, that he may serve his followers; heaven stoops to earth; one abyss calls upon another; and the miseries of man, which were almost infinite, are exceeded by a mercy equal to the immensity of the Almighty. He deferred this ceremony, which was a customary civility paid to honorable strangers at the beginning of their feasts, that it might be preparatory to the second, which he intended should be a feast to the whole world, when all the followers of the blessed Jesus should have an opportunity of feeding on his flesh, and drinking his blood, in a spiritual manner.

Peter modestly declined it when our blessed Saviour came unto him; but his Master told him, that if he refused to submit implicitly to all his orders, he could have no part with him. On which Peter cried out, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* But JESUS told him, that the person who had bathed himself had no reason to wash any part of his body except his feet, which he might have dirtied by walking from the bath. In order to teach us, that persons converted do not stand in need of a total change of mind, but only to cleanse themselves from the particular sins they constantly commit through infirmity; for it is abundantly evident that our blessed Saviour spake of a spiritual washing, because he added, *ye are clean, but not all.* Ye are men of virtuous and holy dispositions; but not all: I well know that one of you will betray me.

After our blessed Saviour had finished this menial service, he asked his disciples, if they knew the meaning of what he had done; as the action was purely emblematical? You truly, added he, style me Master and Lord, for I am the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world: But if I, your Master and your Lord, have condescended to wash your feet, you surely ought to perform,

with the utmost pleasure, the humblest offices of charity to one another. I have set you a pattern of humility, and I recommend it to you.

Certainly nothing can more effectually shew us the necessity of this heavenly temper of mind than it's being recommended to us by so great an example: a recommendation which, in the present circumstances, was particularly seasonable; for the disciples, having heard their great Master declare that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, their minds were filled with ambitious thoughts. Upon which our blessed Saviour added, Ye need not be ashamed to follow my example in this particular; for no servant can think it beneath him, to condescend to perform those actions his Lord has done before him: and, therefore, if he knows his duty, he will be happy if he practises it. Our blessed Saviour added, that tho' he had called them to the apostleship, and well knew the secret dispositions of every heart, before he chose them, they need not be surpris'd, that any one among them should prove a traitor, as it was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: *He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me,* John xiii. 18.

Our dear Lord being now to be but a short time with his disciples, he thought proper to take his farewell of them, which he did in the most affectionate manner. These melancholy tidings greatly troubled them. They were very unwilling to part with so kind a friend, so dear a Master, so wise a guide, and so profitable a teacher; especially as they thought they should be left in a forlorn condition, a poor and helpless prey to the rage and hatred of a blind and malicious generation. They seem'd willing to die with their Lord, if that might be accepted: *Why cannot I follow thee? I will lay down my life for thy sake,* was the language of one, and even all of them; but the thought of a disconsolate separation they could not support.

Their dear Lord and Master seeing them thus dejected, endeavour'd to cheer their drooping spirits: *Let not your hearts be troubled.* Listen attentively to what I am going to deliver for your consolation: *I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am*

there you may be also. A reviving admonition! They were one day to meet again their dear, their affectionate Master, in a place where they should live together to all eternity. But death makes so vast a distance between friends, and the disciples then knew so little of a future state, that they seem'd to doubt whether they should ever, after parting, meet their great Redeemer. They neither knew the place where he was going, nor the way that led to his kingdom. *Lord,* said they, *we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?* In answer to this question, he told them, that he was *the way, the truth, and the life;* as if he had said, the only way of following me to the regions of happiness, is by duly observing my doctrines and precepts which I have deliver'd to you from the Almighty. He added, that by his removing to heaven, he would there intercede for them with his heavenly Father, and send the Holy Ghost to comfort them from thence.

However, lest all these arguments should not be sufficient to quiet their minds, he had still another, which could not fail of success; *If ye loved me,* says he, *ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the father:* intimating that he would consider it as a proof of their love to him, if they ceased to mourn. They doubtless thought, that by grieving for his death, they express'd their love to their Master; and it should seem strange that our Saviour should put so contrary an interpretation on their friendly sorrow, or require so unnatural a thing of them, as to rejoice at his departure. What! (might they think) shall we rejoice at so amiable a friend's removal from us; or can we be glad that he retires and leaves us in this vale of misery? No, it is impossible; the human heart, on so melancholy an occasion, has no disposition to rejoice. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, adds this reason to solve the seeming paradox, because he was going to the father; that is, he was going to ascend to the right hand of infinite power, from whence he would send them all the assistance they could desire. It must not however be supposed, that our Saviour meant by these words, that his disciples should not be concern'd at his death, or that they could not love him unless they express'd a visible joy on this occasion; that would, indeed have been a hard inter-

pretation of their grief; he well knew their grief flowed from love, and that if their love had not been strong, their sorrow had been much less. Indeed, their Master was fully convinced, that love was the occasion of their sorrow; and, for that reason, he used these arguments to mitigate it.

Our Lord did not intend to intimate, that all sorrow for so worthy a friend was unlawful, or an unbecoming expression of their love; doubtless, he was not displeas'd to see his disciples so tenderly affected at his removal from them; he who shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, blended with sighs and groans, cannot be thought to forbid them wholly at his own; he, therefore, did not chide his disciples with angry reproaches, as though they had been entirely in the wrong, but gently reasoned with them by kind persuasion, *Let not your hearts be troubled*, as rather pitying than condemning their sorrow. Soon after JESUS had spoken these things, his heart was greatly troubled, to think that one of his disciples should prove his enemy; he complain'd of it at the table, declaring that one of them should betray him. This moving declaration greatly affected the disciples, and they began every one of them to say to their Master, *Lord, is it I?* But Jesus giving them no decisive answer, John, the beloved disciple, whose sweet disposition, and other amiable qualities, is perpetuated in the peculiar love his great Master bore him, and was now reclining on his bosom, ask'd him, who among the disciples could be guilty of so detestable a crime? JESUS told him, that the person to whom he should give the sop, when he had dipped it, was he who should betray him; accordingly, as soon as he had dipped the sop in the dish, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, saying to him at the same time, *That thou doest, do quickly*.

Judas received the sop, without knowing any thing of what his Master had told the beloved disciple, nor did any of the disciples, except St. John, entertain the least suspicion, that Judas was the person who would betray their Master. They were, indeed, so deeply affected with his declaration, that one of them should betray him, that they did not remark the words of JESUS to his apostate disciple; but continued to ask him, who was the person that

should be guilty of so unnatural a crime? Willing at last to satisfy their importunity, the blessed JESUS declared, that the person who dipped his hand with him in the dish should betray him. This, to the eleven, was a joyful declaration, but confounding in the highest degree to Judas: impudent as he was, it struck him speechless, displaying the foulness of his heart, and pointing him out plainly.

Judas continued mute with confusion, while the blessed JESUS declared, that his death should be brought about according to the decrees of heaven, though that would not in the least mitigate the crime of the person who betrayed him; adding, *it had been good for that man if he had not been born*. Judas having now recovered himself a little, asserted his innocence, by a question which implied a negation of the charge. But his Master positively affirming that he was the person, he was soon silenced.

Judas Iscariot's treachery in betraying his Master, must raise the astonishment of every reader, who has any notion of the character of our great, our merciful Redeemer. It will not, therefore, we hope, be disagreeable to the reader to explain the motives that induced him to be guilty of this atrocious crime, and consider particularly the circumstances that attended so inhuman an action. Some are of opinion, that he was induced to commit this villainy by the resentment of the rebuke given him by his Master for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment, and anointed the head of JESUS, as he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper; but though this had doubtless its weight with the traitor, yet it could not, I think, be his only motive, because the rebuke was given in general to all the disciples, who had, perhaps, been equally forward with him in censuring the woman; nor can we imagine, even if he had been rebuked alone, that so mild a reproof could provoke any person, however wicked, to the horrid act of murdering his friend, much less Judas, whose covetous disposition must have disposed him to bear every thing from his Master, from whom he expected the highest preferment, when he openly declared himself the Messiah, and took the reins of government into his own hands. If it should

be answered, that his resentment was so great as to hinder him from exercising his reason, I desire it may be remembered, that though he actually agreed with the chief priests a few hours after the rebuke was given, yet he did not commit the heinous crime till two days after: besides, to impute his treachery to the sudden impulses of a strong resentment, is so great an alleviation of his crime, as seems absolutely inconsistent with the character given of it in the Scripture, where it is said to merit the heaviest punishment, and represented in the blackest colours.

There are others that think Judas betrayed his Master through covetousness: but if we understand by covetousness, the reward given by the priests, this opinion is equally defective; for the sum was too small for the most covetous wretch to think equivalent to the life of a friend, especially when he expected from him the highest posts and advantages. The reader will be convinced of the force of this remark, when he remembers, that all the disciples believed the Messiah's kingdom was instantly to be erected; and that, according to the notion they entertained of it, each of them, especially the apostles, expected, in a very short time, to be possessed of immense riches; besides, the Scripture tells us, that the predominant passion of Judas was covetousness; he, therefore, could not be so inconsistent with himself, as when just on the point of receiving an immense reward for his service, to exchange every thing for so trifling a sum.

But there are others that attribute the perfidy of Judas, to his doubting whether his Master was the Messiah, and that he betrayed him in a fit of despair: but of all the solutions, this is the worst founded; for, if Judas believed his Master to be 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 would doubtless have mentioned it to the chief priests and elders, when he made the contract with them, which it is plain he did not, as they would have reminded him of it, when he came back and expressed his remorse at what he had done. It should also be observed, that had Judas given them any intimations of this kind, they would doubtless have urged them

against our blessed Saviour himself in the course of his trial, when they were at so great a loss for witnesses to support their accusations; and against the apostles afterwards, when they reproved them for speaking in the name of JESUS: besides, had Judas thought his Master an impostor, and proposed nothing by his treachery, but the price he put upon his life, how came he to sell him for such a trifle, when he well knew, that the chief priests and rulers would have given him any sum, rather than not have gotten him into their hands? In fine, the supposition that Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, is directly confuted by the solemn declaration he made to the priests, when he declared the deepest conviction of the innocence of our great Redeemer: *I have sinned*, said he, *in betraying the innocent blood*. And it must be remembered, that the remorse he felt for his crime, was too bitter to be endured; so that he fled even to the king of terrors for relief, after he saw his Master condemned.

However, since the treachery of Judas did not proceed from any of these motives, it may be asked, what other motive can be assigned for his conduct? The evangelist St John tells us, that he was of so covetous a disposition, as to steal money out of our Lord's bag, and hence we have sufficient reason to believe, that he first followed JESUS, with a view of obtaining 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 rather, as JESUS had lately discouraged all ambitious views amongst his disciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting his kingdom, which was offered him by the multitude who accompanied him into Jerusalem, with shouts, and crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David*. His impatience, therefore, becoming excessive, inspired him with the thought of delivering his Master into the hands of the council, firmly persuaded that he would then be obliged to assume the dignity of the Messiah, and consequently able to reward his followers: for, as this court was composed of the chief priests, elders and scribes, that is, the principal

persons of the sacerdotal order, the representatives of the great families, and the doctors of the law; the traitor did not doubt that his Master, when brought before so august an assembly, would assert his pretensions to the title of Messiah, prove his claims to their full conviction, gain them over to his interest, and immediately enter on his regal dignity. And though he must be sensible, that the measures he took to compass this intention were very offensive to his Master; yet he might think the success of it would procure his pardon from so compassionate a Master, and even recommend him to favour. In the mean time, 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, thinking himself affronted by the rebuke of Jesus, at the time when the woman annointed the head of his Master, he was provoked to execute the resolution he had formed of obliging him to alter his measures. Rising, therefore, directly from the table, he went immediately into the city, to the palace of the high-priest, where he found the council assembled, consulting how they might take JESUS by subtlety, in the absence of the multitude. To them he made known his intention of delivering his Master into their hands; and undertook, for a small sum of money, to conduct a band of armed men to the place where the Saviour of the world usually spent the night with his disciples, where they might apprehend him without the least danger of a tumult. Thus the great deceiver of mankind tempted him to commit the horrid action, by laying hold of the various passions that now agitated the traitor's breast.

It may be gathered from the nature of the contract, that these were really the motives which induced Judas to betray his Master: *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 destroy JESUS, they had not been so abominably wicked as to declare their intention publicly: they only proposed to bring him to a trial for assuming the char-

acter of the Messiah, and to treat him as it should appear he deserved. The offer, therefore, which Judas made them of delivering him up, was in conformity to their public resolutions; nor did they understand it in any other light; for, had the priests thought that his design in this was to get his Master punished with death, they must also have thought he believed him to be an impostor; in which case, they would doubtless have produced him as one of their principal evidences, no person being more proper to bear witness against any criminal than his companion. Or, supposing Judas 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: also, when Judas returned to them with the money, declaring that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood, instead of replying, *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 contract they had made with him. It is true, they called the money they gave him, *the price of blood*; but they did not mean this in the strictest sense, as they had neither hired Judas to assassinate his Master, nor can they be supposed to have charged themselves with the guilt of murdering him: it was only the price of blood, in consequence of its being the reward they had given to the traitor, for putting it in their power to take away the life of CHRIST, 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.

Judas, in short, knew that the rulers could not take away the life of any person whatsoever, the Romans having deprived them of that power; 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 could never die, an opinion which Judas might easily embrace, having seen

his Master raise several persons, and among the rest, one who had been in the grave no less than four days.

It is probable that the traitor's intention in betraying his Master, was that mentioned above, 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 the life of his Master, the sentence of condemnation passed upon him, instead of filling him with despair, must have gratified him, being the accomplishment of his project: whereas, this circumstance is shewn to have been perfectly natural, by the light wherein we have endeavoured to place his conduct.

Having been witness to the greatest part of our Lord's miracles, and having experienced the certain truth of them, in the powers that had been conferred upon himself, Judas could never think that the council would have condemned him as an impostor, 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 the 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 their 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 I think it probable, that the traitor's intention in delivering up his Master, was not to get him punished with death, but only to lay him under a necessity of proving his pretensions before the grandees; whom he had hitherto shunned; thinking that the whole nation would immediately have submitted, and the disciples have been raised forthwith to the summit of their expectations, if they had yielded.

But this account of Judas' 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 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 he had received from him, and, no doubt, exercised with extraordinary pleasure, together with the rest of the apostles.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Our Saviour institutes the Sacrament of his Supper: He checketh the ambitious Strife of his Disciples, and promiseth them a Share in his Kingdom: He telleth Peter of Satan's desire to fist him, but that his Faith should be supported; and yet he should thrice deny him: He adviseth his Disciples to provide Necessaries, and to arm themselves against the Day of Trial: He promiseth them Power to do greater Works than his own, and the Grant of all that they should ask in his Name: He requireth their Obedience as a Proof of their Love, and giveth them a Promise of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. Under the Parable of the Vine, CHRIST setteth forth God's Government of his Church, and exhorteth his Disciples to abide in his Faith and Doctrine: He commandeth them to love one another, according to the great Love he had shewed for them; and warneth them of their Sufferings for his Sake: He comforteth them by a Promise of the Holy Ghost: He intimateth his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension: His Disciples confess their Faith in him; he fo. etelleth their Defection from him, and promiseth them Peace in him amidst their Tribulation in the World: He prayeth to his Father to glorify him; and to preserve his Apostles in Unity of Faith, and from all Evil; and to sanctify them with the Word of Truth; and for the perfect Union of all Believers, and their Admission to a Share of his Glory in Heaven.

IT does not appear that our Saviour was in the least disturbed at the consideration of the treachery of Judas; for, in order to render his love to mankind more effectual, he instituted the sacrament of his supper, to perpetuate the memory of it throughout all ages. Accordingly, as they were eating the paschal-supper, *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.* Observe this rite no longer in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of me; who, by dying for you, will bring you out of the spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian, under which your fathers groaned, and will establish you in the glorious liberty of the children of God: do it in remembrance of me, who, by laying down my life, will ransom you from sin, from death, from hell, and, that you may enter immortality in triumph, will set open the gates of heaven to you.

After having given the bread to his disciples, he also took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* All of you, and all of my disciples in all ages, must drink of this cup, because it represents my blood shed for the remission of the sins of mankind; my blood, by which the new covenant between God and

man is ratified: it is, therefore, my blood of the new covenant; so that this institution exhibits to your joyful meditation, the grand basis of the hopes of the children of men, and perpetuates the memory of it to the end of the world. He added, *I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,* Matr. xxvi. 29.

The most illustrious, the most momentous event that is possible to engage the meditations of mankind, is the manifestation of the Son of God: to his life and death, his resurrection and ascension into glory, we are indebted for our hopes and assurances of pardon, for our peace, for our happiness: to procure our benefit, he made the most amazing condescension from the dignity he enjoyed with his Father, by putting on the veil of flesh; he poured divine instruction from his lips, and shone forth with an all-perfect and all-lovely example; for our benefit, he submitted to a course of the most cruel treatment of his bitter enemies, to the agonies of the cross, and to the stroke of the king of terrors: for our benefit, he arose again with power and lustre, ascended into the mansions of eternal happiness, intercedes for us with the Almighty, and holdeth the reins of government. And shall the amiable, the excellent, the beneficial actions of this Saviour, be buried in oblivion? Forbid it, gratitude, duty, interest! Forbid it, every

consideration that can affect the human mind! With the greatest wisdom and goodness, this beneficent Jesus instituted a rite, that should recall his love to our memories, and awake each pious passion in our breasts; a rite which, by the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of wine, should represent to us in a striking manner, that most signal proof of the affection, both of him and his heavenly Father, when his tender frame was exposed to wounds and bruises, when streams of the most precious blood issued from his sacred veins. And the more we reflect on this instance of divine love, the more we shall perceive that there was a peculiar propriety in pointing out, by a particular ordinance, a fact of such immense importance in the system of revelation! Nay, we may even venture to assert, that in some dark and corrupt ages, when the Scriptures were little known by the common people, and hardly studied by the priests, the death of our Saviour, had not the remembrance of it been renewed by the celebration of this sacred ordinance, would have been almost forgotten.

We should also remember, that the vanities of the world, the allurements of sensual pleasure, the charms of ambition, the splendour of riches; in short, temptations from present objects of every kind, have often too fatal an influence on our temper and conduct; they have a melancholy aptitude to draw the soul aside to folly, and to obliterate the impressions of things divine. It was, therefore, a wise, a kind intention of our great Redeemer, by a frequent repetition of the sacramental feast, to call back the wandering heart of man to a sense of his duty and obligations as a Christian. Besides, though the religion of the immaculate Jesus is altogether gentle, generous, and beneficent; though its whole tendency is to correct the passions, sweeten the dispositions, and enlarge the affections of men; and though it enforces all this upon us by motives surprisingly powerful and affecting; yet such is the perverseness of the human heart, that jealousies and contentions, envy, wrath, and malice, too often find admittance there. Was it not then an instance of our Saviour's wisdom and benevolence, by uniting us together at the sacrament of his body and blood, to

inspire us with condescension, compassion, and love, and to urge the putting away all bitterness, anger, evil-speaking, and revenge.

We ought, therefore, to be very careful how we perform this duty appointed by our dying Saviour. We should, in order to receive it worthily, employ our meditation on the design and excellency of the gospel; on the noble system of doctrines and duties it contains; on the illustrious, divine, and complete example of the blessed Jesus; on the important privileges, the valuable promises, and the ravishing prospects his revelation affords; and on the bright and convincing evidence with which it is attended. We should contemplate that essential and unparalleled benevolence of the Deity, in forming the way for our redemption; on the readiness manifested by the Son of God in undertaking our cause; and on his wonderful transactions in the prosecution of this grand, this amazing work: above all, we should impress upon our souls a strong sense of the special and immediate purposes for which this sacrament was appointed; and when we actually join in communion, we should be careful that our affections be properly directed, and warmly engaged.

To have our hearts fixed upon the vanities, the profits, and the cares of this world, is a direct violation of the ordinance; and therefore we should be extremely careful to maintain a right temper and behavior at that time. We should study to abstract our thoughts as much as possible from every foreign, every terrestrial consideration, and to have our passions fervently employed in the solemn service. "Retire, O, my soul! each of us should say, from this inferior scene of things; from all its pleasures, and all its pursuits, and hold communion with the Almighty and his Son, the immaculate Jesus. Meditate upon that infinite grace of Omnipotence, which contrived the amazing plan, that displayeth pardon, peace, and endless happiness to so undeserving a creature as thou art. Recollect that surprising condescension and tenderness of thy compassionate Redeemer, which induced him to bring down from heaven salvation to the sons of men. Call to mind the admirable instructions he offered, the charming pat-

tern he exhibited, the hard labours and sufferings he endured in the course of his ministry; especially call to mind the ignominy, the reproaches, the agonies he endured, when he hung upon the cross, and purchased for thee eternal mercy. Think upon these affecting subjects, till thine heart is filled with sorrow for thine iniquities; till thy faith becomes lively, active, and fruitful; till thy gratitude and love are elevated to the highest pitch; till thy obedience is rendered uniform, steady, and complete. Hast thou, O, my God, and Parent of universal nature! hast thou so illustriously manifested thy compassion for sinners as not to spare thine own Son? Hast thou sent the Saviour into this lower world, in order to raise the children of men to immortality perfection and glory? And am I now in thy presence, on purpose to celebrate this institution, which requireth me to commemorate the death of the great Messiah; to declare my public acceptance of his excellent revelation, and my regard to my Christian brethren? May then the remembrance of his beneficence dwell upon my mind, and upon my tongue for ever and ever! May I consider and comply with the intention of his gospel: and may the sentiments of kindness and charity towards all my fellow mortals and fellow disciples, with increasing purity, with increasing zeal, reign in my breast."

When we partake of this sacred ordinance, such are the views that should possess our souls: but it will signify little to entertain these views at that time, unless the effects of them are apparent in our future conduct and conversation; for a transient flow of affections or sallies of immediate delight were not principally intended in this institution. The blessed Jesus did not ordain it as a ceremony or charm, but as a proper method of establishing our hearts in virtuous and pious dispositions. Though ye have, therefore, O Christians! obeyed the Redeemer's command in this appointment, and found your passions greatly moved, yet this is not the whole required at your hands; it will justly be expected, that ye should live to the honour of your divine Master. As you have solemnly professed your faith in him, and your love towards him, the reality of your faith and love should be

demonstrated by walking more strictly in the way of his precepts, and by abounding in that heavenly character and temper which his spotless example so engagingly recommends: thus only will the sacrament become subservient to the most beneficial purposes; thus only will it be instrumental in qualifying us for sharing in the dignity and felicity possessed by our exalted Saviour. May, therefore, all the followers of the immaculate Jesus, advance from holiness to holiness, till they arrive at the regions of eternal felicity, by uniting together at his sacred table.

Having thus instituted his last supper, our blessed Saviour was deeply affected with his own thoughts; and after delivering the sacramental cup, telling them that his blood was shed for them, he mentioned the treachery of Judas a second time: *But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* This second declaration was made very properly after the institution of the sacrament, which exhibits the highest instance of our great Redeemer's love to mankind, his dying to obtain the remission of their sins; for it abundantly proves, that the person who could deliberately be guilty of such an injury to so kind a friend must have been a monster, the foulness of whose ingratitude cannot be reached by the force of language. Some of the disciples, particularly struck with horror at the thought of Judas' treachery, rebuked him, by asking him with surprise, how he could betray his Master? This accusation Judas, no doubt, repelled by impudently denying the fact; but consciousness of guilt, giving edge to the reproaches of his brethren, and to every circumstance of the affair, he, thinking himself affronted, immediately left the company exceedingly displeased.

Our blessed Saviour's sufferings were now at hand: the traitor Judas was gone to the chief priests and elders, for a band of soldiers to apprehend him; but this did not discompose the Redeemer of mankind; he took occasion to meditate on the glory that would accrue both to himself and to the Almighty from those sufferings, and spake of it to his disciples: *Now, laid he, is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* He also told them, that having already done honour to his Fa-

ther by the past actions of his life, and being about to honour him yet further by his sufferings and death, which would display his perfections, particularly his infinite love to the human race, in the most astonishing and amiable light, he was in his turn to receive honour from the Almighty; intimating that his human nature was to be exalted to the right hand of Omnipotence, and that his mission from God was to be supported by irrefragable attestations. But his disciples, imagining that he spake of the glory of a temporal kingdom, their ambition was again revived, and they began to dispute with as much keenness as ever, which of them should be greatest in that kingdom. This contention, JESUS composed by the arguments he had formerly used for the same purpose. Amongst the Gentiles, said he, they are reckoned the greatest who have the greatest power, and have exercised it in the most absolute manner: but your greatness shall be very different from theirs; it shall not consist in being unlimited with regard to tyrannical power, even though it should be joined with an affectation of titles, which denote qualities truly honourable; but whosoever desires to be great, or chief among you, let him be so by his humility, and the service he renders to the rest, in imitation of me your master, whose greatness consists in this, that I am become the servant of you all: adding, as they had continued with him in this temptation, he would bestow upon them such a kingdom as his Father had appointed for them. At the same time to check their ambition, and lead them to form a just notion of his kingdom, he told them, that he was soon to leave them, and that whither he was going, they could not at that time follow him; for which reason, instead of contending with one another, which of them should be the greatest, they would do well to be united among themselves in the happy bond of love: for, by loving one another sincerely and fervently they would prove themselves his disciples, to the conviction, of mankind, who could not be ignorant, that the distinguishing part of his character was love.

Our Lord called this a new commandment, not because mutual love had never been enjoyed to mankind before, but because it was a precept of peculiar excel-

lency; for the word *new* in the Hebrew language, denotes excellency and truth: and the reason of this idiom seems to have been, that novelty oftentimes has the same effect upon the mind as excellency, rendering an object acceptable, and raising admiration: he also called this a new commandment, because they were to exercise it under a new relation, according to a new measure, and from new motives: they were to love one another in the relation of his disciples, and in that degree of love which he had shewed to them; for they were to lay down their lives for the brethren. This excellent morality, however, did not make such an impression on Peter, as the words which Jesus had spoken concerning a place whither his disciples could not come: he therefore replied, by asking, where he was going? To which Jesus answered, *Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*

In order to make his disciples humble, watchful, and kindly-affectionate one towards another, he assured them, that Satan was seeking to ruin them all by his temptations: *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.* Peter was greatly offended that his Master should have singled him out as the weakest: for so he interpreted his praying for him particularly: and supposing that he mentioned Satan's seeking to sift him, as a thing which would hinder him from following his Master, replied, Why cannot I follow thee now? Is there any road more terrible than the dark valley of the shadow of death? Yet, I am willing this moment to accompany thee through these black and gloomy shades.

But Jesus knowing his weak, though sincere resolution, answered, Art thou so very confident of thine own strength? *I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me,* Luke xxii. 34.

Our dear Lord having finished what he had to say to Peter in particular, turned himself to his other disciples, and put them in mind, how that, when they were first sent out, he directed them to rely

wholly upon the Almighty for assistance. When I sent you formerly, said he, to preach the gospel, you may remember, I ordered you to go without any provision, either for your sustenance or defence, assuring you, that though you would indeed meet with great opposition, yet Providence would dispose some men in all places to be your friends, and to furnish you with all necessaries; and, accordingly, you found that you wanted for nothing, but were wonderfully supported without any care or provision of your own in the whole journey, and finished your work with success. But now the case is very different; the time of that greatest trial and distress, whereof I have often forewarned you, is just at hand; and you may now make all the provision in your power, and arm yourselves against it as much as you are able: the time, I say, of the greatest trial and distress that ever yet befell you, is now at hand; for I am just going to be betrayed into the hands of my inveterate enemies. I have finished the work for which I was sent into the world; and nothing now remains for me, but to undergo those sufferings which the prophets have foretold concerning me, and, by submitting at last to a most cruel and ignominious death, to complete this whole dispensation of Providence. The disciples thinking that their great Master meant, that they should arm themselves in a literal sense, and endeavour to oppose the assaults that would shortly be made upon them by the Jews, answered, *Lord, here are two swords*: but the blessed Jesus, who only intended to convey an idea of their approaching distress and temptation, and to arm them against the surprise, replied, *It is enough*.

Our blessed Saviour having thus forewarned his disciples of the great trial that was coming upon them, and commanded them to arm themselves against it, proceeded to animate them to sustain the trial manfully, and to comfort them under the dismal apprehensions it might cause in their minds. Be not terrified and disconsolate, said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, because I have told you that I must undergo great sufferings, and be taken away from you for a time. You have always been taught to believe in God, who is the Almighty Preserver and Governor

of all things; and to rely on him for deliverance in every affliction and distress. Learn now, in like manner, to believe in me, who have all power committed to me, as preserver and head of my church; and trust in me to accomplish fully all things that I have promised you. If you do this, and persist steadfastly in the belief of my doctrine, and in the obedience of my commands, nothing in this vale of misery, not even persecution, or death itself, shall be able to hinder you from attaining the happiness I have proposed to you: for in heaven, my Father's house, there is abundant room to receive you, otherwise I would not have filled your minds with the hopes and expectations of happiness: but, as there are mansions sufficient for you in another state, you may with confidence and assurance hope for the full accomplishment of my promises, notwithstanding all this present world may contrive or act against you. And ye ought also to bear patiently my departure from you at this time; since I only leave you to open the portals of those eternal habitations, where I shall be ever with you, and to prepare a place for your reception: after which I will return and take you to myself. Nor shall you evermore be separated from me, but continue with me to all eternity, in full participation of my eternal glory and happiness, in the blissful regions of the heavenly Canaan. You must now surely know the way that leads to these happy seats of immortality, and whither I am going.

However, the disciples, whose minds were not yet fully weaned from the expectations of temporal power and glory, did not understand this discourse of their great and beloved Master. Accordingly, Thomas replied, *Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?* To which the blessed Jesus answered, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* Imitating my example, and obeying my commands, is the way to arrive at the place whither I am going; namely, to my Father's house, and to the enjoyment of his eternal happiness: nor can any man go thither by any other way. If ye say, we do not know the Father, I tell you, that no man who knoweth me, can be ignorant of my Father, of his will, and of

the manner of pleasing him; for my Father and I are one: so that if ye know me, ye must know the Father also; and indeed ye do know him, and have been sufficiently instructed in his precepts. Then Philip answered, Lord, shew us but once the Father, and we shall be fully satisfied. But Jesus replied, have I been so long continually with you, and dost thou not yet know me, Philip? I tell you, I and my Father are the same; so that to know one is to be acquainted with both. What then can you mean by desiring to see the Father, as if you could still be ignorant of him, after being so long acquainted with me? Do ye not believe that the Father and I are one and the same? Whatsoever I speak, is the declaration of his will, and whatsoever I do, is the operation of his power. Believe me, that the Father and I are one; and if ye refuse to believe my own affirmation, yet, as my works carry in them undeniable evidences of a divine power, let them convince you.

Yet then surely have matter sufficient to comfort and support your spirits under the thoughts of my departure from you. Ye have abundant reason to believe, that I have power to perform all the promises I have made you, and the design of my departure is actually to perform them. When I am returned to my Father, ye shall soon receive sufficient pledges of my care and remembrance of you: ye shall be endued with power not only to perform the same works ye have seen me do, as healing diseases, giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, and the like, for the conviction of the Jews, but even to do greater things than those; to speak with all kinds of tongues, and to propagate my religion through all the nations of the earth, even amongst the Gentiles.

As being my disciples, and in order to promote the work of the gospel, whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father, in my name, shall certainly be granted you: that God may be greatly glorified, by the extraordinary success and spreading the religion of his Son, I say, that whatsoever ye shall ask, I will take care, after my return to the Father, that it shall be granted you; only ye must remember, as the necessary condition upon which all depends, that ye be careful above all things to continue

steadfast and immovable in your obedience to my commands: this is the only true mark ye can give of the sincerity of your love towards me; it is more than your grieving at my departure.

I say, the Father shall send you another advocate and comforter, even his Holy Spirit, the author and teacher of truth, who shall guide and direct, assist and comfort you in all cases. This Spirit, the sensual and corrupt world cannot receive, having no knowledge of him, nor disposition to be governed by him; but ye know him, and are disposed to entertain him: he is already in you, by his secret and invisible efficacy; and shall hereafter appear in you openly, by great and visible manifestations of himself. Thus, though I must depart from you, yet I do by no means leave you comfortless: I leave with you a promise of the Holy Spirit; and I leave you in expectation also of my return: for though, after a very little while, I shall appear no more to the world; yet, as I shall live again, and ye also shall live with me, to you I will appear.

Therefore, when I have conquered and triumphed over death, ye shall understand more fully, and it shall appear more visible by great and manifest effects, that I act, in all things, agreeably to my Father's will, and am perfectly invested with his power; and that ye in like manner have my power and commission communicated to you: so that there is a perfect unity and community between us; only ye must remember that the one necessary condition, on which all depends, is, that ye continue steadfast and immovable in your faith in me, and in your obedience to my commands. He, and he only, who embraces my doctrine, and obeys and practises it, shall be judged to be sincere in his love towards me: *And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

Judas Thaddeus here interrupted his Master, saying, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

To which JESUS replied, I have already told you the reason for my acting in this manner; because the generality of the world are not disposed to obey my commandments, the necessary condition of

maintaining communion with me : but ye are disposed to embrace my doctrine, and to obey it ; and, therefore, I manifest myself to you. And whoever else will so love me as to keep my commandments, him also will I and my Father love, and will maintain communion with him, and all spiritual blessings shall be poured down upon him, and he shall be made partaker of happiness and eternal life. On the contrary, whoever loves me not, that is, obeys not my commandments; shall have no intercourse or communion with me ; neither will my Father love or honour him, or make any manifestations of himself to him : for as my commandments are not my own, but the Father's commandments, therefore, whoever dishonours me, my Father will look upon him as dishonouring himself.

I have briefly spoken these things unto you now, according to the shortness of the time I am to continue with you, and to comfort you for the present, against my departure. But when the comforter whom I promised you is come, even the Holy Spirit, whom my Father shall send you on my account, he shall instruct you more fully, recalling to your remembrance what you have forgotten, explaining what is yet obscure, and supplying what is further necessary to be taught you, and to be understood by you. In the mean time, I take my leave of you, and my blessing I leave with you ; not formally, and after the common fashion of the world, but affectionately and sincerely, retaining a careful remembrance of you, and with an earnest desire and intention of returning again speedily to you. Wherefore, be not overmuch grieved for me and my departure, nor fearful of what may then befall yourselves : I go away from you, but it is with an intention, as I have already told you, to return to you again. If you loved me with a wise and understanding affection, ye would rejoice, instead of grieving at my present departure ; because I am going to the Supreme Author of all glory and happiness, even to my Father.

I have now told you these things before they come to pass, that when ye see them happen, your faith in me, and your expectation of the performance of all my promises, may be confirmed and strength-

ened ; the time will not allow me to say much more to you at present ; my end draweth near ; the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of darkness, is at this instant employing all his wicked instruments to apprehend and destroy me : not that either the power of the Devil, or the malice of man, can at all prevail over me ; but because the time of my suffering, according to the appointment of Divine Wisdom, is arrived ; and that I may demonstrate to the world my love and obedience to my Father, I willingly submit myself to be put to death by the hands of sinful and cruel men. Rise up, let us be going, that I may enter on my sufferings. See John, chap. xiv. ver. 1. to the end.

Thus having spoken, they finished the passover with singing a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives. The hymn which they sung was probably that which the Jews call the *Hallel*, or great hymn, which consisted of the hundred and thirteenth and five subsequent Psalms ; part of which was sung at the beginning of the solemnity, and part at the end.

When they arrived at the place which was to be the scene of his sufferings, he desired them to fortify themselves by prayer, and forewarned them of the terrible effects his sufferings would have upon them ; they would make them all stumble that very night, agreeably to the prophecy of Zechariah : *I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.* Therefore, he not only mentioned his own resurrection, but told them they should see him in Galilee, after he was risen from the dead, in order to strengthen their faith.

Peter, on our blessed Saviour's mentioning the offence that his disciples would take at his sufferings, recollected what had been said to him in particular, before they left the house. Grieving therefore afresh, to find his Master entertain such thoughts of him, and being now armed with a sword, the vehemence of his temper urged him to boast a second time of his courageous and close attachment to his Master : *Though all men, said he, should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* But JESUS, knowing that confidence and security are great enemies to virtue, thought proper to forewarn him again of his danger,

and told him, that the cock should not crow before he had denied him. Peter, however, still continued to repeat his confidence, I will die with thee, but never deny thee. The disciples all joined with Peter in professing their fixed resolution of suffering death, rather than they would deny their Master; but the event fully confirmed the prediction of our Saviour. From whence we may learn, how ignorant men are of themselves

Our dear Lord, not willing to lose one single moment of the short time of his ministry that yet remained, continued to instruct his disciples in the great truths he came into the world to explain; and from the vines, which were growing round him on the Mount of Olives, he began his excellent discourse with the parable of the vine, which we shall endeavour to explain in the following manner.

Hitherto, said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, the Jewish church and nation have been the peculiar care of Providence; as a choice and goodly vine, likely to bring forth much fruit, is the especial care of the husbandman: but from henceforth, my church, my disciples, and the professors of my religion, of whatsoever country or nation they be, shall become the people of God, and the peculiar care of Divine Providence: I will be to them as the root and stock of the vine, of which my Father is the husbandman and vine-dresser, and they are the branches.

As the skilful vine-dresser, in the management of a choice vine, cuts off all barren and superfluous branches, that they may not burden nor exhaust the tree, and prunes and dresses the fruitful branches, that they may grow continually, and bear more fruit: so in the government of my church, all useless, wicked, and incorrigible members, my Father, by his just judgment, cuts off and destroys; but those who are sincerely pious and good, he, by the various and merciful dispensations of his providence towards them, tries, purifies, and amends, that they may daily improve, and be more and more abundant in all good works. Now ye, my apostles, are such members as these, being purified in heart and mind, and prepared for every good work, by your lively faith in me, and sincere resolutions to obey my commands.

Continue steadfastly in this state, and then you may be sure of deriving all spiritual blessings from me, as the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine: but as a branch, without continuing in the vine, cannot bear any fruit, but presently dries up and perishes; so ye, unless ye continue steadfast in your communion with me, by a lively faith and sincere obedience, so as to receive grace and spiritual blessings, can never bring forth any good fruit of true holiness and righteousness, but will fall into vanity, superstition, and wickedness, and will utterly perish at last. I say, I am, as it were, the root and stock of the vine, whereof ye are the branches: he that continues to adhere to me, by constant faith in me, by imitating my example, and by obeying my commands, shall bring forth much fruit, of true virtue and holiness, into everlasting life; even as a branch which continues to grow in a vine, and receives sap and nourishment from it: but he that does not continue his relation to me in this manner, is a false and useless professor of my religion, and shall be cast out from me, and perish for ever; even as a fruitless branch is cut off from the vine, and left to wither and dry, and is at last burnt in the fire: but if ye continue in me, by believing my words, and holding fast what ye believe, and obeying and practising it, no power, or malice, either of man or of devils, shall be able to hurt you, or oppose your doctrines: for though I be absent from you in body, yet I will hear your prayers, and my Father himself also will hear you; and whatsoever ye shall ask, for the glory of the Almighty, and the propagation of my true religion in the world, shall certainly be granted you: but, above all things, carefully remember to demonstrate your continuance in me, by abounding in all good works of holiness, righteousness, and charity. This is the honour which my Father desires and expects from you, even as it is the glory and desire of a vine-dresser, that his vine should bring forth much fruit; and this is the honour that I myself expect from you, that ye should prove yourselves to be really and indeed my disciples, by imitating my example and obeying my commands: this ye are bound to do, not only in duty, but in gratitude also; for as my Father hath

loved me, so have I also loved you, and ye in like manner ought to love me again, that you may continue to be loved by me: but the way to express your love towards me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my commandments; even as I, by keeping my Father's commandments, have expressed my love towards him, and continue to be loved by him.

I have spoken to you these things before my departure, that the comfort ye have taken in my presence, may be continued in my absence, and even increased at the coming of the Holy Spirit, as it will be upon this condition, which I have so often repeated to you, that you keep my commandments: and the principal of these commandments is, that ye love one another, not after the common fashion of the world, but in such a manner as I have loved you, nor can you be ignorant what sort of love that is, when I tell you that I am now going to lay down my life for you: this is the highest instance, in which it is possible for a man to express his love towards his greatest friends and benefactors; and this I am now going to do for you, and for all mankind: I do not consider you as my benefactors, but as my friends, upon this easy condition only, that ye keep my commandments. I might, indeed, justly call you servants, considering the infinite distance between me and you, and the obligation ye have to obey my commandments: but I have not treated you as servants, who are not admitted into their master's councils, but as friends, revealing to you, with all freedom and plainness, the whole will of my Father.

I say, I have behaved myself to you, as to the nearest friends: not that you first obliged me, nor did any acts of kindness for me, but I have freely, and of my own good pleasure, chosen you to be my apostles, and the preachers of my gospel, that you may go and declare the will of God to the world, and bring forth much and lasting fruit, in the conversion of men to the knowledge of the truth, and to the profession and practise of true religion and virtue. In the performance of this work, whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father in my name, it shall certainly be granted you, in order to enable you to perform it effectually, and with full success.

In all these things which I have spoken unto you concerning the greatness of my love towards you, in choosing you to be my apostles, in revealing unto you the whole will of my Father, and in laying down my life for you; I have urged and inculcated upon you this reason chiefly, as I at first told you, that ye may learn, after my example, to *love one another*. The world, indeed, you must expect, will hate and persecute you upon my account; but this you ought not to be surprised or terrified at, knowing that I myself have met with the same treatment before you.

But the reason why the generality of the world have opposed and persecuted me, is because my doctrine is inconsistent with their lusts and passions, their covetousness and unjust ambition; and, for the same reason, there is no doubt but they will oppose and persecute you also. If ye were of the spirit of the world, flattering men in their sins, and teaching doctrines consistent with their lusts and passions, the world, doubtless, would love and honour you; but since I have chosen you out of the world, to reprove its vices, and to preach the necessity of reformation, and of men amending their lives, if the world hate and persecute you, wonder not.

Therefore, be not surprised, when ye meet with opposition; nor think to find better treatment in the world, than I myself have done. Remember what I have already told you, that the disciple is not above his Master, nor is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If men had generally and readily embraced my doctrine, you might, indeed, have had some reason to expect, that they would willingly have received yours also: but since I myself have suffered great indignities and persecutions from wicked and perverse, from obstinate and incorrigible men, only for opposing their vices, it is highly reasonable that you should expect to undergo the like treatment upon the like account: in all which sufferings you will moreover have this comfortable consideration to support you, that the justice of your own cause, and the injustice of your persecutors, will by that very means most evidently appear: seeing ye are persecuted only for professing and preaching in my name the doctrine of true religion and virtue; and they per-

persecute you only, because they know not God, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in his command. Indeed, had not I appeared to the world with all possible demonstrations of authority and truth, teaching men a most holy and undeniable doctrine, sufficient to reform their manners and amend their lives, and moreover demonstrating my divine commission, by such proofs as ought to satisfy and convince the most doubting and suspicious minds; they might have had some plea and excuse of ignorance for their unbelief; but now, since all reasonable evidence has been offered them, and proper methods used for their conversion and salvation, and yet they wilfully and obstinately reject these means of grace, it is plain they have no excuse for their sin; but they oppose and persecute you only because they will not forsake their worldly lusts, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in the commands of the Almighty: so that they who oppose and persecute you, as they have before persecuted me, shew plainly that they are haters of God, and of his most holy commandments; which is, as I have already told you, a plain evidence of the injustice of your persecutors, and of the justice of your own cause.

I say, if I had not done such works amongst them as no man ever did, they might, indeed, have had some appearance of excuse for their sin: but now, having seen abundant proofs of my authority, and undeniable evidence of the truth of my doctrine, and yet wilfully and obstinately persisting to oppose it, because inconsistent with their lusts; it is plain that their dishonouring me, is a dishonour done to God himself, and a direct contempt of his commands; so that they are utterly inexcusable. But it is no wonder, when men have given themselves wholly up to be governed by worldly affections, passions, and vices, they should act contrary to all the reason and evidence in the world; for this is but the natural consequence of obstinate and habitual wickedness; and hereby is only fulfilled in me, what holy David long since prophetically complained of, that they hated him without a cause.

However, notwithstanding all the opposition that wicked and incorrigible men will make against my doctrine, there will not

be wanting powerful promoters of it, who shall effectually overcome all opposition: for the comforter, whom I said I will send you from heaven, even that *spirit of truth*, which cometh forth, and is sent from the Father, shall, when he cometh, with wonderful efficacy, bear testimony to the truth of my doctrine, and cause it to spread through the world with incredible success; nay, and ye yourselves also, though now so weak, fearful, and doubting, shall then very powerfully bear testimony to the truth of all the things whereof ye have been eye witnesses from the beginning, having been all along present with me.

I have thus warned you beforehand, of the opposition and persecution ye must expect to meet with in the world, that when it cometh ye may not be surprised and terrified, so as to be discouraged thereby from persisting in the performance of your duty. Ye must expect particularly, that the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, men of great hypocrisy and superstition, zealous for their ceremonies and ritual traditions, but careless to know and obey the will of Omnipotence in matters of great and eternal obligation, and invincibly prejudiced against the spiritual holiness and purity of my doctrine; these, I say, you must expect will excommunicate you as apostates, and cast you out of all their societies, as the vilest of malefactors; nay, to such an absurd height of malice will their superstition carry them, that they will even fancy they promote the service of God, and the cause of religion, when they most barbarously murder and destroy you: but I have warned you of all this beforehand, that ye may prepare and fortify yourselves against it, that ye may remember I foretold it to you, and that your faith in me may thereby be strengthened, when it cometh to pass.

Indeed, I did not tell you particularly of these things at the beginning; when you first followed me and became my disciples, because then I was to continue with you in person, and support you in all things by my immediate presence: but now, being about to leave you, I think it necessary to acquaint you what things are likely to come upon you after my departure, and also what comfort you may expect to support you under them, at the same time.

I must now mention the melancholy part, namely, that I am going from you, and that great temptations will befall you in my absence; this, indeed, ye readily apprehend, and suffer your hearts to be overwhelmed with grief at the thoughts of it: but the comfortable part of my discourse, namely, that my departure is only in order to return to him that sent me, and that I will soon after send you the Holy Spirit, and the other advantages that will thence result to you, are neither considered, nor are you solicitous about them. Nevertheless, if ye will listen, I will plainly tell you the truth: ye are so far from having reason to be dejected at the thoughts of my departure, that, on the contrary, it is really profitable and expedient for you, that I should now depart; for such is the order and dispensation of Providence towards you, and the appointment of my Father's eternal and all-wise council, that before I go and take possession of my kingdom, the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, cannot be sent unto you; but when I am departed from you, and have all power in heaven and earth committed unto me, then I will send him unto you: and when he cometh he shall abundantly support and comfort you under all your troubles; shall powerfully plead your cause against your adversaries; and shall, with wonderful efficacy, cause the doctrine of the gospel to spread and prevail in the world against all opposition: he shall particularly, and in a most extraordinary and convincing manner, make the world sensible of the greatness and heinousness of a sin of which they were not aware, of the righteousness and justice of a dispensation they did not understand, and of the execution of a most remarkable judgment they did not expect. First, by wonderfully attesting and confirming the truth of my doctrine, by the gift of tongues, and other wonderful signs, he shall convince the world of the greatness and heinousness of their sins, in disbelieving and rejecting me. Secondly, by demonstrating, that my departure out of the world, was not perishing and dying, but only a returning to my Father, in order to be invested with all power both in heaven and earth, he shall convince the world of the righteousness and justice of my cause, and of the excellency of that dispensation

which I preached and declared to mankind. Lastly, he shall convince men of my power and authority to execute judgment upon mine enemies, for the establishment of my kingdom upon earth, by mightily destroying the power of the Devil and the dominion of sin, and propagating the doctrine of true religion in the world, with wonderful efficacy and success.

Many other things are yet hereafter to be done in relation to the settling and establishing of my church, which, if it were proper, I would now acquaint you with, but ye are not yet prepared to understand and receive them. Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth, whom I promised you, is come, he shall enlarge your understandings; remove your prejudices, and instruct you in all necessary and divine truths, to enable you to go through that great work, which I have begun in person, and which I will carry on by your ministry; for the Spirit is not to begin any new work, or to found any new doctrine of himself: but as I have taught and will teach you only in my Father's name, so the Spirit shall instruct you only in mine and my Father's will, and in things necessary to promote and carry on the same design. Every thing that he does shall be only in order to manifest my glory, and establish my religion in the world; even as every thing that I have done, has been only to manifest my Father's glory, and reveal his will to mankind: for as all that I have taught is only what I received from my Father, so all that the Spirit shall teach you, is only what he receives from me. Whatsoever, I say, the Spirit shall teach you, is only what he receives from me; for receiving from my Father, I call receiving from me, and teaching his will, is teaching mine; seeing all things that the Father hath, are common to me, and all power and dominion is committed to me by him.

Be careful now to remember what matter for comfort I have given you, and support yourselves with it, under the approaching distress. It is now, indeed, but a very little while before I shall be taken away from you; nevertheless, let not this cause you to despair: for, after I am departed, it will be also but a little while before I appear to you again; inasmuch as my being taken away from you is not pe-

rising, but only returning to my Father. At these last words of JESUS, the disciples were greatly disturbed and troubled, not understanding his true meaning, that in a very short time he should be taken from them by death; and that, after having overcome death by a glorious resurrection, he would appear to them again before his ascension into heaven. Not understanding this, they enquired, one of another, what can he mean by telling us, that in a very little time he shall be taken out of our sight; and that in a very little time more, we shall see him again, and this because he goeth to the Father? The meaning of all this we cannot understand.

But JESUS observing their perplexity, and knowing that they were desirous of asking him, replied, Why are ye thus disturbed and perplexed about what I told you? Is it a thing so very hard to be understood, that I said, within a very little time I should be taken away from you, and that within a very little time more, I should appear to you again? Verily, verily, I tell you I must soon depart out of this world: and when the world, who are your enemies, will rejoice and triumph over you, as if they had destroyed me, and wholly suppressed you; ye for your parts will be overwhelmed with grief and sorrow; but, within a short time, I will return to you again, and then your sorrow shall be turned into exceeding great joy: even as a woman, when she is in labour, hath great pain and sorrow for the present, but, as soon as she is delivered, forgets all her sufferings, and rejoices greatly at the birth of her son; so ye, while ye are under the immediate apprehension of my departure from you, and during that time of distress and temptation, which shall befall you in my absence, will be full of sorrow and anxiety of mind; but, when I return to you again, then ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the cause or continuance of it, no power or malice of man shall ever be able to take from you any more.

However, though I shall return to you again, and your hearts will thereupon be filled with inexpressible joy, and which never shall be taken from you any more; yet there will be no necessity that I should then continue long with you in person, to

instruct you upon every occasion, as I have now done with my own mouth: for besides that the Holy Spirit will be sent to instruct you in all things necessary, my Father himself also will hear your petitions, and be ready to grant you whatsoever you shall desire of him in my name, as being my disciples. Hitherto ye have asked nothing of God in my name; but from henceforth put up your petitions in my name, and whatsoever ye shall so ask for the glory of God, and in order to enable you to go through the work of your ministry successfully, shall certainly be granted you; that your joy, which will begin at my appearing to you again after my death, may be completed by the wonderful success and efficacy of your own ministry. These things I have told you, at present, imperfect and obscurely, according as your capacities are able to bear them; but the time is coming, when your prejudices being removed, I will speak to you with more openness, freedom, and plainness, the whole will of my Father, concerning the nature and establishment of my kingdom, and what things ye ought to pray unto him for, and in what manner.

Ye shall, at that time, with firm assurance pray to my Father in my name, for what ye want; and I need not tell you, that I will intercede with the Father on your behalf: for besides the love he has for me, and the power and authority my prayers have with him, he has, moreover, of himself, a great love for you, and a ready disposition to grant your prayers, because ye are become grateful and acceptable to him, by your love towards me, which ye have shewn, in embracing willingly that Holy doctrine which I have revealed to you from him.

Now to conclude the sum of what I have told you, is briefly and plainly this: I came down from heaven from God my Father, and have lived upon earth in the state of frail and mortal man, that I might reveal to mankind the will of my heavenly Father, and the way to obtain eternal life and happiness: and now having finished this great work, I am about to leave this world, and return again to my Father, from whence I at first came. These last words of JESUS, being somewhat more plain and express, than any he had before spoken,

for that now the disciples clearly perceived, that the departure he had so often mentioned, was no other than his actual going out of this world, they replied, Now, Lord, thou speakest plainly, and without any figure; so that we apprehend fully what thou meanest. And now that our curiosity is satisfied, thou hast likewise greatly confirmed our faith; having given us a certain token, whereby we are assured that thou knowest all things, even the hearts and secret thoughts of men, since thou hast answered us a question which gave us great perplexity, and we were desirous to ask thy opinion of, but were afraid: but now we are convinced, that thou art endued with a truly divine power, and did indeed come forth from God. To which Jesus answered, and do you now at length firmly believe in me? Are you resolved to continue steadfast in this faith? Do you think yourselves able to persevere immoveably in the possession of it? Be not confident of your own strength, but pray that ye may be delivered from temptation in time of distress, such as will come upon you much sooner than ye expect: for I tell you, that ye will all of you, within a few hours, utterly forsake me, and fly, in hopes to secure yourselves, leaving me alone; and yet I should not say alone, since my Father is with me who is more than all: I have therefore acquainted you with these things beforehand, that your minds may be furnished with sufficient matter of comfort and strength to bear up under all temptations, from the consideration of my having foretold both what distresses will befall you, and how ye shall terminate your victory over all your enemies! *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,* John xvi. 33.

Thus having finished his discourse, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed, saying, O Almighty Father! now the time of my sufferings, for which I was sent into the world, is arrived; I entreat thee, support me under it, and make me triumph over death by a glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven; that by this means the glory may redound to thee, and cause thy will to be believed and obeyed through all the world to the salvation of mankind;

according to the full intent of that office and power with which thou didst originally invest me to receive all fitly disposed persons into the covenant of salvation, and to assist and preserve them in it unto everlasting happiness: the condition of this covenant is, that they firmly believe and obey thee, as the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST, as the true Messiah whom thou hast sent. In order to the bringing about this great design of salvation, I have declared thy will to mankind; I have published thy precepts, and discharged the great mission intrusted to me; I have preached the doctrine of repentance to salvation, and have finished the work which thou hast sent me to do, to the glory of thy name upon earth; and now to complete the great design, do thou, O Almighty Father! likewise glorify me with thine own self; support me under my suffering; let me prevail and triumph over death, by a glorious resurrection, and exalt me again to the same glory in heaven which I had with thee before the creation of the universe. I have manifested thy will to my disciples, the men that thou gavest me out of the world, and to all such as were fitted and disposed to receive it; to such as by a pious habit, and teachable disposition, were prepared to embrace whatever doctrine should appear to come from thee. To those persons thou didst in thine infinite wisdom appoint, that thy truth should be made known, and not to the prejudiced and vitious world: therefore, to them I have revealed the mysteries of thy kingdom, the precepts of thy gospel, and the doctrine of thy salvation; and this doctrine they have willingly embraced, steadfastly adhered to, and sincerely obeyed; as they are fully satisfied and convinced, that what I taught them as from thee, was really a divine doctrine taught by thine immediate appointment and command; and that I did not preach any human invention or institution of men, but was really sent by thy divine authority and commission. For these persons, therefore, I now pray, that as thou hast begun the work of their salvation by my preaching and revealing to them my will, while I have been present with them here upon earth; so also that thou wouldst preserve them when I am departed from this world,

and complete the work of their salvation, by my resurrection and ascension into heaven after my death. I do not pray for the unbelieving impenitent world, but for those who have embraced that most holy doctrine, which thou hast taught them through me by my preaching; for those who have glorified and will glorify my name by their ministry, and who consequently are to be esteemed as thine own, in common with me. I am now about to leave the world in order to return to thee, but these my disciples, who continue after me, I recommend to thy divine protection, when I am gone; endue them with powers to persevere in preaching and practising the truth, and to deliver the same holy doctrines which I have given to them, that so they may remain inseparably united to me, as I am to thee: so long as I have been with them in the world, I have watched over them, and kept them from falling away, both by example, preaching, and continual admonition, according to the power and authority which thou didst commit to me; nor has one of my apostles miscarried under my care, except that perfidious traitor, who as the Scripture foretold, has ungratefully conspired with my enemies to destroy me, and will perish according to his deserts. While I have continued with my disciples, I have watched over them and preserved them under my own eye; but now, as I am going to leave the world, I beseech thee to keep and assist them by thy good Spirit; and let the expectation of their continuing under thy special care and protection, be their comfort and support in my absence. The world, indeed, will persecute and hate them on this account, as my doctrine is repugnant to the lusts and affections, the passions, designs, and inclinations of worldly men; it must necessarily be; that the vicious and incorrigible world will oppose and persecute them, as it has before persecuted me; I beseech thee, therefore, to take them under thy particular care, to support them against the violence and oppression of an evil world: I do not desire that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but preserve them in it to be instruments of thy word, thy glory, and to be teachers of thy truth; nor suffer them to be either destroyed by the malice and violence of a perverse and

wicked generation, or corrupted by the evil customs and opinions of it.

According to the example of purity which I have set before them, they are of a temper and spirit very different from the current affections and common dispositions of the world. Do thou preserve and increase in them that moderation and candour of mind; cause them to be thoroughly affected and impressed with that true doctrine so frequently recommended to them from my mouth, so as to express it visibly in their lives and practice, and to promote it zealously in their preaching, that they may become worthy and successful ministers of my gospel, both by word and good example.

As thou hast sent me into the world to reveal thy will to mankind, so send I these my apostles to continue preaching the same doctrine begun by me; and the principal design of my exemplary life, constant teaching, and now voluntarily offering myself to death for it, is to sanctify and enable them to preach with success and efficacy for the salvation of men. Neither pray I for these my apostles only, but for all others, who shall, by their preaching and practice, promote thy true religion; and being converted from the world, may, by their sincere endeavours, go on to reform others, convincing the world of the excellency of their religion, and consequently enforcing men to acknowledge the truth and divine authority thereof: for promoting which great end, I have communicated to my apostles the same power and authority of doing mighty works for the confirmation of their doctrine, and the evidence of thy truth, as thou didst communicate to me; that so I working in them as thou hast done in me, and thus confirming with great efficacy and demonstration of the Spirit, they may establish the same doctrine which I published in person, that the world may, by this evidence, be convinced that I was really sent by thee, and that my disciples may act by the same divine commission that I did.

Almighty and Holy Father, all those whom thou hast thus given me, who have wisely embraced my doctrine, and sincerely obeyed it, I desire that thou wouldst make them partakers of the same happiness with myself, and exalt them to behold the in-

comprehensible glory wherewith thou didst originally invest me in thy eternal love, before the foundation of the world. The generality of mortals, O righteous Father! the covetous and ambitious, the crafty and designing men of this world, have not known thee, nor been willing to embrace and obey the revelation of thy will: but I have known thy will, and have made it known to my disciples, men of simplicity,

and honesty; and they have embraced and obeyed it: and I will continually make it known to them more and more, that they may grow up and improve in faith, in holiness, and in all good works, so as finally to arrive and cause others to arrive at that eternal happiness, which is the effect of thy infinite love and mercy towards me and them.



C H A P T E R X X X I I I .

CHRIST'S Agony and Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: Judas betrayeth JESUS with a Kiss: The Officers and Soldiers, at CHRIST'S Word, fall to the Ground: CHRIST healeth a Servant of the High-Priest, whose Ear was cut off by Peter: His Disciples flee: He is led bound to Annas and Caiaphas.

THE prayer of our great Intercessor being ended, he, with his disciples, came down from the Mount of Olives into a field below, called Gethsemane, through which the brook Cedron ran, and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden, called the garden of Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down, perhaps at the garden door within, till he should retire to pray, taking with him, Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now to be eye witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden door, to watch the approach of Judas and his band. The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great, that the very prospect of them terrified him, and made him express himself in this doleful exclamation, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.* On this great occasion he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul, by which, as well as by dying on the cross, he became a suffering, and accomplished the redemption of mankind. He now withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and his human nature being now overburdened beyond measure, he found it necessary to retire and pray, that if it were possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be

delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him: it was not the fear of dying on the cross which made him speak or pray in such a manner; to suppose this, would infinitely degrade his character, make his sufferings as terrible as possible, and clothe them with all the aggravating circumstances of distress; yet the blessed JESUS, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the divine, could not shrink at the prospect of sufferings, or betray a weakness which many of his followers, who, though mere men, were strangers to; having encountered more terrible deaths without the least emotions. He addresses his Divine Father with a sigh of fervent wishes, that the cup might, if possible, be removed from him: in the Greek, it is, "O that thou wouldest remove this cup from me." And having first kneeled and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding immediately, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Having prayed, he returned to his disciples, and finding them asleep, he said to Peter, *Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Canst thou so soon forget thy Master? Thou who so lately boasted of thy courage and constancy in my service.*

However, in his greatest distress, he ne-

ver lost sight of that kind concern he had for his disciples: *Watch ye, he says, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Neither was he on those extraordinary occasions, in the least moved with the offences which they had committed through frailty and human weakness: on the contrary, was always willing to make excuses for them; alleging in their defence, *that the spirit truly was ready, but the flesh was weak.* It seems from these particulars, that he spent some considerable time in his addresses, because the disciples fell asleep in his absence, and he himself retired again to pray; for the sorrows of our Lord continuing to increase upon him, affected him to such a degree, that he retired a second time, and prayed to the same purpose, saying, *O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, unless I drink it, thy will be done.* After which he returned again to them, and found them asleep, *for their eyes were heavy.* He returned thus frequently to his disciples, that they, by reading his distress in his countenance and gesture, might be witnesses of his passion, which proves that his pains were beyond description intense and complicated; for he went away the third time to pray, and notwithstanding an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen and comfort him, yet they overwhelmed him, and threw him into an agony; upon which he still continued to pray more earnestly: but the sense of his sufferings still increasing, they strained his whole body to so violent a degree, that his blood was pressed through the pores of his skin, which it pervaded, together with his sweat, and fell down in large drops on the ground: *And he left them, and went away again. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* Thus did he suffer unspeakable sorrows in his soul, as long as the Divine Wisdom thought proper. At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father: *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow.* This circumstance shews how much the disciples were affected with their Mas-

ter's sufferings: the sensations of grief which they felt on seeing his unspeakable distress, so overpowered them, that they sunk into sleep. Our blessed Saviour for the last time came to his disciples, and seeing them asleep, he said, *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. Rise, let us be going: behold he is at hand that doth betray me.*

The owner of the garden, it seems, where he now was, had been our Lord's acquaintance, perhaps his disciple, who believing on him, considered himself as highly honoured in JESUS' frequenting it, for the sake of retirement or devotion, and, therefore, had given him the free use of it whenever he pleased. We are told that Judas knew the place; for *Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.* The chief priests and elders being informed by Judas, that the proper time for apprehending JESUS was now come, sent a band of soldiers with him, and servants carrying lanterns and torches, to shew them the way; because, though it was always full moon at the passover, the sky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was shaded with trees: at the same time, a deputation of their number accompanied the band, to see that every one did his duty. Judas, having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches, and weapons; for they were exceeding anxious to secure and get him into their hands: and the soldiers having perhaps never seen JESUS before, found it necessary that Judas should distinguish him, and point him out to them by some particular sign. St. Luke seems to say, that Judas went before them at a little distance, to prepare them for the readier execution of their office, by kissing his Master, the token they had agreed upon, that they might not mistake him and seize a wrong person: *And he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.* Nor can the account which St. John has given us, be understood on any other supposition, who says, that after Judas was come up with the soldiers, JESUS went out of the garden, and asked them, who it was

they were seeking? To which they replied, *Jesus of Nazareth.* It therefore follows, that they were at a loss to know him, which they could not have been, had they seen Judas kiss him: the kiss, therefore, must have been given in the garden before the band came up; nor is their agreement about the sign inconsistent with this supposition; because that confusion which commonly attends the commission of an evil action, might prevent Judas from giving the sign at the proper season. He went before the soldiers, on pretence that he would lead them to the place, and shew them the man by kissing him: however, to conceal his villany from his Master and the disciples, he walked hastily, and without waiting for the band, went up directly, and saluted him; feigning, perhaps to apprise him of his danger. But JESUS did not fail to convince him that he knew the meaning and intent of his salutation, saying, *Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* Judas certainly concealed his treachery so well, that Peter did not suspect him, as it is probable, he would have struck at him rather than at Malchus, the high priest's servant, if he had.

Our Lord's appointed time for suffering being now come, he did not, as formerly, avoid his enemies; but, on the contrary, on their telling him they sought JESUS of Nazareth, he replied, *I am he:* thereby insinuating to them, that he was willing to put himself into their hands: at the same time, to shew them that they could not apprehend him without his own consent, he in an extraordinary manner exerted his divine power, he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground: *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. But the soldiers and the Jews imagining, perhaps, that they had been thrown down by some dæmon or evil spirit, with whom the Jews said he was in confederacy, advanced towards him a second time: Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have*

told you, that I am he; expressing again his willingness to fall into their hands: If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way. If your business be with me alone, suffer my disciples to pass: for the party had surrounded them also. He seems to have made this request to the soldiers, that the saying might be fulfilled which he spoke, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. For as he always proportions the trials of his people to their strength; so here he took care that the disciples should escape the storm, which none but himself could bear.

Some of the soldiers, more daring than the rest, at length rudely caught JESUS, and bound him: upon which Pèter drew his sword, and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant, who probably was shewing greater forwardness than the rest in this business: *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear; the servant's name was Malchus. The enraged apostle was on the point of singly attacking the whole band, when JESUS ordered him to sheath his sword, telling him, that his unseasonable and imprudent defence might prove the occasion of his destruction: Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword. He told him likewise, that it implied both a distrust of the Divine Providence, which can always employ a variety of means for the safety of good men, and also his ignorance in the Scriptures: Thinkest thou, said he, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.*

Legion was a Roman military term, being the name which they gave to a body of five or six thousand men; wherefore, in regard that 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 he could summon to his assistance; more than twelve legions, not of soldiers, but of angels. He yet was tenderly inclined to prevent any bad conse-

quences, which might have flowed from Peter's rashness, by healing the servant, and adding, in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingness to suffer: *The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?*

Our Lord's healing the ear of Malchus, by touching it, seems to imply, that he created a new one in the place of that which was cut off; but though he performed the cure some other way, it equally demonstrates both his goodness and his power. No wound or distemper was incurable in the hand of JESUS; neither was any injury so great that he could not forgive. It seems somewhat surprising, that this evident miracle did not make an impression upon the chief priests, especially as our Lord put them in mind at the same time of his other miracles; for having first said, *Suffer ye thus far; and he touched his ear, and healed him;* he added, *Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness,* Luke xxii. 51, 52, 53. They had kept at a distance during the attack, but drew near, when they understood that JESUS was in their power; for they were proof against all conviction, being obstinately bent on putting him to death. And the disciples, when they saw their Master in the hands of his enemies, forsook him and fled, according to his prediction; notwithstanding they might have followed him without any danger, as the priests had no design against them: *Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. Then the band, and the captain and officers of the Jews, took Jesus, and bound him.* But it was not the cord which held him; his immense charity was by far a stronger band: he could, with more ease than Sampson,

have broken those weak ties, and exerted his divinity in a more wonderful manner; he could have stricken them all dead, with as much ease as he had before thrown them on the ground: but he patiently submitted to this, as to every other indignity which they pleased to offer him: so meek was he under the greatest injuries. Having thus secured him, they led him away: *And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young man laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.* This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden; who, being awakened with the noise, came out with the linen cloth, in which he had been lying, cast round his naked body; and forgetting the dress he was in, and having a respect for JESUS, followed him.

He was first led to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Annas having himself discharged the office of high priest, was consequently a person of distinguished character, which, together with his relation to the high priest, made him worthy of the respect they now paid him: but he refused singly to meddle in the affair; they, therefore, carried JESUS to Caiaphas himself, at whose palace the chief priests, elders, and Scribes were assembled, having staid there all night to see the issue of their stratagem. This Caiaphas was he that advised the council to put JESUS to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the safety of the whole Jewish nation. He was advanced to the sacerdotal dignity by Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor, and was divested of it by Vitellius, governor of Syria, after he had deposed Pilate from his procuratorship; and therefore seems to have enjoyed it during the whole course of Pilate's government.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Peter thrice denies his having any Knowledge of JESUS; but on his LORD's turning and looking on him, he repenteth.

THE trial of our blessed Lord in the high-priest's palace, and Peter's denying him, being co-temporary events, might be repeated by the evangelical historians according to their pleasure. The evangelists Matthew and Mark describe the trial first, as it is the principal fact; but Luke after the denials of Peter. John has preserved the natural order here; 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, concluding with the subsequent denials. But though this be the natural order, we shall view the denials together, previous to the trial, in order to form a better idea of them.

When JESUS was apprehended, the apostles, in great consternation, forsook him, and fled, according to the prediction concerning them: some of them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance, to see what the issue would be. Of this number was Peter, and another disciple, whom John has mentioned without giving his name, and who, therefore, is supposed to have been John himself. This disciple, being acquainted at the high-priest's, got admittance for himself first, and soon after for Peter, who had come with him: *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. The maid-servant who kept the door concluding Peter to be a disciple also, followed after him to the fire, and looking earnestly at him, charged him with the supposed crime: Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? This blunt attack threw Peter into such confusion, that*

he flatly denied his having any connection with JESUS, replying, *I am not*, and adding, *I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest*. As if he had said, I do not understand there is any reason for your asking me such a question. Thus, the very apostle who had before acknowledged his Master to be the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, who was honoured with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and had so confidently boasted of fortitude, and firm attachment to him in the greatest dangers, proved an arrant deserter of his cause upon a trial. His shameful fears were altogether inexcusable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker sex, and the terror of the charge was, in a great measure, taken off by the insinuation made in it, that John was likewise known to be CHRIST's disciple; for as he was known at the high priest's, he was consequently known in that character: *Art thou not also one of this man's disciples? Art thou not one of them as well as he who is sitting with you? Equivocation, mental reservation, and such like base arts, are below the dignity and courage of reasonable creatures; but downright lying, and that in the presence of John his fellow disciple, is abominable, and can only be accounted for, by the confusion and panic which had seized him on this occasion. As Peter's inward perturbation must have appeared in his countenance and gesture, he did not choose to stay long with the servants at the fire: he went out, therefore, into the porch, where he was a little concealed: And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew, namely, for the first time. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them; and he again denied it with an oath, I know not the man: thus aggravating his former crime by that of perjury.*

Peter having been thus attacked without doors, thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire: *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. From this*

circumstance we may conclude, that the ensuing was the third denial; and that Peter left the porch where the second denial happened, and was come again into the hall: *Here one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again, and immediately the cock crew.* The words of Malchus' kinsman bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that servant, threw him into such a panic, that when those who stood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it: *He even began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.* For, when they heard Peter deny the charge, they supported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his answer. Surely, thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto; so that, being pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better colour, he profaned the name of God, by imprecating the bitterest curses on himself, if he was telling a falsehood: perhaps, he hoped, by these acts of impiety, to convince them effectually, that he was not CHRIST'S disciple.

This zealous apostle thus denied his Master three distinct times, with oaths and affeuerations, totally forgetting the vehement protestations he had made a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was permitted to fall in this manner, to teach us two lessons: first, that whatever a person's attainments might have been formerly, if once he passes the bounds of innocence, 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 avoided, and the greatest humility and self-diffidence

maintained: in the second place, we may learn, that no sinner who repents, and has confidence in the goodness of God, should ever despair: for he no sooner denied his Master the third time, than the cock crew, and awakened in him the first conviction of his sin: *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.* St. Luke is the only evangelist who has preserved this beautiful circumstance of CHRIST'S turning and looking on Peter. The members of the council who sat on JESUS, were placed at the upper end of the hall; in the other, were the servants with Peter at the fire: so that JESUS being probably placed on some eminence, that his judges, who were numerous, might see and hear him, could easily look over towards Peter, and observe him denying him, and in passionate terms, loud enough to be heard, perhaps, over all the place. The look pierced him, and, with the crowing of the cock, brought his Master's prediction fresh into his mind. He was stung with deep remorse; and, being unable to contain himself, he covered his face with his garment to conceal the confusion he was in, and, going out into the porch, wept very bitterly. All this passed while the priests examined JESUS with many taunts and revilings; and while the most zealous of CHRIST'S disciples was denying him with oaths and imprecations, the others insulted him in the most inhuman manner. Thus a complication of injuries, insults, and indignities, was at one time heaped upon the blessed Redeemer; the meek and mild JESUS, the suffering and wonderfully patient Son of the adorable Majesty of heaven.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Trial of JESUS before the Sanhedrim, or Grand Council of the Jews.

THE band of soldiers having seized JESUS, led him to the high-priest's house, where all the chief priests, the Scribes, and the elders were assembled: *And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the Scribes came together, and led him into their council.* Probably the trial did not begin immediately on our Lord's arrival; for though many of the judges were at the high-priest's before him, some persons of distinction might be absent, whose coming the rest were, out of respect, inclined to wait for: but, as the passover was at hand, they had no time to lose; so that as soon as the council was fully met, the trial was begun: *And the high-priest asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.* He enquired of him what his disciples were, for what end he had gathered them, whether it was to make himself a king, and what the doctrine was which he taught them? In these questions there was a great deal of art; for as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was, that he had set up for the Messiah, and deluded the people, they expected he would claim that dignity in their presence, and so would, on his own confession, have condemned him, without any further process. This was unfair, as it was artful and ensnaring: to oblige a prisoner on his trial to confess what might take away his life, was a very inequitable method of proceeding; and JESUS expressed his opinion thereof with very good reason, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge by witnesses: *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why asketh thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said.* It was greatly to the honour of our blessed Redeemer, that all his actions were done in public, under the eye even of his enemies; because, had he been carrying on any imposture, the lovers of goodness and

truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him with propriety: he therefore, in his defence, appealed to that part of his character; yet his answer was construed disrespectful: for, *when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? To which he meekly replied with the greatest serenity, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Shew me, prove before this court, wherein my crime consists, or record it in the evidence on the face of my trial; which if thou cannot, how canst thou answer this inhuman treatment to a defenceless prisoner, standing on his trial before the world, and in open court, and strike me undeservedly?*

In this instance, JESUS became an example of his own precept; and if a man *smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*, Matt. v. 39. bearing the greatest injuries with an unprovoked patience, worthy of the meek Lamb of God.

JESUS having declined answering the questions, whereby the council expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgement of his being the Messiah, they proceeded to examine many witnesses to prove his having assumed that character; as they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who being only a man, according to their opinion, could not, without the highest affront to the Divine Majesty, pretend to the title of the Son of God, as it belonged only to the Messiah. But in this examination they acted like interested and enraged persecutors, rather than impartial judges, forming their questions in the most artful manner, in order, if possible, to draw expressions from them which they might pervert into suspicions of guilt, as some foundation for condemning JESUS, who had so long and faithfully laboured for their salvation. Their witnesses, however, disappointed them, some of them disagreeing in their story, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance.

At last, two persons agreed in their depositions, namely, in hearing him say, that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days. But this testimony was absolutely false; for our great Redeemer never said he could destroy and build the temple of Jerusalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true, that after banishing the traders from the temple, when the Jews desired to know by what authority he undertook to make such a reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his resurrection; saying, *Destroy this temple* (pointing probably to his body) *and in three days I will raise it up.* The witnesses, therefore, either through malice or ignorance, perverted his answer into an affirmation, that he was able to destroy, and build the magnificent temple of Jerusalem in three days: and the judges considering that such an act could not be performed by Divine Power, interpreted his assertion as blasphemy.

Our Saviour, during the whole time, made no reply to the evidences that were produced against him, which greatly provoked the high-priest, who, supposing that he intended by his silence to put an affront on the council, rose from his seat, and with great perturbation, demanded the reason for so remarkable a conduct: *Answerest thou nothing?* said he, *what is it which these witnesses against thee?* And some of the council added, *Art thou the Christ?* To which our blessed Saviour, answered, If I should tell you plainly, you would not believe me; and if I should demonstrate it to you by the most evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced, nor release me.

At these things, the high priest, finding it impossible to ensnare JESUS, and being desirous of rendering the trial as short as possible, said to him, I adjure thee solemnly by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whose presence thou standest, that thou tell us plainly and truly, whether thou art the Messiah, the Son of God? This question was artfully contrived; for if JESUS should answer it in the affirmative, they were ready to condemn him as a blasphemer; if in the negative, they intended to punish him as an impostor, who had deceived the people by

accepting from them the honours and titles of the Messiah.

The blessed JESUS was not, however, intimidated by the consequence attending his confession of the truth; for, being adjured by the chief magistrate, he immediately confessed the charge, adding, ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of this truth, in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which I will send upon the Jewish nation; in the quick and powerful progress which the gospel shall make over the earth; and, finally, in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven at the last day, the sign you have so often demanded in confirmation of my being sent from God.

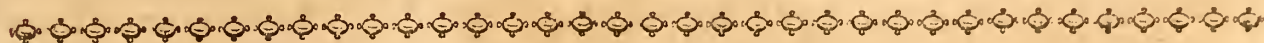
This answer of our blessed Saviour's, caused a number of them to cry out at once, as astonished at the supposed blasphemy, *Art thou the Son of God?* To which our great Redeemer replied, *Ye say that I am:* a manner of speaking among the Jews, which expressed a plain and strong affirmation.

The high priest, on hearing this second assertion, rent his clothes with great indignation, and said unto the council, Why need we trouble ourselves to seek for any more witnesses? Ye yourselves, nay, this whole assembly are witnesses, that he hath spoken manifest and notorious blasphemy; what think ye? To which they all replied, that, for assuming to himself the character of the Messiah, he deserved to be put to death.

The servants and common people then began to fall upon him as a man already condemned; spitting upon him, buffeting him, and offering him all manner of rudeness and indignities; they blindfolded him, and some of the council, in order to ridicule him for having pretended to be the great Prophet, bid him exercise his prophetic gift, in declaring by whom he was smitten: Surely, those miscreants could hardly invent any thing more expressive of the contempt in which they held our great Redeemer's pretensions to the Messiah.

Thus was the great Judge of all the earth placed at the bar of frail mortals, 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, to expire in a moment, or utterly dwindle away.



C H A P T E R XXXVI.

JESUS is led before Pilate : Judas relents, carries back the Money, and hangs himself : The Governor refuses to judge our blessed Saviour, declares him innocent, and sends him to Herod ; who, after hearing his Accusers, sends him back again.

THE Saviour of the world, whom the whole Jewish nation had so long expected, having been thus condemned by the Sanhedrim, they consulted together, and resolved to carry him before the governor, that he likewise might pass sentence on him. The Roman governors of Judea generally resided at Cæsarea ; but at the great feasts they came up to Jerusalem, to prevent or suppress tumults, and to administer justice : it being a custom for the Roman governors of provinces to visit the principal towns under their jurisdiction on this latter account. Pilate being accordingly come to Jerusalem some time before the feast, had been informed, probably by Joseph of Arimathea, of the great ferment amongst the rulers, and the true character of the person on whose account it was raised ; for he entertained a just notion of it : *he knew that for envy they had delivered him.* He knew the cause of their envy, was impressed with a favourable opinion of JESUS, and wished, if possible, to deliver him from his vile persecutors who sought to put him to death.

The Jewish council, early in the morning, brought JESUS to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themselves, however, went not into the hall, but stood without, lest they should be rendered incapable of eating the passover, by being defiled.

Judas Iscariot, who had delivered his Master into the hands of the council, finding his project turned out very different from what he expected, was filled with the deepest remorse for what he had done. He saw all his golden dreams of temporal

honours and advantages sunk at once to nothing ; he saw his kind, his indulgent Master condemned, and forsaken by all his followers. He saw all this, and determined to make all the satisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed : accordingly, he came and confessed openly his sin before the chief priests and elders, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earnestly wished he could recall the fatal transaction of the preceding night. It seems he thought this was the most public testimony he could possibly give of his Master's innocence, and his own repentance : I have, said he, committed a most horrid crime, in betraying an innocent man to death. But this moving speech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewish rulers : they affirmed, that however he might think the prisoner innocent, and for that reason had sinned in bringing the sentence of death upon his head, they were not to blame ; because they knew him a blasphemer, who deserved to die : *What is that to us ?* said they, *see thou to that.* Nay, they even refused to take back the money they had given him as a reward for performing the base act of betraying his Master, who had deserved from him the best of treatment.

Convinced now, that it was not in his power to assist his Saviour, Judas's conscience, being stung with remorse, lashed him more furiously than before, suggesting thoughts, which by turns, made the deepest wounds in his soul. The innocence and benevolence of his Master, the many favours he himself had received from him,

and the many kind offices he had done for the sons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind, and rendered his torment intolerable. He was, if we may be allowed the comparison, like one placed on the brink of the infernal lake. Racked with these agonizing passions, and unable to support the misery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple, and confessing at the same time his own sin, and the innocence of his Master, went away in despair and hanged himself. Thus perished Judas Iscariot the traitor, a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness, and a standing monument of divine vengeance, to deter future generations from acting in opposition to the dictates of conscience, through a love of the things of this world; for which, this wretched mortal betrayed his Master, his Friend, his Saviour, and accumulated such a load of guilt on himself as sunk his soul into the lowest pit of anguish and despondency.

The people gathered up the pieces of silver cast down by Judas, and delivered them to the priests, who, thinking it unlawful to put them into the treasury, because they were the wages of a traitor, agreed to lay them out in purchasing the potter's field, and to make it a common burial-place for strangers. This the evangelist tells us was done, that a particular prophecy relating to the Messiah might be fulfilled: *And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.* This prophecy is found in Zechariah, but by a mistake of some copyist, the word Jeremy is inserted in the Greek manuscripts of St. Matthew's gospel; unless we suppose with the learned Grotius, that this remarkable prophecy was first made by Jeremiah, and afterwards repeated by the immediate direction of the Spirit, by Zechariah; and that, therefore, the evangelist has only ascribed the prophecy to its original author; but however this be, the prophecy is remarkable, and was remarkably fulfilled; and the evangelist puts the truth of this part of the history beyond all manner of exception, by thus appealing to a public transaction.

We have before remarked, that the chief priests and elders refused to go themselves into the judgment-hall, lest they should contract some pollutions in the house of an Heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the passover. The same reason also hindered them from entering the governor's palace on other festivals, when that magistrate attended in order to administer justice: a kind of structure was therefore erected, adjoining to the palace, which served instead of a tribunal or judgment seat. This structure, called in the Hebrew *Gabbatha*, was finely paved with small pieces of marble of different colours, being always exposed to the weather. Perhaps, it resembled a stage; but larger, open on all sides, and on one part of it a throne was placed, whereon the governor sat to hear causes. One side of this structure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor passed to this tribunal. By this contrivance, the people might stand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and see the governor, when he spake to them from the pavement, and observe the whole administration of justice, without danger of being defiled either by him or any of his attendants.

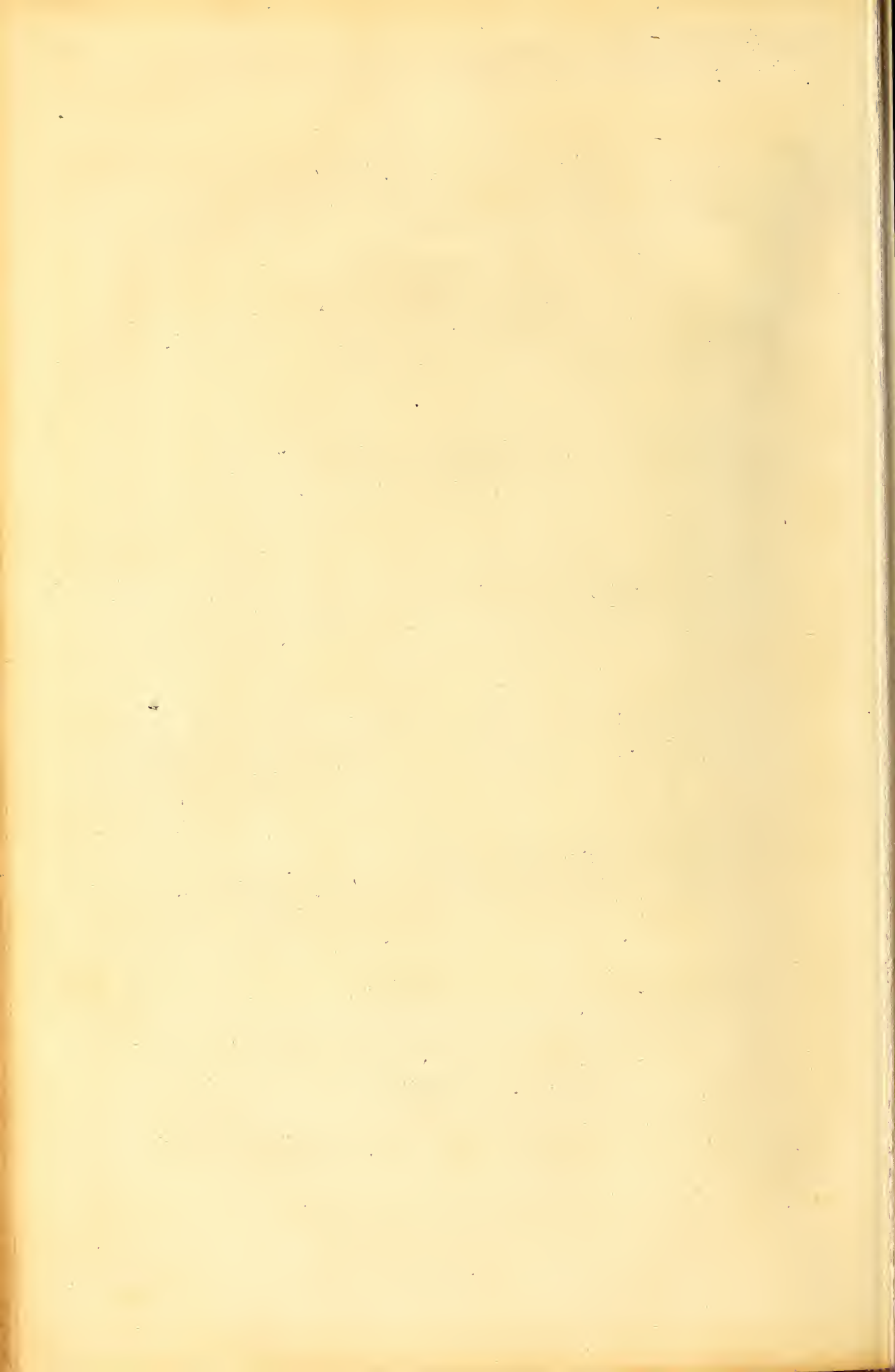
The great Redeemer of mankind, was brought before this tribunal; and the priests and elders having taken their places round the pavement, the governor ascended the judgment seat, and asked them what accusation they brought against the prisoner? Though nothing could be more natural than for the governor to ask this question, yet the Jews thought themselves highly affronted by it. They probably knew his sentiments concerning the prisoner, and therefore considered his question as intended to insinuate, that they brought one to be condemned, against whom they could find no accusation. Pilate might indeed speak to them in a stern manner, and by that means sufficiently indicate his displeasure: but, however that be, the Jews haughtily answered, if he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor, we should not have given thee this trouble at all, much less at so unseasonable an hour as the present.

JESUS was then examined by Pilate, who finding he had not been guilty either of



Sire's sculp

*Judas throwing down the Thirty pieces of Silver
(the Price he had for betraying our SAVIOUR), before the chief priest
and Elders: after which he Hanged himself.*



rebellion or sedition, but that he was accused of particulars relating to the religion and customs of the Jews, grew angry, and said, What are these things to me? Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your own law; plainly insinuating, that in his opinion, the crime they laid to the prisoner's charge, was not of a capital nature; and that such punishments as they were permitted by Cæsar to inflict, were adequate to any misdemeanor that JESUS was charged with. But this proposal of the Roman governor was absolutely refused by the Jewish priests and elders, because it condemned their whole proceeding, and therefore they answered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deserves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but also set up himself for a king. This eagerness of the Jews to get JESUS condemned by the Roman governor, who often sentenced malefactors to be crucified, tended to fulfil the sayings of our great Redeemer, who, during the course of his ministry, had often mentioned what kind of death he was appointed to die by the predetermination of the Omniscient God.

As Pilate now found it impossible to prevent a tumult, unless he proceeded to try JESUS, he therefore ascended again the judgment seat, and commanded his accusers to produce their charges against him. Accordingly, they accused him of seditious practices, affirming that he had used every method in his power to dissuade the people from paying taxes to Cæsar, pretending that he himself was the Messiah, the great king of the Jews so long expected: but they brought no proof of this assertion. They only insinuated, that they had already convicted him of his crime; which was absolutely false. Pilate, however, asked him, Is it true, what these men lay to thy charge, that thou hast indeed attempted to set up thyself as King of the Jews? To which JESUS replied, hast thou ever, during thy stay in this province, heard any thing of me, that gave thee any reason to suspect me guilty of secret practices and seditious designs against the government? Or dost thou found thy questions only on the present clamour and tumult that is raised against me? If this be the

case, be very careful lest thou be imposed on merely by the ambiguity of a word: for, to be King of the Jews, is not to erect a temporal throne in opposition to that of Cæsar, but something very different from it; the kingdom of the Messiah is of a spiritual nature.

Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Can I tell what their expectations are, and in what superstitious sense they understand these words? The rulers and chiefs of thine own people, who are the most proper judges of these particulars, have brought thee before me, as a riotous and seditious person: if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou hast been guilty of, and what they lay to thy charge.

To which JESUS answered, I have indeed a kingdom, and this kingdom I have professed to establish; but then it is not of this world, nor have my endeavours to establish it any tendency to cause disturbances in the government: for, had that been the case, my servants would have fought for me, and not suffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews: but I tell thee plainly, my kingdom is wholly spiritual, consisting only in the obedience of the wills and affections of men to the laws of God.

Pilate said, Thou acknowledgest then in general, that thou hast pretended to be a King? To which the blessed JESUS replied, In the sense I have told thee I have declared, and do now declare myself to be a King: for this very end I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; and whosoever sincerely loves, and is always ready to embrace the truth, will hear my testimony and be convinced by it. Pilate said, *What is truth?* and immediately went out to the Jews, and said unto them, I have again examined this man, but can find him guilty of no fault, which, according to the Roman law, deserves to have the punishment of death inflicted for it.

Though the governor made this generous declaration of the innocence of our blessed Saviour, it had no effect on the superstitious and bigotted Jews: they even persisted in their accusations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he had attempted to raise a sedition.

in Galilee: *He ~~was~~ ^{is} ~~led~~ ^{led} up*, said they, *the people, beginning from Galilee to this place.* JESUS, however, made no answer to this heavy charge: nay, he continued silent, notwithstanding the governor himself expressly required him to speak in his own defence. A conduct so extraordinary, in such circumstances, astonished Pilate exceedingly; for he had great reason to be persuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is, he was altogether ignorant of the divine council, by which the whole affair was directed, and the end proposed by it.

Many reasons induced the blessed JESUS not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem lost and undone mankind, by offering up himself a sacrifice to appease the wrath of his Almighty Father; but had he pleaded with his usual force, the people had in all probability been induced to ask his release, and consequently his death had been prevented: besides, the gross falsehood of the accusation, known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply absolutely unnecessary.

The chief priests continued, in the mean time, to accuse him with great noise and tumult; and the meek and humble JESUS still continuing mute, Pilate spake again to him, saying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence? Dost thou not hear how vehemently these men accuse thee? But Pilate, recollecting what the chief priests had said with regard to a sedition in Galilee, asked if JESUS came out of that country; and on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who then resided at Jerusalem; for the governor supposed that Herod, in whose dominions the sedition was said to have been raised, must be a much better judge of the affair than himself: besides, his being a Jew, rendered him more expert in the religion of his own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders; he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel persecution: but if, contrary to all human probability, he should, at their sollicitation,

condemn JESUS, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose, by this action, to regain Herod's friendship, which he had formerly lost by encroaching, in all probability, on the privileges he was invested with.

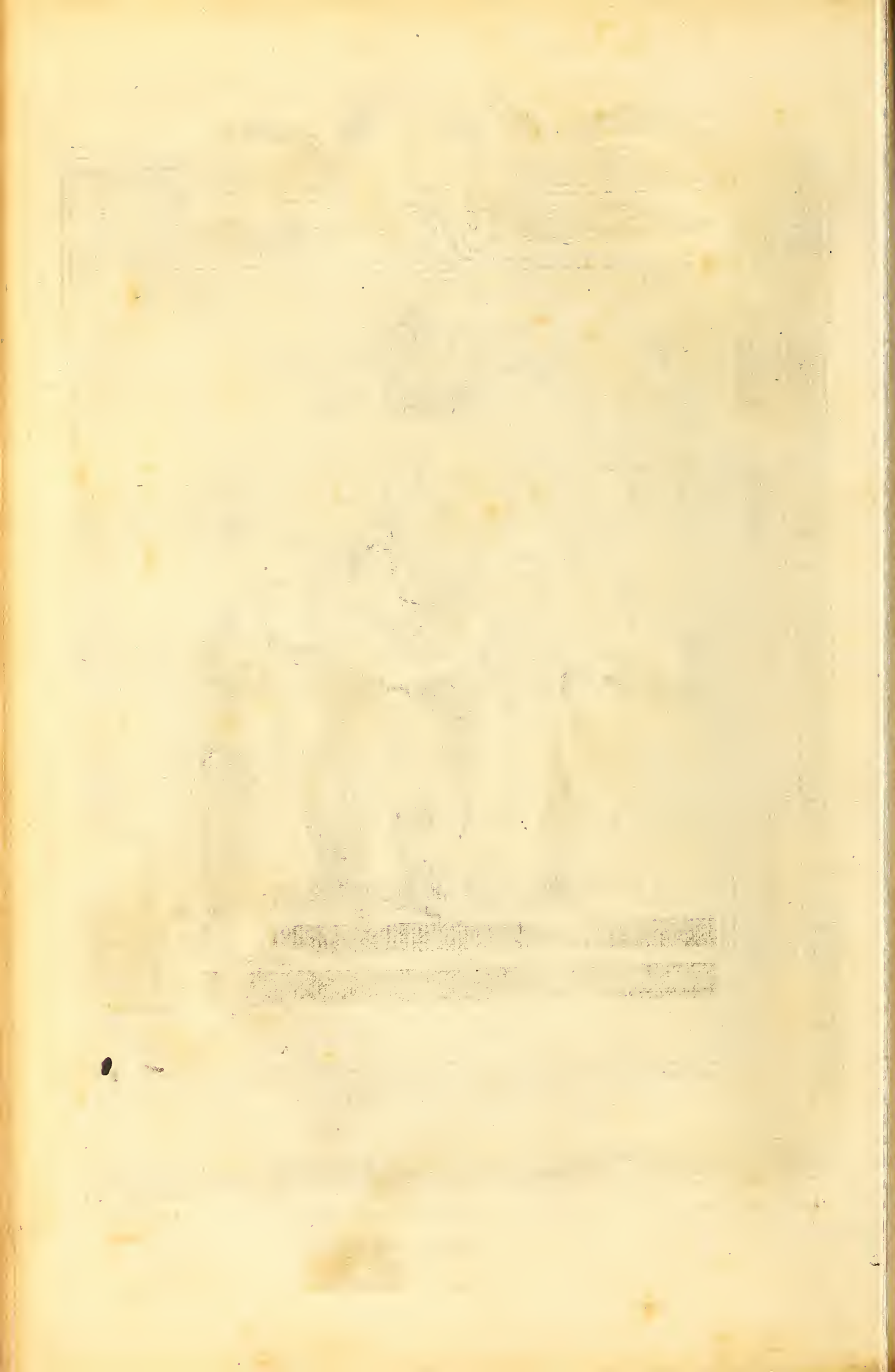
Whatever might be the motive that induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing JESUS, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle. In this he was however mistaken; for as Herod had apostatized from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once a convert, and had even put his teacher to death, the blessed JESUS, however liberal of his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed.

Finding himself thus disappointed, Herod ordered our blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in colour those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him; perhaps to provoke him to work some miracle, though it should prove of a hurtful kind. From Herod's dressing him in this manner, it evidently appears, that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing, but his having assumed the character of the Messiah; for the affront put upon him was plainly in derision of that pretension.

The other head of accusation, namely, his having attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee, on account of the tribute paid to Cæsar, they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and malicious falsehood; and no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems, that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to be unjust to him. Perhaps he was restrained by the remorse he felt on account of the death of John the Baptist, and therefore declined bringing a greater weight upon his conscience.



Herod having examined him & finding No fault in our Blessed Saviour **JESUS** CHRIST, sends him back to Pilate who also declares him faultless.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

Pilate gives the Jews their Choice of JESUS or Barabbas to be released: Upon the Clamour of the common People, Barabbas is loosed, and JESUS delivered up to be crucified: He is crowned with Thorns, spit on, and mocked.

THE Roman governors at the passover, made it a custom to court the favour of the populace, by gratifying them with the release of any one prisoner they pleased. And at this feast there was one in prison named Barabbas, who, at the head of a number of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city, and committed murder during the tumult.

There being now again a great multitude of people assembled before the governor's palace, they began to call aloud on him to perform the annual office of mercy customary at the festival they were now celebrating. Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them, that he was willing to grant the favour they desired; and asked them whether they would have Barabbas or JESUS released unto them? But without waiting for an answer he offered to release JESUS, knowing that the chief priests had delivered him through envy; especially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes he had been accused of.

During these transactions, Pilate received a message from his wife, then with him at Jerusalem, and who had that morning been informed of something in a dream which gave her great uneasiness. Perhaps it pre-figured the vengeance of the Almighty pursuing her husband and family on account of the injustice he was going to commit. But whatever the dream was, it had so great an effect on this Roman lady, that she could not rest till she had sent an account of it to her husband, who was then sitting on the tribunal in the pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous person who was then brought to his bar.

As the people had not yet determined whether they would have JESUS or Barabbas released to them; Pilate therefore, when he received the message from his wife, called the chief priests and rulers together, and, in the hearing of the multitude, made

a speech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination which JESUS had undergone both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring that in both courts it had turned out honourably to his character; for which reason he proposed to them, that he should be the object of the people's favour, and be acquitted.

The intent of Pilate, in doing the priests the honour to consult their inclinations in particular, might, in all probability, be with a design to soften their stony hearts, and, if possible, to move them for once to pity an unhappy, an innocent man. But he was persuaded that if pity was absolutely banished from their callous breasts, his proposal would have been acceptable to the people, whom he expected would embrace the first opportunity of declaring in his favour. Yet in this he was disappointed. They cried out all at once, *Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.*

Ye apostate mortals, a few hours ago ye listened with rapture to his heavenly discourses, beheld with transport the many salutary miracles wrought by this benevolent son of the Most High, and earnestly importuned him to take possession of the throne and sceptre of David! Now nothing will satiate your infernal malice but his precious blood! But remember ye miscreants, ye monsters in the human form, that this same JESUS, whom ye beheld with such contempt before the tribunal of the Roman governor; this JESUS, whose blood your infernal mouths so loudly requested, shall one day come in the clouds of heaven; to take vengeance on his enemies! And how will ye be able to bear the sight of his appearance, when the very heavens themselves will melt at his presence, "the sun become black as sackcloth of hair," the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fly from their spheres? How will ye then repent of your unjust demand; and call to the mountains and rocks to fall

on you, and hide you from the presence of that immaculate Lamb of God, the tremendous judge of the quick and dead!

The governor himself was astonished at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his question, for he could hardly believe what he had himself heard. But on their again declaring that they desired Barabbas might be released, he asked them, *What he should do with Jesus, which is called Christ?* as if he had said, you demand that Barabbas should be released; but what shall I then do with Jesus? you cannot surely desire me to crucify him, whom so many of you have acknowledged as your Messiah? *But they cried, saying, crucify him, crucify him.* Then Pilate said unto them, *Why, what evil hath he done?* And they cried out the more exceedingly, *Crucify him.* They were so resolutely determined to have him destroyed, that notwithstanding Pilate urged them again and again to desire his release, declared his innocence, and offered several times to dismiss him, they would not hear it, uttering their rage, sometimes in hollow, distant, inarticulate murmurs, and sometimes in furious outcries: to such a pitch were their passions raised by the craft and artful insinuations of the priests, and their own thirst for his blood.

Finding it therefore in vain to struggle with their prejudices, Pilate called for water, and washed his hands before the multitude, crying out at the same time, that the prisoner had no fault, and that he himself was not accessory to his death.

Pilate, by this act and declaration, seems to have intended to make impression on the Jewish populace, by complying with the institutions of Moses, which orders, in case of an unknown murder, the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, *Our hands have not shed this blood.* And in allusion to this law, the Psalmist says, *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* According therefore to the Jewish rites, Pilate made the most solemn and public declaration of the innocence of our dear Redeemer, and of his resolution of having no hand in his death. Perhaps he flattered himself that by this solemn appeal, he should have terrified the Jewish populace; for a person of his understanding and education could not but be sensible,

that all the water in the universe was not sufficient to wash away the guilt of an unrighteous sentence. But notwithstanding the solemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out, with one voice, *His blood be on us and on our children.* Dreadful imprecation! It shocks humanity! An imprecation which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is still a heavy burthen on that perfidious people, who are dispersed all over the earth!

Pilate, finding it impossible to alter their choice, released unto them Barabbas. And as it was the general practice of the Romans to scourge those criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the blessed Jesus to be scourged before he delivered him to the soldiers to be put to death. The soldiers having accordingly scourged Jesus, and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the Prætorium, or common-hall, where they added, the shame of disgrace to the bitterness of his punishment; for so soon as he was by reason of the stripes they had given him, they dressed him in a purple robe, in derision of his being the King of the Jews. Having dressed him in this robe of mock-majesty, they put a reed in his hand, instead of a sceptre, and after plaiting a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown; forcing it down in so rude a manner, that his temples were torn, and his face smeared with his most precious blood. To the Son of God in this condition, the rude soldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of respect; but, at the same time gave him severe blows on the head, which drove the prickles of the wreath afresh into his temples, then spit on him, to express their highest contempt and disdain.

The office of governor, obliging Pilate to be present at this shocking scene of inhumanity, he was ready to burst with grief. The sight of an innocent and virtuous man treated with such shocking barbarity, raised in his breast the most painful sensations of pity: and though he had given sentence that it should be as the Jews desired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the soldiers to be crucified, he was persuaded, that if he shewed him to the people in that condition, they must relent, and petition him to let him go. Filled with this thought,



Our blessed Saviour **JESUS CHRIST** *Crowned with THORNS*
by the Roman Soldiers

Seales sc.



he resolved to carry him out and exhibit to their view a spectacle capable of softening the most envenomed, obdurate, enraged enemy. And, in order to render the impression still more poignant, he went out himself, and said unto them, Though I have sentenced this man to die, and have scourged him as one that is to be crucified; yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again testify how fully I am persuaded of his innocence, and that ye may yet have an opportunity of saving his life, and clearing the guiltless.

No sooner had the governor finished his speech, than Jesus appeared on the pavement with his hair, his face, his shoulders all clotted with blood, and the purple robe bedaubed with spittle. And that the sight of Jesus in this distress might make the greater impression on the people, Pilate, while he was coming forward, cried out, *Behold the man!* As if he had said, will nothing make you relent? Have ye lost all the feelings of humanity and bowels of compassion? Can you bear to see the innocent, a son of Abraham, thus injured? Perhaps also the soldiers were suffered to buffet Jesus again on the pavement before the multitude, in order to excite their pity, or at least their pride: for though they might not pity Jesus as a person unjustly condemned; yet when they saw one of their countrymen insulted by Heathens, it was natural for the governor to suppose, that their national pride being provoked, it would have induced them to have demanded his enlargement: but all this was to no purpose. The priests, whose rage and malice had extinguished not only the sentiments of justice and feelings of pity natural to the human heart, but also that love which countrymen bear for each other, no sooner saw Jesus than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent; and therefore, laying decency aside, they led the way to the multitude, crying out with all their might, Crucify him! crucify him! Release not this man, but Barabbas!

The governor, vexed to see the Jewish rulers thus obstinately bent on the destruction of a person from whom they had nothing to fear that was dangerous, either with regard to their church or state, passionately told them, that if they would have him crucified, they must do it themselves;

because he would not suffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime. But this they also refused, thinking it dishonourable to receive permission to punish a person who had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge: besides they considered with themselves, that the governor might afterwards have called it sedition, as the permission had been extorted from him. Accordingly they told him, that even though none of the things alleged against the prisoner were true, he had committed such a crime in the presence of the council itself, as by their law deserved the most ignominious death. He had spoken blasphemy, calling himself the Son of God, a title which no mortal could assume without the highest degree of guilt: *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God, a divine person.*

Pilate's fear was increased, when he heard that Jesus called himself the Son of God; but knowing the obstinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earnest; or, perhaps he was himself more afraid than ever to take away his life, because he suspected it might be true. He doubtless remembered the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, and therefore suspected that he really was the Son of God: for it is well known that the religion which the governor professed, directed him to acknowledge the existence of demigods and heroes, or men descended from the gods; nay, the Heathens believed, that their gods themselves sometimes appeared upon earth in the form of men, and conversed with them.

These kind of reflections induced Pilate to go again into the judgment-hall, and ask Jesus from what father he sprung, and from what country he came? But our blessed Saviour gave him no answer, lest the governor should reverse his sentence, and absolutely refuse to crucify him. Pilate marvelled greatly at this silence, and said unto Jesus, Why dost thou refuse to answer me? Thou canst not be ignorant that I am invested with absolute power, either to release or crucify thee. To which Jesus answered, I well know that thou art Cæsar's servant, and accountable to him for thy management. I forgive thee any

injury, which, contrary to thy inclination, the popular fury constrains thee to do unto me. Thou hast thy power *from above*, from the emperor: for which cause, the Jewish high-priest, who hath put me into thy hands, and by pretending that I am Cæsar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me; or if thou refusest, will accuse thee as negligent of the emperor's interest; he is more guilty than thee: *He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin, being instigated thereto by malice.*

Hearing this sweet and modest answer, such an impression was thereby made on Pilate, that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releasing JESUS, whether they gave their consent or not. Upon which the chief priests and rulers of Israel cried out, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.* If thou releasest the prisoner, who hath set himself up for a king, and endeavoured to raise a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the interest of the emperor thy master. This argument was weighty, and shook Pilate's resolution to the very basis: he was terrified at the thought of being accused to Tiberius, who in all affairs of government always suspected the worst, and punished the most minute crimes, relative thereto, with death. The governor being thus constrained to yield, contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the priests for stirring up the people to such a pitch of madness, and determined to affront them. He therefore brought JESUS out a second time into the pavement, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns; and pointing to him, said, "*Behold your King;*" ridiculing the national expectation of a Messiah, as their deliverer.

Stung to the quick, by this sarcastical expression, they cried out, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* To which Pilate answered, with the same mocking air, *Shall I crucify your king?* The chief

priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Messiah, which the whole œconomy of their religion had been calculated to cherish: they also publicly acknowledged their subjection to the Romans; and consequently, condemned themselves, when they afterwards rebelled against the emperor Vespasian, who, with his son Titus, destroyed their city and temple.

We may here observe, that the great unwillingness of the governor to pass sentence of death upon JESUS, has something in it very remarkable. For from the character of Pilate as drawn by the Roman historians themselves, he seems to have been far from possessing any true principle of virtue. To what then could it be owing, that so wicked a man should so steadily adhere to the cause of innocence, which he defended with uncommon bravery, and perhaps would never have abandoned it, had he not been forced by the threatenings of the chief priests and rulers of Israel? And when he did yield, and passed sentence upon our dear Redeemer, why did he still declare him innocent? This can certainly be attributed to no other cause than to the secret and powerful direction of the providence of the Almighty, who intended that at the same time his son was condemned and executed as a malefactor, his innocence should be made to appear in the most public manner, and by the most authentic evidence; even that of the judge himself. It was the power of the Almighty that set bounds to the inveterate malice and fury of the Jews, that would not suffer them to stain the innocence of the blessed JESUS, at the same time they deprived him of his life; but said to their boisterous malice, as he had before said to the foaming billows of the ocean, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall the proud waves be stayed:* for none can stay his hand, or control his will.

C H A P T E R XXXVIII.

JESUS is led forth to Calvary: Simon, the Cyrenian, compelled to carry the Cross: He is crucified between two Malefactors: A Title is put upon the Cross by Pilate, and Lots cast for his Garment: The Multitude, the Rulers, the Priests, and the Soldiers revile JESUS: The Conversion of one of the Thieves: The great and unnatural Eclipse of the Sun: JESUS speaks to his Friends from the Cross, cries, "It is finished," recommends his Spirit into the Hands of his Heavenly Father, and expires.

O MY soul! come and follow thy Redeemer to the last scene of the most innocent and useful course that was ever passed on earth; follow him to Calvary's horrid eminence, to Calvary's fatal catastrophe; there fix thy most constant attention on that lovely, that sorrowful spectacle. Behold the spotless victim nailed to a tree, and stabbed to the heart; hear him pouring out prayers for his murderers, before he poured out his soul for transgressors; see the wounds that stream with forgiveness, and bleed balm for a distempered world. O! see the justice and goodness of the Almighty, his mercy and his vengeance; all his tremendous and gracious attributes manifested; manifested with inexpressible splendour, in the most ignominious, and yet grandest of transactions that ever the world beheld!

After sentence was pronounced against the blessed JESUS, the soldiers were ordered to prepare for his execution; a command which they readily obeyed; and after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his temples; probably he died wearing it, that the title placed over his head might be the better understood by the spectators.

The ministers of Jewish malice, we may suppose remitted none of the circumstances of affliction which were ever laid on persons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly, JESUS was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his cross: but the fatigue of the preceding night spent without sleep, the sufferings he had undergone in the garden; his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trials; the want of food, and the loss of blood he had sustained, and not his want of courage on this occasion, made him

faint under the burden of his cross. The soldiers seeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene, in Egypt, the Father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the first Christians, and forced him to bear it after the great Redeemer of mankind. The soldiers did not this, however, out of compassion to the suffering JESUS, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means avoiding the punishment designed for him.

In this journey to Calvary our blessed Saviour was followed by an innumerable multitude of people, particularly of women, who lamented bitterly the severity of his sentence, and shewed all the tokens of sincere compassion and grief. JESUS, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time when it lay heaviest upon him, turned himself about, and, with a benevolence and tenderness truly divine, said to them, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us: and to the hills cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* As if he had said, Dry up these tears, ye daughters of Jerusalem, which ye shed in compassion to me, and reserve them for the deplorable fate of yourselves and your children; for the calamities that will soon fall on you and your offspring, are truly terrible, and call for the bitterest lamentations. In those days of vengeance you will passionately wish that you had not given birth to a generation, whose wickedness has rendered them the objects of the wrath of the Al-

mighty to such a degree as was never before experienced in the world. Then shall they wish to be crushed under the weight of enormous mountains, and concealed from their enemies in the bowels of the earth. The thoughts of these calamities afflict my soul far more than the feeling of my own sufferings; for if the Romans are permitted to inflict punishments on me who am innocent, how dreadful must the vengeance be which they shall inflict on a nation whose sins cry aloud to heaven, hastening the pace of the divine judgments, and rendering the perpetrators as proper for judgment as dry wood is for flames of fire.

At the place of execution which was called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, from the criminals bones which lay scattered there, some of our Redeemer's friends offered him a stupifying potion, to render him insensible of the ignominy and excruciating pain of his punishment; but as soon as he tasted the potion, he refused to drink it, being determined to bear his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupifying himself, but by the strength of patience, fortitude, and faith.

Having therefore refused the potion, the soldiers began to execute their orders by stripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to fasten him to his cross. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, instead of crying out with the sharpness of the pain, he calmly, though fervently prayed for them, and for all those who had any hand in his death; beseeching the Almighty to forgive them, and excusing them himself by the only circumstance that could alleviate their guilt; I mean their ignorance. *Father, said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* This was infinite meekness and goodness, truly worthy of the only begotten Son of God; an example of forgiveness, which, though it can never be equalled by any, should be imitated by all, when suffering in a good cause.

Behold now the appointed soldiers dig the hole in which the cross was to be erected. The cross is placed in the ground, and the blessed JESUS lies on the bed of sorrows: they nail him to it; they erect

it; his nerves crack; his blood distils; he hangs upon his wounds naked, a spectacle to heaven and earth. Thus was the only begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven to save the world, crucified by his own creatures, and, to render the ignominy still greater, placed between two thieves: *Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth, earth, hear! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him; by rejecting the only Saviour, and the God of all their mercies.*

Crimes committed by malefactors were usually written on a white board with black, and placed over their heads on the cross. In conformity to this custom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, that all foreigners as well as natives, might be able to read it, and fastened it to the cross, over the head of JESUS; and the inscription was **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.** But when the chief priests and elders had read this title they were greatly displeased; because, as it represented the crime for which JESUS was condemned, it insinuated that he had been acknowledged for the Messiah: besides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the most infamous punishment, it implied, that all who attempted to deliver the Jews, should perish in the same manner. The faith and hope of the nation, therefore, being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the priests thought themselves highly affronted; and, accordingly, came to Pilate, begging that the writing might be altered; but as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify JESUS, contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refused to grant their request: *What I have written, said he, I have written;* and persisted in his resolution not to alter the inscription.

The soldiers, having nailed the blessed JESUS to the cross, and erected it, divided his garments amongst them; but his coat, or vesture, being without seam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to cast lots for it, that the prediction of the prophet concerning the death and sufferings of the Messiah might be fulfilled: *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.* A sufficient indication that every

circumstance of the death and passion of the blessed JESUS was long before determined in the court of heaven; and, accordingly, his being crucified between two malefactors was expressly foretold, *And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

When the common people whom the vile priests had incensed against the blessed JESUS, by the malicious falsehoods they had spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the deposition of witnesses, saw him hang in so infamous a manner upon the cross, and reading the inscription that was placed over his head, they expressed their indignation against him by sarcastical expressions: *Ah, thou, said they, that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.*

The multitude were not the only persons who mocked and derided the blessed JESUS, while he was suffering to obtain the remission of the sins of all mankind. The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually destroyed his pretensions to the character of the Messiah, joined the populace in ridiculing him, and with a meanness of soul, which many infamous wretches would have scorned, mocked him, even while he was struggling with the agonies of death: they scoffed at the miracles by which he demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and promised to believe in him, on condition of his proving his pretensions by descending from the cross: *He saved others, said they, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him:* not knowing what they said.

Nothing could be more false and hypocritical than this pretension of the stiff-necked Jews: for they continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding they well knew that he raised himself from the dead; a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been, a miracle attested by witnesses whose veracity they could not call in question: it was told them by the soldiers whom they themselves placed at the sepulchre to watch the body, and who they were obliged to bribe largely to conceal the truth. It is therefore abundantly evident that if the blessed JESUS had descended from the cross, the Jewish priests would have continued in their infi-

delity; and consequently that their declaration was made with no other intention than to insult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands. The soldiers also joined in this general scene of mockery, *If thou be the King of the Jews, said they, save thyself.* If thou art the great Messiah expected by the Jews, descend from the cross by miracle, and deliver thyself from these excruciating torments, inflicted by thy enemies.

One of the thieves could not forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though labouring himself under the most racking pains, and struggling with the agonies of death: but the other exercised a most extraordinary faith, at a time when our great Redeemer was deserted by his Father, mocked by men, and hanged upon the cross, as the most ignominious of malefactors. This Jewish criminal seems to have entertained a more rational and exalted opinion of the Messiah's kingdom, than even the disciples themselves; they expected nothing but a secular empire: he gave strong intimations of his having an idea of CHRIST'S spiritual dominion: for at the very time when JESUS was dying on the cross, he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom: *Lord, said he, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* Nor did he make his request in vain: the great Redeemer of mankind answered him, *Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise:* thereby evidencing the immediate happiness of the righteous after death.

Let us now attentively consider the history of our blessed Saviour's passion, as it offers to our view events absolutely astonishing: for when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the sons and daughters of affliction; when we reflect on the esteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how cheerfully they followed him to the remotest corners of the country, nay, even into the desolate retreats of the wilderness, and with what pleasure they listened to his discourses; when we consider these particulars, I say, we cannot help being astonished to find them at the con-

clusion, rushing all of a sudden into the opposite extremes, and every individual, as it were, combined to treat him with the most barbarous cruelty and insult.

Pilate having asked the people, if they desired to have JESUS released, his disciples, though they were very numerous, and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained absolutely silent, as if they had been speechless or insatuated. The Roman soldiers, notwithstanding their general had declared him innocent, insulted him in the most inhuman manner; the Scribes and Pharisees ridiculed him; the common people, who had received him with Hosannas a few days before, wagged their heads at him as they passed by, and railed on him as a deceiver: nay, the very thief on the cross reviled him, in the midst of his sufferings.

Though this sudden revolution in the minds of the whole nation may seem unaccountable; yet if we could assign a proper reason for the silence of the disciples, the principles which influenced the rest might be discovered in their several speeches. The followers of the blessed JESUS had attached themselves to him, in expectation of being raised to great wealth and power in his kingdom, which they expected would have been established long before this time: but seeing no appearance at all of what they had so long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps, because they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by some miraculous act of divine power.

The soldiers were angry that any one should pretend to royalty in Judea, where Cæsar had established his authority; hence they insulted our blessed Saviour with the title of King, and paid him, in mockery, the honours of a sovereign: and as for the common people, they seemed to have lost their opinion of him, probably because he had neither convinced the council, nor rescued himself when they condemned him. They began, therefore, to consider the story of his pretending to destroy the temple and build it in three days, as a kind of blasphemy, because it required divine power to perform such a work.

The most implacable and diabolical malice irritated the priests and Scribes against him; because he had torn off their masks of hypocrisy, and shewed them to the people in their true colours. It is, therefore, no wonder, that they ridiculed his miracles, from whence he derived his reputation. In short, the thief also fancied that he would have delivered both himself and them, if he had been the Messiah; but as no such deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretensions to the high character he assumed.

Now, my soul, take a view of thy dying Saviour, breathing out his soul upon the cross! Behold his unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross; those beneficent hands, which were incessantly stretched out to unloose the heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet riveted to the accursed tree with nails: those feet which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns, which shoot their keen afflictive points into his blessed head; that head which was ever meditating peace to poor lost and undone sinners, and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayers for their happiness! See him labouring in the agonies of death, breathing out his soul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this? was ever benevolence so finely displayed? O, my soul! put thou thy trust in that bleeding, that dying Saviour; then, though the pestilence walketh in darkness, and the sickness destroyeth at noon-day; though thousands fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand, thou needest not fear the approach of any evil! Either the destroying angel shall pass over thee, or dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy, which, instead of hurting, will work for thy good: then though profaneness and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe their contagion, and taint the morals of multitudes around thee, thou shalt be safely hid in the hollow of his hand, and freed from every danger in time, and for ever.

Then, O my soul, take sanctuary under that tree of life, the ignominious cross of thy bleeding Saviour; let us fly for safety to that city of refuge opened in his bleeding wounds: these will prove a sacred hiding place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation: his dying merits, his perfect obedience, will be *as rivers of water in a dry place, or as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. But particularly in that last tremendous day, when the heavens shall be rent asunder, and wrapped up like a scroll; when his Almighty arm shall arrest the sun in his career, and dash the structure of the universe to pieces; when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of his glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreversible decision: then, if thou hast faithfully trusted in him, and made his precepts thy constant directors, thou shalt be owned and defended by him. O reader! may both thou that persecutest, and he who hath written this for thy soul's advantage, be covered at that unutterably important juncture, by the wings of his redeeming love; then shall we behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature with composure, with comfort! we shall even welcome the consummation of all things, as the *times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*, and be eternally happy with him.

Behold the sun, conscious of the sufferings of his Maker, and as it were to hide his face from this detestable action of mortals, is wrapped in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkness! This preternatural eclipse of the sun continued for three hours, to the great terror and astonishment of the people present at the execution of our dear redeemer. And surely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature, while the Sun of Righteousness was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promised land, but from the whole world; for it was at once a miraculous testimony given by the Almighty himself to the innocence of his Son, and a proper emblem of the departure of him who was the Light of the world, at least till his luminous rays, like the beams of the morning, shone out anew

with additional splendour, in the ministry of his apostles, after his ascension.

The darkness which now covered Judea and the neighbouring countries, beginning about noon, and continuing till Jesus expired, could not be the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. It is well known that these phenomena can only happen at the change of the moon, whereas the Jewish passover, at which our dear Redeemer suffered, was always celebrated at the full; besides, the total darkness of an eclipse of the sun, never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes, whereas this continued full three hours. Nothing, therefore, but the immediate hand of that Almighty Being which placed the sun in the centre of the planetary system, could have produced this astonishing darkness: nothing but Omnipotence, who first lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, could have deprived it of its cheering rays. Now ye scoffers of Israel, whose blood have ye so earnestly desired, and wished it might fall upon you and your children! behold all nature is drest in the sable vail of sorrow, and in a language that cannot be mistaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and Master; weeps for your crimes, and deprecates the vengeance of heaven upon your guilty heads! Happy for you that this suffering Jesus is compassion itself, and even in the agonies of death, prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the stroke of his justice, thereby opening the gate of mercy even to you his murderers!

The Heathens themselves considered this preternatural eclipse of the sun as a miracle, and one of them cried out, "Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers!" And well might he use the expression; for never since this planetary system was called from its primitive chaos, was known such a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when the Almighty punished Pharaoh for refusing to let the children of Israel depart out of his land, the sable veil of darkness was for three days drawn over Egypt: but this darkness was confined to a part of that kingdom; whereas this that happened at our Saviour's crucifixion, was universal, and not merely local.

The disciples naturally considered the

darkness, when it began, as a prelude to the deliverance of their Master: for though the chief priests, elders, and people, had sarcastically desired him to descend from the accursed tree, his friends could not but be persuaded, that he who had delivered so many from incurable diseases, who had created limbs for the maimed, and eyes for the blind, who had given speech to the dumb, and called the dead from the chambers of the dust, might easily save himself, even from the cross. When, therefore, his mother, his mother's sister, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple observed the veil of darkness begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the cross, probably in expectation that the Son of God was going to shake the frame of the universe, unloose himself from the cross, and take ample vengeance on those cruel and perfidious enemies who had so despitefully treated him.

At this awful period, the blessed JESUS was in the midst of his sufferings; yet when he saw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breast, especially the distress of his mother. The agonies of death, under which he was now labouring, could not prevent his expressing the most affectionate regard both for her and for them: for that she might have some consolation to support her under the greatness of her sorrows, he told her, the disciple whom he loved, would, for the sake of that love supply his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a son; and, therefore, he desired her to consider him as such, and expect from him all the duties of a child: *Woman, said he, behold thy son!*

This remarkable token of filial affection towards his mother, was not the only instance the dying JESUS gave of his sincere love for his friends and followers; the beloved disciple had also a token of his high esteem; he singled him out as the only person among his friends, to supply his place with regard to his mother. Accordingly, he desired him expressly to reverence her in the same manner as if she had been his own parent: a duty which the favourite disciple gladly undertook; for he carried her with him to his house, and maintained her from that hour to the day of

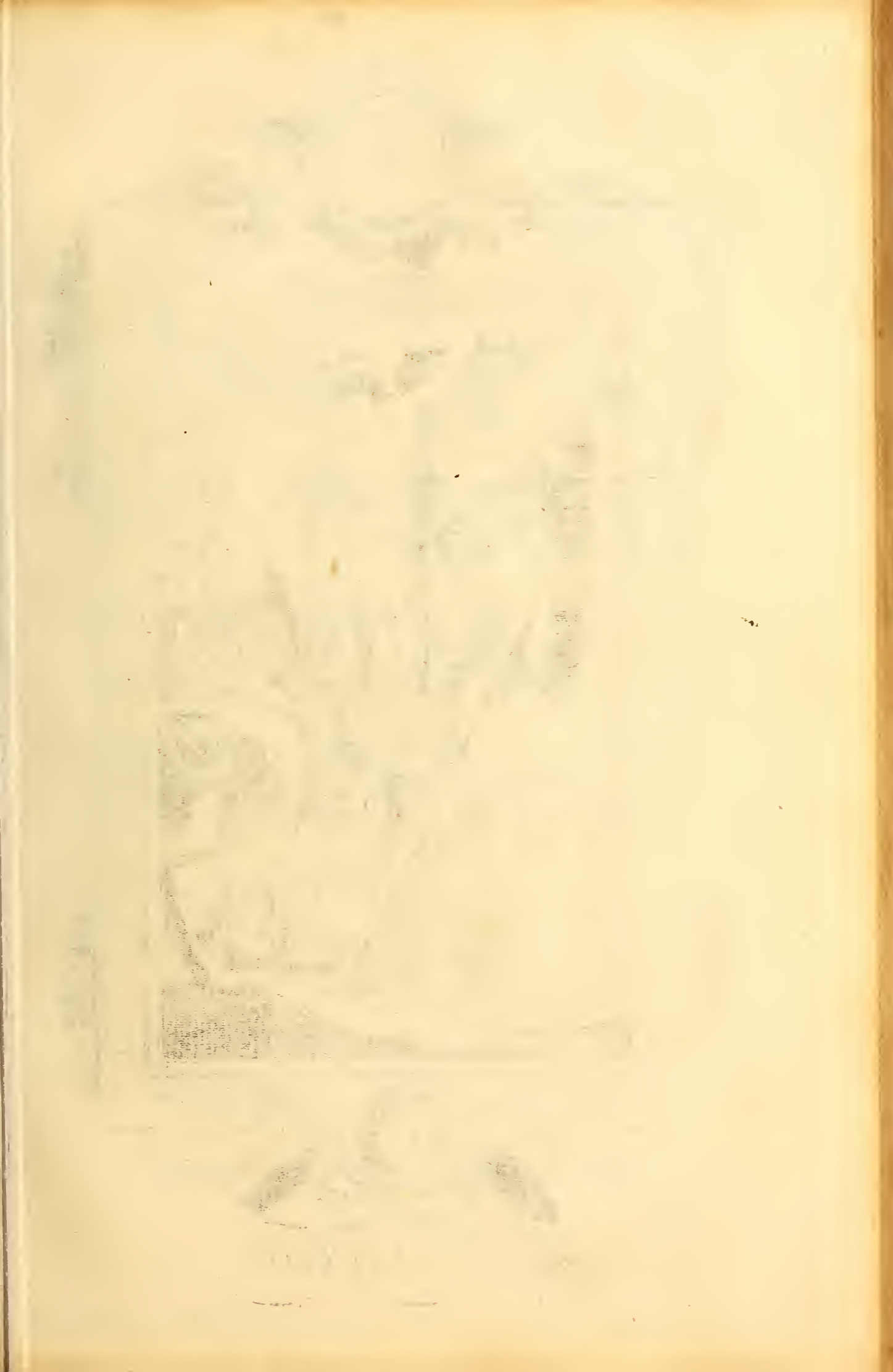
her death; her husband Joseph having been dead some time before.

We have now before us an evident proof, that, in the midst of the heaviest sufferings human nature ever sustained, the blessed JESUS demonstrated a divine strength of benevolence; even at the time when his own distress was at the highest pitch, and nature was dressed in the robe of mourning for the sufferings of her great Creator: his friends had so large a share of his concern, that their happiness interrupted the sharpness of his pains, and for a short time engrossed his thoughts.

Now the moment when JESUS should resign his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father approached, and he repeated part, at least, of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering with a loud voice these remarkable words, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Or, *My God, my God, how long a time hast thou forsaken me!* as the words may be rendered.

It is believed by some, that our blessed Saviour repeated the whole Psalm, as it was customary with the Jews, in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the Psalm or section which they cite. If so, as this Psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our dear Redeemer's passion, being as it were a summary of all the prophecies relative to that subject, by repeating it on the cross, the blessed JESUS signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as the Psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time, he also claimed of his Father, the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him or to his people; the chief of which are recorded in the latter part of the Psalm above mentioned.

When some of the people, who stood by, heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of this Psalm, they misunderstood him, probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias; upon which one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, being desirous of keeping him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come





JOHN

XX. 30.

Hubert del.

Scamper Sc.

The CRUCIFIXION.

to take him down from the cross. But as soon as JESUS had tasted the vinegar, he said, *It is finished*: that is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished; that great work which the only begotten Son of God came into the world to perform, is finished. In speaking these words, he cried with an exceeding loud voice, and, after that, he addressed his Almighty Father in words which form the best pattern of a recommendatory prayer at the hour of death: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*; and having uttered these words, he bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost.

At the very instant that the blessed JESUS resigned his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, behold! the vail of the temple was miraculously rent from the top to the bottom; probably in the presence of the priest who burnt incense in the holy place, and who doubtless published the account when he came out: for our blessed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening sacrifice. Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Messiah; no, the earth trembled from its very foundations, the flinty rocks burst asunder, and the sepulchres hewn in them were opened, and many bodies of saints deposited there, awaked after his resurrection from the sleep of death, left the gloomy chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jerusalem, and appeared unto many. In all probability these saints were disciples of our blessed Saviour, who had but lately passed through the valley of the shadow of death; for when they went into the city they were known to be saints by the persons who saw them, which could not well have happened if they had not been contemporaries with them.

As the rending of the vail 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 was broken: the sting was taken from death, and the victory wrested from the grave. In short, our dear Redeemer's conquests over the enemies of mankind, were shewn to be complete, and an earnest was given of the general resurrection.

The remarkable events which attended that awful period when JESUS gave up the ghost, did not only affect the natives of Judea, but the Roman centurion, who was placed near the cross, to prevent disorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty and cried out, *Truly this man was the Son of God*. And all the people, when they beheld heaven itself bearing witness to the truth of our great Redeemer's mission, smote their breasts and returned. They had been instant with loud voices to have him crucified; but when they saw the face of the creation wrapt in the gloomy mantle of darkness during his crucifixion, and found his death accompanied with an earthquake, as if nature had been in an agony when he died, they rightly interpreted these prodigies to be so many testimonies from the Almighty of his innocence; and their passions which had been inflamed and exasperated against him, became quite calm, or exerted in his behalf.

Some were angry with themselves for neglecting the opportunity the governor gave them of saving his life; some were stung with remorse for having been active in procuring Pilate to condemn him, and even offering the most bitter insults, while he laboured under the cruellest of sufferings; and others were deeply affected at beholding the pains he suffered, which were as severe as they were undeserved. These various passions being visibly painted in their countenances, afforded a melancholy spectacle; the whole multitude returning from the cruel execution with their eyes fixed upon the earth, pensive and silent; their hearts ready to burst with grief, groaning deeply within themselves, shedding floods of tears, and smiting on their breasts, to testify their sorrow.

It is observable that the grief they now felt for the blessed JESUS was distinguished from their former rage against him by this remarkable particular, that their rage was entirely owing to the artful insinuations of the priests; whereas their grief was the genuine, the natural feeling of their own hearts, greatly affected with the truth and innocence of him who was the object of their commiseration: and as flattery had no share in this mourning, so the expressions of their sorrow was such as became a real, and unfeigned passion. Nor was this unaffected mourning shewn by only a few

persons, who might have been represented as the particular friends of the suffering JESUS; no, it was the general condition of the people who had repaired to Calvary, in order to behold the crucifixion of our dear

Redeemer, that when they parted after he had given up the ghost, they covered the roads, and, as it were, darkened all the surrounding country.

C H A P T E R XXXIX.

A Roman Soldier thrusts his Spear into our Saviour's side: Joseph of Arimathea comes to Pilate, and begs of him the body of JESUS.

BY the law of Moses, it was expressly forbidden that the bodies of those who were hanged should remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the Sabbath was at hand, the Jews begged the governor, that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken, to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented; and accordingly gave the necessary orders to the soldiers to put it in execution: but on perceiving that JESUS was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors that were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water. Some suppose that the spear reached his heart; but however that be, it is certain, from the water which issued from the wound, that he pierced the pericardium; and consequently must have killed him, had he not before been deprived of life.

It was of the greatest importance to mankind that this wound was given, for it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and consequently prevented all objections, that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The evangelist adds, that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken, but his side pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled: *A bone of him shall not be broken; and, They shall look on him whom they have pierced,* and be

convinced of the horrid impiety of the deed, as many of them afterwards were, on the preaching of Peter.

There was a person amongst the disciples of the blessed JESUS, called Joseph of Arimathea; he was equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of his great Master: he had indeed nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who, during the whole course of our Saviour's trial, had shewn the greatest inclination to release him; but he had reason to apprehend, that this action might draw upon him the malice of the rulers of the Jews, who had taken such great pains to get their Messiah crucified. The great regard, however, he had for the remains of his Master, made him despise the malice of the Jews, being persuaded that Omnipotence would defend him, and cover his enemies with shame and confusion: and he well knew, that if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiously cast out amongst the executed malefactors, and perhaps be exposed to many indignities.

The governor was at first surpris'd at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time. He had indeed given orders for the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons; but he knew it was not uncommon for them to live many hours after that operation was performed; for

though the pain it left must be exquisite in the last degree, yet as the vital parts remain untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body. Pilate therefore called the centurion to know the truth of what Joseph had told him; and being convinced, from the answer of that officer, that Jesus had been dead some time, he readily granted the request.

Having obtained his desire, this worthy counsellor repaired to mount Calvary; and being assisted by Nicodemus, took the body down from the cross. The latter was formerly so cautious in visiting Jesus that he came to him by night; but in paying the last duties to his Master, he used no art to conceal his design: he shewed a courage far superior to that of any of the apostles; not only assisting Joseph in taking down the body of Jesus from the cross, but bringing with him a quantity of spices necessary in the burial of his Saviour. Accordingly, they wrapt the body, with the spices, in fine linen, and laid it in a new sepulchre, which Joseph had hewn out of a rock for himself. This sepulchre was situated in a garden near mount Calvary: but being not entirely finished when they deposited it in the body of the blessed Jesus, they fastened the entrance by rolling a very large stone upon it.

What a wonderful spectacle was now exhibited in this memorable sepulchre! He who clothes himself with light, as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind, was pleased to wear the habiliments of mortality, and dwell amongst the prostrate dead! Who can repeat the wonderful truth too often? Who can dwell upon the enchanting theme too long! He who sits enthroned in glory, and diffuses bliss amongst all the heavenly host, was once a pale and bloody corpse, and pressed the floor of this little sepulchre! Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!

In that solemn hour how great was thy triumph, O death! never did thy gloomy realms contain such a prisoner before.—Prisoner, did I say? No, he was more than conqueror. He arose far more mightily than Sampson from a transient slumber; broke down the gates, and demolished the strong holds of those dark dominions.

And this, O mortals, is your consolation and security! Jesus has trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage. Jesus, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odour in those beds of dust. The dying Jesus is your sure protection, your unquestionable passport through the territories of the grave. Believe in him with all your hearts, and love and obey him, and you will find him the highway to Sion; he will transmit you safe to paradise. Believe in him, and you shall be no losers, but unpeakable gainers by your dissolution. For hear what the oracle of heaven says on this important point: *Who so believeth in me, shall never die.* Death shall no longer be inflicted as a punishment, but rather vouchsafed as a blessing. Their exit is the end of their frailty, and their entrance upon perfection: their last groan is the prelude to life, immortality, and joy.

The women of Galilee, who had watched their dear Redeemer in his last moments, and accompanied his body to the sepulchre, observing that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themselves, as soon as the sabbath was passed, to return to the sepulchre, and embalm the body of their great Saviour, by anointing and swathing him in the manner then common amongst the Jews. Accordingly, they returned to the city, and purchased the spices necessary for that purpose; Nicodemus having furnished only a mixture of myrrh and aloes for the above end.

The chief priests and Pharisees, during these transactions, remembering that Jesus had more than once predicted his own resurrection, came to the governor, and informed him of it; begging, at the same time, that a guard might be placed at the sepulchre, lest his disciples should carry away the body, and affirm that he was risen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called by the evangelist the next day, because the Jews began their day at sunset. This request being thought reasonable by Pilate, he gave them leave 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 our Saviour's resurrection, the priests desired them to report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept; and to encourage them to tell that falsehood boldly, promised, that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods should be used to pacify him, and deliver them from any punishment: a promise which there was no need of making to servants under their own immediate command.

Now the priests having thus obtained a guard of Roman soldiers, men, long accustomed to military duties, and therefore

most proper for watching the body, set out with them to the sepulchre; and to prevent these guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their post, and sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre. Thus, whilst the priests cautiously proposed to prevent the resurrection of our great Redeemer from being palmed upon the world, and doubtless intended, after the third day was past, to shew his body publicly as an impostor, they placed the truth of this stupendous miracle beyond all doubt, by furnishing a number of unexceptionable witnesses to it, whose testimony they themselves could not refuse or gainsay, and therefore attempted to stifle it.



C H A P T E R XL.

Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, go out to view the Sepulchre, and bring Spices to embalm the body of JESUS: A great Earthquake accompanies the Resurrection: An Angel descends, and JESUS rises from the Dead: The Behaviour of the Jewish Rulers thereupon.

AFTER the sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, came very early in the morning to visit the sepulchre, in order to embalm our Lord's body: for the performance of which they had, in concert with several other women from Galilee, brought unguents and spices. But before they reached the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake preceding the most memorable event that ever happened amongst the children of men, the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead: *For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it: his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men; they fled into the city, and the Saviour of the world rose from the dead.* The angel, who had till then sat upon the stone, quitted his station, entered

into the sepulchre, and probably placed the linen clothes and knapkin in the order they were afterwards found and observed by John and Peter.

In the mean time, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were still on their way to the sepulchre, together with Salome, who joined them on the road. As they proceeded on their way they consulted amongst themselves with regard to the method of putting their intention of embalming the body of their beloved Master in execution; particularly with respect to the enormous stone which they had seen placed there with the utmost difficulty two days before: *Who, said they, shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great.* But in the midst of their deliberation about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design (for it does not appear they knew any thing of the guard) they lift up their eyes, and per-

ceived it was already rolled away: alarmed at so extraordinary and so unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluded, that the stone could not be rolled away without some design; and that they who rolled it away could have no other design, than that of removing our Lord's body; and being convinced by appearances that they had really done so, she ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John of what she had seen, and what she suspected; leaving Mary and Salome there, that if the other women should arrive during her absence, they might acquaint them with their surprize at finding the stone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apostles of the extraordinary event.

The soldiers, who were terrified at seeing an awful messenger from on high roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and open it in quality of a servant, fled

into the city, and informed the Jewish rulers of these miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief priests, as it was a proof of our Saviour's resurrection that could not be denied; they therefore resolved to stifle it immediately; and, accordingly, bribed the soldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publish every where, that his disciples had stolen the body out of the sepulchre. What! the body taken away while the sepulchre was guarded by Roman soldiers? Yes! the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept. A story so inconsistent, and which so evidently carries the marks of its own confutation with it, deserves no answer. The priests themselves could not be so stupid as not to foresee what construction the world would put upon the relation of persons, who pretended to know and tell what was done while they were asleep, and in a state of insensibility.



C H A P T E R XLI.

The Speech of the Angel to the Women, informing them that JESUS is risen: Peter and John go into the Sepulchre: CHRIST appears to Mary Magdalene: The company of Women set out a second Time in Quest of Peter and John: JESUS meets them: Mary Magdalene and the Company of Women return from their several Interviews with JESUS: Peter runs to the Sepulchre a second Time, and as he returns sees his great Lord and Master.

AFTER Mary Magdalene was gone to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the supposed body taken away, Mary and Salome drew near towards the sepulchre, and at their arrival found what they expected, the body of their beloved Master gone from the place where it had been deposited by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; but at the same time beheld, to their great astonishment, a beautiful young man, in shining raiment, very glorious to behold, sitting at the right side of the sepulchre. Matthew tells us, that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone, and frightened away the guards from the sepulchre. It seems he had now

laid aside his terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in order that these pious women, who had accompanied him during the greatest part of the time of his public ministry, might not be terrified: but, notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back, when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them, in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand: *Fear not*, said he; *for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said:* and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre, and view the place where the Son of God had lain; that

is, to look on the linen clothes, and the napkin that was about his head, and which he had left behind him when he rose from the dead: for to look at the place in any other view would not have tended to confirm their faith of his being risen.

Greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as by the sweet accent with which this messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, the women went down into the sepulchre, when behold another of the angelic choir appeared. Probably the one sat at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of JESUS had lain; the position in which they appeared to Mary Magdalene afterwards.

However, they did not yet seem to give credit to what was told them by the angel; and therefore the other gently chid them for seeking the living amongst the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not believing what was told them by a messenger from heaven, or rather for not remembering the words which their great Master had himself told them with regard to his own resurrection: *Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

After this, when the women had satisfied their curiosity by looking at the place where our Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen clothes, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad tidings of his resurrection from the dead; that he was going before them to Galilee; and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him in person.

The disciples, it may reasonably be supposed, were ordered to go into Galilee to meet their great and beloved Master, because they were now most of them in Jerusalem, celebrating the passover; and it may easily be imagined that, on the receiving the news of their Lord's resurrection, many, if not all of them, would resolve to tarry in Jerusalem, in expectation of meeting him: a thing which must have proved of great detriment to them at that time of

the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first fruits being always offered on the second day of the passover-week. In order therefore to prevent their staying so long from home, the message was sent directing them to return into Galilee, with full assurance, that they should there have the pleasure of seeing their great Lord and Master; and by that means be happily relieved from the suspicion of his being an impostor, which doubtless had arisen in their minds, when they saw him expire on the cross. Hereupon the women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's resurrection, left the sepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the disciples these glad tidings.

In the mean time, Peter and John, having been informed by Mary Magdalene, that the stone was rolled away, and the body of JESUS not to be found, were hastening to the grave, and missed the women who had seen this vision of angels. These disciples being astonished at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and desirous of having their doubts cleared up, made all the haste possible to the sepulchre; and John being younger than Peter arrived at the sepulchre first, but did not go in, contenting himself with stooping down and seeing the linen clothes lying which had been wrapped about our Saviour's body. Peter soon arrived, and went into the sepulchre, where he saw the *linen clothes lie; and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

It is the opinion of some, that our dear Redeemer folded up the napkin, to shew the perfect calmness and composure with which he arose, as out of a common sleep: but however that be, it is certain that he left the grave clothes in the sepulchre, to shew that his body was not stolen away by his disciples, who in such a case would not have taken time to have stripped it: besides, the circumstance of the grave-clothes, disposed the disciples themselves to believe when the resurrection was related to them; but at present they had not the least suspicion that he was risen from the dead, as the angels had affirmed.

Having thus satisfied themselves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, those two disciples returned to

their respective habitations: but Mary continued weeping at the door of the sepulchre: she had, it seems, followed Peter and John to the garden, but did not return with them, being anxious to find the body; accordingly, stepping down into the sepulchre to examine it once more, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of JESUS had lain. They were now in the same position, as when they appeared to the other women: but had rendered themselves invisible, while Peter and John were at the sepulchre, seeking our Lord.

Mary, beholding these heavenly messengers, dressed in the robes of light, was greatly terrified: but they, in the most endearing accent, asked her, *Woman, why weepest thou?* To which she answered, *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.* On pronouncing these words, she turned herself about, and saw JESUS standing near her; but the terror she was in, and the garments in which he was now dressed, prevented her from knowing him for some time. JESUS repeated the same question used before by the angel, *Woman, why weepest thou?* To which Mary, who now supposed him to be the gardener, answered, *Sir, if his body was troublesome in the sepulchre, and thou hast removed him, tell me where he is deposited, and I will take him away.* But our blessed Saviour willing to remove her anxiety, called her by her name, with his usual tone of voice. On which she immediately knew him; and falling down before him, would have embraced his knees, according to that modesty and reverence with which the women, of the East saluted the men, especially those who were their superiors in station and dignity.

JESUS refused this compliment, telling her, that he was not going immediately into heaven: he was often to shew himself to his disciples, before he ascended, so that she would have frequent opportunities of shewing her regard to him: and at the same time, said to her, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.* Thus did the blessed JESUS contemplate with a singular pleasure, the work of redemption he had just finished. The

happy relation between God and man, which had been long cancelled by sin, was now renewed; the Almighty, who had disowned them on account of their rebellion, was again reconciled unto them; he was become their God and Father: they were exalted to the honorable relation of CHRIST's brethren, and the sons of God; and their father loved them with an affection far exceeding that of the most tender-hearted parent upon earth.

The kindness of this message sent by our dear Redeemer to his disciples, will appear above all praise, if we remember their late behaviour; they had every one of them forsaken him in his greatest extremity: when he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers, derided by his countrymen, and spitefully entreated by all, they hid themselves in some place of safety, and preferred their own security to the deliverance of their Master: when he fainted under the burden of his cross, not one of them was there to assist him; Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the Roman soldiers to ease him of this ponderous burden. But notwithstanding they had refused to assist their Master during his sufferings for the sins of the world, he graciously, he freely forgave them; he assured them of their pardon, and even called them by the endearing name of brethren, notwithstanding their former flighting conduct.

We cannot help observing that there is something very remarkable in this part of the history: none of the apostles, or male disciples were honoured with the first visions of the angels, or with the immediate news of the resurrection of the Son of God, much less with the appearance of JESUS himself. The angels in the sepulchre kept themselves invisible all the time that Peter and John were observing the linen clothes, and satisfying themselves that the body of their Master was not there: perhaps the male disciples in general were treated with this mark of disrespect, both because they had, with shameful cowardice, forsaken their Master when he was betrayed into the hands of their enemies, and because their faith was so weak that they had absolutely despaired of his being the Messiah when they saw him expire on the cross: but how different was that conduct of the women! Laying aside the weakness and

timidity natural to their sex, they shewed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occasion; for in contradiction to the whole nation, who with one voice required JESUS to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence by tears, cries, and lamentations, when they saw him led forth to suffer on mount Calvary; accompanied him to the cross, the most infamous of all punishments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the consolation in their power, though at the same time the sight of his sufferings pierced them to the heart; and when he expired, and was carried off, they accompanied him to his grave, not despairing, though they found he had not delivered himself, but to appearance was conquered by death, the universal enemy of mankind. Perhaps these pious women entertained some faint hopes that he would still revive; or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at least cherished a strong degree of love for their Lord, and determined to do him all possible honour.

It may be observed, a faith so remarkably strong, a love so ardent, and a fortitude so unshaken, could not fail of receiving distinguished tokens of the divine approbation; and they were accordingly honoured with the news of CHRIST'S resurrection before the male disciples had their eyes cheered with the first sight of their beloved Lord, after he arose from the chambers of the grave; so that they preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves. But there seems to have been other reasons why our great Redeemer shewed himself first to the women: the thoughts of the apostles were constantly fixed on a temporal kingdom, and they had wrested all his words into an agreement with that favourite notion; and whatever they could not construe as consonant to that opinion, they seem either to have disbelieved or disregarded.

Notwithstanding JESUS had foretold his own sufferings no less than seven different times, the apostles were astonished above measure when they saw him expire on the cross. Immortality and terrestrial dominion were, according to their notion, the characteristics of the Messiah; for which reason, when they found that instead of establishing himself in the possession of

universal empire, he had neither delivered himself from an handful of enemies, nor even from death, they gave over all hopes of his being the Messiah: and as for his resurrection, they seem not to have entertained the least notion of it; so that, when the news of this great event was brought to them, they considered it as an idle tale. But not so the women; they were more submissive to their Master's instructions, and consequently were much better prepared for seeing him after his resurrection than the apostles: for though they did not expect that he would rise from the dead, yet they were not prejudiced against it.

The apostles, on the other hand, not only absolutely rejected the matter at first, as a thing incredible, but even after they were acquainted with the accounts the soldiers had given of this great transaction; nay, after they had seen the blessed JESUS himself, some of them were so unreasonable as still to doubt. How much rather then would their incredulity have led them to suspect his appearing as an illusion, had he shewed himself to them! These reports led them to recollect the arguments proper for disposing them to believe; particularly the prophecies that had been so often delivered in their own hearing, concerning his resurrection. Hence the angels, when they told this event to the women, and desired them to carry the news of it to his disciples, put them in mind of the predictions JESUS himself had made, as a confirmation of it. Hence we also see the reason why JESUS, before he had made himself known to the disciples at Emmaus, prepared them for a discovery, by expounding to them on the road, the several prophecies concerning the Messiah, contained in the Old Testament, which hitherto they had little attended to, or did not understand.

The company of women, we have observed, returned to the city, while Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene, were at the sepulchre. On their arrival they told as many of the disciples as they could find, that they had seen at the sepulchre a vision of angels, who assured them that JESUS was risen from the dead. This new information astonished the disciples exceedingly: and as they had before sent Peter and John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them concerning the

body's being removed out of the sepulchre, so they now judged it highly proper to send some of their number to see the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of that great transaction of which the women have given them an account. That this was really the case, appears from what the disciples, in their journey to Emmaus, told their great Lord and Master; namely, that when the women came and told them that they had seen a vision of angels, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said, but saw not JESUS.

We may venture to affirm, that this second deputation from the apostles did not go alone; for as Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, who were sent to examine the truth of her information, so the women who brought an account of the vision of angels, in all probability returned with those who were sent to be witnesses of the truth of their report: besides curiosity, they had an errand thither. The angels had expressly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular; for which reason, when they understood that he was gone to the sepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the disciples to seek him. About the time that the disciples and women set out for the sepulchre, Peter and John reached the city, but passing through a different street, did not meet their brethren in the way.

Having a great desire to reach the sepulchre, the disciples soon left the women behind, and just as they arrived, Mary Magdalene, having seen the Lord, was coming away; but they did not meet her, because they entered the garden at one door, while she was coming out at another. When they came to the sepulchre, they saw the angels, and received from them the news of their blessed Master's resurrection; for St. Luke tells us, *they found it even as the women had said.* Highly elated with their success, they departed and ran back to the city, with such expedition, that they gave an account of what they had seen in the hearing of the two disciples, before Mary Magdalene arrived. Nor will their speed appear at all incredible, if we consider that the nature of the tidings the apostles had to carry gave them wings, as it were, to

make their brethren partakers of their joy at this surprising event.

The company of women who followed the disciples, happening, in the mean time, to meet Peter and John, went forward in quest of them: but they had not gone far from the sepulchre, before JESUS himself met them, and said, *All hail!* On which they approached their great Lord and Master, *held him by the feet and worshipped him.* This favour of embracing his knees, JESUS had before refused to Mary Magdalene, because it was not then necessary; but he granted it to the women, because the angel's words having strongly impressed their minds with the notion of his resurrection, they might have taken his appearing, for an illusion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to handle him, and convince themselves by the united reports of their senses: besides, if our Lord intended that Mary Magdalene should go away as fast as possible, and publish the news, he might hinder her from embracing his knees, to prevent her losing any time before she returned.

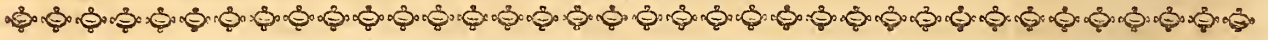
These pious women having tarried some time with JESUS on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Master's resurrection, till some time after Peter and John; and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unless we suppose that she arrived a few minutes before them. But be that as it may, this is certain, that they arrived either at or near the same time; so that their accounts of this miraculous event tended to confirm each other's belief of it.

The relation of the women having filled the disciples with astonishment, they considered the account they had before given them, of their having seen a vision of angels, as an idle tale, and now they seem to have considered this as something worse; for the evangelist tells us, *they believed not.* Peter, indeed, to whom the angel sent the message, was disposed by his sanguine temper, to give a little more credit to their words than the rest; possibly because the messengers from the heavenly Canaan, had done him the honour of naming him in particular. Elated with the respect paid him in particular, he immediately repaired again to the sepulchre;

hoping, in all probability, that his Master would appear to him, or at least the angel who had so particularly distinguished him from the rest of his brethren.

When Peter arrived at the sepulchre, he stooped down: and seeing the linen clothes lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which

they were laid, and returned wondering greatly *in himself at that which was come to pass*. In all probability, it was now that Peter was favoured with the sight of his Master, 1 Cor. xv. 5; for the evangelist tells us, that it happened on the day of our blessed Saviour's resurrection.



C H A P T E R XLII.

JESUS appears to two of his Disciples on the Road to Emmaus: He appears to his Apostles on the Evening of the Resurrection, Thomas being absent: He appears again to the Apostles, and convinces Thomas: Shews himself to his Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and to five hundred of the Brethren in Galilee.

NOT long after the women's first return to the disciples with the news that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that JESUS was risen from the dead, two of the brethren departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about two miles distant from Jerusalem. The concern they were in on account of the death of their great and beloved Master, was sufficiently visible in their countenances; and as they pursued their journey, talking with one another, and debating about the things that had lately happened amongst them, concerning the life and doctrine, the sufferings and death of the holy JESUS, and of the report that was just spread amongst his disciples, of his being that very morning risen from the dead, JESUS himself overtook them, and joined their company.

Appearing like a stranger, they did not in the least suspect, that their fellow traveller was no other than the great Redeemer of the sons of men. He soon entered into discourse with them, by inquiring what event had so closely engaged them in conversation, and why they appeared so sorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with some heavy disappointment or sore affliction.

Cleophas, one of the disciples, being surpris'd at the question, replied, Is it possible, that you can be so great a stranger to the affairs of the world, as to have been at Jerusalem, and not have heard the surpris'ing events that have happened there; events that have astonish'd the whole city, and are now the constant topic of conversation amongst all the inhabitants? JESUS answered, What surpris'ing events do you mean? To which Cleophas replied, The transactions which have happened concerning JESUS of Nazareth, who appeared as a great prophet and teacher sent from God; and accordingly was highly venerated amongst the people, for the excellency of his doctrine, and the number, benefit, and greatness of his miracles. Our chief priests and elders, therefore, envying him as one who lessened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death; but we firmly believed he would have proved himself the Messiah, or great deliverer: and this persuasion we a long time supported, nor were we willing to abandon it, even when we saw him put to death; but it is now three days since these things were done, and therefore we begin to fear we were mistaken concerning him.

A thing indeed happened this very morning, which extremely surprises us, and we are very solicitous with regard to the event. Some women who had entertained the same hopes and expectations as we, going early in the morning to pay their last duties to their Master, by embalming his body, returned with great haste to the city, and informed us, that they had been at the sepulchre, but were disappointed in finding the body; and to increase our surprise, they added, that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that JESUS was risen from the dead. This relation appeared at first to us as an idle tale, altogether incredible; but two of the company going immediately after to the sepulchre, found every thing exactly as the women had reported; they saw the angels, but heard not any thing of the body: so that we are still in doubt and perplexity with regard to this wonderful event, and what the end of these things will be.

JESUS replied, Why are ye so very averse to believe all that the prophets have with one voice predicted concerning the Messiah? Is it not clearly, and very expressly foretold, in all the prophetic writings, that it was appointed by the council of Omnipotence for the Messiah to suffer in this manner, and that after sustaining the greatest indignities, reproach, and contempt, from the malice and perverseness of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, to be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom? And having said this, he began at the writings of Moses, and explained to them, in order, all the principal passages, both in the books of that great legislator and the writings of the other prophets, relating to his own sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection, as predicted of him.

This he did, with such surprising plainness, clearness, and strength, that the two disciples, not yet suspecting who he was, were as much amazed to find a stranger so well acquainted with all that JESUS did and suffered, as they at first wondered at his appearing to be totally ignorant of these transactions. They were also astonished to hear him interpret and apply the Scriptures to their present purpose, with such readiness and convincing clearness of argument, as carried with it a strange and

unusual authority and efficacy. When therefore they came to the village whither they were going, and JESUS seemed as if he would have passed on and travelled further, they, desirous of his company, pressed him, in the strongest manner, to tarry with them that night, as it was then late in the evening.

The great Redeemer of mankind consented to this request, and when they were sat down to supper, he took bread, and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them in the same manner he used to do while he conversed with them upon earth before his death. This engaged their attention, and looking steadfastly on him, they perceived it was their great and beloved Master: but they had then no time to express their joy and astonishment to their benevolent Redeemer; for he vanished out of their sight immediately.

No sooner did they perceive that their Master was departed, than they said one to another, How slow and stupid were we before, not to know him on the road, while he explained to us the Scriptures; when, besides the affability of his discourse, and the strength and clearness of his arguments, we perceived such an authority in what he said, and such a powerful efficacy attending his words, and striking our hearts with affection, as we could not but have known, if we had not been remarkably stupid, to have been the very same that used to accompany his teaching, and was peculiar to our dear Master, who spake as never man spake.

After this surprising event, they did not think proper to stay any longer in Emmaus, but returned that very night to Jerusalem, and found the apostles, with several other disciples, discoursing about the resurrection of their Master; and on their entering the room, the disciples accosted them, saying, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.*

The reports of the women were little credited, supposing they were occasioned more by imagination than reality; but when a person of Simon's capacity and gravity declared he had seen the Lord, they began to think that he was really risen from the dead. Their belief of this was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, who declared to

their brethren, how JESUS had appeared to them on the road, and how they discovered him to be their Master, by his breaking of bread, when he sat down to supper with them.

During this conversation of the disciples from Emmaus, describing the manner of the appearing of JESUS to them, and offering arguments to convince those who doubted the truth of it, their great Master himself put an end to the debate, by standing in the midst of them, and said, *Peace be unto you.*

The disciples were greatly terrified at this appearance of our blessed Saviour, supposing they had seen a spirit; for as they had secured the doors of the house where they were assembled for fear of the Jews, and JESUS having opened the locks, by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the house, it was natural for them to think that a spiritual substance only could enter. The circumstance therefore of the doors being shut, is very happily mentioned by St. John; because it suggests a reason why the disciples took their Master for a spirit, notwithstanding many of them were convinced that he was really risen from the dead, and were that moment conversing about the event.

However, to dispel their fears and doubts, JESUS came forward, spake to them in the most endearing accent, shewed them his hands and his feet, and desired them to handle him; in order to convince themselves by the united report of their different senses, that it was he himself, and no spectre or apparition: *Why are ye troubled, said the benevolent Redeemer of mankind, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have, Luke xxiv. 38, 39.*

By these infallible proofs, the disciples were sufficiently convinced of the truth of their Lord's resurrection, and they received him with rapture and exultation: but their joy and wonder had so great an effect on their minds, that some of them, sensible of the great commotion they were in, suspended their belief, till they had considered the matter more calmly: JESUS therefore, knowing their thoughts, called for

meat, and ate with them, in order to prove more fully the truth of his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his presence with them at that time. When JESUS had given this further ocular demonstration of his having vanquished the power of death, and opened the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his salutation, *Peace be unto you;* adding, 'The same commission that my Father hath given unto me, I give unto you: go ye therefore into every part of the world, and preach the gospel to all the children of men. Then breathing on them, he said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost,* to direct and assist you in the execution of your commission: whosoever embraces your doctrine, and sincerely repents, ye shall remit his sins, and your sentence of absolution shall be ratified and confirmed in the courts of heaven: and whosoever either obstinately rejects your doctrine, disobeys it, or behaves himself unworthily after he hath embraced it, his sins shall not be forgiven him; but the censure ye shall pass upon him on earth, shall be confirmed in heaven to his condemnation.

At this meeting of the apostles, Thomas, otherwise called Didymus, was absent; nor did this happen without the special direction of Providence, that the particular and extraordinary satisfaction which was afterwards granted him, might be an abundant and undeniable testimony of the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection, to all succeeding generations. The rest of the apostles therefore told him, that they had seen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had delivered in their hearing: but Thomas replied, This event is of such great importance, that unless, to prevent all possibility of deception, I see him with my own eyes, and feel him with my own hands, putting my fingers into the print of the nails whereby he was fastened to the cross, and thrusting my hand into his side which the soldier pierced with his spear; I will not believe that he is risen from the dead in reality and truth, as ye affirm.

We have now enumerated, in the most explicit manner, the transactions of that day on which the great Redeemer of mankind arose from the dead; a day highly to be remembered by the children of men throughout all generations; a day, in

which was fully completed and displayed the conceptions lodged in the breast of Infinite Wisdom from all eternity; even those thoughts of love and mercy, on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have, therefore, the highest reason to solemnize this day with gladness each returning week, by ceasing from their labour, and giving up themselves to prayer, pious meditations, and other exercises of religion. The redemption of mankind, which they weekly commemorate, affords matter for eternal thought; it is a subject impossible to be equalled, and whose lustre, neither length of time, nor frequent reviewing can either tarnish or diminish: it resembles the sun, which we behold always the same glorious and luminous object; for the benefit we celebrate is, after so many ages, as fresh and beautiful as ever, and will always continue the same, flourishing in the memories of all reasonable beings through the endless revolutions of eternity. Redemption is the brightest mirror in which we contemplate the goodness of the Almighty, other gifts are only mites from the divine treasury; but redemption opens, we had almost said, exhausts all the stores of his grace. May it be constantly the favourite subject of our meditations, more delightful to our musing minds than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme of our discourses; sweeter to our tongues than the droppings of the honey comb to the taste! May it be our choicest comfort, through all the changes of this mortal life, and the reviving cordial, even in the last extremities of dissolution itself, and upon the verge of the grave!

After our great Redeemer had been risen eight days from the dead, he shewed himself again to his disciples while Thomas was with them, and upbraided that disciple for his unbelief; but knowing that it did not, like that of the Pharisees, proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honest heart, and a sincere desire of being satisfied of the truth, he addressed himself particularly to this doubting disciple: Thomas, said he, since thou wilt not be contented to rely on the testimony of others, but must be convinced by the experience of thy own senses, behold the wounds in my hands, and reach hither thy

hand, and thrust it into my side, and doubt no longer of the reality of my resurrection from the tomb.

The incredulous disciple immediately obeyed the kind invitation of his Master; and being fully satisfied according to his own desire, he cried out, I am abundantly convinced thou art indeed my Lord, the very same that was crucified; and I acknowledge thy Almighty power, in having triumphed over death, and worship thee as my God and Saviour.

The blessed JESUS replied, Because thou hast both seen and felt me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the dead. Blessed are they who, without such evidence of the senses, shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe and embrace a doctrine, which tends so greatly to the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind.

The blessed JESUS appeared, according to St. John, on several other occasions to his disciples after his resurrection; and by many infallible proofs, not mentioned by the evangelists, fully convinced them, that he was alive after his passion: but that those which are mentioned, are abundantly sufficient to induce men to believe that JESUS was the Son of God, the great Messiah so often foretold by the ancient prophets; and that by means of that belief, they may obtain everlasting life, in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan, and there adore and praise him forever.

JESUS having first by the angels, and afterwards in person, ordered his disciples to repair to their respective habitations in Galilee, it is reasonable to think they would leave Jerusalem as soon as possible. This they accordingly did, and on their arrival at their respective places of abode, applied themselves to their usual occupations; and the apostles returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake of Tiberius. Here they were toiling with their nets very early in the morning, and saw JESUS standing on the shore, but did not then know him to be their Master, as it was something dark, and they at a considerable distance from him. He, however, called to them, and asked if they had taken any fish; to which they answered, they had caught nothing: he then desired them to let down their nets on the right side of

the boat, and they should not be disappointed. The disciples imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fishing, did as he had directed them, and enclosed in their net so vast a multitude of fishes, that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them in the water towards the land.

They had toiled, it seems, all the preceding night to no purpose; and therefore such remarkable success could not fail of causing various conjectures amongst them, with regard to the stranger on the shore, who had given them such happy advice. Some of the disciples declared they could not imagine who he was; but others were persuaded, that this person was no other than their great and beloved Master. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter; who making no doubt of it, girt on his fisher's coat, and leaped into the sea, in order to get ashore sooner than the boat could be brought to land, dragging after it a net full of such large fishes as were almost ready to sink it.

The disciples when they came ashore, found a fire kindled, and on it a fish broiling, and near it some bread: but neither being sufficient for the company, JESUS bid them bring some of the fish they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did the blessed JESUS prove again to his disciples the reality of his resurrection, not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle like that which, at the beginning of his ministry, had made such an impression upon them, as disposed them to be his constant followers. This was the third time that JESUS appeared publicly to a great number of his disciples in a body, besides his shewing himself to particular persons, upon special occasions, and at divers times.

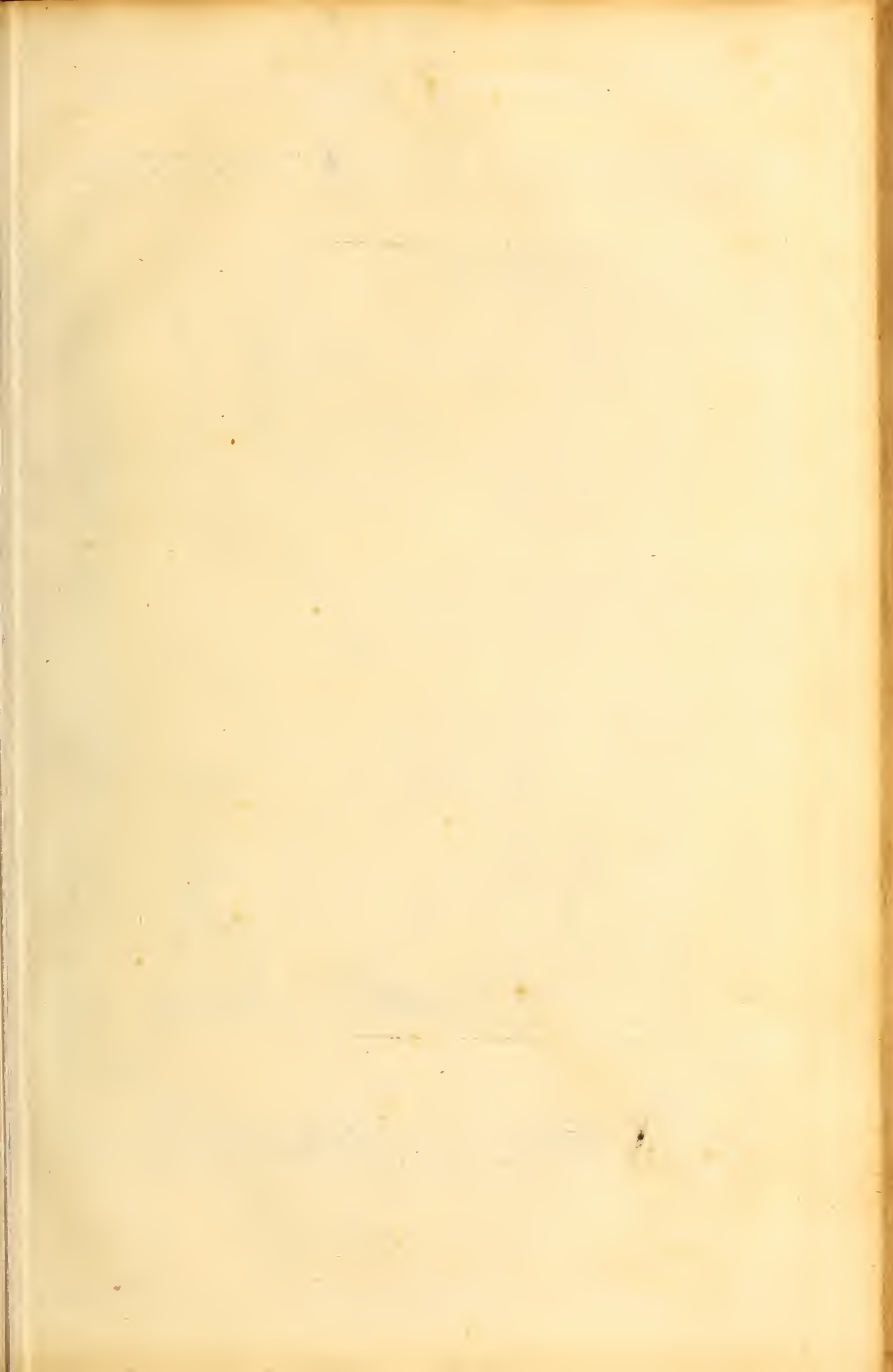
After they had eaten, JESUS reminded Peter how diligent and zealous he ought to be, in order to wipe off the stain of his denying him, when he was carried before the high-priest: *Simon, son of Jonas, said our blessed Saviour to him, art thou more zealous and affectionate in thy love towards me, than the rest of my disciples? To which Peter answered, Yea, Lord; thou*

knowest that I love thee. He was taught modesty and diffidence by his late fall; and, therefore, would not compare himself with others, but humbly appealed to his Master's omniscience, for the sincerity of his regard to him. JESUS answered, Express then thy love towards me by the care of my flock committed to thy charge: *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.* I well know, indeed, continued the blessed JESUS, that thou wilt continue my faithful shepherd even until death: for the time will come, when thou, who now girdest on thy fisher's coat voluntarily, and stretchedst out thy hands to come to me, shalt in thine old age be girt by others, and forced to stretch out thy hands against thy will, in a very different manner, for the sake of thy constant profession of my religion.

JESUS, by these last words, signified the manner of Peter's death, and that he should finally suffer martyrdom for the glory of God, and the testimony of the truth of the Christian religion, which he had been instrumental in propagating to the world.

The disciples being now about to meet their great Lord and Master, according to the messages he had sent them by the women, and having in all probability, appointed this meeting at some former appearance, not mentioned by the evangelists, the brethren set out for the mountain in Galilee, perhaps that on which he was transfigured. Here five hundred of them were gathered together, waiting the joyful sight of their great Master, after he had triumphed over death and the grave; some of them not having yet seen him after his resurrection from the dead.

The disciples did not wait long before JESUS appeared, on which they were seized with rapture; and with hearts overflowing with gladness, they approached their kind, their benevolent Master, and worshipped him. Some few indeed doubted, it being a thing agreeable to nature for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wish, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys, which vanish like a morning cloud. But JESUS afterwards appeared frequently to them, and gave all of them full satisfaction, and instructed them in many things relating to their preaching the gospel, establishing the church, and spreading it through the known world.





Engraved by Sam. Hill Boston.

MARK, XVI. 19.

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR'S ASCENSION *up to* HEAVEN.

Our blessed Saviour, either at his appearance on the mountain, or some subsequent appearance, not mentioned by the evangelists, probably ordered them to return to Jerusalem, as he proposed to ascend visibly into heaven from the top of the Mount of Olives.

C H A P T E R XLIII.

JESUS ascends into Heaven: The principal Arguments of the Deists against our blessed Saviour's Resurrection, considered and refuted: Reflections on the Life and Doctrine of our Great Redeemer.

ABOUT twelve days before the feast of Pentecost, called in the law *the feast of weeks*, and nearly forty days after our blessed Saviour arose from the dead, the disciples repaired to Jerusalem, probably in conformity to a command given them by their great Master at one of his appearances; unless we suppose they went up to that city, in order to purify and prepare themselves for the solemnity now approaching.

However that be, the blessed JESUS made his last appearance here to his apostles; and, after instructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God, and the manner they were to behave themselves in propagating the doctrine of the gospel, he put them in mind that, during his abode with them in Galilee, he had often told them, that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning him, were to be exactly accomplished. At the same time, he opened their understandings, that is, he removed their prejudices by the operation of his spirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, strengthened their judgments, and enabled them to discern the true meaning of the Scriptures, respecting his divine mission.

Being thus qualified by him for receiving the truth, he again assured them that both Moses and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to suffer in the very manner he had suffered, that he was to rise from the dead on the third day, as he had done, and that repentance and remission of sins was to be preached in the Messiah's name amongst all nations, beginning with the Jews at Jerusalem.

After this, he delivered unto them their commission, to preach the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, in his name, amongst all

nations, and to testify unto the world the exact accomplishment in him of all things foretold concerning the Messiah: and, to enable them to perform this important work, promised to bestow on them the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which he called the promise of his Father; because the Almighty had promised them by his prophets in the Old Testament.

Being thus fortified for the important work they were going to undertake, he led them on to the Mount of Olives, as far as Bethany; where, standing on a hill above the town, he told them that he was now raised to the government of heaven and earth; for which reason, they might go courageously through all the world, and preach the gospel to every rational creature; assuring themselves that affairs in all countries should be so ordered, as to dispose the inhabitants for the reception of the gospel; that they who believed, were to be admitted into his church by the rite of baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to be taught, in consequence of their baptism, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined them: That such baptised believers should receive the pardon of their sins, together with eternal life in the happy mansions of his Father's kingdom; but that those who refused to embrace the doctrines of the gospel, should be for ever excluded those happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; that while they were employed in this work, he would be with them to the end of the world, to guide them by his counsel, to assist them by his Spirit, and to protect them by his Providence. Finally, that those who should, through their preaching, be induced to believe, should themselves work most astonishing miracles, by which the

gospel should be propagated with the greatest rapidity and success.

After JESUS had spoken these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and in the action of blessing them, he was parted from them in the midst of the day, a shining cloud receiving him out of their sight; that is, this brilliant cloud encompassed him about, and carried him up to heaven, not suddenly, but at leisure, that they might behold him departing, and see the proof of his having come down from heaven, as he had promised them.

The blessed JESUS ascended in a cloud which was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame, being no other than the Shechinah, or glory of the Lord, the visible symbol of the Divine Presence which had so often appeared to the patriarchs of old, which filled the temple at its dedication, and which, in its greatest splendour, cannot be beheld with mortal eyes; for which reason it is called the light inaccessible in which the Almighty resides, and with which he is surrounded.

It was probably on this occasion that our Lord's body was changed, acquiring the glories of immortality, perhaps in the presence of his disciples, who steadfastly beheld him as he mounted from the earth. And as he ascended, the flaming cloud that surrounded him marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below, till at last it vanquished, together with their beloved Master, out of their sight; for he was received up where the Divine Being manifests himself in a peculiar manner, and was set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; all power in heaven and in earth being now given him: and this universal government he will hold, till he establishes the dominion of righteousness, when he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, *that God may be all in all*, 1 Cor. xv. 28.

Thus did the great Redeemer of mankind depart in a most illustrious manner, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his Father to execute; a work which God himself, in the remotest eternity, contemplated with pleasure, which angels with joy desiried as to happen, and which, through all eternity to come, shall, at periods the most

immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight by every inhabitant of heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such, that no distance, however great, can lessen it: the kingdom of heaven is erected on the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the kingdom and city of the Almighty comprehending all the virtuous beings in the universe, made happy by goodness and love; and, therefore, none of them can ever forget the foundation on which their happiness stands established: the human species in particular, recovered by the labour of the Son of God, will view their Deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking with the highest rapture, while they are feasting without interruption on its delicious fruits: the rest of the members likewise of the city of God, will contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their kindred that were lost; and possibly the grand confirmation of the whole rational system, in their subjection to him who reigneth for ever, whose favour is better than life itself, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

We have now followed our dear Redeemer through all the transactions of his life, and enlarged on the stupendous miracle of his resurrection, as the whole Christian doctrine is founded on that glorious event. And it is abundantly evident from this history, that our blessed Saviour shewed himself to his disciples and friends only, not to the Jews in general. This circumstance gave Spinoza a pretence for raising an objection, which his disciples have considered as the strongest argument against our Lord's resurrection. "If, say they, he really arose from the dead, to have shewed himself to his enemies as well as to his friends, would have put the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, than which nothing could be more necessary to the cause of Christianity; and, therefore, the supposition of his having confined his appearances, after his resurrection, to a few select friends, renders the affair extremely suspicious and unworthy of credit."

This argument, however plausible it may appear at first sight, is destitute of the least force; because it may be demonstrated, that if JESUS had shewed himself to his enemies, and to all the people in general, these appearances, instead of putting the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, would have weakened the evidence of it, at least in after-ages; and, consequently, have been of infinite prejudice to mankind: for, upon the supposition that our blessed Saviour had shewed himself openly, one of these two things must necessarily have happened; either his enemies, submitting to the evidence of their senses, would have believed his resurrection, or, resisting that evidence, they would reject it altogether. We shall begin with taking the latter into consideration.

It is very evident, that those enemies of the great Redeemer of mankind who resisted the evidence of their senses, or who, though really convinced, would not acknowledge their conviction, must have justified their disbelief by affirming that the person who appeared to them, as risen from the dead, was not JESUS whom the Roman governor had crucified, but an impostor who personated him. On any other foundation their infidelity would have been ridiculous and absurd; but, if the unbelieving Jews, by our Lord's appearing personally to them, would have been laid under a necessity of denying the reality of his resurrection, even though persuaded of it in their own minds, the evidence of fact could have gained nothing by such public appearances; because the generality of the Jews were not capable of passing a judgment upon the falsehood which CHRIST'S enemies must have made use of to support their denial of his resurrection; being unacquainted with JESUS, they could not certainly tell whether he was really the very person whom the Romans had crucified. His apostles, disciples, and acquaintances, who, by their long attendance on him, knew his stature, shape, air, voice, and manner, were the only proper persons by whose determination the point in dispute could be decided; consequently, if our Lord had appeared to all the people, if any considerable number of his enemies had continued in their infidelity, the whole stress of the evidence of his resurrection

must have rested on the evidence of the very persons who, according to the plan pitched upon by Providence, bear witness to it now, and upon whose testimony the world has believed it: so that, instead of gaining an additional evidence, by the proposed method of shewing JESUS publicly to all the people, we should have had nothing to trust to but the testimony of his disciples, and that clogged with this incumbrance, that his resurrection was denied by many to whom he appeared, and who were not convinced by the testimony of their senses.

In the second place, it may be supposed, that in case our blessed Saviour had shewed himself publicly, the whole nation of the Jews must have believed, and that future generations would thus have had the fullest evidence of the truth of his resurrection, beyond all possibility of a doubt.

However, this will not appear to be the case, if we consider, that the greatest part of our Lord's enemies, having not given themselves the trouble of attending him often, cannot be supposed to have been so well acquainted with his person as to know him with certainty; for which reason, though he had shewed himself to them, even their belief of his resurrection, must, in a great measure, have depended on the testimony of his disciples and friends: if so, it is not very probable that his appearing publicly, would have had any great effect on the Jews, to persuade them to embrace a crucified Messiah. It is far more reasonable to believe, that they would have rejected the whole, and continued in their infidelity, unless a divine power interposed, to remove the veil from their hearts.

In order to give the argument all the force the Deists can desire, let us further suppose, that, in consequence of our blessed Saviour's appearing to all the people of the Jews, the nation in general would have been convinced of the truth of his resurrection, and become his disciples; what advantage would the cause of Christianity have reaped from such effects of our Lord's public appearance? Would the evidence of his resurrection have become thereby the more unquestionable? Or would the modern infidels have been the better disposed to believe in this crucified JESUS? By no means: for we

do not find that men of this class are at all the more ready to believe the miracles of Moses in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness, because the whole nation were witnesses of them. The truth is, had our blessed Redeemer persuaded all the people of the Jews, by appearing personally to them, the objections against his resurrection, would have been ten times more numerous and forcible, than they are at present; for would not the whole have been called a state-trick, a Jewish fable, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit, after they had so long talked of a Messiah, who was to come at that time? Besides, we should certainly have been told, that the government being engaged in the plot, a fraud of this kind might have easily been carried on, especially as the people in general would eagerly fall in with it; because it was so exactly adapted to their prejudices, and because the few who had sagacity enough to detect the fraud, could have no opportunity of examining into it; or, if they did examine, and detect the fraud, would not have dared to make any discovery of it, in opposition to the whole weight of the state: so that they would let it pass quietly, without once calling it in question.

The resurrection of our great Redeemer universally believed amongst the Jews, and published to the world by the unanimous voice of the nation, would, to say the truth, have been liable to an infinite number of objections, which are all effectually cut off by the method made choice of by the wisdom of Providence; for as the people in general, and the rulers in particular, continued in their infidelity, the persons concerned in this supposed fraud, must have carried it on under the greatest disadvantages. The reason is, that instead of making many friends to assist them, which a fraud of this kind requires, all men were their enemies, and interested to discover the cheat. The Jewish rulers, in particular, gave all possible encouragement to make the strictest scrutiny into the fact, and into all its circumstances; and many, doubtless, zealously made the inquiry, with the utmost exactness. The apostles who preached the resurrection, exposed themselves to the fiercest resentment of the men in power; because the resurrection of our great Redeemer cast the greatest reflection up-

on those who had put him to death. It should also be remembered, that if the generality of the nation had not continued in their unbelief, the apostles who preached the resurrection, would not have suffered these persecutions, which in every country were raised against them, chiefly by the Jews; and consequently one of the strongest arguments for the truth of their testimony would have been wanting: whereas, by their having been persecuted to death for their preaching the resurrection of their great Master, they fully demonstrated how sincerely they believed the great fact which they preached in continual jeopardy of their lives, notwithstanding the virulent malice and restless persecution of their enemies.

We have thus endeavoured to answer, in the plainest and most satisfactory manner, the principal objection made by the Deists against the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection; and shall conclude this chapter with a few reflections on the life of the blessed JESUS; a life the greatest and best that was ever led by man, or was ever the subject of any history since the universe was called from its original chaos, by the powerful word of the Almighty, which spake it into being.

As the human character of the blessed JESUS results from the accounts given of him by the evangelists (for they have not formally drawn it up) so it is entirely different from that of all other men whatsoever; for whereas they have selfish passions deeply rooted in their breasts, and are influenced by them in almost every thing they do, JESUS was so entirely free from them, that the most severe scrutiny cannot furnish one single action in the whole course of his life, wherein he consulted his own interest only; no, he was influenced by very different motives; the present happiness and eternal welfare of sinners regulated his conduct; and while others followed their respective occupations, JESUS had no other business than that of promoting the happiness of the sons of men: nor did he wait till he was solicited to extend his benevolent hand to the distressed; he went about doing good, and always accounted it more blessed to give than to receive; resembling God rather than man, in every act of his life.

Persons of the most exalted faculties are apt to be elated with success and applause, or dejected by censure and disappointments : but the blessed Jesus was never elevated by the one, nor depressed by the other ; he was never more courageous than when he met with the greatest opposition and cruel treatment, nor more humble than when the sons of men worshipped at his feet. He came into the world inspired with the grandest purpose that ever was formed, that of saving from eternal perdition, not a single nation, but the whole world ; and in the execution of it, went through the longest and heaviest train of labours that ever was sustained, with a constancy and resolution, on which no disadvantageous impression could be made by any accident whatever : calumny, threatenings, bad success, with many other evils constantly attending him, served only to quicken his endeavours in this glorious enterprize, which he unweariedly pursued, even till he finished it by his death on the cross.

Mankind are prone to retaliate injuries received, and seem to take a satisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of those who oppress them ; whereas, the whole of Christ's labours breathed nothing but meekness, patience, and forgiveness, even to his bitterest enemies, and in the midst of the most excruciating torments. The words *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the cross, fitly express the temper which he maintained through the whole course of his life, even when assaulted by the heaviest provocations. The truth is, he never signified, on any occasion, the least resentment by speech or action, nor indeed any emotion of mind whatever, except such as flowed from pity and charity ; consequently such only as expressed the deepest concern for the welfare of mankind, to which his glorious life and sufferings effectually opened the way.

The greatest and best men have had their failings, which tarnish the lustre of their virtues, and shew them to have been nothing more than men. This was the case with Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Paul, and other heroes celebrated in history ; but it was otherwise with JESUS : he was superior to all the

men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners, and the perfection of his virtues : he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. Whether we consider him as a teacher, or as a man, *he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, 1 Pet. ii. 22. His whole life was perfectly free from spot or weakness, at the same time it was remarkable for the greatest and most extensive exercises of virtue ; but never to have committed the least sin in word or in deed, never to have uttered any sentiment that could be censured, upon the various topics of religion and morality, which were the daily subjects of his discourses, and that through the course of a life filled with action, and led under the observation of many enemies, who had always access to converse with him, and who often came to find fault, is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature ; and, consequently, he who possessed it, must have been divine, and a most perfect Being.

This adorable Person is the subject of the evangelical history. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine, and miracles, as they are here represented to him united in one series, has a clearer idea of these things than before, or observes a beauty in his actions thus linked together, which taken separately do not appear so fully ; if he feels himself touched by the character of Jesus in general, or with any of his sermons and actions in particular, thus simply delineated in writing, whose principal charms are the beauties of truth : above all, if his dying so generously for men, strikes him with admiration, or fills him with joy, in the prospect of that pardon which is thereby purchased for the world ; let him seriously consider with himself, what improvement he ought to make of the divine goodness, and what returns of praise and gratitude are due from him.

The Saviour of mankind, by his death, hath set open the gates of immortality to all the posterity of Adam ; and by his word, spirit, and example, graciously offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the saints in light : let us, therefore, remember, that, being born under the dispensation of his gospel, we have,

from our earliest years, enjoyed the best means of acquiring wisdom, virtue, and happiness, the lineaments of the image of God. We have been called to aspire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty exhibited to mortal eyes in the man Christ Jesus, to fire us with the noblest ambition. His gospel teaches us, that we are made for eternity; and that our present life is to our future existence, as infancy is to manhood: but as in the former many things are to be learned, many hardships to be endured, many habits to be acquired, and that by a tedious course of exercises, which in themselves though painful, and possibly useless to the child, yet are necessary to fit him for the business and enjoy-

ments of manhood; so while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardships to be endured, and habits to be acquired by a laborious course of discipline, which however painful must be undergone, because necessary to fit us for the employments and pleasures of our riper existence in the realms above. Enflamed, therefore, with the love of immortality and its joys, let us submit ourselves to our heavenly Teacher, and learn of him those graces which alone can render life pleasant, death desirable, fill eternity with ecstasie joys, and the tongues and hearts of the blessed with a song of triumph in honour of their Deliverer.

C H A P T E R XLIV.

Observations on the Doctrine of our blessed Lord and Saviour; The excellency of the Religion he enforced and inculcated: And the reasonableness of, and pleasure resulting from, a Christian Life.

WE cannot more properly conclude our history of the life of the blessed Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, nor place the great doctrines taught by the benevolent Son of the Most High, in a more conspicuous light, than by removing a few prejudices which some, we fear too many, have formed against the religion of the holy Jesus, and shew that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

There have not, perhaps, been greater enemies to the progress of religion, than those who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form; nor any guilty of a more injurious calumny against the gospel, than those who represent its precepts as rigorous impositions and unnecessary restraints. True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleasure, of public order and private happiness. Christianity is the most excellent and the most useful institution,

having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; it is the voice of reason; it is also the language of scripture; the ways of wisdom *are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17..... And our blessed Saviour himself assures us, that his precepts are easy, and the burden of his religion light and pleasant.

The religion which Christ came into this lower world to establish, is a rational service, a worship in spirit and truth; a worship worthy of the majesty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to pay. One of its important branches is natural religion, reinforced by additional motives and new discoveries: its positive rights are few, of plain and easy significaney, and manifestly adapted to establish a sense of moral obligations. The gospel places religion not in abstruse speculation and metaphysical subtilities; not in outward shew and tedious ceremony; not in su-

perstitious austerities and enthusiastic vision, but in purity of heart, and holiness of life. The sum of our duty, according to our great Master himself, consists in the *love of God*, and *of our neighbour*; according to St. Paul, in *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*; and in *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present wor'd*; according to St. James, in *visiting the fatherless and widows in affliction*, and in *keeping ourselves unspotted from the world*. This is the constant strain and tenor of the gospel; this it inculcates most earnestly, and on this it lays the greatest stress, as most conducive to true and substantial happiness.

If it be asked, whether the Christian system is only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined system of Morality? We reply, No certainly; it is a great deal more. It is an act of grace, a stupendous plan of Providence, designed for the recovery of mankind from a state of degradation and ruin, to the favour of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality through a Mediator. Under this dispensation, true religion consists in a repentance towards God, and in faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, as the person appointed by the supreme authority of heaven and earth, to reconcile apostate man to his offended Creator, as a sacrifice for sin; our vital head, and governing Lord. This is the religion of Christians; and what hardship, what exaction is there in all this? Surely none: nay, the practice of religion is much easier than the servitude of sin, which at best is the vilest drudgery, and yields the worst kind of wages.

All will readily agree, that our rational powers are impaired, and the soul weakened by sin; the animal passions are strong, and apt to oppose the dictates of reason; objects of sense make powerful impressions on the mind; we are, in every situation, surrounded with many snares and temptations: in such a disordered state of things, to maintain a course of strict piety and uncorrupted virtue, is a work of great difficulty. There are, however, many tender propensions and generous instincts interwoven with our very being, as restraints from vice, and incitements to virtue. The gracious author of nature has planted in the human breast, a quick sense of good and evil; a faculty which strongly dictates right and

wrong; and though, by the strength of appetite, and warmth of passion, men are often hurried into immoral practices; yet in the beginning, especially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is usually with reluctance and opposition of mind. What inward struggles precede, what bitter pangs attend their sinful excesses! What guilty blushes and uneasy fears! What frightful prospects and pale reviews! "Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown consumeth them." To make a mock at sin, and to commit iniquity without remorse, is an attainment that requires length of time, and much painful labour; more labour than is requisite to attain that habitual goodness which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the christian, his preparation for heaven, and the chief source of his happiness there. The soul can no more be reconciled to flagrant acts of wickedness and injustice, than the body to excess, without suffering many bitter pains and cruel attacks, attacks attended with much anguish and vexation of spirit.

Conscience may indeed be stopped and put to silence for a while, by false principles; its secret whispers may be drowned by the noise of company, and stifled by entertainments of sense; but this principle of conscience is so deeply rooted in human nature, and, at the same time, her voice is so clear and strong, that all the sinner's arts will be unable to lull her into a lasting security. When the hour of calamity arrives, when sickness seizeth, and death approacheth the sinner, conscience constrains him to listen to her accusations, and will not suffer the temples of his head to take any rest: *There is no peace to the wicked*; the foundations of peace are subverted, they are at utter enmity with their reason, with their conscience, and with the God of their mercies.

The case is far otherwise with true religion; conscience is on her side; reason pleads for her, and interest joins in the recommendation. When religion pure and genuine forms the temper, and governs the life, conscience applauds, and peace takes her residence in the breast: the soul is in its proper state, there is order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conscious of its own integrity, and secure of the divine approbation, the soul enjoys a calmness not to be described: but why

do I call this happy frame calmness only? It is far more than mere calmness: the air may be calm, and the day overcast with thick mists and dark clouds: the pious and virtuous mind resembles a serene day, enlightened and enlivened with the brightest rays of the sun; though all without may be clouds and darkness, there is light in the heart of a pious man; he is satisfied from himself, and is filled with peace and joy in believing; in the concluding scene, the awful moment of dissolution, all is peaceful and serene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay with the well-grounded hopes of ascending to happiness and glory, without mixture, and without end.

The gospel enjoins no duty but what is fit and reasonable: it calls upon all its professors to practise reverence, submission, and gratitude to God; justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our own minds; and what has any one to object against this? From the least to the greatest commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reason can find fault with; his law is perfect; his precepts are true, and righteous altogether. Not even those excepted, which require us to love our enemies, to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross. To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge it; to control a licentious appetite than to indulge it; to suffer poverty, reproach, and even death itself, in the sacred cause of truth and integrity, is much wiser and better, than, by base compliances, to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Thus in a storm at sea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with pleasure abandons his lumber to secure his jewels: piety and virtue are the wisest and most reasonable things in the world; vice and wickedness the most irrational, absurd, and pernicious.

The infinitely wise Author of our being hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such relations, that there is nothing vicious but what is injurious; nothing virtuous but what is advantageous to our present interest, both with respect to body and mind. Meekness and humility, patience and universal charity, are graces which give a joy unknown to transgressors. The divine virtues of truth and

equity, are the only bands of friendship, the only supports of society. Temperance and sobriety are the best preservatives of health and strength; but sin and debauchery impair the body, consume the substance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to an immature and untimely death. Now this is the chief excellency of all laws; and what will always render their burden pleasant and delightful is, that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious; but, on the contrary, what is profitable, and of a salutary nature.

Besides, to render our duty easy, we have the example, as well as the commands of the blessed Jesus.....The masters of morality amongst the heathens gave excellent rules for the regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honesty or the courage to try their own arguments upon themselves. It was a strong presumption that the yoke of the Scribes and Pharisees was grievous, when they laid heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, which they themselves refused to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great law-giver, Jesus Christ the righteous; his behaviour was, in all respects, conformable to his doctrine; his devotion towards God, how sublime and ardent! benevolence towards men, how great and diffusive! He was in his life an exact pattern of innocence; for he *did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. In the Son of God incarnate is exhibited the brightest, the fairest resemblance of the Father, that earth or heaven ever beheld; an example peculiarly persuasive, calculated to inspire resolution, and to animate us to use our utmost endeavours to imitate the divine pattern, the example of the author and finisher of our faith, of him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Our profession and character as Christians oblige us to make this example the model of our lives. Every motive of decency, gratitude, and interest, constrain us to tread the paths he trod before us, more especially, when we reflect that it was marked out to us by Unerring Wisdom.

Let us also remember that our burden is easy; because God, who knoweth whereof we are made, who considereth that we are but dust, is ever ready to assist us. The heathen sages themselves, had some notions of this assistance,

though guided only by a glimmering lamp of reason; but what they looked upon as probable, the gospel clearly and strongly asserts. We therefore hear the apostle exhorting, *Let us come bodily unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*, Heb. iv. 16. We there hear the blessed JESUS himself arguing in this convincing manner, *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke xi. 13.

We would not here be understood to mean, that the agency of the spirit is irresistible, and lays a necessitating bias on all the faculties and affections. Were this the case, precepts and prohibitions, promises and threatenings, would signify nothing; and duty and obligation would be words without a meaning. The spirit assisteth in a manner agreeable to the frame of human nature; not controlling the free use of reason, but by assisting the understanding, influencing the will, and moderating the affections: but though we may not be able to explain the mode of his operations, the Scriptures warrant us to assert, that, when men are renewed and prepared for heaven, it is through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth. How enlivening the thought! How encouraging the motive! We are not left to struggle alone with the difficulties which attend the practice of virtue in the present imperfect state.... The merciful Father of our spirits is ever near to help our infirmities, to enlighten the understanding, to strengthen good resolutions, and, in concurrence with our own endeavours, to make us conquerors over all opposition. Faithful is he to his promises, and will not suffer the sincere and well disposed to be tempted above what they are able to bear. What can be desired more than this? To promote the virtue and happiness of his moral offspring, the Supreme Parent hath done all that is consistent with the holiness of his nature, and the free agency of man: if then we are not virtuous and happy, it is our own faults, and we are utterly inexcusable, in refusing the grace and mercy proffered in the gospel.

Let us also remember, that the great doctrine of the gospel concerning the propitious mercy of God, to all penitents through CHRIST

JESUS, greatly contributes to the ease and pleasure of a religious life. Let it be granted, that the hope of pardon is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its first principles; yet, considering the doubts and suspicions which are apt to arise in a mind conscious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great, an inestimable favour to be relieved in this respect by a messenger from omnipotence himself. This is our happiness: we are not left to depend upon consequential reasonings, which the bulk of mankind are little used to; but we are assured, that, upon our true repentance, we shall, through the mediation of CHRIST, receive the full remission of past sins, and be restored to the same state and favour with our Maker, as if we had never transgressed his laws: here the gospel triumphs; with these assurances it abounds; upon this head the declarations of our blessed Saviour and his apostles are so express and full, that every one who believes them, and knows himself to be a true penitent, must banish every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unspeakable: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Mat. xi. 28. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men*, ch. xii. 31.... *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin*, John i. 7. What grace and favour is this! Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long? Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made easy. No sins are unpardonable, if repented of and forsaken: for it is said, such shall find mercy.

You who have never yet regarded religion, but pursued a course of vice and sensuality all your lives long, are earnestly entreated to consider, that, though your conduct has been base to the last degree, your case is not desperate, far from it: the God whom you have so highly offended, commiserates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his most degenerate creatures, upon their repentance and reformation, and, *is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto penitent sinners their trespasses*, 2 Cor. v. 19....

Let the wicked therefore, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, who will so liberally extend his mercy to him; and to our God, who will thus abundantly pardon, Isaiah lv. 7.

What still further conduces to render the Christian religion easy and delightful, is its leading us to the perfect, eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied but that we may draw from the light of nature, strong presumptions of a future state; the present existence does not look like an entire scene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity: but whatever solid foundation the doctrine of a future state may have in nature and reason, certain it is, that through the habitual neglect of reflection, and the force of irregular passions, this doctrine was, before the coming of our blessed Saviour, very much disfigured, and in a great measure, lost amongst the sons of men, some of whom affirmed, that there was neither resurrection, angel, or spirit.

A future state of rewards and punishments was a matter of mere speculation and uncertainty in the heathen world; it was sometimes hoped for, sometimes doubted of, and sometimes absolutely denied. The law of Moses, though of divine original, is chiefly enforced by promises of temporal blessings; and, even in the writings of the prophets, a future immortality is very sparingly mentioned, and obscurely represented: but the doctrine of our Saviour hath brought life and immortality to light. In the gospel we have a distinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumstances, about which the decisions of reason were dark and confused. We have the testimony of the author of our religion, who was raised from the dead, and who afterwards, in the presence of his disciples, ascended into heaven. In the New Testament, it is expressly declared, that good men, *when absent from the body, are present with the Lord....* Here we are assured of the resurrection of the body, in a glorious form, clothed with immortal vigour, suited to the active nature of the animating spirit, and assisting its most enlarged operations and incessant progress towards perfection. Here we are assured, that *the righteous shall go into life everlasting; that they*

shall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, no vice disturb the will. In these regions of perfection, nothing but love shall possess the soul; nothing but gratitude employ the tongue: there the righteous shall be united *to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born*: there they shall see their exalted Redeemer at the right hand of Omnipotence, and sit down with him on his throne: there they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of the Supreme Fountain of life and happiness, and, beholding his face, be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.... Here language...here imagination fails me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel, to paint the happiness, the blissful scene of the new Jerusalem, which human eyes cannot behold till this mortal body shall be purified from its corruption, and dressed in the robes of immortality: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart, to conceive the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him....* What is the Elysium of the Heathens, compared with the heaven of the Christians? The hope, the prospect of this, is sufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progress, sweeten all our labours, alleviate every grief, and silence every murmur, by impressing on our minds a meek acquiescence with the divine dispensations in the course of his providence.

But the libertine, in the gaiety of his heart, may possibly inquire, why there should be any difficulties, or restraint at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human breast are to be gratified: to deny, or to restrain them, is ignominious bondage; but to give full scope to every desire and passion of the heart, without check or control, is true manly freedom, and only pursuing the dictates of nature.

In order to confute and expose this loose and careless way of reasoning, let it be considered, that the liberty of a rational creature doth not consist in an entire exemption from all control, but in following the dictates of reason as the governing principle, and in keeping the various passions in due subordination. To follow the regular motion of those affections

which the wise Creator hath implanted within us, is our duty : but as our natural desires in this state of trial are often irregular, we are bound to restrain their excesses, and not to indulge them, but in a strict subserviency to the integrity and peace of our minds, and to the order and happiness of human society established in the world. They who allow the supreme command to be usurped by sense and brutal appetite, may promise themselves liberty, but are truly and absolutely the servants of corruption : to be vicious is to be enslaved. We behold with pity those miserable objects that are chained in the galleys, or confined in dark prisons and loathsome dungeons : but much more abject and vile is the slavery of the sinner ! No slavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind : no chains press so closely, or gail so cruelly as the fetters of sin, which corrode the very substance of the soul, fret every faculty, and degrade men below the brute part of the creation.

We must indeed confess, that there are some profligates so hardened by custom, as to be past all feeling ; and, because insensible of their bondage, boast of this insensibility as a mark of their native freedom, and of their happiness. Vain men ! they might extol, with equal propriety, the peculiar happiness of an apoplexy, the profound tranquillity of a lethargy, or, we may add, the ideal paradise of a fool or a madman.

We have, in the foregoing observations, endeavoured to place in a plain and conspicuous light, some of the peculiar excellencies of the Christian religion ; and from hence many useful reflections will naturally arise in the mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of JESUS that hath removed idolatry and superstition, and brought immortality to light when concealed under a veil of darkness almost impenetrable. This hath set the great truths of religion in a clear and conspicuous point of view, and proposed new and powerful motives to influence our minds, and to determine our conduct.

Nothing is enjoined to be believed, but what is worthy of God ; nothing to be practised but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the gospel are rational and consistent ; all its precepts are truly wise, just, and good. The gospel contains nothing grievous to an inge-

nious mind ; it debars us from nothing but doing harm to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures ; and permits us to range any where but in the paths of danger and destruction. It only requires us to act up to the dignity of the rational nature, and to prefer to the vanishing pleasures of sin, the smiles of a reconciled God, and an eternal weight of glory : and is this a rigorous exaction, a heavy burden not to be endured ? How can sinful mortals harbour a thought so ridiculous and unworthy ?

Can any man who is a real friend to the cause of virtue and to the interest of mankind, ever be an enemy to Christianity, if he truly understands it, and seriously reflects on its wise and useful tendency ? Impossible, for it conducteth us to our journey's end by the plainest and securest path, where the steps are not straightened, and where he that runneth stumbleth not. Let us who live under this last and most gracious dispensation of God, to mankind, *count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord* : and not suffer ourselves, by the slight evils of unbelievers, to be moved away from the hope of the gospel. Let us demonstrate, that we believe the superior excellency of the Christian dispensation, by conforming to its precepts. Let us shew that we are Christians, in deed and in truth ; not by endless disputes about trifles, and the transports of a blind zeal, but by practising that universal, that exalted goodness, our holy religion recommends, and by abounding in those *fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God*, Phil. i. 11.

We may clearly perceive, from what has been said, how groundless all those prejudices are which some conceive against religion, as if it was a peevish, morose scheme, burdensome to human nature, and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life. Such sentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the spirits are brisk and lively, and the passions warm and impetuous ; but it is wholly a mistake, and a mistake of the most dangerous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience, no real peace but what results from the practice of virtue ; this enables the mind, and can alone support it under all the various and unequal scenes of the present state of trial ; this lays a sure foundation of an easy,

comfortable life, of a serene, peaceful death, and of eternal joy and happiness hereafter : whereas vice is ruinous to all our most valuable interests ; it spoils the native beauty, and subverts the order of the soul ; it renders us the scorn of man, the rejected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happiness of the soul : sin is the disease, the servitude, and destruction of it, both here and for ever.

If these arguments be not sufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee, worn out in the cause of iniquity, his bones full of the sins of his youth, that from his own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that the way of transgression is hard ; and that however sweet sin may be in the commission, *it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*, Prov. xxiii. 32. This awful truth is exemplified in a very strong point of view, by the late celebrated Dr. YOUNG, in his *Centaur not Fabulous*, page 149—161, where he draws a most awful picture of the last scene of an abandoned profligate, who had despised religion, and lead a life of pleasure and dissipation. The relation is as follows :

“ I am going, Reader, to represent to thee the last moments of a person of high birth and spirit, of great parts and strong passions, every way accomplished, nor the least in iniquity : his unkind treatment was the death of a most amiable wife, and his monstrous extravagance, in effect, disinherited his only child. And surely the death bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads ; it has the most of hell that is visible upon earth, and he that has seen it has more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I see it now says the worthy divine from whom I shall borrow this relation, for who can forget it ? Are there in it no flames and furies ? You are ignorant then, of what a sacred imagination can figure, what a guilty heart can feel ! How dismal is it ! The two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin sink and confound his friends ; silence and darkness the shocking scene : sickness excludes the light of heaven, and sin its blessed hope. Oh, double darkness ! more than Egyptian ! acutely to be felt !

“ The sad evening before the death of that noble youth, whose last hours suggested these thoughts, I was with him. No one was there but his physician, and an intimate acquaintance whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming he said, “ You and the physician “ are come too late....I have neither life nor “ hope. You both aim at miracles. You “ would raise the dead.”

“ Heaven I said was merciful.”——

“ Or I could not have been thus guilty. “ What has it not done to bless, and to save “ me ? I have been too strong for Omnipotence : I plucked down ruin.”

“ I said the blessed Redeemer.”——

“ Hold ! Hold ! you wound me !—That is “ the rock on which I have split ! I denied his “ name.”

“ Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck ; then he cried out with vehemence, “ Oh time ! time ! It is fit thou “ shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the “ heart....How art thou fled for ever ? A “ month !.....Oh, for a single week ! I ask “ not for years, though an age were too little “ for the much I have to do.”

“ On my saying we could not do too much ; that heaven was a blessed place....

“ So much the worse. ’Tis lost ! ’Tis lost !.... “ Heaven is to me the severest part of hell !”

“ Soon after, I proposed prayer....“ Pray, “ you that can : I never prayed : I cannot “ pray....Nor need I. Heaven is on my side “ already : it closes with my conscience, its “ severest strokes but second my own.”

“ His friend being much touched, even to “ tears at this (for who could forbear ? I could “ not) he, with a most affectionate look, said, “ Keep these tears for thyself. I have undone “ thee.....Dost thou weep for me ? That’s “ cruel. What can pain me more ?”

“ Here his friend, too much affected, would “ have left him.

“ No, stay. Thou still mayst hope ;.... “ therefore hear me. How madly have I talk- “ ed ? How madly hast thou listened and believ- “ ed ? But look on my present state as a full “ answer to thee and to myself. This body is “ all weakness and pain ; but my soul, as if

“ stung up by torment, to greater strength and
 “ spirit, is full powerful to reason ; full migh-
 “ ty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs
 “ within the jaws of mortality, is doubtless
 “ immortal. And as for a Deity, nothing less
 “ than an Almighty could inflict the pains I
 “ feel.”

“ I was about to congratulate this passive,
 involuntary confession; in his asserting the two
 prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack
 of nature : when he thus very passionately ad-
 ded, “ No, no ! let me speak on....I have not
 “ long to speak.....My much injured friend !
 “ my soul, as my body, lies in ruins, in scat-
 “ tered fragments of broken thought : remorse
 “ for the past throws my thoughts on the fu-
 “ ture ; worse dread of the future strikes it
 “ back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find
 “ no ray.....Didst thou feel half the mountain
 “ that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with
 “ the martyr for his sake, and bless heaven for
 “ the flames ; that is not an everlasting flame ;
 “ that is not an unquenchable fire.”

“ How were we struck ? Yet, soon after,
 still more. With what an eye of distraction,
 what a face of despair he cried out, “ My prin-
 “ ciples have poisoned my friend ; my extra-
 “ vagance has beggared my boy ; my unkind-
 “ ness has murdered my wife ! And is there
 “ another hell ? Oh ! thou blasphemed, yet
 “ most indulgent Lord God ! Hell itself is a
 “ refuge if it hides me from thy frown.”.....

“ Soon after, his understanding failed ; his
 terrified imagination uttered horrors not to
 be repeated, or ever forgotten ; and before the
 sun (which I hope has seen few like him) arose,
 this gay, young, noble, ingenious, accomplish-
 ed, and most wretched mortal, expired.”

It sometimes happens, we confess, that men
 who have led very wicked lives, have gone out
 of the world, as they lived in it, defying con-
 science, and deriding a future judgment as an
 idle fiction : but these instances are very rare,
 and only prove that there are monsters in the
 moral as well as in the natural world, who have
 sported with their own deceivings, and who
 have even dared to lift their puny and rebellious
 arm against Omnipotence.

But it will perhaps be said, that the sons of
 vice and riot have pleasure in sensual indul-
 genes. Allowed : but it is altogether of the

lower kind, empty, fleeting, and transient ; like
 the eraekling of thorns under a pot, so is the
 mirth of the wicked. It makes a noise and a
 blaze for the present ; but soon vanishes away
 into smoke and vapour. On the other hand,
 the pleasure of religion is solid and lasting, and
 will attend us through all, even the last stages
 of life. When we have passed the levity of
 youth, and have lost our relish for the gay en-
 tertainments of sense ; when old age steals up-
 on us, and bends us towards the grave, this
 will cleave fast to us, and give us relief. It
 will be so far from terminating at death, that it
 then commences perfect, and continually im-
 proves with new additions, and ever blooming
 joys.

If our souls are elad in this immortal robe,
 we need not fear the awful summons of the
 king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the
 chambers of the dust. Our immortal part will
 wing its way to the arms of its omnipotent Re-
 deemer, and find rest in the heavenly mansions
 of the Almighty. And though our earthly part,
 this tabernacle of clay, return to its original dust,
 it is only to be raised in a more beautiful and
 heavenly form. If it retires into the shadow
 of death, and visits the gloomy habitations of
 the grave, it is only to return from a short con-
 finement, to endless liberty : for our great Mas-
 ter will lead his redeemed from the chambers
 of the grave, and guide them in his strength to
 his holy habitation : he will plant them in the
 mountain of his inheritance, in the place he
 hath prepared for them, even the sanctuary
 which his hands hath established ; and we shall
 be with the Lord for ever and ever, to serve
 him day and night in his temple, where the in-
 habitant shall never say, I am sick ; where the
 wicked shall cease from troubling, and where
 the weary soul will be for ever at rest.

We shall here subjoin a copy of a letter sent
 by Publius Lentulus, governor of Judea, to the
 Senate of Rome, respecting the person and ac-
 tions of our blessed Lord and Saviour, JESUS
 CHRIST ; which may serve as a strong testi-
 mony and evidence in favour of the divinity of
 our Lord's person and doctrines, against the
 stale objections of the Deists, as the authenti-
 city of the ancient manuscripts, from which it
 was translated, is founded on the best author-
 ity. Tiberius Cæsar was then Emperor, and

caused the extraordinary intelligence contained in this letter, to be published throughout all the Roman provinces. One would have thought this confirmation, issued by the Roman governor, might have convinced the generality of the Romans, as well as Jews, concerning the divinity of our Lord's mission; but such was the universal prejudice of the people, that nothing would satisfy those who had not given credit to the words of CHRIST himself. The epistle runs as follows :

“ There appeared in these our days, a man
 “ of great virtue, named JESUS CHRIST, who
 “ is yet living amongst us, and of the Gentiles
 “ is accepted as a Prophet of Truth, but by his
 “ own disciples called the SON OF GOD. He
 “ raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of
 “ diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall,
 “ and comely, with a very reverend counte-
 “ nance, such as the beholders may both *love*
 “ and *fear* : his hair is of the colour of a filbert
 “ full ripe, and plain almost down to his ears,
 “ but from his ears downward, somewhat curl-

“ ed, more orient of colour, and waving about
 “ his shoulders. In the midst of his head go-
 “ eth a seam or partition of his hair, after the
 “ manner of the Nazarites ; his forehead very
 “ plain and smooth ; his face without spot or
 “ wrinkle, beautified with comely red ; his
 “ nose and mouth so formed as nothing can be
 “ reprehended ; his beard somewhat thick,
 “ agreeable in colour to the hair of his head,
 “ not of any great length, but forked in the
 “ midst ; of an innocent, mature look ; his eyes
 “ grey, clear, and quick. In reproving he is
 “ terrible ; in admonishing, courteous and fair
 “ spoken ; pleasant in speech, mixed with gra-
 “ vity. It cannot be remembered that any
 “ have seen him laugh, but many have seen
 “ him weep. In proportion of body, well
 “ shaped and straight ; his hands and arms
 “ right delectable to behold ; in speaking, very
 “ temperate, modest, and wise. A man for
 “ singular beauty, surpassing the children of
 “ men.”

THE
NEW, COMPLETE, AND AUTHENTIC LIVES

OF THE

APOSTLES,
EVANGELISTS, DISCIPLES, &c.

OF

OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR,

Jesus Christ.

THE LIFE OF ST. MATTHEW,
THE EVANGELIST AND APOSTLE.

THIS evangelist was also called Levi; and, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean. Kirsten, an Arabian author, tells us, that he was born at Nazareth, a city in the tribe of Zebulun, famous for the habitation of Joseph and Mary, and the place where our blessed Saviour resided the whole time of his private life. St. Matthew was the son of Alpheus and Mary, sister, or kinswoman, to the blessed Virgin, both originally descended from the tribe of Issachar.

The occupation of Matthew was that of a publican, or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office detested by the generality of the Jews.... Amongst the Romans indeed, it was accounted a place of power and credit, and, as such, rarely conferred on any but Roman knights: and T. Fl. Sabimus, father of the Emperor of Vespasian, was the publican of the Asian provinces, an office which he discharged so greatly to the satisfaction of the public, that they erected statutes to him. These officers being sent into the Provinces to gather the tributes, generally employed the natives under them, as per-

sons best skilled in the affairs and customs of their own country.

On two accounts, this office was odious to the Jews....First, because the persons who managed it, were generally covetous, and great exactors; for having themselves farmed the customs of the Romans, they used every method of oppression, in order to pay their rents to the Romans, and procure an advantage to themselves. Of this Zaccheus, the chief of these farmers, was very sensible after his conversion, when he offered to make a fourfold restitution to all from whom he had taken any thing by fraud and extortion. And upon this account, they became infamous, even amongst the Gentiles themselves, who commonly mention them as public robbers, and, though members of the community, were more voracious and destructive in a city, than wild beasts in a forest. The other particular which rendered them so hateful to the Jews, was, the tribute they demanded, which they considered not only as a burden, but also as an affront to their nation; for they looked upon themselves as a free people, having received that privilege im-

mediately from God himself; and therefore, they considered this tribute as a daily and standing instance of their slavery, which they detested above every thing; and it was this that betrayed them into so many rebellions against the Romans. We may add, that these publicans were obliged by their office to have frequent dealings and conversation with the Gentiles, with the Jews considered as an abomination; and though they were themselves Jews, they rigorously exacted the taxes of their brethren, and thereby seemed to conspire with the Romans to entail perpetual slavery on their own countrymen.

The publicans, by these practices, became universally abhorred by the Jewish nation, so that it was reckoned unlawful to assist them in the common offices of humanity; nay, they asserted it was no crime to cheat and over-reach a publican, though they broke the solemnity of an oath: they might not eat or drink, converse or travel with them; they were considered as common thieves and robbers, and the money received of them was not permitted to be deposited with others, considering it as gained by rapine and violence; they were not admitted to give testimony in any court of justice; they were looked upon in so infamous a light, that they were not only banished from all communion in matters of divine worship, but shunned in all affairs of civil society and commerce, as the pests of their country, as persons whose conversation was infectious, and not at all better than the Heathens themselves. And hence they had a common proverb amongst them, "Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican; for they are all publicans!" that is, they are all thieves, robbers, and wicked sinners. And to this proverbial custom our blessed Saviour alludes, when speaking of a hardened sinner, on whom neither private reproofs, nor the public censures and admonitions of the church, can prevail, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican*; or, in other words, an incorrigible sinner.

St. Matthew the evangelist was of this profession, and he seems to have been more particularly employed in collecting the customs on commodities that came by sea into Galilee, and the tribute which passengers were to pay who went by water: and for this purpose the

office or custom-house stood by the sea side, that the officers might be always at hand: and here it was, as St. Mark intimates, that Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, where the tribute-money was collected.

After having cured a person long afflicted with the palsy, our blessed Lord retired out of Capernium, to walk by the sea-side, where he taught the people that shocked after him. Here he saw Matthew sitting in his office, and called him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wise and prudent person, and doubtless understood what it would cost him to comply with the call of JESUS: he was not ignorant that he must exchange wealth for poverty, a custom-house for a prison, rich and powerful masters, for a naked and despised Saviour: but he overlooked all these considerations, left all his interest and relations, to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a more spiritual way of commerce and traffick, which might bring glory to God, and peace of conscience to himself.

It is not likely that he was before wholly unacquainted with our Saviour's person or doctrine, especially as he resided at Capernium, where our Lord so often preached, and wrought his miracles; so that he must, in some measure, be prepared to receive the impressions which our Saviour's call made upon him: and to shew that he was not discontented at his change, he entertained both his Master and his disciples at his house, calling together his friends, especially those of his own profession, hoping, no doubt, that they might also be converted by the company and conversation of our blessed Redeemer.

As the Pharisees had sought all opportunities of raising objections against the doctrine of the blessed JESUS, so they took this opportunity of suggesting to his disciples, that it was highly unbecoming so pure and holy a person, as their Master pretended himself to be, to converse so familiarly with the worst of men, with publicans and sinners, persons infamous to a proverb: but he presently replied to them, that these were the sick, and therefore needed the physician; that his company was of most consequence, where the souls of men most required it; that God himself preferred works of mercy and charity, especially in doing good to the souls of men, infinitely above all ritual ob-

servances; and that the principle design of his coming into the world, was not to call the righteous, or those who like themselves vainly pretended to be so, but sinners, modest, humble, self-convinced sinners, to repentance, and to reduce them to a better state and course of life than they had hitherto pursued.

St. Matthew after his election to the apostleship, continued with the rest till the ascension of his great and beloved Master; after which, for the first eight years at least, he preached in different parts of Judea; but afterwards he left the country of Palestine to convert the Gentile world. Before his departure, he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write the history of the life and actions of the blessed JESUS, and leave it amongst them as a standing monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his sermons. This he readily complied with, as we shall more particularly mention, in giving an account of the gospel penned by him.

Leaving Judea, he travelled into several parts, especially Ethiopia; but the particular places he visited are not known with any certainty. Metaphrastus tells us, that he first visited Parthia, and after planting Christianity in those parts, he travelled into Ethiopia; where, by his preaching and miracles, he triumphed over superstition and idolatry, convinced multitudes of the error of their ways, and prevailed on them to obey the precepts of the gospel; ordained them spiritual guides and pastors to confirm them in the faith, and bring over others to the religion of the Son of God, which he had inculcated both by his doctrine and example.

Having laboured indefatigably in the vineyard of his Master, he afterwards suffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia, called Nad-dabar; but by what kind of death, is not absolutely known, though the general opinion is, that he was slain with an halbert.

This apostle was a remarkable instance of the power of religion, in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumstances while he continued a stranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall find that the love of the world had possessed his heart. He had acquired a plentiful estate, was in possession of a very rich and profitable office, supported by the power and favour of the Ro-

mans, prompted by covetous inclinations, and these confirmed by long habits and customs: but notwithstanding all this, no sooner did CHRIST call him, than he abandoned, without the least scruple or hesitation, all his riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative office, but ran the greatest hazard of displeasing the masters who employed him, for quitting their service, without giving them the least notice, and leaving his accounts in confusion.

Had our blessed Saviour appeared as a secular prince, clothed with temporal power and authority, it would have been no wonder for St. Matthew to have gone over to his service: but when he appeared under all the circumstances of meanness and disgrace, when he seems to promise his followers nothing but misery and sufferings in this life, and to propose no other rewards than the invisible encouragements of another world, his change appears truly wonderful and surprising. It was indeed so remarkable, that both Porphyry and Julian, two subtle adversaries of the Christian religion, took occasion from hence to charge him either with falsehood or folly: with the former, if he did not give a true account of things; and with the latter, if his case was fairly represented, in so hastily following the person who called him: but these detractors would have done well to have remembered, that the holy JESUS was no common person; his commands were attended with something more than common.

St. Jerom is of opinion, that besides the divinity which evidently appeared in the miracles of the Lamb of God, there was a divine brightness and kind of majesty in his looks, which was at first sight sufficient to draw persons after him: but however that be, his miraculous powers that reflected a lustre from every quarter, and the efficacy of his doctrine accompanied with the divine grace, made way for the summons sent to our apostle, and enabled him to conquer all oppositions, and all the difficulties that opposed his obeying the commands of his Saviour, when he received the powerful call.

A still further evidence of his contempt of the world, appeared in his exemplary temperance and abstemiousness from all delights and pleasures: nay, even from the ordinary conve-

niences and accommodations of it : he was so far from indulging his appetite with delicate rarities, that he refused to gratify it with lawful and ordinary provisions ; his usual diet being only herbs, roots, seeds and berries ; but what appeared most remarkable in him, and which, though the least virtue in itself, is the greatest in the esteem and value of a wise man, was his humility ; he was mean and modest in his own opinion, always preferring others to himself ; for whereas the other evangelists, in describing the apostles by pairs, constantly place him before St. Thomas, he modestly places him before himself.

The rest of the evangelists are careful to mention the honour of his apostleship, but speak of his former sordid, dishonest, and disgraceful course of life, only under the name of Levi ; while he himself sets it down, with all its circumstances, under his own proper and common name ; a conduct which at once commends the prudence and candour of the apostle, and suggests to us this useful reflection, That the greatest sinners are not excluded from divine grace ; nor can any, if penitent, have just reason to despair, when publicans and sinners find mercy at the throne of grace. The conduct of the other evangelists with regard to St. Matthew, should also teach us to use a penitent brother with the greatest modesty and tenderness ; it being contrary to the rules of civility, as well as the laws of religion, to upbraid and reproach a person, after his repentance, with the errors of his former life and practices.

We shall conclude the life of this apostle with a remark concerning his gospel, which was written at the entreaty of the Jewish converts, while he abode in Palestine, but at what particular time, is uncertain ; some will have it to be written eight, some fifteen, and some thirty years after our Lord's ascension : it was originally written in Hebrew, but soon after translated into Greek by one of the disciples, probably by St. James the Less ; but whoever the translator was, is of no consequence, because the version was well known to the apostles, and approved by them ; and accordingly the church

has, from the earliest ages, received the Greek copy as authentic, and placed it in the sacred canon of scripture.

The Greek translation having been entertained, the Hebrew copy was afterwards chiefly owned and used by the Nazæri, a middle sect between Jews and Christians ; with the former, they adhered to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law ; and with the latter, they believed in CHRIST, and embraced his religion ; and hence this gospel has been styled, " the gospel according to the Hebrews, and the gospel of the Nazarenes." But after a time, it was interpolated by these Christians, who inserted several passages of the evangelical history ; which they had heard from the apostles, or from those who had familiarly conversed with them ; and to these additions the ancient fathers frequently refer in their writings. The Ebonites, on the contrary, struck out many passages, because they were not favourable to their tenets. A Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's gospel (but whether exactly the same as that written by the apostle, is uncertain) was found amongst the other books, in the treasury of the Jews at Tiberias, by one Joseph, a Jew, who, after his conversion, was a man of great honour and esteem in the reign of Constantine. St. Jerom assures us, that another was kept in the library at Cæsaria in his time, and another by the Nazarenes at Berea, from whom he procured the liberty to transcribe it, and which he afterwards translated both into Greek and Latin, with this remarkable observation, that in quoting the text of the Old Testament, the evangelist immediately follows the Hebrew, without taking notice of the Septuagint translation. A copy of this gospel was also dug up in the year 485, on opening the grave of St. Barnabas in Cyprus, transcribed with his own hand ; but these copies have long since perished ; and with regard to those published since by Tile and Munster, the barbarous and corrupt style sufficiently demonstrate that they were not originals, but the translation of a more ignorant and corrupt age, and therefore deservedly rejected by the more judicious and enlightened part of mankind.

THE LIFE OF ST. MARK,

THE EVANGELIST AND APOSTLE.

THOUGH the name of St. Mark seems to be of Roman original, he was nevertheless descended from Jewish parents, and of the tribe of Levi: nor was it uncommon amongst the Jews to change their names, on some remarkable revolution or incident of life, or when they intended to travel into any of the Roman provinces in Europe.

St. Mark was generally considered by the ancients, as one of the seventy disciples; and Epiphanius expressly tells us, that "he was one of those who, taking exception at our Lord's discourse, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, went back and walked no more with him." But there appears no manner of foundation for these opinions, nor for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the son of St. Peter's sister: nay, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who lived near the apostolic times, positively affirms, that he was neither a hearer nor follower of our Saviour. It is therefore most probable, that he was converted by some of the apostles, perhaps by St. Peter, whom he constantly attended in his travels, supplying the place of an amanuensis and interpreter: for though the apostles were divinely inspired, and had amongst other miraculous powers, the gift of tongues conferred upon them, yet the interpretation of tongues was a gift more peculiar to some than to others; and this probably was St. Mark's talent, in expounding St. Peter's discourses, whether by word or writing, to those who were strangers to the language in which they were delivered: but however this be, he accompanied him in his apostolical progress, preached the gospel in Italy and at Rome, where, at the request of the Christians of those parts, he composed and wrote the gospel, which is called after his name.

We are told by Eusebius, that St. Mark was sent into Egypt by St. Peter, to preach

the gospel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria, the metropolis of it; and his success was so very remarkable, that he converted multitudes both of men and women, persuading them not only to embrace the Christian religion, but also a life of more than ordinary strictness. That there was indeed a sect in Egypt, remarkably strict in their discipline, is evident from Philo, who gives the following account of them.

"There is, says he, a sort of persons in many parts of the world, especially near the Maræotic lake in Egypt, who have formed themselves into religious societies, and lead a strict philosophical and contemplative course of life.... When they first enter on this manner of living, they renounce all secular interests and employments, and leaving their estates to their relations, retire into gardens, and places devoted to solitude and contemplation. Their houses, or colleges, are not contiguous, that, being free from noise and tumult, they might the better attend to the designs of a contemplative life; nor yet removed at too great a distance, that they may maintain mutual society, and be conveniently capable of helping and assisting one another. In each of these houses is an oratory, called Semnion and Monasterion, in which they discharged the more secret and solemn rites of their religion, divided in the middle by a partition-wall, three or four cubits high, one apartment being for the men, and the other for the women. Here they publicly meet every seventh day, where, being seated according to their seniority, and having composed themselves with great decency and reverence, the most aged person amongst them, and the best skilled in the dogmata and principles of their institution, comes forth into the midst, gravely and soberly discoursing on what may make the greatest impression in their minds; the rest at-

tending with the most profound silence, and only testifying their assent with the motion of their eyes or head. Their discourses are commonly mystical and allegorical, seeking hidden senses under plain words; and of such an allegorical philosophy, the books of their religion, left them by their ancestors, consist: the law they compare to an animal, the letters of it resembling the body, while the soul of it lies in these abstruse and recondite notions, which the external veil and surface of the words conceal from common understandings.

“ With regard to their method of living, they take very little care of their bodies, spending their whole time in perfecting their minds by precepts of wisdom and religion; the day they wholly spend in pious and divine meditations, in reading and expounding the law and the prophets, and the holy volumes of the ancient founders of their sect, and in singing psalms to the honour of their Maker; absolutely temperate and abstemious, neither eating nor drinking till night, the only time they think proper to refresh and regard the body; and some of them out of an insatiable desire of growing in knowledge and virtue, fast many days together. Their diet is plain and simple, sufficient only to satisfy the calls of nature, a little bread, salt, and water, being their constant bill of fare. Their cloaths are as mean as their food, designed only as present security against cold and nakedness. Nor is this the case only of the men, but also of the pious and devout women that live amongst them; who religiously observe every seventh day, and especially the preparatory week to the great solemnity, which they keep with all expressions of sincere devotion, and also with severe abstinence.”

Eusebius affirms, that these excellent persons were Christians, converted and brought under such admirable rules and institutions by St. Mark at his coming hither, accommodating all passages to the manner and discipline of the Christians; and is followed by Epiphanius, Jerom, and others. But whoever seriously and impartially considers Philo's account, will plainly find, that he intends it of the Jews, and professors of the Mosaic religion, though what particular sect they were, I shall not pretend to determine; perhaps they were Essenes: but however that be, it is plain they were, not

Christians; for Philo speaks of them as an institution of some standing; whereas, the Christians had but very lately appeared in the world, especially in Egypt: besides, many parts of Philo's account does not in several parts agree with the state and manners of the Christians at that time; as that they withdrew themselves from public conversation, and all the affairs of civil life, which the Christians never did, but when forced to it by violent persecutions; for at other times, as Justine Martyr and Tertullian tell us, they mixed themselves promiscuously with the inhabitants of the country, dwelt in towns and cities, ploughed their lands, and followed their respective trades and callings like other men. Nor can the books which Philo tells us they had, besides those of Moses and the prophets, be understood of those of the Christians; for the writings of the evangelists had been very lately published, and consequently could not come under the character of ancient authors. Not to mention that some of their ceremonies were such as the Christians of those days were absolute strangers to, not being introduced into the church till several years, and some of them not till some ages after Philo wrote his account: nay, some of them were never used by the primitive Christians, especially their religious dances, which Philo particularly describes, as used by them at their festival solemnities, especially that remarkable one which they observed at the end of every seven weeks; when their entertainment being ended, they all rose up, the men in one company, and the women in another, dancing with various measures and motions, each company singing divine hymns and songs, and having a precentor going before each division, singing alternately, till, in the conclusion, they joined in one common chorus, in imitation of the triumphant song sung by Moses and the Israelites, after their great deliverance at the Red Sea, from the hostile attempts of Pharo and his army.

From these, and several other particulars that might be mentioned, it will appear, that these could not be Christians: it is not indeed to be doubted, but that persons educated under such excellent rules and methods of life, were more than ordinarily prepared for the reception of Christianity, and could not fail of

rendering St. Mark's success surprising in those parts, and open a path for men to come in multitudes to embrace the doctrines of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

This apostle did not confine himself to Alexandria, and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed westwards to Lybia, passing through the countries of Marmarcia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where, though the people were both barbarous in their manners and idolatrous in their worship, yet by his preaching and miracles, he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the gospel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith of his divine Master.

He returned, after his long tour, to Alexandria, where he preached with the greatest freedom, ordered and disposed of the affairs of the church, and wisely provided for a succession, by constituting governors and pastors of it. But the restless enemy of the souls of men would not suffer our apostle to continue in peace and quietness: for while he was assiduously labouring in the vineyard of his master, the idolatrous inhabitants about the time of Easter, when they were celebrating the solemnities of Serapis, tumultuously entered the church, forced St. Mark, then performing divine service, from thence, and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and over the most craggy places to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, leaving him there in a lonesome prison for that night; but his great and beloved Master appeared to him in a vision, comforting and encouraging his soul, under the ruins of his shattered body. The next morning early the tragedy began afresh, dragging him about in the same cruel and barbarous manner, till he expired: but their malice did not end with his death, they burnt his mangled body, after they had so inhumanly deprived it of life: but the christians, after the hellish tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and ashes, and decently interred them near the place where he used to preach. His remains were afterwards, with

great pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they are religiously honoured, and he adopted as the titular saint and patron of that state and people. He suffered martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the year is not absolutely known; the most probable opinion however is, that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

As to his person, St. Mark was of a middle size and stature, his nose long, his eye-brows turning back, his eyes graceful and amiable, his head bald, his beard thick and gray, his gait quick, and the constitution of his body strong and healthful.

The only writing he left behind him, was his gospel, written, as we have before observed, at the entreaty and earnest desire of the converts at Rome, who not content to have heard St. Peter preach, pressed St. Mark his disciple, to commit to writing an historical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulness and brevity, and being perused and approved by St. Peter, was commanded to be publicly read in their assemblies. It was frequently styled St. Peter's gospel, not because he dictated it to St. Mark, but because the latter composed it from the accounts St. Peter usually delivered in his discourses to the people: and this is probably the reason of what St. Chrysostom observes, that in his style and manner of expression, he delights to imitate St. Peter, representing a great deal in a few words. The remarkable impartiality he observed in all his relations, is plain from hence, that he is so far from concealing the shameful lapse and denial of Peter, his dear tutor and master, that he describes it with more aggravating circumstances than any of the other evangelists. The Venetians pretend to have the original Greek copy of St. Mark's gospel, written with his own hand: but this manuscript, if written by St. Mark, is now useless, the very letters being rendered illegible, by length of time.

ST. LUKE, THE EVANGELIST.

ST. LUKE was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city celebrated for the pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the riches of its commerce, the wisdom of its senate, and the civility and politeness of its inhabitants, by the pens of some of the greatest orators of those times. It was eminent for schools of learning, which produced the most renowned masters in the arts and sciences; so that being born, as it were, in the lap of the muses, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal education: but he was not contented with the learning of his own country, he travelled for improvement into several parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly skilled in physic, which he made his profession.

They who would, from this particular, infer the quality of his birth and fortune, seem to forget that the healing art was, in these early times, generally practised by servants; and hence Grotius is of opinion, that St. Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there a servant to some noble family, in quality of physician: but after obtaining his freedom, he returned into his own country, and probably continued his profession till his death, it being so highly consistent with, and in many cases subservient to, the care of souls. He is also famous for his skill in another art, namely, painting, and an ancient inscription was found in a vault near the church of St. Maria de Via Lata, at Rome, supposed to have been the place where St. Paul dwelt, which mentions a picture of the blessed Virgin, *UNA EX VII. AB LUCA DEPICTIS, being one of the seven painted by St. Luke.*

It is not certainly known when St. Luke became a Christian, after having been a Jewish proselyte: those who understand him in the beginning of his gospel, to say that he had the facts from the reports of others, who were eye witnesses, suppose him to have been converted by St. Paul, and that he learned the history of his gospel

from the conversation of that apostle, and wrote it under his direction; and that when St. Paul in one of his epistles, says, *according to my gospel*, he means this of St. Luke, which he styles *his*, from the great share he had in its composition.

They, on the other hand, who hold that he wrote his gospel from his own personal knowledge, observe, that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an eye witness of the matters contained in it, because all those matters were transacted before his conversion; and that he never saw our Lord, before he appeared to him in his journey to Damascus, which was some time after he ascended into heaven. Consequently when St. Paul says, *according to my gospel*, he means no more than that gospel in general which he preached; the whole preaching of the apostles being styled the gospel, all having an uniform tendency to inculcate and establish the faith and practice of the Christian religion.

But they further observe, that it is not probable that St. Luke was converted by St. Paul, because the latter would, in that case have styled him his son, it being the constant practice of the apostles to call all eminent converts by that appellation; but he mentions him by the name of *Luke, the beloved physician*. They therefore suppose, that he studied the law in one of the schools of Jerusalem, where he was converted by our Lord, and was one of the seventy disciples mentioned in scripture.

However this be, St. Luke became the inseparable companion of St. Paul, in all his travels, and his constant fellow-labourer in the work of the ministry: he followed him in all his dangers, was with him at his several arraignments at Jerusalem, accompanied him in his tedious and dangerous voyage to Rome, where he still attended on him, to administer to him in his necessities, and supply those ministerial offices, which the apostle's confinement would not suffer him to undertake; and espe-

cially, in carrying messages to other churches, where he had planted the Christian religion.... This infinitely endeared him to St. Paul, who seemed delighted with owning him for his fellow labourer, and in calling him *the beloved physician*, and the *brother whose praise is in the gospel*, 2 Cor. viii. 18.

It is very probable he did not leave St. Paul, till he had finished his course, and received the crown of Martyrdom; though some tell us, that he left St. Paul at Rome, and returned back into the East, travelling into Egypt and several parts of Libya, where he preached the gospel, wrought miracles, converted multitudes, and constituted guides and ministers of religion; nay, that he himself undertook the episcopal charge of the city of Thebais. Euphinius tells us, that he first preached in Delamata and Galatia, then in Italy and Macedonia, where he spared no pains, and declined no dangers, that he might faithfully discharge the trust committed to him by his great Master.

The time or manner of his death are not very well agreed upon by the ancients; some affirming him to die in Egypt, others in Greece, the Roman Martyrology in Bythia, and Dorotheus at Ephesus; some will have that he died a natural, and others a violent death. Indeed, neither Eusebius nor St. Jerom take any notice of it, but Gregory Nazianzen, Paulinus, bishop of Nola, and several others, expressly assert, that he suffered martyrdom; and Nicephorus gives us this particular account of it: "That coming into Greece, he successfully preached the gospel, and baptised many converts into the Christian faith, till at last, a party of infidels opposed his doctrines: but, being unable to silence him by reason and argument, they had recourse to cruelty, dragged him from the place where he was teaching the gospel, and hung him on an olive tree, in the eighth, or, according to St. Jerom, in the eighty-fourth year of his age." Kirstenius thinks, he suffered martyrdom at Rome soon after St. Paul's first imprisonment, because he did not continue his acts of the apostles any further, which it is natural to think he would have done, had he lived any considerable time after St. Paul's departure. His body was afterwards, by the command of Constantine, or his son Constantius, removed with great solemnity, to Constantinople, and buried in the great church,

erected to the memory of the apostles, in that city.

His gospel, and the acts of the apostles, were written by him for the use of the church; both which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the ancients suppose to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all sincere Christians: but others think it was a real person, because the title of "most excellent" is attributed to him, the usual title and form of address in those times, to princes and great men. Probably he was some magistrate, whom St. Luke had converted and baptized, and to whom he dedicated these books, not only as a testimony of honourable respect, but also as a means of giving him further certainty and assurance of those things wherein he had instructed him, and which it was requisite he should be informed of.

The principal transactions of our Lord's life are contained in his gospel; and the particulars omitted by him, are, in general, of less importance, than those the other Evangelists forbear to mention.

The acts of the apostles written by St. Luke, were no doubt penned at Rome, about the time of St. Paul's imprisonment there, with which he concludes his history. It contains the actions, and sometimes the sufferings of the principal apostles, especially St. Paul, whose activity in the cause of CHRIST made him bear a greater part in the labours of his master; and St. Luke being his constant attendant, an eyewitness of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his most intimate transactions, was consequently capable of giving a more full and satisfactory account of them. Amongst other things, he enumerates the great miracles the apostles did in confirmation of the doctrine they advanced.

His manner of writing, in both these treatises, is exact and accurate: his style noble and elegant, sublime and lofty, and yet clear and perspicuous, flowing with an easy and natural grace and sweetness, admirably adapted to an historical design. In short, as an historian, he was faithful in his relations, and elegant in his writings; as a minister, careful and diligent for the good of souls; as a christian, devout and pious; and to crown all the rest, laid down his life in testimony of that gospel he had both preached and published to the world, by the command of his Lord.

THE LIFE OF ST. JOHN,

THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST...COMMONLY CALLED THE DIVINE.

THIS beloved disciple of our Lord was a native of Galilee, the son of Zebedee and Salome, one of those devout women that constantly attended on our Lord in his ministry, and brother of James the Great. Before his becoming a disciple of the blessed JESUS, he was, in all probability, a follower of John the Baptist, and is thought to be that other disciple, who, in the first chapter of his gospel, is said to have been present with Andrew when John declared JESUS to be *the Lamb of God*, and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his residence.

Though St. John was by much the youngest of the apostles, he was nevertheless admitted into as great a share of his Master's confidence as any of them. He was one of those to whom he communicated the most private transactions of his life; one of those whom he took with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; one of those to whom he exhibited a specimen of his divinity, in his transfiguration on the mount; one of those who were present at his conference with Moses and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him *the beloved Son of God*; and one of those who were companions in his solitude, most retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden. Thus of the three who were made the witnesses of their Master's actions, which it was convenient to conceal, St. John constantly enjoyed the privilege of being one: nay, even of these three he seems to have had, in some respects, the preference; witness his lying on his Master's bosom at the paschal supper: and even when Peter was desirous of knowing who was the person that should betray their Master, and durst not himself ask the question, he made use of St. John, to propose it to their Lord, as the person most likely to succeed in obtaining an answer.

Our apostle endeavoured, in some measure, to answer these instances of particular kindness and constancy; for though he at first deserted his Master on his apprehension, yet he soon recovered himself, and came back to seek his Saviour, confidently entered the high-priest's hall, followed our Lord through the several particulars of his trial, and at last waited on him at his execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the midst of armed soldiers, and in the thickest crowds of his most inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his sorrowful and desolate mother, with his dying breath. And certainly the holy JESUS could not have given a more honourable testimony of his particular respect and kindness to St. John, than by leaving his own mother to his trust and care, and substituting him to supply that duty he himself paid her, while he resided in this vale of sorrow amongst men.

St. John no sooner heard of our Lord's being risen from the chambers of the dust, than he, in company with Peter, hastened to the sepulchre. There seems indeed to have been a peculiar intimacy between these two disciples; it was Peter that St. John introduced into the palace of the high-priest: it was Peter to whom he gave notice of CHRIST'S appearing when he came to them at the sea of Tiberias, in the habit of a stranger; and it was for St. John that Peter was so solicitously inquisitive to know what was determined concerning him, when our Saviour expressed himself somewhat ambiguously respecting that disciple.

After the ascension of the Saviour of the world, when the apostles made a division of the provinces amongst themselves, that of Asia fell to the share of St. John; though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem till the death of the blessed

Virgin, which happened about fifteen years after our Lord's ascension: being released from the trust committed to his care by his dying Master, he retired into Asia, and industriously applied himself to the propagating Christianity, preaching where the gospel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his founding, particularly those of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodoea, and others; but his chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where St. Paul had many years before founded a church, and constituted Timothy bishop of it. Nor can we suppose that he confined his ministry entirely to Asia Minor; it is highly reasonable to think that he preached in other parts of the East, probably to the Parthians, his first epistle being anciently directed to them; and the Jesuits assure us, that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Bassora in India affirm, that, according to a tradition handed down from their ancestors, St. John planted the Christian faith in their country, where the Christians are called by his name.

Having spent several years at Ephesus, he was accused to Domitian, who had begun a persecution against the Christians as an eminent asserter of Atheism and impiety, and a public subverter of the religion of the empire; so that by his command, the proconsul sent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from so barbarous a prince, being thrown into a caldron of boiling oil: but the Almighty, who reserved him for further services in the vineyard of his Son, restrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this seemingly unavoidable destruction. And surely one would have thought that so miraculous a deliverance would have been sufficient to have persuaded any rational man that the religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from danger by the hand of Omnipotence: but miracles themselves were not sufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury: he ordered St. John to be transported to a desolate island in the Archipelago, called Patmos, where he continued several years instructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the Christian faith; and here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his book of Reve-

lation, exhibiting, by visions and prophetic representations, the state and condition of Christianity, in the future periods and ages of the church, till the final consummation of all things.

After the death of Domitian, and on the succession of Nerva, who repealed all the odious acts of his predecessor, and by public edicts recalled those whom the fury of Domitian had banished, St. John returned to Asia, and fixed his seat again at Ephesus; the rather, because the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy their bishop. Here, with the assistance of seven other bishops, he took upon himself the government of the large diocese of Asia Minor, erected oratories, and disposed of the clergy in the best manner that the circumstances of those times would permit, spending his time in an indefatigable execution of his charge, travelling from East to West, to instruct the world in the principles of the holy religion he was sent to propagate. In this manner St. John continued to labour in the vineyard of his great Master, till death put a period to all his toils and sufferings; which happened in the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age, and he was buried near Ephesus, according to Eusebius.

This great evangelist and apostle seems always to have led a single life: though some of the ancients tell us he was a married man. With regard to his natural temper, he seems to have been of an eager and resolute disposition, easily inflamed, but which age had reduced to a calmer temper. He was polished by no study or arts of learning; but what was wanting from human art, was abundantly supplied by the excellent constitution of his mind, and that fullness of divine grace with which he was adorned: his humility was admirable, studiously concealing his own honour; for in his epistles, he never styles himself either apostle or evangelist; the title of presbyter or elder, is all he assumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office. In his gospel, when he speaks of *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, he constantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to discover whom he meant: love and charity he practised himself, and affectionately pressed them upon others; the great love of his Saviour towards him, seems to have inspired his soul with a larger and more generous

charity than the rest. This is the great vein that runs through all his writings, especially his epistles, where he urges it as the great and peculiar law of Christianity, and without which all other pretences to the religion of the holy JESUS are vain and frivolous, useless and insignificant: and this was his constant practice to the very hour of his dissolution; for when age and the decays of nature had rendered him so weak that he was unable to preach to the people any longer, he was constantly led, at every public meeting, to the church at Ephesus, and always repeated to them the same precept, *Little children, love one another*: and when his hearers, wearied with the constant repetition of the same thing, asked him why he never varied his discourse, he answered, "Because to love one another was the command of our blessed Saviour, and if they did nothing more, this alone was sufficient to denote whose they were, and whom they served."

The largest measures of his charity were, however, displayed in the remarkable care he took to promote the salvation of the souls of men; travelling from East to West in propagating the principles of that religion he was sent to teach, patiently enduring every torment, surmounting every difficulty, and removing every obstacle, to save the souls of the human race, free their minds from error and idolatry, and turn them from the paths of vice and debauchery. Amongst many other instances of this kind, Eusebius relates the following.

"St. John, during one of his visitations of the church at Ephesus, was greatly pleased with the appearance and behaviour of a young man, whom he called to him, and, with a special charge, recommended to the bishop, who undertook the trust, and promised to discharge it with the greatest fidelity: accordingly, the bishop took him home with him to his house, carefully instructed him in the principles of the Christian religion, and at last baptised and confirmed him. After he had proceeded thus far, he thought he might a little relax the reins of discipline; but the youth made a bad use of his liberty, and being debauched by evil company, became the captain of a gang of robbers, and committed the most horrid outrages in the adjacent countries. St. John being informed of this at his return, sharply reprov'd the bi-

shop, and determined to find the young man out; never considering the dangers that would inevitably attend him, by venturing himself amongst persons of desperate fortunes: accordingly, he repaired to the mountains where they usually abode, and being taken by one of the robbers placed as a watch, he desired to be carried to their captain, who, on seeing St. John coming towards him, immediately fled. The apostle, forgetting his age, hastened after him; but being unable to overtake him, he passionately cried out, 'Child, why dost thou run from thy father, an old and defenceless man? Spare me this pains of following thee, and let not terror and despair seize upon thee. Thy salvation is not irrecoverable. Stay, and be convinced that CHRIST himself hath sent me.' At these words, the young man stopped, fixed his eyes upon the earth, trembled in every part, and burst into a flood of tears.... And when the aged apostle approached, he embraced him, and implored forgiveness with such weeping and lamentations, that he seemed to be re-baptized, and to wash away his sins with his own tears. The apostle received him with the greatest kindness, assured him that he had obtained pardon for his sins, at the hands of his great Redeemer, and returned him a true penitent and convert to the church of which he was a member."

Our apostle's care for the souls of men, is further evidenced by the writings he left to posterity. The first of which in time, though placed last in the sacred canon, is his Apocalypse, or book of Revelation, which he wrote during his banishment at Patmos. After the preface and admonition given to the bishops of the seven churches in Asia, it contains a prophetic view of the persecutions the faithful were to suffer from the Jews, Heretics, and tyrannical princes, together with the peaceable and flourishing state of the church, till disturbed by other enemies; and the happiness of the church triumphant in heaven. And hence, St. John is, in the strictest sense, a prophet, and has thereby one material addition to his titles, being not only an apostle and evangelist, but also a prophet: an honour peculiar to himself.... St. Peter was an apostle, but no evangelist: St. Mark and St. Luke were evangelists, but no apostles: St. Matthew was an apostle and

evangelist, but no prophet: but St. John was an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet likewise.

His three epistles take place, in order of time, next to the Apocalypse; the first of which is catholic, being calculated for all times and places, and containing the most excellent rules for the conduct of a Christian life, pressing to holiness and pureness of manners, and not to be satisfied with a naked and empty profession of religion; not to be led away with the crafty insinuations of seducers; and cautioning men against the poisonous principles and practices of the Gnostics. The apostle here, according to his usual modesty, conceals his name, it being of more consequence to a wise man what is said, than he who says it. It appears from St. Augustine, that this epistle was anciently inscribed to the Parthians, because, in all probability, St. John preached the gospel in Parthia. The other two epistles are but short, and directed to particular persons; the one a lady of great quality, the other to the charitable and hospitable Gaius, the kindest friend, and most courteous entertainer of all indigent Christians, in those primitive times.

We are told by Eusebius and St. Jerom, that St. John, having perused the other three gospels, approved and confirmed them by his authority; but observing, at the same time, that these evangelists had omitted several of our blessed Saviour's transactions, particularly those which were performed before the Baptist's imprisonment, he wrote his gospel to supply what was wanting in them; and because several Heretics were at that time sprung up in the

church, who denied the divinity of our blessed Saviour, he took care to guard against these heresies, by proving that our great Redeemer was God from everlasting. He largely records our Saviour's discourses, but takes little notice of his miracles, probably because the other evangelists had so fully and particularly written concerning them.

Previous to his undertaking the task of writing his gospel, he caused a general fast to be kept by all the Asian churches, to implore the blessing of Heaven on so great and momentous an undertaking. When this was done, he set about the work, and completed it in so excellent and sublime a manner, that the ancients generally compared him to an eagle's soaring aloft amongst the clouds, whither the weak eye of man was not able to follow him. "Among all the evangelical writers," says St. Basil, "none are like St. John, the son of thunder, for the sublimity of his speech, and the height of his discourses, which are beyond any man's capacity fully to reach and comprehend." "St. John, as a true son of thunder," says Epiphanius, by a loftiness of speech peculiar to himself, "acquaints us, as it were out of the clouds and dark recesses of wisdom, with the divine doctrine of the Son of God, the glorious Saviour of mankind."

Thus have we given the character of the writings of this great apostle and evangelist, who, as we have hinted before, was honoured with the endearing title of being the beloved disciple of the Son of God; and was a writer so sublime as to deserve, by way of eminence, the character of *St. John the Divine*.

THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL,

THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES.

THIS eminent and laborious apostle was a native of Tarsus, and a descendant from the ancient stock of Abraham. He was born about two years before the blessed JESUS, and belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob, who thus prophesied of him, *Benjamin shall raven as a wolf ; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil ;* a prophetic character which Tertullian and others will have to be accomplished in this apostle : for, in his youth, or the morning of his days, he persecuted the churches, destroying the flock of the Almighty ; he devoured the prey : in his declining age, or evening of his days, he became a physician of the nations, feeding and distributing, with the greatest care and assiduity, the sheep of CHRIST, the great Shepherd of Israel.

The place of this apostle's nativity, was Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilicia, situated about three hundred miles distant from Jerusalem ; it was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman municipium, or free corporation, invested with the privileges of Rome by the two first emperors, as a reward for the citizens firm adherence to the Cæsars in the rebellion of Crassus. St. Paul was therefore born a Roman citizen, and he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

The inhabitants of Tarsus usually sent their children into other cities for learning and improvement, especially to Jerusalem, where they were so numerous, that they had a synagogue of their own, called the synagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our apostle was also sent, and brought up at the feet of that eminent rabbi Gamaliel, in the most exact knowledge of the law of Moses : nor did he fail to profit by the instructions of that great master ; for he so diligently conformed himself to his precepts, that, without boasting, he asserts of himself, that touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless, and defied even his enemies to

alledge any thing to the contrary, even in his youth. He joined himself to the sect of the Pharisees, the most strict order of the Jewish religion ; but, at the same time, the proudest, and the greatest enemies to CHRIST and his holy religion, as evidently appears by the character given of them by the evangelists, and our Lord's description of that self-righteous sect.

Respecting his double capacity, of Jewish extraction and Roman freedom, he had two names, *Saul* and *Paul*, the former Hebrew, and the latter Latin. It was common for the descendants of Benjamin to give the name of Saul to their children ever since the time of the first king of Israel, who was chosen out of that tribe ; and Paul was a name as common amongst the Romans. We must also consider his trade of tent-making as a part of his education, it being the constant practice of the Jews, to bring up their children to some honest calling, that, in case of necessity, they might provide for themselves by the labour of their own hands, without becoming burdensome to the public.

Having obtained a thorough knowledge of the sciences cultivated by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, Saul became a great champion for the law of Moses, and the tradition of the elders, which he considered as a zeal for God. This rendered him impatient of all opposition to the doctrine and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blasphemer and persecutor of the Christians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and destroyers of the Jewish œconomy. We must not however, consider our apostle as guilty of the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees ; for he declares, that he had ever been careful to act in conformity to the dictates of his conscience, by which he thought himself bound to do many things contrary to the name of JESUS of Nazareth. It was therefore the prejudice of his education, and the natural warmth of his temper, that excited him to those violent per-

secutions of the Christians, for which he became so famous in the infancy of the church.

We find that the first action he engaged in, was the disputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr Stephen, concerning the Messiah. The Christian was too hard for them in the dispute; but they were too powerful for him in their civil interests; for being enraged at his convincing arguments, they carried him before the high-priest, who, by false accusations, condemned him to death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel action, is impossible to say; all we know is, that he kept the raiment of them that slew him, and, consequently, was accessory to his death.

The enemies of the church having thus raised a storm of persecution against it, it increased prodigiously, and the poor christians of Jerusalem were miserably harrassed and dispersed. In this persecution, our apostle was a principal agent, searching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted saints, beating some in the synagogue, compelling some to blaspheme, confining some in prison, and procuring others to be put to death for their profession: nor could Jerusalem and the adjacent parts confine his fiery zeal; he applied to the Sanhedrim, and procured a commission from that court, to extend his persecution to Damascus. How eternally insatiable is the fury of a misguided zeal! how restless and unwearied in its designs of cruelty! It had already sufficiently harrassed the poor Christians at Jerusalem, but not content with that, it persecuted them to strange cities, even to Damascus itself, whither many of them had fled for shelter, resolving to bring them back to Jerusalem, in order to their punishment and execution there.

We think it necessary to observe here, that the Jewish Sanhedrim had not only the power of seizing and scourging offenders against their law, within the bounds of their own country, but by the connivance, and favour of the Romans, might send into other countries, where there were any synagogues that acknowledged a dependence in religious affairs upon the council of Jerusalem to apprehend them; and, accordingly, Saul was sent to Damascus, to apprehend what Christians he could find in that city, and bring them bound to Jerusalem, to be tried and punished.

It was, however, Saul's peculiar happiness, that the Almighty designed to employ him in a work of a very different nature, and accordingly stopped him in his journey: for as he was travelling between Jerusalem and Damascus, to execute the commission of the Jewish Sanhedrim, a refulgent light, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, darted upon him; at which both he and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, falling, together with their horses, prostrate on the ground... Amidst this confusion, a voice was heard in the Hebrew language, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* To which Saul replied, *Who art thou, Lord?* And was immediately answered, *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* As if the blessed JESUS had said, "All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me, will prove abortive, and, like kicking against the spikes, wound and torment thyself the more."

Being now sufficiently convinced of his folly in acting against JESUS, whom he was now assured to be the true Messiah, Saul asked, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* On which the blessed JESUS informed him of the true intention of his appearance, *Arise, said he, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darknees to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance amongst them which are sanctified by faith that is in me,* Acts xxvi. 16, 17, 18. And for further instruction, the immaculate JESUS referred him to one of his followers, named Ananias, commanding him to repair immediately to the city, and receive further instruction from that disciple.

The men who were with him heard the voice, but did not see the person who spake from heaven: in all probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew language, and therefore only heard a confused sound; for the apostle himself tells us, that they heard not the voice of him that

spake, that is, they did not hear it with a proper degree of understanding.

Saul now arose from the earth, but found himself deprived of sight, the resplendent brightness of the vision being too intense for mortal eyes to behold. His companions therefore, led him by the hand to the city of Damascus, where he entered the house of Judas, and remained there three days without sight, nor did he either eat or drink, but spent his time in prayer to the Almighty, beseeching him to pardon the sins of his past life, and be gracious to him.

Our blessed Saviour, in the mean time, appeared in a vision to Ananias, a very devout and religious man, highly esteemed by all the inhabitants of Damascus, though he professed the religion of the crucified Jesus, commanding him to go into such a street of the city, and inquire in the house of Judas, for one Saul of Tarsus, then offering up the most fervent prayers to the throne of grace. Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the commands of the Most High, startled at the name, having heard of his bloody practices at Jerusalem, and what commission he was now come to execute in Damascus: he therefore suspected that his pretended conversion was nothing more than a snare artfully laid for the Christians. But our blessed Saviour soon removed his apprehensions, by telling him that his suspicions were entirely destitute of foundation; and that he had now taken him as a chosen vessel to preach the gospel, both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greatest monarchs of the earth; acquainting him, at the same time, with the great things he should do and suffer for the sake of the gospel, what chains and imprisonments, what racks and scourges, what hunger and thirst, what shipwrecks, and that, at last, he should even suffer death itself.

The fears of Ananias being thus quieted, he immediately obeyed the heavenly vision, repaired to the house of Judas, and laid hands upon Saul, saying, "That Jesus who appeared to thee in the way, hath sent me to restore thy sight, and, by the infusion of his spirit, to give thee the knowledge of those truths which thou hast blindly and ignorantly persecuted; but who now is willing to receive thee by bap-

tism into his church, and make thee a member of his body."

This speech was no sooner pronounced, than there fell from his eyes thick films, resembling scales, and he received his sight, and after baptism, conversed freely with the Christians of Damascus. Nor did he only converse with them; he also, to the great astonishment of the whole church, preached the gospel to those Christians, he came down with an intention to destroy, boldly asserting, *that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God*; and proving it to the Jews with such demonstrative evidence, that they were confounded, and found it impossible to answer him, or disprove his arguments.

St. Paul did not stay long at Damascus after his conversion; nor did he return to Jerusalem: but being commanded to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he retired into Arabia Petrea, where he received a full revelation of all the mysteries of Christianity; for he himself declares, that he conversed not with flesh and blood. And having preached in several parts of that country some time, he returned again to Damascus, applying himself with the utmost assiduity to the great work of the ministry, frequenting the synagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made by the descendants of Jacob against Jesus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles to the faith.

This apostle was indeed remarkably zealous in his preaching, and blessed with a very extraordinary method of reasoning, whereby he proved the fundamental points of Christianity beyond exception. This irritated the Jews to the highest degree: and, at length, after two or three years continuance in those parts, they found means to prevail on the governor of Damascus to have him put to death: but they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had so many friends in the city; they therefore kept themselves a continual watch, searched all the houses where they supposed he might conceal himself, and also obtained a guard from the governor to observe the gates in order, to prevent his escaping from the place.

His Christian friends were far from deserting him in this distress; they tried every method that offered, to procure his escape: but

finding it impossible for him to pass through either of the gates of the city, they let him down from one of their houses through a window in a basket, over the wall, by which means the cruel designs of his enemies were rendered ineffectual.

St. Paul having thus escaped from his malicious persecutors, repaired to Jerusalem, and, on his arrival, addressed himself to the church : but they knowing well the former temper and principles of this great persecutor, shunned his company till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet cast into prison, and to James our Lord's brother, bishop of Jerusalem, informing them of his miraculous conversion, and that he had preached the gospel with the greatest boldness in the synagogue of Damascus ; upon which they gladly received him, and entertained him fifteen days with the greatest hospitality and affection.

He was remarkably assiduous during this interval, in preaching the gospel of the Son of God, and confuting the Hellenistic Jews, with the greatest courage and resolution. But snares were soon laid for him, as malice can as easily cease to be, as to remain inactive ; and being warned by God in a vision, that his testimony would not be received at Jerusalem, and therefore it was necessary for him to depart and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Accordingly, being conducted by the brethren to Cæsarea Philippi, he set sail for Tarsus, his native city ; from whence he was soon after brought by Barnabas to Antioch, to assist him in propagating Christianity in that city. In this employment he spent one whole year, and had the pleasure of seeing the gospel flourish in a very remarkable manner in those parts.

Here the disciples first acquired the name of Christians, for before they were styled Nazareens ; but this appellation soon prevailed all over the world, and the former was, in a few ages, almost entirely laid aside.

A terrible famine, foretold by Agabus, happened, about this time, in several parts of the Roman empire, particularly in Judea ; which induced the Christians at Antioch to compassionate the miseries of their brethren at Jerusalem ; and, accordingly, raised considerable contributions for their relief, which they sent to the capital of Judea by the hands of Barnabas

and Saul, who, immediately after executing their commission, returned to Antioch. But while they were performing the public exercises of religion, it was revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, that they should set apart Barnabas and Saul, to preach the gospel in other places ; which was accordingly done, and they were immediately deputed for that service by prayer, fasting, and the imposition of hands.

They first of all visited Seleucia, where they did not continue long, but sailed for Cyprus ; and at Salamis, a great city in that island, they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. From hence they removed to Paphos, the residence of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, but miserably seduced by the wicked artifices of Bar-Jesus, a Jewish imposter, who styled himself Elymas, or the magician, vehemently opposed the apostles, and kept the proconsul from embracing the faith, as preached by them.

However, the proconsul called for the apostles, who, after severely checking Elymas for his malicious opposition to the truth, told him the divine vengeance was now ready to seize upon him ; and immediately he was deprived of his sight. The vengeance of the Almighty, in depriving him of the use of his bodily eyes, bore a remarkable analogy to the blindness of those of his mind, which were so wilfully and maliciously shut against the light of the gospel, and also endeavoured to keep others in darkness and ignorance. This miracle convinced the proconsul of the truth of the doctrines taught by the apostles, and made him a convert to Christianity.

After this remarkable success in Cyprus, St. Paul repaired to Phrygia and Pamphilia, and taking Titus with him in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jerusalem, travelled to Antioch, the metropolis of Phisidia. Soon after their arrival they entered the synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath-day, and, after the reading of the law, Paul being invited by the rulers of the synagogue, delivered himself in the following manner : " Harken, all ye descendants of Jacob, and ye that fear the Almighty, to the words of my mouth. The God of Israel made choice of our fathers, and loved them, when they had no city of their own to dwell in, but were strangers and slaves in Egypt, bringing them from thence with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm ;

fed them in the wilderness forty years, and would not suffer his anger to rise against them, though they often provoked him in the desert. On their arrival in the land, he promised their fathers, he destroyed the nations that inhabited it, and placed them in that fruitful country, dividing it to them by lot, for their inheritance.

“As soon as they were settled in the land, he gave them judges during four hundred and fifty years, till Samuel the prophet; but on their desiring a king, he placed over them Saul, the son of Cis, a Benjamite, who reigned about forty years; and after his death, he placed David on the throne of Israel, giving him this testimony, *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.* And according to his promise, the Almighty hath raised up to the sons of David a Saviour JESUS, which is CHRIST the Lord. The baptism of repentance having been preached before his coming by John: and as his forerunner executed his office, he asked his followers, *Whom think ye that I am?* You must not mistake me for the Messiah; he will soon follow me: but I am not worthy to perform the meanest office for him.

“Therefore, ye descendants of Abraham, and all others who fear the Almighty, to you is *the word of this salvation sent.* For the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and rulers of Israel, being ignorant of him, and the voices of the prophets, though read every Sabbath in their synagogues, fulfilled their predictions by condemning the immaculate Son of the Most High. They found indeed no fault in him, though they earnestly desired Pilate that he might be crucified.

“Every thing that had been written by the prophets concerning him, being now fulfilled, they took him from the tree, and deposited his body in the chambers of the grave: but death had no power to detain him; his Almighty Father raised him from the habitations of the dead. After which, he was seen during many days by his disciples, who attended him from Galilee, and who are the witnesses, chosen by Omnipotence, of these great and miraculous works. And we now declare unto you glad tidings, namely, That the promise made by the Almighty to our forefathers, he hath performed to us their children, by raising JESUS from the dead. The prophet David also said,

Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. He also foretold, that he should return from the chambers of the dust, and no more be subject to corruption: *I will give him,* said he, *the sure mercies of David.* And again, *Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* Now this prophecy must relate to the Messiah, for David himself, after he had swayed the sceptre of Israel a certain time, fell asleep, was deposited in the chambers of the grave, and his flesh saw corruption: but the great son of David, whom the Almighty raised from the dead, never saw corruption, as it was written of him.

“Therefore, be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Saviour is preached unto you, the forgiveness of sins: it is by his merits we are justified from all things, which was impossible by the law of Moses. Be careful, therefore, lest what was foretold by the prophets come upon you, *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*”

The apostle's speech had the desired effect; for several of the Jews, who were convinced of the truth, desired to hear him on the next Sabbath, and the apostles persuaded them to continue firm in the belief of these things. The ensuing Sabbath, almost the whole city flocked to hear the apostles; at which the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted Paul, uttering many blasphemous expressions against the name of JESUS of Nazareth: but their opposition could not daunt the apostles, who boldly declared that our blessed Saviour had charged them to preach the gospel first to the Jews; but as they so obstinately rejected it, they were now to address themselves to the Gentiles; who, hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the word of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the doctrines of the gospel. This increased the malice and fury of the Jews, who, by false and artful insinuations, prevailed on some of the more devout and honourable women to bring over their husbands to their party; by which means, Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city. At which the apostles departed, shaking off the dust from their feet, as a testimony against their ingratitude, infidelity, and rejection of the gospel.

They went from Antioch to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, a province of the Lesser Asia, where they again entered into the synagogue of the Jews, notwithstanding the ill-treatment they had met with from the Jews in other places; for so great was their zeal for the gospel, that they were not to be deterred from preaching it by ill-usage, however great.... Therefore, according to their usual method, they again began their preaching in the assembly of Israelites; and the Almighty so far assisted their endeavours, that many, both Jews and proselytes, believed. Their success encouraged them to continue a considerable time in this city, to instruct the converts, and confirm their faith by miracles. But, though they had gained a considerable part of the city to the faith, yet many continued in their infidelity: the old leaven of Jewish malice began again to ferment, and the unbelieving Jews, having stirred up the Gentiles against the apostles, at last prevailed on the multitude to stone them: but the apostles having timely notice of their design, fled from the city, and travelled to Lystra, where they preached the gospel to the inhabitants, and those who dwelt in the country adjacent.

At Lystra there was a man amongst the converts, who had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked: and Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be saved, thought proper to add the cure of his body to that of his soul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him, but to all the rest of the believers, by confirming their faith: and, that the miracle might be wrought in the most conspicuous manner, he, in the midst of the congregation, said in an audible voice to the man, *Stand upright on thy feet*: and the words were no sooner pronounced, than his strength was at once restored, and he leaped up and walked, praising God.

They who were eye-witnesses to this miracle, well knew that it was not wrought by any human power; but having been initiated into the superstitious customs of the Heathens, cried out, in the speech of Lycaonia, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*.... And accordingly they called Barnabas Jupiter, because of his venerable gravity, and Paul Mercury, from his eloquence. Nor was it

long before the whole city resounded with acclamations; so that almost all the inhabitants gathered themselves together, and preceded by the priest of Jupiter, and oxen dressed in garlands, they came to the house where the apostles were, intending to do sacrifice to them: but as soon as Barnabas and Paul understood their intentions, they were greatly affected at this superstitious attempt; and rending their clothes to express their grief and abhorrence of the action, ran to them, crying out, "Ye men of Lystra, ye are mistaken in the object of your worship; for though we have done many miracles in the name, and by the power of CHRIST, yet we are no more than men, and subject to the same passions as yourselves, and preach unto you the glad tidings of salvation, that ye may forsake the vanities of this world, and turn to the living God, who created the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all the creatures they contain. This Omnipotent Being suffered all nations formerly to walk in their own ways, though he never left himself without a witness, doing the greatest good to the children of men; it is he that sendeth rain from heaven, and crowneth the year with fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness."

The apostles' argument had the desired effect; and the people were at last, though with difficulty, persuaded to lay aside their intended idolatrous sacrifice: and surely no argument could be more proper to affect the minds of the audience. Is it possible to survey the several parts of the creation, and not discover in every place, evident traces of an infinite wisdom, power and goodness? Who can contemplate the heavens, and not discern the wisdom of Omnipotence, adorning in the most beautiful manner, those lofty regions? Behold the sun, how justly is that source of light and heat, placed in the centre of the planetary choir, that each may enjoy its destined share of his prolific beams; so that the earth is not burnt by a too near approach, nor chilled by the northern blasts from too great a recess; but impregnated with fruits and flowers, by the happy influence of a vital heat, and crowned with luxuriant plenty, by the benign influences of the seasons. Who but an Infinite Being, could launch these massive globes through the immense regions

of space, and confine their motions to their respective orbits? Who poizes *the balancings of the clouds, that divides a water-course for the overflowing of waters, and a way for the lightning of thunder?* Who can bind *the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?* Or who can bring forth *Mazzaroth in his season, or guide Arcturus with his sons?* Do these happen by chance, or by the secret appointment of Infinite Wisdom? Who can contemplate the wonderful properties of the air, the great treasury of vital breath, and not reflect on the divine Wisdom that formed it? If we survey the earth, we there discover the footsteps of an Almighty Being, who *stretcheth the North over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing*; filling it with a great variety of admirable and useful creatures, and maintaining them all by the bounty of his hand. It is he that clothes the grass with a delightful verdure, that crowns the year with his loving kindness, and causes the valleys to stand thick with corn. It is he that *maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the service of man*: he adorns the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, with a glory that excels the pomp and grandeur of Solomon's court: *He shut up the sea with doors, and said, Hitherto shall thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* It is this Almighty Being that arrests the storm, and smooths the tempestuous billows of the deep; that delivereth the mariner from all his troubles, and bringeth his ship into the desired haven of safety. How reasonable, therefore, is it, that we should worship and adore this Omnipotent, this kind Creator, and not transfer the honours due to him alone, to frail mortals, much less to dumb idols, the works of men's hands, which cannot profit.

Thus having persuaded the people to desist from the idolatrous worship they would have paid them, the apostles continued their labours in instructing the people, and planting in this city the gospel of the Son of God: but the malice of the Jews still pursued them; for some of these bigotted Israelites coming from Antioch and Iconium, exasperated and stirred up the multitude; so that those very persons who could hardly be restrained from offering sacrifice to them, now used them like slaves,

stoning them in so cruel a manner, that Paul was thought to be dead, and as such they dragged him out of the city; but while the Christians of Lystra were attending on his corpse, probably in order to carry him to his grave, he arose and returned with them into the city; and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the gospel, and converted many; no danger being able to terrify them from the work of the ministry, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation, in every place they came to.

However, they did not long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, confirming the Christians of those places in the faith, earnestly persuading them to persevere, and not be discouraged with those troubles and persecutions which they must expect would attend the profession of the gospel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders and pastors, to teach, to instruct, and to watch over them; and then left them to the protection of the Almighty, to whose care they recommended them by fasting and prayer.

The apostles, after leaving Antioch, passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia; and after preaching the gospel at Perga, they went down to Attalia. Having thus finished the circuit of their ministry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at first departed. Here they summoned the church, and gave them an account of their ministry, the success it had met with in these different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the conversion of the Heathens.

During St. Paul's stay at Antioch, that famous controversy, relating to the observation of the Jewish ceremonies in the Christian dispensation, was set on foot by certain Jewish converts, to the great disturbance of the whole church. And it was determined to send Paul and Barnabas to consult with the apostles and church at Jerusalem, that this affair might be settled on the most solid foundation. On their arrival at Jerusalem, they first addressed themselves to Peter, James, and John, the pillars of that church, by whom they were kindly entertained, and admitted to the right hand of fellowship. And perceiving by the account given

them by St. Paul, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, as that of the circumcision was to Peter, they agreed that Peter should preach to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. This being determined, a council was summoned, wherein Peter declared his opinion, and Paul and Barnabas acquainted them with the great things God, by their ministry, had done amongst the Gentiles. A plain evidence, that they were accepted by the Almighty, though uncircumcised as well as the Jews with all their legal rights and privileges. Accordingly, it was unanimously determined, that Gentiles were not under the obligation of the law of Moses, and therefore, for their fuller satisfaction in this matter, it was agreed, that some persons of their own church should be joined with Paul and Barnabas, to carry the decrees of the council to Antioch.

St. Paul and his companions, having received the decretal epistle, returned back to Antioch; and soon after Peter himself came down. On reading this epistle in the church, the converts conversed freely and inoffensively with the Gentiles, till some of the Jews coming thither from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew his conversation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By such a strange method of proceeding, the minds of many were dissatisfied, and their consciences very uneasy. St. Paul, with the greatest concern, observed it, and publicly rebuked Peter, with that sharpness and severity his unwarrantable practice called for on such an important occasion.

Paul and Barnabas, soon after this dispute, resolved to visit the churches they had planted amongst the Gentiles, and Barnabas was desirous of taken with them his cousin Mark: but this Paul strenuously opposed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling dispute arose to such a height, that these two great apostles and fellow-labourers in the gospel parted asunder; Barnabas, taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus his native country; and Paul, having made choice of Silas, and recommended the success of his undertaking to the care of Divine Providence, set forward on his intended journey.

St. Paul and Silas first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming them in the faith, by their instructions and exhortations.

Hence they sailed to Crete, where Paul preached the gospel, and constituted Titus to be the first bishop and pastor of that island, leaving him to settle those affairs of the church which time would not permit the apostles to settle himself. From hence Paul and Silas, returned back into Cilicia, and came to Lystra, where they found Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother a Jewish convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, especially with regard to the Holy Scriptures, which he had studied with the greatest assiduity and success. This person St. Paul designed for the companion of his travels, and a special instrument in the ministry of the gospel: but, knowing that his being uncircumcised would prove a stumbling block to the Jews, caused him to be circumcised; being willing in lawful and indifferent matters, in order to save the souls of men, to conform himself to their tempers, apprehensions, and prejudices.

St. Paul and his companions now departed from Lystra, passing through Phrygia and the country of Galatia, where the apostle was entertained with the greatest kindness and veneration, the people looking as an angel sent immediately from heaven; and being by revelation forbidden to go into Asia, he was commanded by a second vision to repair to Macedonia, to preach the gospel.

Accordingly, our apostle prepared to pass from Asia into Europe. Here St. Luke joined them, and became ever after the inseparable companion of St. Paul, who, being desirous of finding the speediest passage into Macedonia, took ship with his companions Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samothracia, an island in the Ægean sea, not far from Thrace; and the next day to Neapolis, a port of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, where, for some days they resided.

Paul, according to his constant practice, preached in a Proseucha or oratory of the Jews, which stood by the river's side, at some distance from this city, and was much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met there to pray, and hear the law. To these St. Paul preached the glad tidings of the gospel;

and, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, converted many, especially a certain woman named Lydia, a Jewish proselyte, a seller of purple in that city, but a native of Thyatira. This woman, being baptized with her whole family, was so importunate with St. Paul and his companions to abide at her house, that they were constrained to accept of her invitation.

While the apostles resided in Philippi, they continued their daily course of worshipping at the same oratory. And after several days, as they were repairing to the same place of devotion, there met them a damsel who had a prophetic spirit of divination, by whom her masters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, *These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way to salvation.* Paul, at first, took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without necessity; but when he saw her following them several days together, he began to be troubled; and in imitation of his great Master, who would not suffer the devil to acknowledge him, lest his false and lying tongue should prejudice the truth in the minds of men, commanded the spirit, in the name of JESUS, to come out of her. The devil with reluctance obeyed, and left the damsel immediately.

As this miraculous cure proved a great loss to her masters, who acquired large gains from her soothsaying, they were filled with malice and envy against the apostles; and, by their instigation, the multitude arose, and, seizing upon Paul and his companions, hurried them before the magistrates and governors of the colony; accusing them of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the state, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans. The magistrates being concerned for the tranquillity of the state, and jealous of all disturbances, were very forward to punish the offenders, against whom the whole multitude testified; and therefore commanded the officers to strip them, and scourge them severely, as persons who stirred up seditions.

The sentence was accordingly executed; after which the apostles were committed to close custody, the gaoler receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them safely; and he accordingly thrust them into the inner prison, and

made their feet fast in the stocks: but the most obscure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of the night, cannot intercept the beams of divine joy and comfort from the souls of such pious men. Their minds were all serenity, and at midnight they prayed and sung praises so loud, that they were heard in every part of the prison: nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain; an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors, loosed the chains, and set the prisoners at liberty. This convulsion of nature roused the gaoler from his sleep; and concluding from what he saw, that all his prisoners were escaped, was going to put a period to his life; but Paul observing him, hastily cried out, *Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.* The keeper was now as greatly surprised at the goodness of the apostles, as he was before terrified at the thoughts of their escape; and calling for a light, he came immediately into the presence of the apostles, fell down at their feet, took them from the dungeon, brought them into his own house, washed their stripes, and begged of them to instruct him in the knowledge of that God who was so mighty to save and deliver.

The gaoler's request was readily granted by St. Paul, who replied, That, if he believed in JESUS CHRIST, he might be saved, with his whole house. Accordingly, the gaoler, with all his family, were, after a competent instruction, baptized, and received as members of the church of CHRIST. How happy a change does the doctrine of the gospel make in the minds of men! How does it smooth the roughest tempers, and instil the sweetest principles of civility and good-nature into the minds of men! He who, but a few moments before, tyrannized over the apostles with the most cruel usage, now treats them with the greatest respect, and the highest marks of kindness he was capable of shewing.

When it was day, the magistrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harsh and unjustifiable, sent their serjeant to the gaoler, with orders to discharge the apostles. The gaoler joyfully delivered the message, and bid them depart in peace: but Paul, that he might make the magistrates sensible what injury they had done them, and how unjustly they had punish-

ed them without examination or trial, sent them word, that as they had thought proper to scourge and imprison Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they should come themselves, and make them some satisfaction for the illegal treatment they had received.

This message terrified the magistrates, who well knew how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable power of the Romans, who never suffered any freeman to be beaten uncondemned; they came therefore to the prison, and very submissively entreated the apostles to depart without any further disturbance. This small recompence for the cruel usage they had received was accepted by the meek followers of the blessed JESUS; they left the prison, and retired to the house of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance, and departed; having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as appears from St. Paul's epistle to the church at Philippi.

Paul and his companions leaving this city, continued their journey towards the West, till they came to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, about an hundred and twenty miles from Philippi. On their arrival at Thessalonica, Paul, according to his custom, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his countrymen; the ungrateful usage he had met with in other places, not discouraging him from persevering in so glorious a work. His doctrine, however, was strenuously opposed by the Jews, who would not allow JESUS to be the Messiah, because of the ignominious death which he had suffered.

The apostles, during their stay at Thessalonica, lodged in the house of a certain Christian named Jason, who entertained them very courteously. But the Jews would not suffer the apostles to continue at rest; they refused to embrace the gospel themselves, and therefore envied its success, and determined to oppose its progress; accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, who beset the house of Jason, intending to take Paul, and deliver him up to an incensed multitude; but in this they were disappointed, Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Christians, and concealed in some other part of the city. Their fury, however,

was rather exasperated than lessened at losing their prey; and, as they could not find the apostles of the blessed JESUS, they determined to be revenged on Jason, who had concealed them. Accordingly, they seized on him and some others of the brethren, and carried them before the magistrates of the city, accusing them, as they had before done the apostles themselves, at Philippi, of disturbing the peace of the empire, and setting up JESUS as a king, in derogation of the emperor's dignity and authority. This accusation induced both people and magistrates to be their enemies; and though Jason was only accused of harbouring those innovators, yet the magistrates could not be prevailed upon, to dismiss him and his companions, till they had given security for their appearance when called upon.

When the tumult was over, the Thessalonians, who had been converted by them, sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. Here also Paul's great love for his countrymen, the Jews, and his earnest desire for their salvation, excited him to preach to them in particular: accordingly, he entered into their synagogue, and explained the gospel unto them, proving out of the Old Testament the truth of the doctrines he advanced. These Jews were of a more candid and ingenuous temper than those of Thessalonica; and as they heard him with great reverence and attention expound and apply the scriptures, so they searched diligently, whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and consonant to the sense of the texts he referred to: and having found every thing to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and several Gentiles, following their example, became obedient to the faith, amongst whom were several women of quality. The news of this remarkable success was carried to Thessalonica, and greatly incensed the inveterate enemies of the gospel there; who accordingly repaired to Berea, and raised tumults against the apostles; so that Paul, to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timothy, either less known, or less envied, continued still in the place.

Leaving Berea under the conduct of certain guides, it was pretended that Paul designed to

retire by sea out of Greece, that his restless enemies might cease their persecution: but the guides, according to his desire, brought him to Athens, and left him there, after receiving from him an order for Silas and Timothy to repair to him as soon as they conveniently could.

At this time Athens was the most famous academy of all Greece, and abounding with philosophers, illustrious for their learning.... Amongst the several sects that now flourished at Athens, the Stoics and Epicureans were the most remarkable for their opposition to Christianity. The Epicureans, because they found their pleasant and jovial humour, and their loose and exorbitant course of life, so greatly checked and controlled by the strict and severe precepts of the gospel; and because the doctrines of it so plainly and positively asserted a Divine Providence, governing the world, and which at the last day, will reward or punish every man according to his works. The Stoics, on the other hand, though pretending to principles of great and uncommon rigour and severity, and such as had the nearest affinity to the doctrines of the gospel, yet they found them very different in practice. That meek and humble temper of mind, that modesty and self-denial, which the gospel so earnestly recommends, and so strictly requires, were directly opposite to the immoderate pride and ambition of that sect, who were not ashamed to affirm, that their sages and philosophers, were not inferior to God himself, in wisdom.

During Paul's abode at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate survey of the city, which he found miserably over run with superstition and idolatry. The inhabitants were remarkably religious and devout: they had a great number of gods whom they adored; false, indeed, they were, but such as they, being destitute of revelation, accounted true: and so very careful were they, that no deity should want due honour from them, that they had an altar inscribed, *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*. A great variety of reasons are given for this inscription: some affirm, that it was the name which the Pagans generally gave to the God of the Jews; but others think, that

besides the unknown God, it included all the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa.

The spirit of the apostle was grieved at these superstitious practices: he lamented to see so much zeal and devotion misplaced; and flattered himself, if he could but direct it to its proper object, it would be of eminent service to the church of CHRIST. Accordingly, he exerted all his strength for their conversion; disputing on the sabbath days in the synagogues of the Jews; and at other times took all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians, the coming of the Messiah, to save the world from sin and misery.

The apostle's doctrine was equally new and strange to the Athenians; and though they did not persecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching JESUS was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, as a fabulous legend; and by the more sober part, as a discovery of some new gods, which they had not yet placed in their temples: and though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet as the Areopagus, the supreme court of the city, was to judge of all gods, to whom public worship might be allowed, they brought him before those judges, to give an account of his doctrine in their hearing.

Being placed before the judges of this high assembly, St. Paul readily gave them an account of his doctrine, in a grave and elegant speech; wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and gross idolators, lest he should offend them, and thereby prevent them from listening to his reasons; but, having commended them for their religious dispositions, he took occasion from the altar inscribed, *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*, to make a proper defence of his doctrine. "I endeavour, said he, only to explain that altar to you, and manifest the nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worship; which is the God that made the world, and all things therein; and who being Lord of all, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is to be worshipped in lifeless idols. As he is the Creator of all things, he cannot be confined to the workmanship of man, whether temples or statues; nor stands in need of sacrifices, since he is the fountain of life to all things.... He made from one common original the whole race of mankind, and hath wisely determined

their dependence on him, that they might be obliged to seek after him and serve him. A truth perceivable in the darkest state of ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your own poets. If this be the nature of God, it is surely the highest absurdity to represent him by any image or similitude. The divine patience hath been too much exercised already, with such gross abuses in religion; but now expects a thorough reformation, having sent his son JESUS CHRIST to make him known to the world, and at the same time to inform them, that he hath appointed a day of general judgment, when the religion of mankind shall be tried by the test of the gospel, before his only begotten Son, who is appointed sole judge of quick and dead, and whose commission to that high office hath been ratified by the Almighty, in raising him from the dead, by his almighty power."

He had no sooner mentioned the resurrection, than some of the philosophers mocked and derided him; others, more modest, but not satisfied with the proofs he had given, gravely answered, *We would hear thee again of this matter.* After which, Paul departed from the court; but not without some success: for a few of his auditors believed, and attended his instructions; amongst whom were Dionysius, one of the judges, and Damaris, thought by some to have been his wife. And it is generally believed, that Dionysius was afterwards constituted the first bishop of Athens, by this apostle.

While St. Paul remained at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him out of Macedonia, and brought an account, that the Christians at Thessalonica were under persecution from their fellow-citizens, ever since his departure: at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at first inclined to visit them in person, to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but being hindered by the enemies to the gospel, he sent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at first heard, namely, that persecution would be the constant attendant on their profession.

St. Paul left Athens on Timothy's departure, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade. Here he found

Aquila, and Priscilla his wife, lately come from Italy, after having been banished from Rome by a decree of Claudius; and they being of the same trade he himself had learned in his youth, he wrought with them, that he might not be burdensome to the new converts in that city.

The apostle after some stay in Corinth, was joined by Silas and Timothy, and disputed frequently in the synagogue, reasoning and proving that JESUS was the true Messiah.— This exasperated the Jews to the greatest degree, and what they could not conquer by argument and force of reason, they endeavoured to carry by noise and clamour, blended with blasphemies and revilings; the last refuge of an impotent and baffled cause. But St. Paul, to testify his resentment, shook his garment, and told them, that since they were determined to pull down the vengeance of heaven upon their own heads, he was absolutely guiltless and innocent, and would henceforth address himself to the Gentiles: accordingly he left them, and repaired to the house of Justus, a religious proselyte, where, by his preaching and miracles, he converted great numbers to the faith; amongst which were Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, Gaius, and Stephanus, who with their families were baptized, and admitted members of the church of Christ.

Inasmuch as the constant returns of malice and ingratitude are sufficient to tire the largest charity, and cool the most generous resolution; our dear Redeemer, therefore, that the apostle might not be discouraged by the restless attempts and machinations of his enemies, appeared to him in a vision, and told him, that notwithstanding the bad success he had hitherto met with, there was a large harvest to be gathered in that place; that he should not be afraid of his enemies, but preach the gospel boldly and faithfully, for that he himself would protect and preserve him from every danger.

St. Paul seems about this time to have written his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, Silas and Timothy being lately returned from thence, and delivered the message for which he had sent them thither. The principle design of this Epistle is, to confirm them in the belief of the Christian religion, and excite them to persevere in it, notwithstanding all the malice of their

enemies, in the persecutions they must expect to suffer ; and to instruct them in the duties of their high vocation.

During these transactions, the malicious Jews were plotting his destruction : but being for some time disappointed, their malice changed into fury, and they hurried the apostle before the tribunal of Gallio, elder brother to the famous Seneca, and proconsul of the province, accusing him of being an innovator in religion, and of endeavouring to introduce a method of worshipping God contrary to the law. Paul was ready to have made his defence ; but Gallio prevented him by telling his accusers, that if he had been guilty of an injustice, he would have heard their complaint and redressed their grievance ; but as it was nothing but a controversy about words and names, he would have nothing to do with it. But the Jews continuing their clamour, he commanded his officers to drive them from the tribunal ; which was accordingly done, and some of the townsmen seized upon Sosthens one of the rulers of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat, the proconsul giving himself no concern about it. Thus were the designs of the apostle's enemies rendered abortive ; and Paul continued, without any further opposition, to preach the doctrine of the gospel during a year and a half, when he left the church at Corinth, to visit others he had planted in different parts of the East.

While the Apostle continued at Corinth, he wrote his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to supply his absence. In this Epistle he again endeavours to confirm their minds in the truth of the gospel, and prevent their being shaken with those troubles, which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raising against them. And because some passages in his former Epistle relating to the destruction of the Jews, had been misunderstood, as if the day of the Lord was near at hand, he rectifies these mistakes, and shews the sign that must precede our Lord's coming to judgment, in the latter days.

Leaving the church at Corinth, St. Paul took ship at Cenchrea, the port at Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla ; and on his arrival at Ephesus, he preached a while in the synagogue of the Jews, promising

to return to them after keeping the passover at Jerusalem. Accordingly, he again took ship, and landed at Cæsaria, and from thence travelled to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast, visited the church, and then repaired to Antioch : here he stayed some time, and then traversed the countries of Galatia and Phrygia, till he came to Ephesus, confirming the new converted Christians.

While the apostle was taking this large circuit, Providence took care of the churches of Ephesus and Corinth, by means of one Apollos, an eloquent Jew of Alexandria, and well acquainted with the law and writings of the prophets. This man coming to Ephesus, though he was only instructed in the rudiments of Christianity, and John's baptism ; yet he taught with great courage, and a most powerful zeal. After being fully instructed in the faith by Aquila and Priscilla, he passed over into Achaia, being furnished with recommendatory letters by the churches of Ephesus and Corinth. He was of the greatest service in Achaia, in watering what Paul had planted, confirming the disciples, and powerfully convincing the Jews, that JESUS was the true Messiah, promised in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Leaving Apollos thus usefully employed, St. Paul returned to Ephesus, where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus a native of Thessalonica, Timotheus and Erastus of Corinth and Titus. The first thing he did after his arrival was to examine certain disciples, whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed ? To which they answered, " That the doctrine they had received, promised nothing of that nature ; nor had they ever heard that such an extraordinary spirit had of late been bestowed upon the church." This answer surprised the apostle, who asked them in what name they had been baptized ; since, in the Christian form, the name of the Holy Ghost was always expressed ? They replied, that they had only received John's baptism ; which, though it enjoined men to repent, yet mentioned nothing expressly concerning the Holy Ghost, or its gifts or powers. Upon which the apostle informed them, that though John's baptism commanded nothing but repentance, yet it tacitly

implied the whole doctrine of CHRIST and the Holy Ghost. When they heard this, they were baptized according to the form prescribed by CHRIST himself, that is, in the name of the blessed Trinity; and after the apostle had prayed and laid his hands upon them, they received the gifts of tongues and other miraculous powers.

St. Paul, after this, entered into the Jewish synagogues, where for the first three months, he contended and disputed with the Jews, endeavouring with great earnestness and resolution to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. But when instead of success he met with nothing but obstinacy and infidelity, he left the synagogue, and taking those with him whom he had converted, instructed them and others who resorted to him, in the school of one Tyrannus, a place where scholars used to be instructed. In this manner he continued to preach the gospel two whole years; by which means the Jews and proselytes of the whole proconsular Asia had an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of salvation. And because miracles are the clearest evidence of a divine commission, the Almighty was pleased to rectify the doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature; for he did not only heal those that came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the sick, their diseases immediately vanished, and the evil spirits departed out of those whom they had possessed.

The apostle about this time wrote his Epistle to the Galatians; for he had heard that since his departure, corrupt opinions had crept in amongst them, with regard to the necessity of observing the legal rites; and that several impostors had found admittance into that church, who knew no better method of undermining the doctrine he had planted there, than by vilifying his person, slighting him only as an apostle at second hand, not to be compared with Peter, James, and John, who had familiarly conversed with CHRIST in the days of his flesh, and being immediately deputed by him.

In this Epistle he reproves them with some necessary severity, for their being so soon led out of the right way, wherein he had placed

them, and so easily suffered themselves to be imposed upon by the crafty artifices of seducers. He vindicates the honour of his apostleship, and the immediate receiving his commission from CHRIST, wherein he shews, that he was not inferior to the very best of the apostles. He largely refutes those Judaical opinions that had tainted and infected them; and, in the conclusion, instructs them in the rules and duties of a holy life.

While St. Paul resided at Ephesus, an accident happened which was attended with great trouble and danger. In this city was the celebrated temple of Diana, a structure so magnificent for beauty, riches, and magnitude, that it was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world: but what increased its fame and reputation was, an image of Diana kept there, which the idolatrous priests persuaded the people was made by Jupiter himself, and dropt down from heaven; for which reason it was held in great veneration, not only at Ephesus, but throughout all Asia: so that people procured silver shrines, or figures of this temple, of such a size as to carry in their pockets, either for curiosity, or to stir up their devotion. This proved the source of a great deal of business to the silversmiths of Ephesus, of whom one Demetrius was the chief: this man plainly perceiving, that Christianity tended to the subversion of idolatry, and, consequently, to the ruin of their gainful employment, called all the artists together, and pathetically represented to them, "How inevitably they must be reduced to a state of poverty, if they suffered Paul to bring their temple and goddess into contempt, by persuading people, as he did, that they were no gods, which were made by the hands of men."

On hearing this speech of Demetrius, the people were fired with a zeal which they could no longer contain; so that they cried out with one voice, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. They should, indeed, have considered, that if their goddess was able to defend herself against the doctrines preached by Paul, neither she nor the temple were in any danger: whereas, if Paul was able to destroy their gods, it was in vain for them to resist him: but interest and superstition meeting in the minds of a bigotted multitude, admitted of no reason; they were

all fired with a zeal for their goddess, and determined, if they could find Paul, to expose him to the beasts in the theatre. The whole city was filled with the tumult, and the crowd, missing Paul, laid hold on Gaius and Aristarchus, two Macedonians of Paul's company, and hurried them into the theatre, with a design to throw them to the wild beasts: Paul, who was at present in a place of security, hearing of the danger to which his brethren were exposed, was very desirous of venturing after them, in order to speak in their behalf; but was at last dissuaded from it, not only by the Christians, but also by the Gentile governors of the theatrical games, who were his friends, and assured him, that he would only endanger himself, without rescuing his friends, or affording them any assistance.

The multitude were now prodigiously clamorous and confused, most of them not knowing the reason for which they were come together; and, therefore, some cried one thing, and some another. In this distraction, Alexander, a Jewish convert, was singled out by the multitude, and by the instigation of the Jews was going to make his defence, in which, doubtless, he would have laid the whole blame upon Paul: but the multitude perceiving him to be a Jew, and therefore suspecting he was one of Paul's associates, raised another outcry for near two hours together, wherein nothing could be heard but *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. This confusion brought the town-clerk, who kept the register of the games, into the theatre, to suppress, if possible, so uncommon a tumult; and having, with great difficulty, obtained silence, calmly and discreetly told them, "That the world was sufficiently acquainted with the devotion paid by the Ephesians to the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter; and therefore it was absolutely needless for them to publish it at that time; that if Demetrius and his fraternity had any thing to allege against Paul and his companions, the courts were open, and they might bring their accusation against them; or, if they were questioned with regard to the breach of any of their laws, the cause ought to be heard in a regular assembly. That they would do well to consider this, and be quiet; having already rendered themselves obnoxious to the displea-

sure of the magistrates, if they should think proper to call them to an account for the tumult which they had that day occasioned."

The multitude, on hearing this discourse, were convinced that they had acted very improperly, and therefore repaired to their respective habitations; and Gaius, Aristarchus, and Alexander, were released without any hurt: but the escape of Paul was so very remarkable, that he mentions it as a miraculous deliverance. *We had, says he, the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death.* And in another place he tells us, *he fought with beasts at Ephesus*; alluding, either to the design of the enraged multitude of throwing him to the wild beasts in the theatre, though their intention was not executed; or to the manners of the people, who sufficiently deserved the character of being savage and brutal in the strictest sense of the words.

Paul about this time, was informed of some disturbances in the church of Corinth, hatched and formented by a company of false teachers; crept in amongst them, who endeavoured to draw them into parties and factions, by persuading one company to be for Peter, another for Paul, and a third for Apollon; as if the principal part of religion consisted in being of this or that denomination, or in a warm active zeal to depreciate and oppose whoever is not of our own narrow sect. It is a very weak and slender claim, when a man holds his religion by no better title than his having joined himself to such or such a sect or congregation, and is remarkable zealous to promote it; to be childishly and passionately clamorous for some person's particular mode of administration, or some particular opinion; as if religion rather consisted in curious disputes, or in separating from our brethren, than in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. By these means, schisms and factions broke into the Corinthian church, whereby many wild and extravagant opinions, and some of them such as tended to undermine the fundamental articles of Christianity, were planted, and had taken root there. To cure these distempers, St. Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians, wherein he smartly reproves them for their schisms and

parties, conjures them to follow after peace and unity, corrects those gross corruptions that had been introduced amongst them, and particularly resolves those many cases and controversies, wherein they had requested his advice.

Apollos soon after determining to go to Crete together with Zenos, St. Paul sent by them his Epistle to Titus, whom he had made bishop of that island, and had left there for propagating the gospel. In this Epistle, he instructs him fully in the execution of his office, how to behave himself, and what directions he should give to others, in the several relations and ranks of men, especially those who were to be advanced to places of office and authority in the church, amongst the Gentiles.

The tumult at Athens had not long subsided, before Paul called the Christians together, and took his leave of them with the most tender expressions of love and affection. He had now spent almost three years at Ephesus, and founded there a very considerable church, of which he had ordained Timothy the first bishop. He first travelled about two hundred miles northward to Troas, before he took ship, expecting to meet Titus there: but missing him, he pursued his voyage to Macedonia, where, on his arrival, he preached the gospel in several places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Sclavonia. During this journey, he met with many troubles and dangers, *without were fightings*, and *within were fears*: but God, who comforteth those that are cast down, revived his spirits by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleasing account of the good effects his Epistle had produced at Corinth. This worthy bishop came thither, with large contributions from that church, and from the example of those liberal Christians, St. Paul stirred up the Macedonians to imitate their charity, intending to assist the distressed Christians at Jerusalem, who were then in an indigent and persecuted state.

While Titus continued in Macedonia, Paul wrote his second Epistle to the Corinthians, and sent it to them by Titus and Luke. In this, he endeavours to rectify what his former Epistle had not effected, to vindicate his apostleship from that contempt and scorn, and himself from those slanders and aspersions, which the seducers who found themselves lashed by

his former letter, had cast upon him; together with several other particular cases, relating to the church. About this time also, he wrote his first Epistle to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus, wherein he gives him large directions how to carry himself in the discharge of that great office and authority in the church, committed to his care; and instructs him in the particular qualifications of those he should make choice of as bishops and ministers in the church. He likewise gives him instructions with regard to his giving orders to deaconesses, and instructing servants; warning him at the same time, against that pestilent generation of heretics and seducers, that would arise in the church after his departure.

While Paul remained in Greece, he went to Corinth, where he wrote his excellent Epistle to the Romans, which he sent by Præbe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth. His principal intention in this Epistle is, fully to state and determine the great controversy between the Jews and Gentiles, with regard to the obligations of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, and those principal and material points of doctrine, depending upon it; namely, Christian liberty, the use of indifferent things, and the like: and, which is the chief intention of all religion, instructs them and presses them, to perform the duties of a holy and pious life, such as the Christian doctrine naturally recommends and enforces.

Being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions to the brethren at Jerusalem, he set out on his journey; but being informed, that the Jews had formed a design of killing and robbing him by the way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he stayed seven days: here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his discourse till midnight, being himself to depart in the morning. The length of his discourse, and time of the night, caused some of his audience to be overtaken with sleep, and amongst them a young man, named Eutychus, who fell from the third story, and was taken up dead; but the apostle, by his prayer to the throne of grace, presently restored him to life and health. How indefatigable was the industry of this great apostle! How closely did

he tread in the steps of his great master, who went about doing good! He preached, and wrought miracles, in the name and by the power of CHRIST, wherever he came! As a master-builder, he either laid a foundation, or raised a superstructure! He was instant in season and out of season, and spared no pains to assist the souls of men, by warning and persuading some, and confuting and establishing others.

After having spent the night in holy exercises, St. Paul took his leave of the brethren in the morning, travelling on foot to Assos, a sea-port town, whither he had before sent his companions by sea: from thence they sailed to Mytilene, a city in the isle of Lesbos: the next day they sailed from thence, and came over against Chios, and the day following landed at Trogyllium, a promontory of Ionia, near Samos: the next day they came to Miletus, not putting in at Ephesus, because the apostle was resolved to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, if possible.

Arriving at Miletus, he sent to Ephesus, to summon the elders of the church, and on their coming, reminded them of the manner in which he had conversed amongst them; how faithfully and affectionately he had discharged the offices of his ministry, and how incessantly he had laboured for the good of the souls of men: adding, that he had never failed to acquaint them both in public and private, with whatever might be useful and profitable to them; urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance, and reformation of life, and a hearty entertainment of the faith of CHRIST: that now he was going up to Jerusalem, where he was ignorant of what might befall him, except what had been foretold him by those who were endued with the prophetic gifts of the Holy Ghost; namely, that afflictions and imprisonment would attend him: but this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the gospel required it, and fully determined to serve faithfully his great Lord and Master. "I well know, continued he, that ye will see my face no more; but for my encouragement and satisfaction, ye yourselves can bear me witness, that I have not, by concealing any part of the Christian doctrine, betrayed your souls: and as for yourselves, whom God hath made bishops and pastors of his church, you should

be careful to feed, guide, and direct those Christians under your inspection, and be infinitely tender of the welfare of souls, for whose redemption the blessed JESUS laid down his own life. All the care, therefore, possible for you to use, is no more than necessary; for after my departure, heretical teachers will appear in the church, to the great danger of the souls of men, seeking, by every crafty method, and pernicious doctrine, to gain proselytes to their party, and by that means fill the church of CHRIST with schisms and factions. Watch ye, therefore, and remember with what tears and sorrow I have, during three years, warned you of these things: and now I recommend you to the divine favour and protection, and to the rules and instructions of the gospel, which, if adhered to, will undoubtedly dispose and perfect you for that state of happiness which the Almighty hath prepared for good men in the mansions of eternity. You well know that I have from the beginning dealt faithfully and uprightly with you; that I have had no covetous designs, or ever desired the riches of other men; nay, I have laboured with mine own hands, to support me and my companions; you ought, therefore, to support the weak, and relieve the poor, rather than be yourselves chargeable to others, according to that incomparable saying of the great redeemer of mankind, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

After having finished his discourse, St. Paul kneeled down, and joined them in prayer; when they all melted into tears, and with the greatest expressions of sorrow, attended him to the ship; grieving in the most passionate manner for what he had told them, *that they should see his face no more.*

Departing from Miletus, Paul and his companions arrived at Coost, from whence they sailed the next day to Rhodes, two islands in the Ægean sea. From whence they came to Patra, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another vessel bound for Tyre in Phœnicia. On his arrival he visited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was advised by some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jerusalem; but the apostle would by no means abandon his design, or refuse to suffer any thing, provided he might spread the gospel of

his Saviour. Finding all persuasions were in vain, they all accompanied him to the shore, where he kneeled down and prayed with them ; and after embracing them with the utmost affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Cesarea. Here Paul and his companions lodged in the house of Philip, the Evangelist, one of the seven deacons set apart by the apostles, and who had before converted the Samaritans. Philip had four daughters, all virgins, each of whom had a prophetic spirit.

While they were in this place, Agabus, a Christian prophet, came thither from Judea, who taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it ; signifying by this external symbol, that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him to the Gentiles. Whereupon, both his own companions and the Christians of Cesarea, earnestly besought him, that he would not go up to Jerusalem ; but the apostle asked them, if they intended by these passionate dissuasives to add more affliction to his sorrow ? *For I am ready,* continued he, *not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.* When the disciples found that his resolution was not to be shaken, they importuned him no further, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleasure of the Most High. And all things being ready, Paul and his companions set forwards on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Christians at Jerusalem, on their arrival.

Paul and his companions, the next day after their arrival, went to the house of St. James the apostle, where the rest of the bishops and governors of the church were met together. After mutual salutations, the apostle gave them a particular account of the success with which God had blessed his endeavours in propagating Christianity amongst the Gentiles ; for which they all joined in thanksgiving to God ; but withal told him, that he was now come to a place where there were many thousands of Jewish converts, who were all zealous for the law of Moses, and who had been informed, that he taught the Jews whom he had converted, to renounce circumcision, and the ceremonies of the law ; that as soon as the multitude heard of his arrival, they would all assemble to see

how he behaved himself in this matter : and therefore, to prevent disturbance, they thought it advisable for him to join himself with four persons, who were at that time to accomplish a vow, and perform the usual rites and ceremonies with them, and provide such sacrifices for them, as the law, in that case, required ; and that as a symbol of their discharging their vow, they might shave their heads ; whereby it would appear, that the reports that were spread concerning him were false and groundless, and that he himself still observed the rites and orders of the Mosaical institutions. But, with regard to the Gentile converts, they required no such observances at their hands, nor expected any thing more from them in these indifferent matters, than what had been before determined in the synod formerly held at Jerusalem. St. Paul, who in such cases was willing to become all things to all men that he might gain the more, consented to their counsel ; and taking the persons with him to the temple, told the priests that the time of a vow they had made being now expired, and having purified themselves as the nature of their case required, they were come to make the offerings which the law enjoined.

When the seven days, in which those sacrifices were to be offered, were almost ended, certain Jews from Asia, finding him in the temple, began to raise a tumult, and laying hold on Paul, called to their brethren the Jews to assist them, declaring that was the person who every where preached doctrines detrimental to the Jewish nation, and destructive to the institutions of the law, and the purity of that sacred place which he had now defiled, by bringing Greeks into the temple ; positively concluding, that because they had seen Trophimus, a Gentile convert, with him in the city, that he had also brought him into the temple : so apt is malice to make any supposition in order to draw from thence its own conclusion. This accusation, though absolutely false, set the whole city in an uproar, and seizing on the apostle, they dragged him out of the temple, when the doors were immediately shut, to prevent his returning into that holy place : nor had they failed of soon putting a period to all his sufferings and troubles, had not Claudius Lysias, commander of the Roman garrison in the cas-

tle of Antonio, arrived with a band of soldiers to his rescue, and supposing, from the great tumult of the Jews, that he was a more than ordinary malefactor, loaded him with a double chain, though he was as yet altogether ignorant, either of his country, or the crime he was accused of; it being impossible to obtain any satisfactory answer from the multitude, who called for nothing but his death, following the soldiers in such a riotous manner, that they were forced to carry the apostle in their arms, to secure him from the rage and violence of the people, who were ready to tear him in pieces.

While they were going in this manner towards the castle, Paul asked the governor, whether he might have the liberty of speaking to him; who finding he understood the Greek language, inquired of him whether he was not that Egyptian, who, a few years before, had raised a sedition in Judea, and headed a party of four thousand vile and profligate wretches. To which the apostle replied, that he was a Jew of Tarsus, a freeman of a rich and honourable city, and therefore begged of him, that he might have leave to speak unto the people. This the Roman officer readily granted, and Paul, standing near the door of the castle, made signs that they should hold their peace, and began to address them in the Hebrew language; which engaged them to listen with more attention to the following extraordinary narrative:

“Ye descendants of Jacob, listen to a person of your own religion, and, like yourselves, a child of Abraham; born in Tarsus, and brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and fully instructed in the law delivered by Moses to our forefathers, and formerly as zealous for the temple worship as ye are at present.

“Yea, more, I persecute unto death all who believed in Jesus, seizing on all I could find both men and women, and cast them into prison. This the high priest, and all our elders well know; for from them I received a commission, and repaired to Damascus, to bring from thence to Jerusalem all the Christians, in order to their undergoing an exemplary punishment. But as I was pursuing my journey, to execute this commission, and being arrived near Damascus, there appeared, about mid-day,

a light from heaven, shining round me with great brightness.

“Being terrified at so awful an appearance, I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* To which I answered, *Who art thou, Lord?* And the voice replied, *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.*

“My companions, during this interval, were greatly terrified at the great light that surrounded me; but they did not understand the words that were spoken from above.

“As soon as I had recovered from the terror with which my mind was filled, on seeing Jesus so highly advanced above all earthly power, I answered, *What shall I do, Lord?* And he replied, *Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.*

“I was immediately deprived of sight by the brilliance of the glory that shone around me; so that my companions led me by the hand to Damascus, where one Ananias, a person well respected by all the Jews of that city, visited me, and said, *Brother Saul, receive thy sight.* And in a moment my eyes were opened, and I saw him standing before me.

“Perceiving that my sight was restored, he said to me, ‘The Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appointed thee to know his will, to see the great Messiah, the Holy One of God, and hear the voice of his mouth; for thou art chosen to be a witness, to all the nations of the earth, of those surprising things which thou hast seen and heard. Why therefore, tarryest thou here any longer? *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*’

“In a short time after this glorious vision, and miraculous power of the Most High, when I was returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, and offering up my prayers in the temple, I fell into a trance, and again saw the great Son of David, who said unto me, ‘Depart quickly from Jerusalem; for the sons of Jacob will refuse to believe thy testimony concerning me.’ And I answered, ‘Lord, they know how cruelly I used thy saints and followers; that I imprisoned and beat them in every city, and in every synagogue. Nay, when they shed the blood of thy holy martyr Stephen, I

‘ was also one of the spectators ; I consented to his death ; I even kept the raiment of those that slew him.’ But he replied, ‘ Depart : I will send thee to countries far remote ; even to the Gentiles, that thou mayest there speak in my name, and publish to them my salvation.’

Till now the Jews had listened with some attention to his speech ; but, on his mentioning the commission he had received to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, their fury knew no bounds ; crying out, with one accord, *Away with such a fellow from the earth ;* he is unworthy to be ranked amongst the race of mortals, or even to breathe the vital air. And as they thought words too weak to express their fury, they threw off their clothes, and filled the air with dust, indicating their great desire of stoning him to death.

At this instant a captain of the guard commanded him to be brought within the castle, and that he should be examined by scourging, till he confessed the reason of the uncommon rage shewn against him by the people. Accordingly, the lictor bound him, and was going to put the orders he had received into execution, when Paul asked the centurion that stood by, whether it was lawful to scourge a citizen of Rome, before any sentence had been passed upon him ? The centurion, instead of answering the question, repaired immediately to the governor ; desiring him to take care how he proceeded against the prisoner, because he was a Roman.

On this information, the governor himself came into the prison, and asked Paul whether he was really a free citizen of Rome ? And being told he was, he answered, that he himself procured that great privilege by a large sum of money : but Paul answered, *I was free born.* On receiving this account, the governor commanded the centurion not to scourge him, being terrified at what he had already done, in chaining a free denizen of Rome. The next day, therefore, he ordered his chains to be taken off ; and that he might thoroughly satisfy himself of the cause of so unusual a tumult the preceding day, summoned the Sanhedrim to meet, and brought down Paul before them, that they might hear his defence.

Being thus placed before the high council of the Jews, Paul told them, that in all the passages of his life, he had taken care to govern his actions by the severest rules of duty and conscience : *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until this day....* How great is the security of a truly good man ! How strong, though invisible a support does innocence become in the greatest danger ! With how generous a confidence does virtue and honesty guard the breast of a true professor of Christianity ! Nothing else indeed, can lay a solid foundation for satisfaction and tranquillity, when any calamity overtakes us : religion and a good conscience fill the breast with a heavenly serenity, which all the little accidents of this world can neither ruffle nor discompose. And, accordingly, Seneca compares the mind of a wise and good man to the state of the upper region, which is always calm and serene, though all around is tumult and confusion.

However this expression of the apostle might tend to shew the true state of his mind ; the high priest Ananias was so offended at it, that he commanded those who stood next to him, to strike him on the face ; at which the apostle smartly replied, *God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall.* Thou art placed on the seat of judgment, to determine according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten in direct opposition to its precepts. On which some of the spectators replied, it is not lawful to revile the high priest of the Almighty. And Paul answered, I did not know that Ananias was appointed by God to be an high priest ; but as he is invested with authority, it is unjust to revile him, God himself having commanded, that *no man should speak evil of the ruler of the people.* St. Paul, now perceiving the council consisted partly of Sadducees, and partly of Pharisees, cried aloud, “ *Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and am now brought before this tribunal, for asserting the resurrection from the dead.*” This declaration threw the whole court into confusion ; the Pharisees being zealous patrons of that tenet, declared the prisoner innocent, and that in all probability he had received some intimation from heaven by an angel, or the silent whispers of the Holy Spirit ; and it so, they really fought against Omnipotence himself, by opposing his

doctrine. While the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, together with the existence of either angel or spirit, strenuously insisted that the apostle was a turbulent person, and ought to be punished for his misconduct.

Hereupon the council was greatly divided, and their dissensions increased to that degree, that the captain feared Paul would have been pulled in pieces by them, and therefore took him from the bar, and carried him back to the castle. But during the silence of the night, the great Redeemer of mankind, to comfort his faithful servant under all the terrors he had suffered the two preceding days, appeared to him in a vision, encouraging him to constancy and resolution, assuring him, that as he had borne witness of him at Jerusalem, he should, notwithstanding all the malice and wicked designs of his enemies, live to bear his testimony even in Rome itself, before the Gentiles.

The Jews, whose envy and malice were increased by these dilatory proceedings, determined, the next morning, to use a quicker method of putting a period to his life. In order to this, above forty of the most turbulent entered into a shocking confederacy of killing him; ratifying it by an oath, and the most bitter execration, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had put their inhuman design into execution: but such vile monsters would do well to remember, that a Being, from whose eye nothing can be concealed, and whose power nothing can resist, is privy to all their actions, often renders their designs abortive, and will surely punish them for their base attempts. Accordingly, this design, though probably concluded under the pitchy mantle of the night, was discovered to St. Paul, by his sister's son, and, at the request of the apostle, told to the governor himself, who immediately commanded two parties of horse and foot to be ready by nine o'clock that night, in order to conduct St. Paul to Felix, the Roman governor of that province, to whom also he sent an account of the whole proceedings of the Jews against the prisoner: and, at the same time, ordered his accusers also to appear before the Roman magistrate: accordingly, St. Paul was conducted to Antipatris, and afterwards to Cesarea, where the letters being delivered to Felix, the apostle was also presented to him; and find-

ing that he belonged to the province of Cilicia, he told him, that as soon as his accusers were come down, he would determine the affair, and commanded him to be secured in the place called Herod's Hall, till they should appear against him.

Ananias the high-priest, with some others of the Sanhedrim, came to Cesarea, a few days after St. Paul's arrival, accompanied by Tertullus their advocate, who, in a short, but eloquent speech, adorned with all the flattering and insinuating arts of oratory, began to accuse the apostle, charging him with sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple: that they would have saved him the trouble of this hearing, by judging him according to their own law, had not Lysias, the chief captain, violently taken him from them, and sent both the prisoner and them to Cesarea, by a guard of soldiers.

The charge of the orator against the apostle being finished, Felix told St. Paul, that he was now at liberty to make his defence; accordingly, he distinctly answered every part of the charge in the following manner. "I answer this charge of the Jews with greater satisfaction before thee, because thou hast for many years been a judge of this nation. About twelve days since, I repaired to Jerusalem, to worship the God of Jacob: but I neither disputed with any man, or endeavoured to stir up the people in the synagogues or the city: nor can they prove the charge they have brought against me at this time.

"However, I readily confess, *that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers*, firmly believing every part of the writings of Moses and the prophets; and, at the same time, believe, as they themselves also do, that the Almighty will raise at the last day, both the just and unjust from the dead; and I am careful to maintain a clear and quiet conscience, both towards God and man, agreeable to this faith.

"Having spent some years in distant countries, I repaired to Jerusalem, with the alms I had collected in other provinces, for the poor of mine own nation, and offerings for the God of Jacob. And while I was performing the duties of religion, certain Asiatic Jews found me in the temple, purified according to the law;

but neither attended with a multitude of followers, or the least tumultuous assembly. It was therefore necessary that these Jews should have been here, if they had any thing to allege against me: nay, I appeal to those of the Sanhedrim here present, if any thing has been laid to my charge, except the objections of the Sadducees, who violently opposed me for asserting the doctrine of the resurrection from the grave at the last day."

Having thus heard both parties, Felix refused to pass any final sentence, till he had more fully advised about it, and consulted Lysias the governor of the castle, who was the most proper person to give an account of the sedition and tumult; commanding in the mean time, that St. Paul should be kept under a guard, but at the same time enjoy the liberty of being visited by his friends, and receive from them any office of friendship and kindness they thought proper to bestow.

Drusilla, a Jewess, and daughter of the elder Herod, who was also the wife of Felix, soon after this, came down to him at Cesarea, in whose presence the governor sent for Paul, and gave him leave to explain the doctrines of Christianity. In this discourse, the apostle took occasion particularly to insist upon the great obligation which the laws of CHRIST lay upon men to justice and righteousness, to sobriety and Chastity: urging, at the same time, the true and impartial account that must be given at the judgment of the great day, when all men shall be arraigned before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence, for the actions of their past lives, and be eternally punished or rewarded according to their works done in the body.

This reasoning was wisely adapted to the state and temper of Felix; but corrosives are very uneasy to a guilty mind: men naturally hate whatever brings their sins to remembrance, and sharpens the sting of a violated conscience. But however disagreeable these truths may be, they cannot be heard without confusion; and accordingly, when St. Paul pathetically described the terrors of the last judgment, Felix trembled on his throne; and was so greatly affected, that he caused the apostle to break off abruptly, telling him that he would hear the remainder of his discourse at a season more convenient than the present.

Certainly Felix had sufficient reason to tremble, and his conscience to be sensibly alarmed at these reflections; for he was a man notoriously infamous for rapine and violence. Tacitus tells us, that he made his will the law of his government, practising all manner of cruelty and injustice: his incontinence, luxury, and debauchery, was remarkable; nor did he scruple to violate all the laws of God and man, to satisfy his unruly passions: to these qualities he added bribery and covetousness; and, therefore, often sent for our apostle to discourse with him, expecting he would have given him a considerable sum for his release; having, in all probability, heard that St. Paul had brought a large quantity of money to Jerusalem: but finding no offers were made him, either by the apostle himself, or his friends, he kept him prisoner two years; when he himself being discharged from his office by Nero, he left Paul in prison, in order to gratify the malice of the Jews, and engage them, after his departure from Judea, to speak the better of his government.

After the displacing of Felix, the government of the province was conferred on Portius Festus, before whom, at his first coming to Jerusalem, the high priest and Sanhedrim preferred an indictment against Paul, desiring that he might be sent for up to Jerusalem, in order to his trial, intending to assassinate him by the way: but Festus told them, that he was shortly going himself to Cesarea; and that if they had any complaint against Paul, they might come down thither and accuse him. Accordingly, as soon as he was come to Cesarea, he ascended the tribunal, where the Jews renewed the charge they had before brought against Paul; but the apostle soon cleared himself of every part of the charge, they not being able to prove any thing against him. Festus, however, being willing to procure the favour of the Jews at his entrance on the government, asked him whether he would go up and be tried before him at Jerusalem? But the apostle well knowing the consequences of such a proposal, answered, "I am a Roman, and therefore ought to be judged by the Roman law; and now stand before the judgment seat of Cæsar. I have done nothing against the Jews, a fact thou thyself very well knowest to be true. If I have committed any thing that deserves death,

I am ready to die ; but if not, no person hath a power to deliver me into the hands of mine enemies....*I appeal unto Cæsar.*"

Appeals of this nature were common amongst the Romans, and introduced to defend and secure the lives and fortunes of the people from the unjust encroachments, and over-rigorous severities of the magistrates, whereby it was lawful in cases of oppression to appeal to the emperor for redress ; a thing more than once settled by the sanction of the Valerian law, and now fully established.

King Agrippa, who succeeded Herod in the tetrarchate of Galilee, and his sister Bernice, came to Cesarea, some time after St. Paul had appealed to Cæsar, to visit the new governor. Festus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the case of our apostle to king Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occasioned amongst the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæsar. This account excited the curiosity of king Agrippa, and he was desirous of hearing himself what St. Paul had to say in his own vindication. Accordingly, the next day the king and his sister, accompanied with Festus the governor, and several other persons of distinction, came into the court with a pompous and splendid retinue, where the prisoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Festus informed the court how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Cesarea and Jerusalem, to put the prisoner to death as a malefactor ; but having, on examination, found him guilty of no capital crime, and the prisoner himself having appealed unto Cæsar, he was determined to send him to Rome ; but was willing to have his cause debated before Agrippa, that he might be furnished with some material particulars to send with him ; it being highly absurd to send thither a prisoner without signifying the crimes laid to his charge.

After Festus had finished his speech Agrippa told Paul, he was now at liberty to make his own defence : and silence being made, he addressed his speech particularly to Agrippa in the following manner :

" I esteem it a particular happiness, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence against the accusations of the Jews, before thee ; because thou art well acquainted with all their customs, and the questions commonly debated

amongst them : I therefore beseech thee to hear me patiently and impartially.

" The Jews in general are well acquainted with my manner of life from my youth, the greatest part of it having been spent with mine own countrymen at Jerusalem. They also knew that I was educated under the institutions of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion, and am now arraigned for a tenet believed by all their fathers, a tenet sufficiently credible in itself, and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, I mean, the resurrection of the dead. Why should any mortal think it either incredible or impossible, that God should raise the dead to life ?

" I once thought myself indispensably obliged to oppose the religion of JESUS of Nazareth : nor was I satisfied with imprisoning, and punishing with death itself, the saints I found at Jerusalem ; I even persecuted them in strange cities, whither my implicable zeal pursued them, having procured authority from the chief priests and elders for that purpose.

" I departed accordingly for Damascus, with a commission from the Sanhedrim ; but as I was travelling towards that city, I saw at mid-day, O king, a light from heaven, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, encompassing me and my companions. On seeing this awful appearance, we all fell to the earth ; and I heard a voice, which said to me in the Hebrew language, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks ?* To which I answered, *Who art thou, Lord ?* And he replied, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest :* but be not terrified, arise from the earth ; for I have appeared unto thee, that thou mightest be both a witness of the things thou hast seen, and also of others which I will hereafter reveal unto thee : my power shall deliver thee from the Jews and Gentiles, to whom now I send thee to preach the gospel ; to withdraw the veil of darkness and ignorance, to turn them from falsehood unto truth, *and from the power of Satan unto God.*

" Hereupon, king Agrippa, I readily obeyed the heavenly vision ; I preached the gospel first to the inhabitants of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles ; persuading them to forsake

their iniquities, and turn to the living God, by sincere repentance.

“The Jews being exasperated at these endeavours, to save the souls of sinful mortals, caught me in the temple, and entered into a conspiracy to destroy me: but, by the help of Omnipotence, I still remain a witness to all the human race, preaching nothing but what Moses and all the prophets foretold; namely, that the Messiah should suffer, be the first that should rise from the chambers of the grave, and publish both to the Jews and Gentiles, the glad tidings of Salvation.”

After the apostle had thus pleaded for himself, Festus cried out, “Paul, thou art mad; too much study hath deprived thee of thy reason.” But Paul answered, “I am far, most noble Festus, from being transported with idle and distracted ideas; the words I speak are dictated by truth and sobriety: and I am persuaded that king Agrippa himself is not ignorant of these things: for they were transacted openly before the world. I am confident, king Agrippa, that thou believest the prophets: and therefore, must know that all their predictions were fulfilled in CHRIST.” To which Agrippa answered, “Thou hast almost persuaded me to embrace the Christian faith.” And Paul replied, “I sincerely wish, that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were not almost, but altogether the same as I myself, except being prisoners.”

After Paul had thus spoken, the king and the governor, with the rest of the council, withdrew to confer privately together; and finding, by the accusations brought against him, that he was not guilty by the Roman law, of any capital offence, nor even of such as deserved imprisonment, Agrippa told Festus, that he might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar; but an appeal being once made, the judge had no longer any power either to absolve or condemn, the cause being entirely reserved to the cognizance of that superior, to whom the prisoner had appealed, for his own justification.

As it was now finally determined that Paul should be sent to Rome, he, with several other prisoners of consequence, were committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Augustus; and was

accompanied in this voyage by St. Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others, not mentioned by the sacred penman.

In the month of September, 56, or, according to others, 57, they embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, and sailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteously gave the apostle leave to go on shore, to visit his friends, and refresh himself. After a short stay, they sailed for Cyprus, and arrived opposite the Fair Havens, a place near Myra, a city of Lycia.... Here the season being far advanced, and Paul foreseeing it would be a dangerous voyage, persuaded them to put in and winter there: but the Roman centurion preferring the opinion of the master of the ship, and the harbour being at the same time incommodious, resolved, if possible, to reach Phœnice, a port of Crete, and winter there. But they soon found themselves disappointed; for the fine southerly gale which had favoured them for some time, suddenly changed into a stormy and tempestuous wind, at North-East, which blew with such violence, that the ship was obliged to sail before it; and to prevent her foundering, they threw over-board the principal part of her lading, to lighten the vessel.

They continued fourteen days in this desperate and uncomfortable condition, neither sun nor star appearing for great part of the time. During this confusion, the apostle put them in mind how preposterously they had acted in not listening to his advice; but, at the same time told them, that the God whom he served and worshipped, had the last night sent an angel to him, with assurance that, notwithstanding their present danger, not one of their lives should be lost, though the ship should be wrecked.

When the fourteenth night arrived, the sailors, upon sounding, found they were near some coast; and, therefore, to avoid the rocks, thought proper to come to an anchor, till the morning might give them better information. In the mean time, the seamen, who best understood the danger, were preparing to get into the boat to save themselves; which Paul perceiving, told the captain, that unless they all stayed in the ship, not one of them could be saved: whereupon the soldiers cut the ropes, and let the boat fall into the sea, from the ship.

While they continued at anchor, waiting for the light of the morning, St. Paul prevailed upon them to eat, and refresh themselves, having fasted a long time, assuring them that they should all escape. When they had finished their repast, they lightened the ship of those goods which still remained on board, and endeavoured to put into a small creek they had discovered at a little distance; but falling into a place where two seas met, the ship ran aground, the forepart remaining immovable, but the after part was demolished by the waves: awakened with the danger they were in, the soldiers were desirous of killing the prisoners, lest any of them should make their escape: but the centurion, willing to save Paul, refused his consent, commanding that every one should shift for himself in the best method he could. Accordingly, some by swimming, and others by broken pieces of the ship, they all, to the number of two hundred three score and sixteen, got to shore in safety.

Agreeable to St. Paul's prediction, the country on which they were cast, was an island called Melita, now Malta, situated in the Libyan sea, between Syracuse and Africa. Here they met with great civility from a barbarous people, and the plain acknowledgments of a divine justice written on the naked and uninstructed minds of men; they treated them with great humanity, entertaining them with all the necessary accommodations: but while St. Paul was laying a few sticks on the fire, a viper, enlivened by the heat, came from amongst the wood and fastened on his hand. On seeing this, the inhabitants of the island concluded, that he was certainly some notorious murderer, whom the divine vengeance, though it suffered him to escape the sea, had reserved for a more public and solemn execution: but when they saw him shake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm ensue, they changed their sentiments, and cried out, *that he was a God*: so easily are light and credulous minds transported from one extreme to another, according to the difference of occurrences.

The residence of Publius, the governor of the island, was not far from the place where they were shipwrecked: he entertained this unfortunate company with great hospitality for three days; in acknowledgment of which, St. Paul

by his prayers, and the imposition of his hands, recovered his father from a fever and a bloody-flux; and restored several others of the inhabitants, afflicted with different diseases, to their former health and strength; in consequence of which, they not only shewed him the greatest marks of their esteem, but furnished both him and his company with all the necessaries proper for the rest of their voyage.

After three months stay in this island, the centurion with his charge went on board the *Castor and Pollux*, a ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuse, where they tarried three days, sailed thence to Regium, and so to Puteoli, where they landed; and finding some Christians there, staid at their request a week with them, and then set forward on their journey to Rome. The Christians of this city, hearing of the apostle's coming, went to meet him as far as the *Three Taverns*, about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the *Apia Forum*, fifty-one miles distant from the capital: they kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he saw the Christians enjoyed at Rome, greatly tended to enliven the spirits of the apostle. By these Christians he was conducted in a kind of triumph in the city, where, at their arrival, the rest of the prisoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, and by him disposed in the common prison; but St. Paul probably by the intercession of Julius, was permitted to reside in a private house, with only a soldier to guard him.

St. Paul arrived at Rome, he sent, after he had been there three days, for the heads of the Jewish consistory in that city, and related to them the cause of his coming, in the following manner: "Though I have been guilty of no violence of the laws of our religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jerusalem to the Roman governors, who more than once would have acquitted me as innocent of any capital offence; but by the perverseness of my persecutors, I was obliged to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had any thing to accuse my nation of: I had therefore recourse to this method, merely to prove mine own innocence, and confute the allegations of my enemies."

A popular prejudice being thus removed, he added, "That the true cause of his sufferings was what their own religion had taught

him, the belief and expectation of a future resurrection." This speech gained greatly on their affections, and they answered, That they had received no advice concerning him, nor had any of the Jews that came from Judea brought any charge against him; but, at the same time, they desired to know, what he had to say in support of the religion he had embraced, it being every where decried both by Jew and Gentile. Accordingly, upon a day appointed, he discoursed with them from morning to night, concerning the religion and doctrine of the holy JESUS; proving, from the promises and predictions of the Old Testament, that he was the true Messiah: but his discourse had different effects on different hearers, some being convinced, and others persisting in their infidelity; and as they were departing in some discontent at each other, the apostle told them, it was too plain, that God had accomplished upon them the prophetic curse, of being left to their own wilful hardness and impenitency, to be blind at noon-day, and to run themselves headlong into irrecoverable ruin. That since this was the case, they must expect that he would henceforth preach to the Gentiles, who would very readily embrace the glad tidings of the gospel, which they so scornfully rejected.

During two whole years, Paul dwelt at Rome, in a house he had hired for his own use; wherein he constantly employed himself in preaching and writing for the good of the church. He preached daily without interruption, and with remarkable success; so that his imprisonment contributed greatly to the propagation of the gospel, and rendered him famous even in the Emperor's court, where he converted several to the faith of CHRIST.

Besides others of the apostle's converts at Rome, there was one Onesimus, who had formerly been a servant to Philemon, a person of distinction in Colosse, but had run away from his master, and taken with him some things of value. Having rambled as far as Rome, he was now converted by St. Paul, and by him returned to his master, with a short recommendatory letter, earnestly desiring him to pardon him; and, notwithstanding his former faults, to treat him kindly, and use him as a brother, promising withal, that if he had wronged or

owed him any thing, he himself would repay it for him.

St. Paul's Epistle on this subject may be considered as a master-piece of eloquence, in the persuasive way; for the apostle has herein had recourse to all the considerations, which friendship, religion, piety, and tenderness, can inspire, to reconcile a master to his servant; and yet some of the ancients were of opinion, that it did not deserve a place in the canon of Scripture, because it was written on a particular occasion, and with a design not so much to instruct christians in general, as to recommend a poor fugitive servant: but though the subject of this Epistle be a private affair, yet it contains, amongst others, the following general instruction *First*, That no Christian, though in the meanest condition, is to be contemned. *Secondly*, That Christianity does not impair the power of masters over their servants. *Thirdly*, That servants ought to make satisfaction for any wrong or injury done to their masters. *Fourthly*, That masters ought to be reconciled to their servants, upon their repentance and acknowledgment of their faults. And, *Fifthly*, That there is, at all times, a love and affection due from a master to a servant. Who, therefore, would refuse to number an Epistle so profitable, and so instructive, with the rest of the works of this learned apostle?

The Philippians hearing of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, and not knowing what straits he might be reduced to, raised a contribution for him, and sent it by Epaphroditus, their bishop, by whom he returned an Epistle to them, wherein he gives some account of the state of his affairs at Rome; gratefully acknowledges their kindness to him; warns them against the dangerous opinions which the Judaizing teachers began to vent amongst them; and advises them to live in continual obedience to CHRIST; to avoid disputations, delight in prayer, be courageous under affliction, united in love, and clothed with humility, in imitation of the blessed JESUS, who so far humbled himself, as to *become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, for the sins of men.

The apostle had lived three years at Ephesus, preaching the gospel to the numerous inhabitants of that city, and was therefore well acquainted with the state and condition of the

place; so that taking the opportunity of Ty-chicus' going thither, he wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians, wherein he endeavours to countermin the principles and practices both of the Jews and Gentiles; to confirm them in the belief and practice of the Christian doctrine; and to instruct them fully in the great mysteries of the gospel; their redemption and justification by the death of CHRIST; their gratuitous election; their union with the Jews in one body, of which CHRIST is the head, and the glorious exaltation of that head, above all creatures, both spiritual and temporal; together with many excellent moral precepts, both as to the general duties of religion, and the duties of their particular relations in life.

Though St. Paul himself had never been at Colosse, yet Epaphras, who was then at Rome a prisoner with him, had preached the gospel there with good success; and from him he might learn, that certain false teachers had endeavoured to persuade the people, that they ought not to apply to God by JESUS CHRIST, who, since his ascension, was so far exalted above them, that angels were now become the proper mediators between God and man; and, therefore, in opposition to this, as well as other seductions of the same nature, he wrote his Epistle to the Colossians; wherein he magnificently displays the Messiah, and all the benefits flowing from him, as being the image of his Father, the Redeemer of all mankind, the reconciler of all things to God, and the head of the church, which gives life and vigour to all its members: he commends the doctrine preached to them by Epaphras, and exhorts them not to be led away by the reasonings of human philosophy, by the superstitious practices of making differences of meats and drinks, or by a pretended humility in worshipping angels; and gives them an abstract of many principal duties of the Christian life, especially such as respects the relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, and other social and relative duties.

We have no account in history, by what means St. Paul was delivered from his imprisonment, and discharged from the accusation the Jews brought against him; but it is natural to suppose, that not having sufficient proof of what they alleged, or being informed that the

crimes they accused him of, were no violations of the Roman law, they durst not implead him before the Emperor, and so permitted him to be discharged of course: but by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his salutations to the Jewish churches.

It is necessary to observe, that the principal design of this admirable Epistle, is to magnify CHRIST and the religion of the gospel, above Moses and the Jewish œconomy, in order to establish and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding the trouble and persecutions that would certainly attend them. He therefore represents our Saviour in his divine nature, as far superior to all angels, and all created beings; and in his mediatorial capacity, as a greater priest than Aaron, and a greater king and priest than Melchisedec: he shews that the ceremonies, the sacrifices, and the observances of the law could have no virtue in themselves, but only as they were the types of JESUS CHRIST; and being now accomplished in his person, were finally and totally abolished: he insists on the necessity of faith; and by the examples of the patriarchs and prophets, proves that justification can be procured no other way, than by the merits of a dying Saviour: and, lastly, he mingles many excellent precepts for the regulation of their lives; exhortations to put trust and confidence in CHRIST, in all their sufferings; and strict cautions against apostacy from his religion in the hottest persecutions from their enemies.

St. Paul having thus discharged his ministry, both by preaching and writing in Italy, prosecuted his long-intended journey into Spain, accompanied by Timothy; and, according to the testimony of several writers, crossed the sea, and preached the gospel in Britain. What success he had in these western parts, is not known; he however, continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the East, visited Sicily, Greece, and Crète, and then repaired into Judea.

How long he continued in his native country, is unknown, no further mention being made of him, till his return to Rome, which was probably about the eighth or ninth year of

Nero's reign. Here he met with Peter, and was, together with him, thrown into prison, doubtless in the general persecution raised against the Christians, under pretence that they had set fire to the city: but besides this general, there were particular reasons for his imprisonment. Some of the ancients say, he was engaged with St. Peter in detecting the impositions of Simon Magus.

St. Chrysostom tells us, that Nero was highly enraged against St. Paul, for his having converted one of his favourite concubines; and the apostle, after he was thrown into prison, persisting, to persuade that lady to continue in her chaste and pious resolutions, Nero commanded him to be put to death. How long he remained in prison, is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was scourged before his execution: he was however, allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore beheaded.

As he was led to the place of execution, he is said to have converted three of the soldiers sent to guard and conduct him, and who soon after became martyrs to the faith. Being come to the place, which was the Aquæ Salviæ, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a solemn preparation, gave his neck to the fatal stroke; and from this vale of misery, his spirit passed to the blissful regions of immortality, to the kingdom of his beloved Master, the great Redeemer of the human race, in the propagation of whose gospel, he had so long and faithfully laboured.

His mortal part was buried in the Vie Ostiensis, about two miles from Rome; and about the year 317, Constantine the Great, at the instance of Pope Sylvester, built a stately church over his grave, adorned it with an hundred marble columns, and beautified it with the most exquisite workmanship: but this church being thought too small for the honour of so great an apostle, Valentinian, by a rescript to Saus-tius, prefect of the city, caused it to be taken down, and a much larger structure to be erected, which was finished after his death by Theodosius; and further beautified, at the persuasion of Leo, bishop of Rome, by the empress Placida.

According to Nicephorus, St. Paul was of a low and small stature, somewhat stooping; his complexion was fair, his countenance grave,

his head small, his eyes sparkling, his nose high and bending, and his hair thick and dark, but mixed with grey. His constitution was weak, and often subject to distempers: but how mean soever the cabinet might be, there was a treasure within precious and valuable, as will sufficiently appear, if we view the accomplishments of his mind.

His judgment was clear and solid, his understanding quick, and his memory strong and clear; all which were greatly improved by art, and the advantages of a liberal education. The schools of Tarsus and Jerusalem had sharpened his discursive faculty, by logic and the arts of reasoning, instructed him in the institutions of philosophy, and adorned his mind with every kind of human learning. A sufficient proof, that it is not unlawful to bring the spoils of Egypt into the service of the sanctuary; and to make use of the advantages of foreign studies and human literature to divine and excellent purposes. He seems indeed to have been educated purposely to qualify him for being the apostle of the Gentiles, to contend with and confute the grave and the wise, the acute and subtle, the sage and the learned of the heathen world, and to wound them with arrows from their own quivers. He seldom made use of learning and philosophy; it being more agreeable to the designs of the gospel, to confound, by the plain doctrine of the cross, the wisdom and learning of the world.

Though these were great accomplishments, yet they were only a shadow of that divine temper of mind he enjoyed, and which discovered itself through the whole course of his life. He was humble to the lowest step of abasement and condescension, none ever thinking better of others, or more meanly of himself. And though, when he had to deal with envious and malicious adversaries, who endeavoured, by vilifying his person, to obstruct his ministry, he knew how to magnify his office, and to let them know that he was not inferior to the chiefest of the apostles; yet, at other times, he always declared to the world, that he considered himself as an abortive, or an untimely birth, as *the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle*; and, as if this were not enough, he formed a word on purpose to express his humility, styling himself *Elachistoteron, less than*

the least of the saints ; nay, the very chief of sinners.

How freely and frequently does he confess, that, before his conversion, he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, a person that injured both God and man : though honoured with the highest grace and favour, taken up to an immediate converse with God in heaven, yet he never shewed the least loftiness over his brethren ; he was intrusted with the greatest power and authority in the church, but never affected to govern the faith of men ; he only endeavoured to be an helper of their joy. How studiously did he decline all the honours and commendations that were heaped upon him ; when some in the church of Corinth magnified him, and, under the patronage of his name, began to set up for a party, he severely rebuked them, told them that it was CHRIST, not he that was crucified for them ; that they had not been baptized into his name, nor did he remember to have baptized above three or four of them, and was heartily glad he had no oftener performed the ceremony, lest a foundation might have been laid, from that circumstance, for charging him with Judaizing.

St. Paul's temperance and sobriety were remarkable ; for he often abridged himself of the convenience of lawful and necessary accommodations : his hungerings and thirstings were frequent ; by which means he reduced the extravagancy of the sensual appetites to a perfect subjection of the law of reason. Hence he easily got above the world, with all its charms and frowns, and his mind was continually conversant in heaven, where his thoughts were fixed, and whither his desires always ascended. What he taught to others, he practised himself ; his conversation was in heaven, and his desires were to depart, and to be with CHRIST. This world neither arrested his affection nor disturbed his fears : he was neither pleased with its applauses, nor terrified with its threatenings : he studied not to please men, nor valued the censures they passed upon him : he was not greedy of a great estate, titles of honour, or rich presents from men ; food and raiment was his bill of fare, and more than this he never cared for ; accounting, that the less he was clogged with these things, the lighter he should pass to heaven, especially as he was

travelling through a world, overrun with troubles and persecutions. And hence it is very probable, that he always led a single life, though some of the ancients rank him amongst those apostles who were married.

No less exemplary were his kindness and charity ; for he had a compassionate tenderness for the poor, and a quick sense of the wants of others. To what church soever he came, it was always one of his first cares to make provision for the poor, and to stir up the bounty of the rich and wealthy ; nay, he himself worked often with his own hands, not only to maintain himself, but also to help and relieve them : but his charity to the souls of men was infinitely greater, fearing no dangers, refusing no labours, going through good and evil report, that he might gain men over to the knowledge of the truth, bring them out of the crooked paths of vice and idolatry, and place them in the straight way that leadeth to life eternal : nay, so insatiable was his thirst for the good of souls, that he affirms that he would sooner himself be accursed from CHRIST, than that his countrymen should miscarry. And as he was infinitely solicitous to gain them over to the religion of the Son of God, so he was equally careful to keep them from being seduced from it ; ready to suspect every thing that might corrupt their minds, from the simplicity that is in CHRIST : *I am jealous over you*, says he, to the church of Corinth, *with a godly jealousy* : an affection of all others, the most active and vigilant, and which inspires men with the most passionate care and concern, for the good of those for whom they have the highest degree of love and kindness.

Nor was his charity to men greater than his zeal for God, labouring with all his might, to promote the honour of his master. How remarkably zealous was he while he continued a member of the Jewish religion, of the tradition of the fathers ! How earnest to vindicate and assert the divinity of the Mosaic dispensation, and to persecute all who were of a contrary faith, even to rage and madness ! And when his zeal was afterwards turned into a right channel, it ran with a swift current, carrying him out against all opposition, to vanquish the kingdom and the powers of darkness, to beat down idolatry, and plant the world

with the right apprehensions of God, and the true knowledge of religion. When at Athens he saw them involved in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and giving the honour that was due to God alone, to statues and images, this fired his zeal, and he could not but let them know the resentment of his mind, and how greatly they dishonoured God, the great maker and preserver of the world. This zeal must have rendered him remarkably diligent and industrious in the execution of his office, warning, reproving, entreating, persuading, preaching in season and out of season, by night and by day, by sea and by land; he thought no pains too much to be taken, no dangers too great to be overcome.

For thirty-five years after his conversion, he seldom staid long in one place, travelling from Jerusalem through Arabia, Asia and Greece, to Illyricum, to Rome, and to the utmost bounds of the western world, preaching the gospel of Christ. Running, says St. Jerom, from ocean to ocean, like the sun in the heavens, of which it is said, his circuit is from the one end of the heaven to the other, sooner wanting ground to tread on than a desire to propagate the faith of CHRIST. Nicephorus compares him to a bird in the air, which, in a few years, flew round the world: Isidore, to a winged husbandman, who flew from place to place to cultivate the world with the most exact rules and institutions of life. And while the other apostles confined themselves, as it were, to one spot, choosing this or that particular province and place for their ministry, St. Paul over-ran the whole world to its utmost bounds and corners, planting all places where he came, with the divine doctrines of the gospel. Nor in this course was he tired with the dangers and difficulties he met with, the troubles and oppositions that were raised against him; but all these served only to reflect a greater lustre on his patience; of which he was a most eminent pattern, enduring the greatest troubles and persecutions, with a patience triumphant and unconquerable.

This will easily appear if we take a survey of what trials and sufferings he underwent; some part whereof are thus briefly summed up by himself: *In labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft; thrice*

beatn with rods, once stoned, thrice suffered, shipwreck, a night and a day in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils by his countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst falsebrethren: in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst: in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; and besides those things that were without, which daily came upon him, the care of all the churches. An account, though very great, yet far short of what he endured. All which he cheerfully underwent with a soul as calm and serene as the morning sun: no malice or rage, nor fury or storms, could ruffle or discompose his spirit: nay, they animated him to rise up with the greater eagerness and resolution to perform his duty. Could all the powers of men and devils, spite and opposition, torments and threatenings, have been able to baffle him out of that religion he had embraced, he must have deserted his station: but his soul was steeled with a courage and resolution that was impenetrable; and on which no temptation, either from hopes or fears, could make any more impression, than an arrow shot against a wall of adamant.

He did not want solicitations both from Jews and Gentiles; and might, doubtless, in some measure, have made his own terms, would he have been false to his trust, and quitted that way which was then every where spoken against. But, alas! these things weighed little with our apostle, who *counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus;* and therefore, when he thought himself under the sentence of death, could triumphantly say, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* In short, he was a man in whom the divine life eminently displayed itself; he lived piously and devoutly, soberly and temperately, justly and righteously; careful *always to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and man.* This, he tells us, was his support under all his sufferings; this the foundation of his confidence towards God, and his firm hopes of happiness in another world. *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly*

sincerity we have had our conversation in the world. In short, as the love of this great apostle to his divine Master knew no bounds, so the beauty and energy of his writings, as well as his sufferings in support of the truth he espoused and inculcated, are beyond example.

THE LIFE OF ST. JAMES,

THE APOSTLE.....SURNAMED THE GREAT.

THIS apostle was a native of Galilee, born, in all probability, either at Capernaum or Bethsaida, as he was a partner with Simon Peter in the fishing trade. The epithet of Great was given him, to distinguish him from another apostle of the same name.

He was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman, who kept several servants to carry on his trade, and therefore must have been a person of some consequence in his way. His mother's name was Mary, surnamed Salome, the daughter of Cleophas, and sister or rather cousin-german to Mary the mother of our Lord; so that he had the honour of being a near relation to CHRIST himself. He was brought up to the trade of his father; a mean occupation, indeed, in the eye of the world, but no employment is mean that is honest and industrious; and it should be remembered that the Son of God himself stooped so low, as to become the reputed son of a carpenter, and during the retirement of his private life laboured himself at his father's trade; not merely devoting himself to contemplations, nor withdrawing from all useful society with the world, and hiding himself in the solitudes of an anchorite, but busying himself in an active course of life, as he continually went about doing good to the souls and bodies of mankind.

Not in the least discouraged at the meanness of his father's trade, St. James applied himself to it with remarkable assiduity, and was exercising his employment when the Saviour of the world passing by the sea of Galilee, saw him with his brother in the ship, and called them both to be his disciples. Nor was the call in vain; they cheerfully complied with it, and

immediately left all to follow him: they did not stay to dispute his commands, or solicitously inquire into the minute consequences of the undertaking, the troubles and dangers that might attend this new employment; but readily delivered themselves up to perform whatever service he should call them to.

He was called soon after this from the station of an ordinary disciple, to the apostolical office, and even honoured with some particular favours beyond most of the apostles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of, as his companions in the more intimate transactions of his life, from which the rest were excluded. Thus, with Peter and his brother John, he attended his Master when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; he was admitted to CHRIST's glorious transfiguration on the mount, and heard the discourses that passed between him and the great ministers from the courts of heaven; and when the holy JESUS was to undergo his bitter agony in the garden, as preparatory sufferings to his passion, James was one of the three taken to be a spectator of them.

It is not easy to determine what reasons induced the Redeemer of mankind, to admit those three apostles to peculiar acts of favour; though he doubtless did it for wise and proper ends. Whether he designed these three to be more solemn and peculiar witnesses of some remarkable transactions of his life, than the other apostles; or that they would be more eminently useful and serviceable in some parts of the apostolic office; or to encourage them thereby to prepare for the sufferings that would attend them in the ministry; or whether he designed

them for some more eminent kinds of martyrdom than the rest of his disciples.

It was not the least instance of particular honour that our Lord conferred on these apostles, when he called them to the apostolate, that he gave them a new name and title. A thing not uncommon of old, for the Almighty often imposed new names on persons, when he intended them for some great and peculiar services and employments; instances of this we have in Abraham and Jacob. Accordingly, our Lord, at the election of these three apostles, gave them new names: Simon he called *Peter*, or a rock; and James and John, *Boanerges*, or the sons of thunder. What our Lord intended by their surnames, is much easier to conjecture than determine; some think it was given them on account of their being present in the mount, when a voice came out of the cloud, saying, *This is my beloved Son, &c.* for when the people heard the same voice at another time, they said, "It thundered." But this observation is in itself very inconsiderable, because it was equally applicable to Peter as to them. Others think that it was given them on account of their loud and bold preaching the gospel to the world, fearing no threatenings, despising all opposition, and going on thundering in the ears of a drowsy and sleepy world; rousing and awakening the consciences of men, with the earnestness and vehemence of their preaching, which resembled thunder, as the voice of God powerfully shakes the natural world, and breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the doctrines they delivered, teaching the great mysteries of the gospel in a more profound and loftier strain than the rest.

How far the latter opinion might be true with regard to St. James, the scriptures are wholly silent; but it was certainly verified in his brother John, whose gospel is so full of the more sublime notions and mysteries of the gospel, concerning the divinity, pre-existence, &c. of CHRIST, that he is generally affirmed by the ancients to thunder rather than speak. Perhaps the expression may denote no more than that in general they were to be prime and eminent ministers in this new state of things; the introducing the gospel or evangelical dispensation, being called "a voice shaking the

heaven and the earth," and therefore exactly correspondent to the native importance of the word, signifying an *earthquake*, or a vehement commotion, that, like thunder, makes an alarming noise.

However this be, our blessed Saviour doubtless by this term, alluded to the furious and resolute dispositions of those two brothers, who seem to have been of a more fiery temper than the rest of the apostles, of which we have this memorable instance. When our Lord was determined on his journey to Jerusalem, he sent some of his disciples before him to make preparations for his coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, were rudely rejected, from the old grudge that subsisted between the Samaritans and the Jews, and because our Saviour, by going up to Jerusalem, seemed to slight their place of worship on mount Gerizem.

This piece of rudeness and inhumanity, was so highly resented by St. James and his brother John, that they came to JESUS, desiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling down fire from heaven, to consume this barbarous, inhospitable people. So apt are men, for every trifling provocation, to call upon heaven to revenge them on the aggressors, according to the extravagancies of their own unreasonable passions! But the holy JESUS soon convinced them of their mistake, by telling them, that he was come to save the lives of the children of men, and not to destroy them.

We have no account from sacred history, what became of St. James after the ascension of his great and beloved Master. Sophronius tells us, that he preached to the dispersed Jews, that is, to those converts who were dispersed after the death of Stephen. The Spanish writers will have it, that after preaching the gospel in several parts of Judea and Samaria, he visited Spain, where he planted Christianity, and appointed some select disciples to perfect what he had begun; but if we consider the shortness of St. James' life, and that the apostles continued in a body at Jerusalem, even after the dispersion of the other Christians, we shall find it difficult to allow time sufficient for so tedious and difficult a voyage as that was, in those early ages; and therefore, it is safest to

confine his ministry to Judea, and the countries bordering upon it.

We learn from profane history, that Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great, had been a great favourite both with the emperor Caligula, and his successor Claudius, who conferred on him his grandfather's kingdoms, and sent him into Judea. Herod was noble and generous, prudent and politic, thoroughly versed in all the arts and intrigues of a court; he knew how to oblige his enemies, and mollify or avert the displeasure of the emperor. He was of a courteous and affable disposition; but at the same time, a great zealot of the Jewish religion, and a very accurate observer of the Mosaic law.... This prince, at his arrival in his new kingdom, thought there was no surer way of ingratiating himself into the favour of the populace, than by persecuting the Christians, whom he knew the Jews detested. Accordingly, he began a violent persecution; but the commonalty being too mean a sacrifice to satisfy his own zeal, and favour his popular designs, he laid hands on St. James, whose active temper and vigorous manner of contending for the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, rendered him a proper victim at this time.

The same zeal which animated Herod to lay hands on St. James, also prompted him to pass sentence of death on him immediately. As he was led to the place of execution, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, having been converted by that remarkable courage and constancy shewn by the apostle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, came and fell down at the apostle's feet, and heartily begged pardon for what he had said against him. The holy man, after recovering from the surprize, tenderly embraced him. "Peace," said he, "my son, peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Upon which the officer publicly declared himself a Christian, and both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell the great apostle James, the first protomartyr of the apostles, the first of that

number that gained the crown, taking cheerfully that cup, of which he had long since told his Lord he was ready to drink.

However, the divine vengeance, that never sleeps, would not suffer the death of this innocent and righteous man to pass long unrevenged; for shortly after the martyrdom of St. James, Herod removed to Cesarea, in order to make war on the neighbouring Tyrians and Sidonians: and while he continued in this city, he proclaimed solemn fights and festival entertainments to be held in honour of Cæsar, to which there flocked a prodigious confluence of the principal inhabitants of the adjacent parts. Early in the morning of the second day, he came with great state into the theatre, to make an oration to the people; and being clothed in a robe curiously wrought with silver, the beams of the sun were reflected from it with such lustre, that the people cried out, that it was some deity they beheld; and that he who spake to them, must be something above the common standard of humanity.

This impious applause Herod received without the least token of dislike, or sense of the injury that was done by it to the Supreme Being. But a sudden accident changed the scene, and turned their mirth and rejoicing into melancholy and mourning: for Herod, looking up, saw an owl perched upon a rope over his head, which he considered as the fatal minister of his death; on which an incurable melancholy seized his mind, and the most exquisite torments his bowels, occasioned by those worms St. Luke mentions; so that turning to the people, he cried out, "Behold the deity you admired, and yourselves evidently convinced of flattery and falsehood; see me this moment condemned by the laws of fate to die, whom just now you styled immortal." He was removed into the palace, but his pains still increased upon him: and though the people fasted, and offered prayers for his life and health, yet his acute torments prevailed, and after five days put a period to his life.

THE LIFE OF ST. JAMES, THE APOSTLE.....SURNAMED THE LESS.

BEFORE we enter upon the life of this apostle, it will be necessary to remove some difficulties relating to his person. It has been doubted by some, whether this was the same with that St. James, who was afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, two of this name being mentioned in the sacred writings, namely, St. James the Great, and St. James the Less, both apostles; the ancients mention a third, surnamed the Just, which they will have to be distinct from the former, and bishop of Jerusalem: but this opinion is built on a sandy foundation; for nothing is plainer than that St. James the apostle, whom St. Paul calls *our Lord's brother*, and reckons with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church, was the same who presided amongst the apostles, doubtless by virtue of his episcopal office, and determined the causes in the synod of Jerusalem. Nor do either Clemens, Alexandrinus, or Eusebius, mention any more than two St. James' slain by Herod, and St. James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem, whom they expressly affirm to be the same with him who is called the brother of our Lord by St. Paul.

The difficulties with regard to his person, being thus removed, we shall proceed to the history of his life. It is reasonable to think that he was the son of Joseph, afterwards the husband of Mary, by his first wife, whom St. Jerom styles *Escha*, and adds that she was the daughter of Aggi, Brother to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: hence he was reputed our Lord's brother. We find indeed several mentioned as the brethren of our Saviour in the evangelical history; but in what sense, was greatly controverted by the ancients. St. Jerom, St. Chrysostom, and some others, will have them to have been so called, from their being the sons of Mary, cousin-german, or according to the Hebrew idiom, sister to the Virgin Mary: but Eusebius, Epiphanius, and many others tell us, they were the children

of Joseph, by a former wife; and this seems most natural, and best agrees with what the evangelist says of them, when he enumerates the questions of the Jews: *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man these things?* By which it is plain, that the Jews understood these persons not to be CHRIST's kinsmen only, but his brethren; the same carpenter's sons having the same relation to him, that JESUS himself had: indeed they had more, CHRIST being only his reputed, they his natural sons. Upon this account, the blessed Virgin is sometimes called the mother of James and Joses; and by this name we frequently find her mentioned by the evangelists in relating our Lord's crucifixion: and though she was only mother-in-law to St. James, yet the evangelists might choose to style her so, because she was commonly called his mother, after the death of Joseph: perhaps she herself chose that title, that the Son of God, whom as a Virgin, she had brought into the world, might be the better concealed, and less exposed to the envious malice of the Jews. To this it may be added, that Josephus, who was eminently skilled in matters of genealogy and descent, expressly says, that St. James was the brother of JESUS CHRIST. There is indeed, one objection against this, namely, that he is called *the son of Alpheus*: but this may mean no more, than either that Joseph was called by another name, a thing very common amongst the Jews, or that James himself was a disciple of some particular sect or synagogue, called Alpheans, there being many such sects about this time amongst the Jews.

The sacred history is silent with regard to the place of his birth: the Jews, in their Talmud, called him a man of the town of Sechania; but where that place was situated, is uncertain:

nor is it known what his particular way or course of life was before he was called to the apostleship; the sacred writers having been silent with regard to this particular, mentioning nothing concerning him during the life of our Saviour.

St. James was honoured, after the resurrection, with a particular appearance of our Lord to him, which, though passed over in silence by the evangelists, is recorded by St. Paul. St. Jerom, from the Hebrew gospel of the Nazarenes, which contains several particulars omitted by the evangelical historians, gives the following relation of his appearance to this apostle. St. James had solemnly sworn, that from the time he had drank of the cup of the institution of the supper, he would eat bread no more, till he saw the Lord risen from the dead; our Lord, therefore, being returned from the grave, came and appeared to him, and commanded bread to be set before him, which he took, blessed, and brake, and gave to St. James; saying, "Eat thy bread, my brother, for the Son of man is truly risen from amongst them that sleep."

After the resurrection of our Saviour, he was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, being preferred before all the rest, for his near relation to CHRIST; and for the same reason, we find Simeon chosen to be his immediate successor in that see, because, after St. James, he was our Lord's next kinsman: a consideration that made Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, though they had been peculiarly honoured by our Saviour, not to contend for this high and honourable station, but freely chose James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem. This dignity is indeed said by some of the ancients, to have been conferred on him by CHRIST, who constituted him bishop at the time of his appearing to him: but it is safest to follow the general opinion, that this dignity was conferred upon him by the apostles; though possibly they might receive some intimations from our Lord himself, concerning it.

St. Paul, when he came to Jerusalem, after his conversion, applied to St. James, and was by him honoured with the right hand of fellowship: and Peter sent to St. James the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison, *Go*, said he, *shew these things unto James, and to*

the brethren; that is, to the whole church, especially to St. James, the pastor of it at that time.

This apostle was remarkably active in the synod of Jerusalem, when the great cause relating to the Mosaic rites was debated; for the cause being opened by Peter, and further debated by Paul and Barnabas, St. James stood up to pass the final and decretory sentence: That the Gentile converts were not to be loaded with the Jewish yoke; a few indifferent rites only being ordered to be observed, in order to produce an accommodation between the Jews and Gentiles, ushering in the expedient with this positive conclusion, "This is my sentence and determination:" a circumstance the more considerable, because spoken at a time when Peter was in council, and produced not the least intimation of the authority afterwards ascribed to him.

St. James performed every part of his charge with all possible care and industry, omitting no particular, necessary to be observed by a diligent and faithful guide of souls; strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, reproving the obstinate; and, by the constancy of his sermons, conquering the stubbornness of that perverse and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better sort being persuaded to embrace the Christian faith: but a person so careful, so successful in his charge, could not fail of awakening the spite and malice of his enemies; a sort of men of whom the apostle has given too true a character, that *they please not God, and are contrary to all men*.

The Jews being vexed to see St. Paul had escaped their hands, by appealing unto Cæsar, their malice became as great and insatiable as hell itself, so that as they could not have their revenge on St. Paul, they turned their fury against St. James; but being unable to effect their design under the government of Festus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorship of Albinus, his successor, Ananus the younger, of the sect of the Sadducees, being high priest. They were however fearful, that Albinus would oppose their design, and therefore thought it the surest method to dispatch him, if possible before the new governor arrived. In order to this, a council was summon-

ed, and the apostle, with others, arraigned and condemned as violaters of the law : but that the action might appear more plausible and popular, the Scribes and Pharisees, masters in the art of dissimulation, endeavoured to ensnare him : and, at their first coming, told him, that they had all placed the greatest confidence in him ; that the whole nation as well as they gave him the title of a just man, and one that was no respecter of persons ; that they therefore desired he would correct the error and false opinion the people had conceived of JESUS, whom they considered as the Messiah, and take this opportunity of the universal confluence to the paschal solemnity, to set them right in their opinions in this particular, and would go with them to the top of the temple, where he might be seen and heard by all the people.

To this the apostle readily consented, and being advantageously placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addressed him in the following manner : “ Tell us, O Justus ! whom we have all the reason in the world to believe, that the people are thus generally led away with the doctrine of JESUS, who was crucified ; tell us, what is this institution of the crucified JESUS ? ” To which the apostle answered, with an audible voice : “ Why do you inquire of JESUS, the Son of man ? He sits in heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven. ” The people below hearing this, glorified the blessed JESUS, and openly proclaimed, “ Hosanna to the son of David. ”

Hereupon the Scribes and Pharisees perceived that they had acted foolishly ; that, instead of reclaiming, they had confirmed the people in their error ; and that there was no way left but to dispatch him immediately, in order to warn others, by his sufferings, not to believe in JESUS of Nazareth : accordingly they suddenly cried out, that Justus himself was seduced, and become an impostor ; and immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he stood, into the court below ; but not being killed on the spot, he recovered himself so far as to rise on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers : but malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindness, or satisfied with cruelty : little portions of revenge serve only to enflame it, and rouse it up to

greater acts of cruelty. Accordingly, his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, they poured a shower of stones upon him, while he was imploring their forgiveness at the throne of grace ; and one of them, more merciful than the rest, with a fuller's club, put an end to his misery.

This great and good man thus finished his course, in the ninety-sixth year of his age, and about twenty-four years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the sober and just persons amongst the Jews themselves, as Josephus himself confesses. He was buried, according to Gregory of Tours, on Mount Olivet, in a tomb he had built for himself, and in which he had buried Zacharias and old Simeon. Hejcsippus says, he was buried in the court of the temple, where he suffered martyrdom, and that a monument was there erected to his memory : but the former seems more agreeable to reason ; for the Jews very rarely buried any person in the city, much less in the courts of the temple ; and therefore, it is not natural to think they would permit that honour to be paid to him they had so lately put to death as an impostor and deceiver.

St. James was a man of exemplary piety and devotion, educated under the strictest rules and institutions of religion, a priest of the ancient order of the Rechabites, or rather, as Epiphanius conjectures, according to the most ancient order and form of priesthood, when the sacerdotal office was the prerogative of the first-born : but whether this kind of priesthood was at any time observed under the Mosaic dispensation, we are no where told in Sacred Writ : but however that be, it is certain that he had the privilege of entering the sanctuary or holy place, when he pleased, though none but priests of the order of Aaron were permitted to enter there besides himself. Prayer was his constant business and delight ; he seemed to live upon it, and to have continually his conversation in heaven ; and, therefore, used constantly to repair into the temple, to pray, which he always performed kneeling, and with the greatest reverence, till by his daily devotions, his knees were become hard and callous, like those of a camel. And he who has told us, that *the prayer of a righteous man availeth much,*

found it so by his own experience, heaven lending a more immediate ear to his petitions; so that in a time of remarkable drought, on his praying for rain, the clouds melted into fruitful showers, and relieved the necessities of the people.

His charity towards men was not less singular than his piety towards God: he did good to all, watched over the souls of men, and studied to advance their eternal welfare; his daily errand into the temple was to pray for the happiness of the people, and that God would not severely reckon with them; he could forgive his most inveterate enemies, and overcome evil with good: when thrown from the top of the temple, he made use of his latest breath in sending up petitions to heaven for the pardon of his murderers, "I beseech thee, O Almighty Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This apostle was of a remarkable meek and humble temper, honouring what was excellent in others, concealing what was valuable in himself: neither the eminency of his relation to the blessed JESUS, nor the dignity of the place he so worthily filled, could induce him to entertain lofty thoughts of himself, above the rest of his brethren; on the contrary, he strove to conceal whatever might place him in a higher rank, than the other disciples of the Lord of glory. Though he was brother to the Redeemer of mankind, he styles himself only the servant of our Lord JESUS CHRIST; not so much as mentioning his being an apostle of his divine Master.

He was a person of extraordinary temperance, wholly abstaining from flesh, drinking neither wine nor strong drink, and never using the bath. His holy and mortified mind, was contented with the meanest accommodations; he went bare-foot, and never wore any other than linen garments. He lived indeed after the strictest rules of the Nazarite order: and as the mitre he wore on his head evinced his priesthood, which was rather from Melchizedek than Aaron; so his never shaving his head, or using any ointments, his habit and diet, and the great severity of his life, shewed him to belong to the Nazarite institution to which he was consecrated, even from his mother's womb. A man of so divine a temper, that he was at once

the love and wonder of his age; and from the reputation of his holy and religious life, was styled *James the Just*. He was indeed the safety and happiness of the nation, which was reckoned to depend upon his prayers and interest with heaven, and hence he acquired the title of *Oblias*, or *Ozliam*, the *defence and fortress of the people*; indicating, that when he was no more, their castles would be dismantled, and their strength laid level with the ground: and so indeed it proved; for a few years after his death, the Roman army broke in upon them, and filled the country with blood and slaughter. It is indeed no wonder that the judgments of the Almighty, like a flood, should come rolling in upon a nation, when the sluices are plucked up, and Moses taken away, that stood in the gap to oppose them. In short, St. James was the delight of all good men, and in so great favour and estimation with the people, that they used to flock after him, and strive who should touch, if it were only the border of his garment; his very episcopal chair, as Eusebius informs us, wherein he used to sit, was carefully preserved, and had a kind of veneration paid it, even in his time. He was beloved not only by his friends, but also by his enemies, and the Jews themselves mention St. James in their Talmud, as a person who wrought miracles in the name of JESUS his Master; and the wisest of them considered his martyrdom as the principal cause of all those calamities that soon after flowed in upon them. Josephus in particular reckons the death of St. James, as the action that more immediately roused the divine vengeance, and hastened the universal ruin of that nation by the Roman armies.

This apostle wrote only one epistle, probably not long before his martyrdom, as appears from some passages in it relating to the near approach of the destruction of the Jews: he directed it to the Jewish converts dispersed up and down those eastern countries, to comfort them under their sufferings, and confirm them against error: he saw a great degeneracy of manners coming on, and that the purity of the Christian faith began to be undermined by the doctrines and practices of the Gnostics, who, under pretence of zeal for the legal rites, generally mixed themselves with the Jews: he beheld libertinism flowing in apace, and the way to heaven

made soft and easy, men declaiming against good works as useless and unnecessary, and ascertaining that a naked belief was sufficient to salvation. These doctrines the apostle opposes, presses the purity, patience, charity, and all the virtues of a good life ; and by undenia-

ble arguments proves, that such a faith alone, which has CHRIST for its object, and works by love and holiness, can justify us before God, and procure our admittance into the celestial kingdom of eternal glory.

THE LIFE OF ST. PETER,

THE APOSTLE TO THE JEWS.

THIS remarkable apostle and disciple of our blessed Lord and Saviour was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, situate on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, called also the sea of Galilee, from its being situated in that country ; and the lake of Tiberias, from that city being built on its banks : but the particular time of this great apostle's birth cannot be known ; the evangelists, and other writers amongst the primitive Christians, having been silent with regard to this particular. It is, however, pretty certain, that he was at least ten years older than his master ; the circumstances of his being married, and in a settled course of life, when he became a follower of the great Messiah, and that authority and respect the gravity of his person procured him amongst the rest of the apostles, sufficiently declare this conjecture to be very far from improbable.

St. Peter, being a descendant of Abraham, was circumcised according to the rites of the Mosaic law, and called, by his parents, Simon or Simeon, a name at that time common amongst the Jews : but after his becoming a disciple of the blessed JESUS, the additional title of Cephias was conferred upon him by his Master, to denote the firmness of his faith ; the word Cephias in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, signifying a stone or rock : and thence he is called in Greek *Petros*, and by us Peter, which appellation bears the same meaning.

The evangelists have also been silent with regard to the parents of St. Peter, except in telling us, that his father's name was Jonah, probably a fisherman of Bethsaida : but whatever was his trade, he was highly honoured by our blessed Saviour, who chose two of his sons, Andrew and Peter, to be his apostles, and preachers of the glad tidings of salvation to mankind.

While young, St. Peter was brought up to the trade of fishing, on the lake of Bethsaida, famous for different kinds of fish, which excelled all others in the fineness of the taste. Here he closely followed this trade : but afterwards removed to Capernaum, probably on his being married, where he settled ; for we find he had a house there when our Saviour began his public ministry, and there he paid tribute. Nicophorus tells us, that Helen, the mother of Constantine, erected a beautiful church over the ruins of St. Peter's house, in honour of him.

The town of Capernaum, was as well situated as Bethsaida, for the carrying on his trade, standing at the influx of the river Jordan into the sea of Galilee, and where he might, with equal advantage, reap the fruits of an honest and industrious diligence. The business of St. Peter was, we confess, both mean and servile ; it exposed him to all the injuries of the weather, and the tempestuousness of the sea, and the darkness and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himself and his

family : but meanness is no exception to the Almighty ; the poor, if virtuous, are as dear to heaven as the wealthy, the great, and the powerful : the beggar and the monarch are equally regarded by the great Parent of the human race, with whom there is no respect of persons ; and who is the rewarder of all that diligently seek him.

Here we cannot help observing the wise and admirable methods made use of by Divine Providence, in making choice of such mean and unlikely instruments, in planting and propagating the Christian religion in the world : men who were destitute of every advantage of education, and brought up to the meanest employments, were chosen to confound the wise, and overturn the learning of the prudent.... Such were the persons whom the Almighty sent to propagate the religion of his Son ; to silence the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world, and to make foolish the wisdom of the earth : for though the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom ; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour was a scandal to the former, and foolishness to the learned latter ; yet by his foolishness of preaching, God was pleased to save them that believed ; and, in the event, made it appear, that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men* ; that so the honour of all may redound to himself, *that no flesh should glory in his presence, but he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord*, to whom alone all honour is due.

We are not told of what sect St. Peter was before he became a follower of the blessed Jesus ; but it is highly probable that he was a disciple of John the Baptist. We know that his brother Andrew was a follower of that preacher of repentance ; and it is very unlikely that he, who was so ready to carry his brother to the early tidings of the Messiah, that the Sun of Righteousness was already risen in those parts, should not be equally solicitous to bring him under the discipline and influences of John the Baptist, the day-star which appeared to usher in the appearance of the Son of God : besides, Peter's great readiness and curiosity at the first news of CHRIST'S appearing, to come to him and converse with him, shews that his expectations had been awakened, and some glimmer-

ing rays of hope conveyed to him by the preaching and ministry of John, who was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

Whether Peter was or was not a disciple of John the Baptist, he became acquainted with the immaculate Lamb of God in the following manner : The blessed JESUS, having spent thirty years in the solitude of a private life, had lately been baptized by John in Jordan, and there owned by the solemn attestation of heaven to be the Son of God ; whereupon he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, and there for forty days maintained a personal contest with the Devil : but having conquered this great enemy of mankind, he returned to Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing his proselytes, and endeavouring to answer the Jews, who had sent a deputation to him to inquire concerning this new Messiah that appeared amongst them. To satisfy these curious inquiries of Israel, John faithfully related every thing he knew concerning him gave him the greatest character, and soon after pointed him out to his disciples ; upon which two of them presently followed the great Redeemer of mankind, one of which was Andrew, Simon's brother. They came to him towards evening, and in all probability stayed with him the whole night, during which time Andrew had an opportunity of informing himself, and of satisfying his most anxious scruples.

He did not long conceal the joyful discovery he had made ; for early in the morning he hastened to acquaint his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah. It is not enough to be happy alone ; religion is a communicative principle, that like the circles in the water, delights to multiply itself, and to diffuse its influences all around, especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. " I have (said he with rapture to his brother) found that eminent person so long and signally foretold by the prophets, and whom all the devout and pious amongst the sons of Jacob so earnestly expected to appear."

St. Peter, who was one of those who waited for redemption in Israel, ravished with this joyful news, and impatient of delay, presently followed his brother to the place ; and, on his arrival, our blessed Saviour immediately gave

him a proof of his divinity, saluting him at first sight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name, and kindred, and what title should soon be conferred upon him by the authority of his Master.

Whether these two sons of Jonah constantly attended in person from that time on the great Redeemer of mankind, and became his disciples, the sacred history does not mention. It is however probable, that they stayed with him some time, till they were instructed in the first rudiments of his doctrine, and then, by the leave of their great and benevolent Master, returned to their families and to their callings; for it is reasonable to suppose, that the blessed JESUS was not at this time willing to awaken the jealousy of the rulers of Israel, and the suspicion of the Romans, by a numerous retinue, and therefore dismissed his disciples, and amongst the rest Andrew and Peter, who returned to their trade of fishing on the lake, where they were afterwards found by our blessed Redeemer.

Our Lord had now more than a year entered on his public ministry, going into every part of the country, to seek opportunities of doing good to the children of men; so that by the constancy of his preaching, and the reputation of his miracles, his fame was spread throughout all Judea, and multitudes of people flocked to him from all parts to hear his doctrine, and be spectators of his mighty works. And surely it is no wonder that the parched and barren earth thirsted for the kindly dews and showers of heaven, to refresh it.

In order to avoid this prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer often retired to some solitary place, to indulge the privacies of contemplation: in one of these retreats on the banks of the sea of Galilee, the multitude found him out, and ran to him from the city. Our Saviour, therefore, to avoid the crowd, stepped into a fishing boat which lay near the shore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, together with his companions, were on shore drying their nets after an unsuccessful night spent in toil and labour. The blessed JESUS, who might have commended, was pleased to entreat Peter, who now returned to his boat, to trust off a little from the land, that he might instruct the

people, who were gathered in prodigious crowds on the borders of the lake, to hear him.

St. Peter gladly complied with the request of his Master, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on the shore. As soon as he had ended his discourse, he resolved to seal his miracle, that the people might be persuaded he was a *teacher come from God*: accordingly, he ordered Simon to row further from the shore, and cast his net into the sea. To which Simon answered, that they had laboured the whole preceding night, and had taken nothing; and if they could not then succeed, there was little hopes of it now, as the day was far less proper for fishing than the night: but as his Master was pleased to command, he would readily obey; and, accordingly, he let down his net, when, to the astonishment both of him and his companions, so great a multitude of fishes were enclosed, that they were obliged to call their partners to their assistance.

Amazed at this miraculous draught of fishes, Simon Peter, in an ecstasy of admiration, blended with awe and humility, fell prostrate at his Master's feet, acknowledged himself a vile and sinful person, and thinking himself unworthy of being admitted into the presence of a person so immediately sent from God: but the compassionate Sion of the Most High kindly removed his fears, telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith, and to indicate to him, that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him, that of saving the souls of the children of men. From this time Peter and his companions became the inseparable and constant disciples of the great Messiah, living under the rules of his institutions and discipline.

Our blessed Saviour returned soon after to Capernaum with his disciples, where they found the mother-in-law of Peter dangerously ill of a fever: but the compassionate JESUS, who never omitted an opportunity of doing good to the human race, rebuked the disease, and taking her by the hand, restored her in a moment to her former health; demonstrating at once his power and willingness to relieve and comfort the sons and daughters of affliction and sorrow.

The adorable Redeemer, having for some time entered on his public ministry, thought proper to elect some peculiar persons from amongst his followers, to be constant witnesses of his miracles and doctrines, and who, after his departure, might be intrusted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world, for which he himself left the mansions of heaven, and put on the veil of mortality. In order to this, he withdrew privately in the evening to a solitary mountain, where he spent the night in solemn addresses to his Almighty Father, for rendering the great work he was going to undertake, prosperous and beneficial to mankind.

The disciples came to him early the next morning, out of whom he made choice of twelve to be his apostles, and the constant attendants on his person. These he afterwards invested with the power of working miracles, and sent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great work which he himself had so happily begun amongst the people.

The evangelists in general, in their enumeration of the apostles, constantly place St. Peter first. Indeed, the age and gravity of his person, together with his being first called to be an apostle, particularly qualified him for being president of this sacred college: but we must not suppose that St. Peter was invested with any personal prerogative above his brethren; none of them ever intimated any such thing; and St. Paul says expressly, that he himself was not inferior to the very chiefest apostle; for he was less eminent for usefulness than success in his ministry.

This election had not long taken place, when the blessed JESUS, attended by Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, followed Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, to his house, in order to restore his daughter, an only child, who lay at the point of death; but before their arrival, a messenger arrived with the news that the damsel was dead, and therefore unnecessary for our Saviour to give himself any further trouble: but our Lord bid the ruler not despair; for, if he believed, his daughter should yet be restored to her former health: and, accordingly, on his arrival he took the maid by the hand, and with the power of his word recalled her fleeing spir-

it, which had quitted its earthly tabernacle, and restored her again to life and health, in the presence of her astonished friends.

No further account of St. Peter, in particular occurs, till the night after our Saviour's miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness. JESUS had ordered his disciples to take ship, and pass over to the other side, while he sent the multitude away: but a violent storm arising, they were in great danger of their lives, when their great Master came unto them, walking on the surface of the boisterous billows, with the same ease as if it had been dry ground. At his approach, the disciples were greatly terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit: but their compassionate Master soon dispelled their fears, by telling them it was he himself, and therefore, they had no reason to be terrified.

St. Peter, who was always remarkable for bold resolutions, and a precipitate zeal, desired his Master to give him leave to come to him on the water; and on obtaining permission, he left the ship, and walked on the sea to meet his Saviour: but when he heard the deep roar around him, and the waves increase, he began to be afraid; and as his faith declined, his body sunk into the water; so that, in the greatest agony, he called for assistance to him who was able to save: nor was his cry in vain; the compassionate Redeemer of mankind stretched out his hand, and again placed him on the surface of the water, with this gentle reproof, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* And no sooner was the blessed JESUS and his disciple entered into the ship, than the winds ceased, the waves subsided, and the ship was at the land whither they were going. A miracle of this kind, could not fail of astonishing the disciples, and convincing them of the divinity of his person; accordingly, they drew near, and worshipped him with this confession, *Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

Our blessed Saviour, the next day, entered the synagogue of Capernaum; and, from the miracle of the loaves, took occasion to discourse concerning himself, as the true manna, and the *bread which came down from heaven*; opening to them the more sublime and spiritual mysteries, and the necessary and important duties of the gospel. On which, great part of the audience, who expected he was go-

ing to erect a temporal kingdom, and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem, offended at his representing his dominion as entirely spiritual, departed from him, and came no more to hear his discourses. JESUS, on beholding this defection, turned himself towards his disciples, and asked them whether they also would go away? To which Peter replied, *Lord, whither shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life: thy doctrine alone can instruct us in the paths that lead to happiness; and thou art the true Messiah, the great Prophet so fully foretold, and so long expected by our nation.*

The Jews, who beheld with astonishment the miracles wrought by the blessed JESUS, had formed many conjectures concerning him: our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this; but being willing to hear what account his disciples would give him of the various opinions of the people, asked them, what the world said concerning him? To which they replied, that some took him for John the Baptist, risen from the dead; some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. This account not satisfying our blessed Saviour, he told them that it was no wonder that the people, who had seldom seen him, should form various conjectures concerning him and the doctrines he preached; but as they had been constantly with him, heard his sermons, and been spectators of his miracles, it was natural to think they might form a truer idea of him; and, therefore, asked them what they themselves thought of him? To which Peter, in the name of the rest, answered, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, anointed and set apart by the Most High, to be the great King, Priest, and Prophet of Israel.*

This full and comprehensive declaration of Peter, satisfied the inquiry of our blessed Saviour, who answered, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven: that is, this faith which thou hast now confessed, is not human, or built upon the testimony of man, but upon those evidences and principles which I was sent from God to reveal unto the world, and those great and solemn attestations he had given from heaven to the truth, both of my person and doctrine: therefore, I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and up-*

on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. As thy name signifies a rock, so shalt thou prove firm, solid, and immoveable, in building my church, which shall be so firmly established by thy care and diligence to that faith thou hast now professed, that all the assaults of men and devils, shall not be able to destroy, by their utmost efforts.

At this time the disciples had no idea that their Master was to suffer death for the sins of the world; on the contrary, they considered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, *That Christ abideth for ever: so that when the blessed JESUS told them of the sufferings he must undergo at Jerusalem, what affronts and indignities he must suffer, and be at last put to death, with all the acts of torture and disgrace, by a sentence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, St. Peter, who could not endure the thought of his Master's suffering even the least punishment, much less those cruelties he had mentioned, and at last death itself, interrupted him very unseasonably, and said, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee. He considered these sufferings as inconsistent with the character of the great Messiah, whom he expected would restore the splendour of the throne of David, his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience.*

Our blessed Saviour, who came down from heaven to give his life a ransom for the sins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own ease and safety, highly resented this speech of St. Peter, and accordingly returned this sharp reproof, *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me: thou favourest not the things of God, but those that be of men.*

After these transactions, the great Redeemer of the sons of men, being about to receive a specimen of his future glorification, took with him three of the most intimate of his apostles, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high mountain; and while they were employed in earnest addresses to the Almighty, he was transfigured before them, such lustre beaming from his face, as exceeded the brightness of the meridian sun; and such rays of light issued from his garments, as exceeded the light of the clearest day; an evident and

sensible representation of that state, when *the just shall walk in white robes, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father.* During this heavenly scene, the great prophets, Moses and Elias, appeared in all the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, familiarly conversing with him, and discoursing of the death and sufferings he was shortly to undergo, and his ascension to the heavenly regions of happiness and glory.

St. Peter and the two apostles, were, in the mean time fallen asleep, being either very weary for want of natural rest : or, overpowered with these extraordinary appearances, which the frailty and weakness of their nature could not support, were fallen into a trance : but on their awaking, were strangely surprised to see their Lord surrounded with so much glory, and those two great persons conversing with him. They however remained silent, till those visitants from the courts of heaven were going to depart, when Peter, in a rapture and ecstasy of mind, addressed himself to his Master, declaring their infinite pleasure and delight in being favoured with this glorious spectacle ; and desired his leave to erect three tabernacles, one for him, one for Moses, and one for Elias : but while he was speaking, a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed those two great prophets, and a voice came from it, uttering these remarkable words, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : hear ye him.* On which the apostles were seized with the utmost consternation, and fell upon their faces to the ground ; but JESUS touching them, bid them dismiss their fears, and look up with confidence. They immediately obeyed, but saw their Master only ; the others having vanished, together with the cloud of light they had lately beheld.

This heavenly scene being ended, our blessed Saviour travelled through Galilee, with his apostles, and at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him, whether his Master was not obliged to pay tribute ? To which Peter readily declared he did. On his entering the house to give his Master an account of this demand, JESUS prevented him, by asking, *What thinkest thou, Simon ? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute ? of their own children, or of strangers ?* To which Peter answered, not from their

servants and family, but from strangers. *Then,* replied our Lord, *are the children free.* I myself as being the Son of God, and you as my servants, are free from this tax, yearly paid to God, for repairing his temple at Jerusalem. But rather than give offence, by seeming to despise the house of God, and undervalue that authority which had settled this tribute, he determined to pay it, though at the expence of a miracle. Accordingly, he ordered Peter to repair to the sea with a hook, and take the first fish that offered, in whose mouth he should find a piece of money. The disciple obeyed, and found the money as his Master had foretold, and gave to the gatherers of the tribute for his master and himself, as their proportion of it.

Our blessed Saviour having entered the city of Jerusalem, in triumph, he repaired to Bethany ; from whence he sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to make preparation for his celebrating the passover before his death.

Preparation being made, the great Redeemer and his apostles entered the house, and sat down to table. But their great Master, who often taught them by example as well as precept, arose from his seat, laid aside his upper garment, took a towel, and pouring water into a bason, began to wash his disciples' feet, to teach them humility and charity, by his own example. But on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Master to perform so mean and condescending an office. What ! the Son of God stoop to wash the feet of a sinful mortal ! A thought which shocked the apostle, who strenuously declared, *Thou shalt never wash my feet.* But the blessed JESUS told him, that if he washed him not, he could have no part with him ; meaning that this action was mystical, and signified the remission of sins, and the purifying virtue of the spirit of the Most High, to be poured upon all true Christians. This answer sufficiently removed the scruples of Peter, who cried out, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

The dear Redeemer now began the institution of his supper, that great and solemn institution, which he resolved to leave behind him, to be constantly celebrated in his church, as a standing monument and memorial of his love in dying for mankind ; telling them at the same time, that he himself was now going to leave.

them, and that whither he went, they could not come. Peter, not well understanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going? To which our blessed Lord replied, that he was going to that place, whither he could not now, but should hereafter follow him: intimating the martyrdom he was to suffer for his Master's religion. Peter answered, that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident presumption was not at all agreeable to the blessed JESUS, who told him he had promised great things, but would be so far from performing them, that before the cock crew twice, that is before three in the morning, he would deny his Master thrice.

Having now ended supper, they sung an hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives; where JESUS again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to suffer would offend them. To which Peter replied, that *though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*

After this they repaired to the garden of Gethsemane; and leaving the rest of the apostles near the entrance, our blessed Saviour, taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the more solitary parts of the garden, to enter on the preparatory scene of the great tragedy that was now nigh at hand.

The blessed JESUS at this awful juncture, laboured under the bitterest agony that ever human nature suffered, during which he prayed with the utmost fervency, to his Almighty Father, *offering up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.* While our great Redeemer was thus interceding with the Almighty, his three disciples were fallen asleep, though he had made three several visits to them; and calling to Peter, asked him if he could not watch one hour with him? advising them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation, adding, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

During our Lord's conversation with them, a band of soldiers from the chief priests and elders, preceded by the traitor Judas, to conduct and direct them, rushed into the garden, and seized the great High Priest of our profes-

sion. Peter, whose ungovernable zeal would admit of no restraint, drew his sword, and without the least order from his Master, struck at one of the persons who seemed to be remarkably busy in binding JESUS, and cut off his right ear. This wild and unwarrantable zeal, was very offensive to his Master, who rebuked Peter, and entreated the patience of the soldiers, while he healed the wound by a miracle.

The fidelity of the apostles, which they had urged with so much confidence, was now put to the trial. They saw their Master in the hands of a rude and inconsiderate band of men, and therefore should have exerted their power to release him, or at least, have been the companions of his sufferings, and endeavoured by every kind and endearing action, to have lessened his grief. But, alas! instead of assisting or comforting their Master, they all forsook him, and fled from innocence in distress.

Hereupon the soldiers who had bound JESUS, led him away, and delivered him to the chief priests and elders, who carried him from one tribunal to another; first to Annas, and then to Caiaphas, where the Jewish Sanhedrim were assembled, in order to try and condemn him to death.

Peter, who in the mean time had followed the other disciples in their flight, recovered his spirits, and being encouraged by his companion St. John, returned to seek his Master; and seeing him leading to the high priest's hall, followed at a distance, to know the event: but on his coming to the door, was refused admittance, till one of the disciples, probably St. John, who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed on the servant who kept the door, to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the fire, burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and servants were standing; where, being observed by the maid servant who let him in, she charged him with being one of CHRIST's disciples; but Peter publicly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and presently withdrew into the porch, where he heard the cock crow: an intimation seemingly sufficient to have awakened his conscience into a quick sense of his duty, and the promise he had, a few hours before made to his Master. But, alas! human nature, when left to itself, is remarkably frail and inconstant....

This Peter sufficiently experienced; for while he continued in the porch, another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of JESUS of Nazareth; which Peter stiffly denied, and the better to gain belief, uttered an oath, to confirm his assertion.

Nearly an hour after this, the servant of the high priest (he whose ear Peter had cut off) charged him with being a disciple of CHRIST, and that he himself had seen him in the garden with him; adding, that his very speech proved him to be a Galilean. Peter, however, still denied the fact; and to add the highest accomplishment to his sin, ratified it, not only by an oath, but a solemn curse and execration, that he was not the person, that he knew not the man. But no sooner had he uttered this denial, than the cock crew. At which his Master turned about, and earnestly looked upon him: a look that pierced him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance, what his Saviour more than once had foretold, that he would basely and shamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his sorrow: he flew from the palace of the high priest, and wept bitterly, passionately bewailing his folly, and the aggravations of his sin; endeavouring thereby to make some reparation for his apostacy, recover the favour of heaven, and prevent the execution of divine justice, by taking a severe revenge upon himself for his crime.

St. Peter's fall should convince us of the miserable frailty even of the best of men, and effectually subdue those vain confidences which are apt to rise in our hearts, from our own supposed strength and virtue: for as this great disciple fell in so scandalous a manner, who shall hereafter dare to depend upon the highest degree of knowledge, when one so wise, so perfectly satisfied of the truth of the Christian doctrine, was, after the fullest convictions of his own conscience, so weak and frail as to deny and abjure his Lord, who instructed and bought him, even at the price of his own blood? Who shall presume upon his best resolutions, when he who declared so firm a purpose of adhering to JESUS, did, within a few hours, peccatorily and solemnly disown that very person, for whose sake he was lately ready and disposed to lay down his life.

From this example we should also remember the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty, in causing the faults and infirmities of his saints to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and the use we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent virtues, and their as eminent repentance, where they did amiss, are written as a seasonable warning, and exhibit an instance of humiliation to all future ages; by letting us see, that the most perfect are but men, subject to blemishes and imperfections: and that the highest and purest state is no security from danger. This should make us very tender how we judge and despise our brethren; whose faults, however severely we may censure them, might probably have been our own, had we been in their circumstances, and surrounded with their temptations: for, *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* We should not then promise ourselves safety and freedom from temptations, in any circumstance in life; or so far presume on our own virtues, as to think we are incapable of committing the blackest crimes, should the Almighty withdraw his grace, and leave us to ourselves.

We have no account whether St. Peter, after the denial of his Master, retired into some solitary place, to give vent to his grief and indulge his tears, or whether he followed his Saviour through the several stages of his trial, and personally attended as a mourner at the funeral of his Master. But however that be, he stayed at Jerusalem, or at least, in the neighbourhood, and probably with St. John; for when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre, to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the door, and the body not to be found, Peter and John set out immediately towards the garden. John, who was the younger, arrived first at the sepulchre, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of fear, or a reverence to his Saviour.

Peter, whose zeal was greatly increased, came soon after, and resolutely went into the sepulchre, where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, and the napkin that was about his head, wrapped together in another; a sufficient indication, that the body was not stolen away: for had that been the case, so much care and order would not have been observed, in disposing of the linen clothes. But

he did not wait long in suspence, with regard to his great Lord and Master; for the same day, and probably about noon, Jesus appeared to him; perhaps in compassion to his sorrow, in which he was overwhelmed for his late shameful denial of his Master. And as he was the first of the disciples who had made a signal confession of the divinity of the Messiah, so it was reasonable he should first see him after his resurrection; and, at the same time, to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of in denying him was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour oil into his wounded conscience, and administer comfort to his afflicted soul.

The apostles soon after prepared to obey the command of their great Master, of retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathanael, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples, returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake. One morning early, as they were labouring at their employment, having spent the whole night to no purpose, they saw on shore a grave person (perhaps in the habit of a traveller) who called to them, and asked if they had any meat? To which they answered, No. Cast then, replied he, the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They followed his directions, and enclosed a prodigious number of large fish. Astonished at such remarkable success, the disciples looked one upon another for some time, till St. John told Peter, that the person on shore, was doubtless their great Lord and Master, whom the winds, the sea, and the inhabitants of the watery region were so ready to yield obedience to.

St. Peter no sooner heard the beloved disciple declare his opinion concerning the stranger, than his zeal took fire, and, notwithstanding the coldness of the season, girt on his fisher's coat, threw himself into the sea, and swam to shore; his impatience to be with his dear Lord and Master, not suffering him to stay the few minutes necessary to bring the ship near the shore.

As soon as the disciples came on land, they found a fire kindled, and the fish laid upon it, either immediately created by the power of their divine Master, or that came ashore of its own accord, and offered itself to his hand: but notwithstanding there were fish already on the fire,

he ordered them to bring of those they had now caught, and dress them for their repast, he himself eating with them; both to give them an instance of mutual love and friendship, and also to assure them of the truth of his human nature, since he was risen from the dead, as they now beheld.

The repast being ended, our blessed Saviour addressed himself particularly to St. Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence in his care of souls; and because he knew that nothing but a sincere love to himself could support him under the troubles and dangers of so laborious and difficult an employment, he inquired of him whether he loved him more than the rest of the apostles; mildly reproving him for his overconfident resolution. Peter, whom fatal experience had taught humility, modestly answered, that none knew so well as himself, the integrity of his affections: thou knowest the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest that I love thee. The question was three several times repeated by our blessed Saviour, and as many times answered by the apostle: it being but just that he, who by a threefold denial, had given so much reason to question his affection, should now, by a threefold confession, give more than common assurance of his sincere love for his Master; and to each of these confessions, our great Redeemer added this signal trial of his affection, *Feed my sheep.*

Our dear Lord having thus engaged Peter to a cheerful compliance with the dangers that might attend the discharge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him; telling him, that when he was young, he girt himself, lived at his pleasure, and went wherever his fancy directed him; but when he should reach the term of old age, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no desire to go; intimating, as the evangelist tells us, by what death he should glorify God, and seal the truth with his blood.

St. Peter was not averse to drinking the bitter cup, and making his confession as public as his denial, that he might thereby testify the sincerity of his sorrow and contrition for his great offence. And seeing John following, he asked his great Master what should be his fate, and

whether he, who had been the object of his Master's love in his life time, should not have as honourable a death as he that had denied him? To which JESUS replied, it doth not concern thee to know how I shall dispose of events with regard to him: he shall see the destruction of the Jewish nation, and then go down in peace to the chambers of the dust.

Our blessed Saviour soon after appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem, to take his last farewell of them, who had constantly attended him during his public ministry amongst the sons of men. He had now led them out as far as Bethany, a small village on Mount Olivet, where he briefly told them, that they were the persons he had chosen to be the witnesses both of his death and resurrection; a testimony which they should publish in every part of the world: in order to which, he would, after his ascension into heaven, pour out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary manner, that they might be the better enabled to struggle with that violent rage and fury with which the doctrine of the gospel would be opposed by men and devils; adding, that in the mean time, they should return to Jerusalem, and there wait till those miraculous powers were given from on high.... This discourse being finished, he laid hands upon them, and gave them his solemn benediction; during which he was taken from them, and received up into the regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our glorious Redeemer having left this vale of misery, and ascended into the blissful habitations of immortality, the apostles began to act in conformity to the power and commission they had received from him. The first object that engaged their attention, after their return to Jerusalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their college, lately made by the unhappy fall and apostasy of Judas. In order to this they called together the church, and entered into an upper room, when Peter, as president of the assembly, proposed to them the choice of a new apostle. He put them in mind that Judas, one of the disciples of their great and beloved Master, being betrayed by his covetous and insatiable temper, had lately fallen from the honour of his place and ministry; that this was no more than what the prophet had long since foretold should come to pass; and that the care

of the church which had been committed to him, should devolve upon another; that therefore it was highly necessary that some person who had been familiarly conversant with the blessed JESUS, from first to last, and consequently, a competent witness both of his doctrine and miracles, his death, resurrection, and ascension, should be substituted in his room, and appointed to that high office. In order to which, two candidates were proposed, Joseph called Barsabas, and Matthias, both qualified for the great and important office of the apostleship; and having prayed that the Divine Providence would immediately guide and direct their choice, they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly admitted into the number of the twelve apostles of our Lord.

This vacancy being filled up in the apostolic college, they spent their time in prayer and meditation, till the feast of Pentecost; when the promise of their great Master in sending the Holy Ghost, was fulfilled. The christian assembly were met as usual, to perform the public services of their worship, when suddenly a sound, like that of a mighty wind, rushed in upon them, representing the powerful efficacy of that Divine Spirit which was now to be communicated to them; after which there appeared small flames of fire, which, in the shape of cloven tongues, descended and sat upon the head of each of them, to denote that the enjoyment of this gift should be constant and perpetual, and not like the prophets of old, who were inspired only at some particular times and seasons: upon which they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, which, in an instant, enabled them to speak fluently several languages they had never learned, and probably never heard till this time.

As this surprising transaction had different effects on the minds of the audience, some considering it as the effect of a miracle, and others to the power and strength of new wine: the apostles thereupon, all stood up, and Peter, in the name of the rest, undertook to confute this injurious calumny: he told them that this scandalous slander proceeded from the spirit of malice and falsehood; that their censure was uncharitable as it was unjust; that it was early in the morning, and therefore, not a time for drinking, especially on a day set apart for de-

votion; that these extraordinary and miraculous effects were but the accomplishment of an ancient prophecy, which the Almighty had expressly declared should be fulfilled in the times of the Messiah; that JESUS of Nazareth had evidently proved himself to be that great prophet, the Son of the Most High, by many unquestionable miracles, of which they themselves had been eye witnesses; and though, by the permission of Omnipotence, who had determined by this means, to bring about the redemption of mankind, they had wickedly crucified and slain him, yet God had raised him from the dead.

Though this was the first discourse that St. Peter ever made in public, it deeply affected the audience, and every word, like a dagger, pierced them to the heart; so that they cried out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* To which Peter answered, "The only way to expiate your guilt, and obtain pardon for the many sins you have committed, and acquire the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is to repent sincerely, and be baptized into the religion of this crucified Saviour."

A short time after this wonderful conversation, Peter and John going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, near the conclusion of one of the solemn hours of prayer, they saw a poor impotent cripple, near forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth, lying at the beautiful gate of the temple, and asking alms of those who entered the sacred edifice. This miserable object moved their compassion; and Peter beholding him with attention, said, "The riches of this world, the silver and gold so highly coveted by the sons of men, are not in my power to bestow; but I possess the power of restoring life and health, and am ready to assist thee." Then taking the man by the hand, commanded him, in the name of JESUS of Nazareth, to rise up and walk. Immediately the nerves and sinews were enlarged, and the several parts of the diseased members performed their natural functions: upon which the man accompanied them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God for his cure.

An event so strange and extraordinary, filled the minds of the people with admiration, and their curiosity drew them round the apostles, to view the men who had performed it. Peter

seeing the multitude gathering round them, took the opportunity of speaking to them in the following manner: "Men and brethren, this remarkable cure should not excite your admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own power; it was wrought in the name of JESUS of Nazareth, our crucified Master, by the power of that very CHRIST, that holy and just person, whom you yourselves denied, and delivered to Pilate, nay, and preferred a murderer before him, when the governor was desirous of letting him go: but though you have put him to death, yet we are witnesses that he hath raised him again from the dead, and that he is ascended into heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous day of general restitution."

While Peter was speaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was, in all probability, doing the same in the other: and the success plainly indicated, how powerful the preaching of the apostles was; five thousand persons embracing the doctrines of the gospel, and acknowledging the crucified JESUS for their Lord and Redeemer.

The attention and envy of the rulers of Israel could not fail of being excited at such amazing success from the preaching of the apostles: accordingly, the priests and Sadducees repaired to the Roman magistrate, and intimated to him, that in all probability, this course of people would prove the cause of a tumult and insurrection. Upon this information, the captain of the temple seized on the apostles, and cast them into prison. The next day they were carried before the Jewish Sanhedrim, and being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly answered, "Be it known unto you, and to all the descendants of Jacob, that this miracle was wrought wholly in the name of JESUS of Nazareth, whom ye yourselves have crucified and slain, and whom the Almighty hath raised again from the dead. This is the stone which you builders refused, and which is become the head of the corner: nor is there any other way by which you, or any of the sons of men can be saved, but by this crucified Saviour, the Lord JESUS CHRIST."

After beholding the apostles with a kind of astonishment, the court remembered that they

had seen them with JESUS of Nazareth, and therefore ordered them to withdraw, while they debated amongst themselves what was proper to be done: it was impossible to deny the miracle, for it was performed before all the people, and the person on whom it was wrought, no stranger in Jerusalem. They therefore resolved to charge them strictly not to preach any more in the name of JESUS: accordingly, they were again called in, and acquainted with this resolution of the council: to which the apostles answered, "That as they had received a commission from heaven, to declare to all nations what they had seen and heard, it was certainly their duty to obey God rather than man."

Although this was a fair appeal to the consciences of their very judges; yet these rulers of Israel, instead of being satisfied with it, would in all probability, have proceeded to a greater violence, had not the people's veneration for the apostles checked their malice; so that all they dared to do, was to enforce their menaces, and suffer them to depart.

This intrepidity of the apostles had the desired effect, the church increased exceedingly; and that so great a company, especially the poor and needy, might be maintained, the professors of the religion of the holy JESUS, sold their estates, and brought the money to the apostles, that they might deposit it in one common treasury, and from thence supply the several exigencies of their poor brethren.

We find, however, that hypocrisy was not unknown amongst the professors of religion, even in these primitive times. Ananias, and his wife Sapphira, having embraced the doctrines of the gospel, pretended to follow the free and generous spirit of these times, by consecrating and devoting their estate to the honour of God, and the necessities of the church.... Accordingly, they sold their possessions, and brought part of the money and laid it at the apostle's feet; hoping to deceive them, though guided by the spirit of Omnipotence: but Peter, at his first coming in, asked Ananias how he could suffer Satan to fill his heart with such enormous wickedness, as to think to deceive the Holy Ghost? That before it was sold, it was wholly in his own power; and afterwards the money entirely at his own disposal: so that his action was capable of no other interpreta-

tion, than that he had not only abused and injured man, but mocked the Almighty himself, who he must know was privy to the most secret thoughts of his heart.

No sooner had the apostle finished, than Ananias, to the great terror of all that were present, fell down dead by a stroke from heaven; and not long after, his wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the same manner he had done her husband, adding, that she should immediately end her life in the same awful manner; upon which she was smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead; sharing with her husband in the punishment, as she had before in the heinous crime.

This remarkable instance of severity, filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and prevented, in a great measure, that hypocrisy and dissimulation, by which others might flatter themselves to deceive the church. But such instances of severity were very extraordinary; the power of the apostles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence towards the sons and daughters of affliction: they cured all kinds of diseases, and cast out devils; so that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that the shadow at least of Peter, as he passed by, might cover some of them; well knowing, a single touch or word from either of the apostles, was sufficient to remove a disease of the most inveterate nature.

However, these stupendous works of the apostles, and the growing numbers of the church, alarmed the rulers of Israel, who seized the apostles and cast them into prison. Their power, however was limited, and like the drop of a bucket to the ocean, when opposed to the almighty arm of the great Jehovah. The prison doors, though fastened with the utmost caution, opened of themselves at the approach of a messenger from the courts of heaven, who commanded the apostles to leave the dungeon, repair to the temple, and preach the glad tidings of the gospel to the people in Jerusalem.

When the officers returned in the morning, they found the prison doors shut and guarded, but the prisoners gone. This remarkable circumstance greatly alarmed them, and they repaired to the council to acquaint them with what had happened. The rulers were aston-

ished at the news; but hearing that the apostles were teaching in the temple, they sent an officer to bring them, without the least violence, to their persons, before the Sanhedrim. Their orders were soon obeyed, and the disciples of JESUS placed before the same court, by which their Master had been so lately condemned.

Being thus brought before the Sanhedrim, the high priest asked the apostles how they dared to propagate a doctrine they had lately so strictly charged them not to preach: to which Peter, in the name of the rest, replied, "We certainly ought to obey God rather than man; and though you have so barbarously and contumeliously treated the Saviour of the world, yet God hath raised him up to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give both repentance and remission of sins: and of these things both we are witnesses, together with the miraculous powers which the Holy Ghost hath conferred on all Christians."

As the apostles delivered this answer with remarkable boldness, it exasperated the council, and they began to consult how they might destroy them: but Gamaliel, a grave and learned counsellor, after commanding the apostles to withdraw, desired them to proceed with caution in an affair of this nature; reminding them, that several persons had already raised parties, and drawn great numbers of persons after them; but that every one of them had miscarried, and all their designs were rendered abortive, without the interposition of that court. That they would therefore do well to let the apostles alone; for if their doctrines and designs were of human invention, they would come to nothing; but if they were of God, all their powers and policy would be of no effect.

The council were satisfied with this prudent and rational advice, and after commanding the apostles to be scourged, they strictly charged them to preach no more in the name of JESUS, and set them at liberty: but this charge had little effect on the disciples of the blessed JESUS; they returned home in triumph, rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer in so righteous a cause, and to undergo shame and reproach for so kind and so powerful a Master.

Hitherto the church at Jerusalem had been tossed with gentle storms, but now it was overtaken by a more violent tempest, which com-

menced with the death of the proto-martyr Stephen, and was now carried on with greater violence; nor did it end but with the dispersion of the disciples, by which means, the glad tidings of the gospel, which had till then been confined to Judca, and the professors of it hid in secret places, was now preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says, *Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.....* Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise, in the further spreading of the truth.

The followers of the blessed JESUS being thus dispersed, Philip the deacon retired to Samaria, where he preached the gospel, and confirmed his doctrine by many miraculous cures, and casting out devils. In this city was one Simon, who, by magic arts and diabolical sorceries, was beheld with admiration by the people; and some considered him as the *great power of God*, a name he blasphemously gave himself, pretending to be the first and chief deity, or what every nation considered as the supreme God. This wicked mortal, hearing the sermons of Philip, and beholding the miracles wrought by him, became a convert to the religion of JESUS, and was baptized with the others who had embraced Christianity.

Several of the apostles who continued at Jerusalem, were soon informed of this remarkable success of Philip's ministry at Samaria, and thought it necessary to send him assistance. Accordingly, Peter and John were deputed to this infant church, who having prayed and laid their hands on the new converts, they received the Holy Ghost. Such miraculous gifts astonished the magician, and desirous of obtaining the same privilege, he offered the disciples money, to invest him with this power, that on whomsoever he laid his hands, he might receive the Holy Ghost: but Peter, who perceived the insincerity of his heart, rejected his offer with scorn and detestation. "*Thy money, said that great apostle, perish with thee.* And as thy heart is full of hypocrisy and deceit, thou canst have no share nor portion in so great a privilege. Thou wouldest do well to repent for so monstrous a crime, and sincerely apply thyself to seek the Almighty, that the thoughts

of thy heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thy temper and disposition of mind is still vitious and corrupt, and that thou art yet bound by the chains of iniquity, and in a state displeasing to the Almighty, and dangerous to the welfare of thy own soul."

This speech of St. Peter terrified Simon, his conscience flew in his face, and he prayed the apostles to make intercession for him to the throne of grace, that the Almighty might pardon his sin, and not inflict on him those heavy judgments they had denounced.

After this violent storm, the church enjoyed a time of calmness and serenity; during which St. Peter went to visit the churches lately planted in those parts, by the disciples whom the persecution had dispersed: and at his arrival at Lydda, he miraculously healed Æneas, who had been afflicted with the palsy, and confined to his bed eight years; but on Peter's bidding him arise in the name of JESUS, he was immediately restored to perfect health. Nor was the success of this miracle confined to Æneas and his family, the fame of it being blazed through all the neighbouring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a seaport town, about six miles from Lydda; and the brethren immediately sent for Peter, on the following melancholy occasion: Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety and extensive charity, was newly dead, to the great loss of all mankind who loved the paths of virtue, especially the poor and afflicted, who were supported by her benevolence.

When St. Peter arrived, he found her dressed for her funeral solemnity, and surrounded by mournful widows, who shewed the coats and garments wherewith she had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality: but Peter put them all out, and kneeling down, prayed with the utmost fervency; then turning to the body, he commanded her to arise, and taking her by the hand, presented her in perfect health to her friends and others, who were assembled to pay their last duties to so good a woman. This miracle confirmed those who had newly embraced the gospel of JESUS, and converted many more to the faith. After which, he

stayed a considerable time here, and lodged in the house of one Simon, a Tanner, at Joppa.

While he abode in this city, one day when he was offering up his prayers to the Almighty, he found himself hungry, and called for meat; but while it was dressing for him, he fell into a trance, wherein was presented to him a large sheet let down from heaven, containing all sorts of creatures, clean and unclean; and at the same time, a voice said to him, *Arise Peter, kill and eat*: but the apostle, as yet tenacious of the rites and institutions of the Mosaic law, answered, that his conscience refused to comply, having never eaten any thing that was common or unclean. To which the voice replied, "That it was unjust to consider that as common, which God had cleansed." This was done thrice, after which the vessel was again drawn up to heaven, and the vision disappeared. By this symbolical representation, St. Peter was given to understand, that the Almighty was now going to send him on a new embassy, which the spirit at the same time commanded him to undertake. While he was still wondering with himself what the event would prove, three messengers knocked at the gate, inquiring for him; and from them he received the following account: That Cornelius, a Roman, captain of a band of Italian soldiers at Cesarea, a person of great piety and religion, one who had long been a proselyte of the gate, had sent for him by an immediate command from God. Peter, accompanied with some of the brethren, went the next day with the messengers, and soon after arrived at Cesarea.

Cornelius having information of his coming, had summoned his friends and kindred to Cesarea; and at the apostle's entering his house, fell at his feet, a method of address frequent in the eastern countries: but Peter, who considered that honour as due only to the Almighty, lifted him up, and declared to the company the reason of his coming, saying he had lately learned, that with God there was no respect of persons.

As soon as the apostle had ended his speech, Cornelius, at his request, related the particular reason for his sending for him. "Four days ago, said this Roman officer, being conversant in the duties of fasting and prayer, an angel from the courts of heaven appeared to me, de-

claring that my prayers and alms were come up as a memorial before the throne of the Most High; and at the same time, ordered me to send to Joppa for one Simon Peter, who lodged in the house of a Tanner, near the sea side, who would give me further information in the duties of religion. Accordingly, I made no hesitation to obey the heavenly messenger, but sent immediately for thee."

The apostle was at first astonished at this relation of the centurion; but he was soon convinced that God had broken down the partition wall, and no longer maintained a peculiar kindness for the sons of Jacob; that it was not the nation, but the religion; not the external quality of the man, but the internal temper of the mind, that recommended the human race to the favour of Omnipotence: that the devout and pious, the righteous and the good man, whatever part of the earth he may inhabit, is the favourite of heaven; that God as highly respects a just and virtuous man in the barren wastes of Scythia, as on the mountain of Sion; that the reconciling and making peace between God and man by JESUS CHRIST, was the doctrine published by the prophets of old; and that God had now anointed and consecrated JESUS of Nazareth with divine power, in the exercise whereof he went about doing good to the children of men.

At the time that Peter was thus preaching to them, the Holy Ghost fell upon the greatest part of his hearers, enabling them to speak several languages, and in them to magnify the great creator of the sons of men. At this the Jews, who accompanied Peter, marvelled exceedingly, to see that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured upon the Gentiles; and Peter seeing this, told the company, that he knew no reason why these persons should not be baptized, as they had received the Holy Ghost as well as them; and accordingly, he gave orders that they should be baptized; and to confirm them in the holy faith they had embraced, he tarried some time with them.

Having thus finished his visitation to the new planted churches, Peter returned to Jerusalem, and was indefatigable in instructing the converts in the religion of JESUS, and preaching the glad tidings of salvation to the descendants of Jacob: but he did not long continue in this

pleasing course; Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himself into the favour of the Jews, put St. James to death, and finding the action was highly acceptable to that stiff-necked people, he resolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly cast him into prison: but the churches were incessant in their prayers to God for his safety: and what have mortals to fear, when guarded by the hand of Omnipotence! Herod was persuaded he should soon accomplish his intention, and sacrifice Peter to the insatiable cruelty of the Jews.

The night before this intended execution, a messenger from the courts of heaven visited the gloomy horrors of the dungeon, where he found Peter asleep between his keepers. The angel raised him up, took off his chains, ordered him to gird on his garments, and follow him: Peter obeyed, and having passed through the first and second watch, they came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened to them of its own accord: the angel also accompanied him through one of the streets, and then departed from him; on which Peter came to himself, and perceived that it was no vision, but that his great and beloved Master had really sent a messenger from above, and released him from prison. He therefore repaired to the house of Mary, where the church was assembled, and offering up their prayers, to the throne of grace for his safety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the door, which they at first considered as the effect of fancy: but the damsel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was an angel, or some messenger sent to him from the court of heaven: but on opening the door, they were convinced of their mistake, finding that it was really Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered; and, desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, retired from them.

The officers came in the morning from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution: but when they came to the prison, the keepers informed them, that the apostle had made his escape; which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those to be

put to death who were intrusted with the care of the prisoner.

After this miraculous deliverance of St. Peter, a controversy arose between the Jewish and the Gentile converts, with regard to the observation of the Mosaic law, a dispute which gave great uneasiness to the minds of many persons; the Jews zealously contending, that it was absolutely necessary to salvation to be circumcised, and observe the precepts of the ceremonial law, as well as those of the gospel. To compose this difference, it was thought necessary to summon a general council of the apostles and brethren to meet at Jerusalem. This was accordingly done, and the case thoroughly debated.

At last Peter stood up, and declared, that God having chosen him out of all the apostles to be a preacher of the gospel, not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, God, who was best able to judge of the hearts of men, had borne witness to them, that they were accepted of him, by giving them his Holy Spirit, as he had done the Jews; and, consequently, that there was no difference between them.

St. Peter's declaration convinced the church, and it was unanimously decreed, that no other burthen than the temporary observance of a few particular precepts, equally convenient to the Jew and Gentile, should be imposed on them: and the decision was drawn up into a synodical epistle, and sent to the several churches, for allaying the heats and controversies which had been occasioned by this dispute.

Peter soon after left Jerusalem, and went down to Antioch; where, using the liberty given him by the gospel, he freely ate and conversed with the Gentile proselytes, considering them now as *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*. This he had been taught by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven: this had been lately decreed at Jerusalem; this he had before practised with regard to Cornelius and his family, and justified the action to the satisfaction of his accusers; and this he had freely and innocently done at Antioch, till some of the Jewish brethren coming thither, he, for fear of offending them, withdrew himself from the Gentiles, as if it had been unlawful for him to hold conversation with uncircumcised persons; notwithstanding he knew, and was fully satisfied, that our blessed Saviour

had broken down the partition-wall between the Jew and Gentile, under the gospel.

Having thus acted against the light of his own mind and judgment, Peter condemned what he had approved, and destroyed the superstructure he had before erected; at the same time, he confirmed the Jewish zealots in their inveterate errors, filled the minds of the Gentiles with scruples, and their consciences with fears. Nor was this all, the old prejudices between Jew and Gentile were revived, and the whole number of Jewish converts, following the apostle's example, separated themselves from the company of the Gentile Christians; nay, even Barnabas himself was carried away by the torrent of unwarrantable practices that now unhappily prevailed.

The apostle Paul was now at Antioch, and resolutely opposed St. Peter to his face; he publicly reprov'd him, as a person worthy to be blamed for his gross prevarication. He reasoned and severely expostulated with him, that he who was himself a Jew, and consequently under a more immediate obligation of observing the Mosaic law, should throw off the yoke himself, and at the same time, endeavour to impose it on the Gentiles, who were never under the necessity of observing the ceremonies of the Israelites: a severe though an impartial charge.

Thus far we had an infallible guide to direct us in writing the life of this great apostle; but here the sacred historian hath left us, and therefore we must have recourse to the ancients for materials in the further prosecution of his history.

Before this contest at Antioch, St. Peter had preached the gospel in various parts of the world, enlarged the kingdom of his great Master, and spreading the glad-tidings of salvation amongst the inhabitants of various countries; and, amongst the rest, those of Rome, then the mistress of the world. In that capital he is said to have continued several years, till the emperor Claudius, taking advantage of some seditious tumults raised by the Jews, published an edict, whereby they were banished from Rome, and amongst the rest St. Peter, who returned to Jerusalem, and was present at the synod already mentioned: but how long he continued in the capital of Judea, is uncertain; for we have no account of his transactions for many

years. This, however is certain, that he was not idle in the service of his great Master; and Eusebius tells us, from Metaphrastes, that he visited several of the western parts, and particularly this island of Great-Britain; where he continued several years, spreading the glad tidings of salvation in these remote parts, and converting the several nations to the faith of the gospel.

However this be, whether St. Peter was or was not in England, it is certain, that towards the latter end of Nero's reign, he returned to Rome, where he found the minds of the people strangely bewitched, and hardened against the doctrines of the gospel, by the sorceries of Simon Magus, who, as I have already observed, was chastised by Peter, for his wickedness at Samaria. This monster of impiety, not only opposed the preaching of the apostles, but also did all in his power to render them and their doctrines odious to the emperor. St. Peter foreseeing that the calumnies of Simon and his adherents would hasten his death, took the greater pains, and was still more assiduous to confirm those he had been any ways instrumental in converting in the sublime truths they had received.

In order to this, the apostle strongly opposed the great deceiver of mankind: for in the last year of his life, he seems to have written his two epistles to the dispersed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bythia; and, in an appointed encounter with Simon, discovered his magical impostures, and through the power and the assistance of the Almighty, brought him to an exemplary and miserable death.

The account of the miserable end of this unhappy man, no sooner reached the emperor's ears, than he vowed revenge, both for the death of his favourite, and the endeavours used by the apostles to *turn mankind from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God*. Accordingly, he issued orders for apprehending St. Peter, together with his companion St. Paul. St. Ambrose tells us, that when the people perceived the danger to which St. Peter was now exposed, they prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for a while to some secure retreat, that his life might be preserved for the benefit of the church. Peter, with great reluctance, yielded to their entreaties, and made his

escape by night: but as he passed the gate, he was met by a person in the form of his great and beloved Master, and on Peter's asking him, whither he was going, answered, "To Rome, to be crucified a second time:" which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice, returned again into the city, was soon after apprehended, and cast, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertine prison. Here they were confined eight or nine months, but spent their time in the exercises of religion, especially in preaching to the prisoners, and those who resorted to them: and during this confinement, it is generally thought, St. Peter wrote his second epistle to the dispersed Jews; wherein he endeavours to confirm them in the belief and practice of Christianity, and to fortify them against those poisonous and pernicious principles and actions, which began to break in upon the church, then in its infancy.

At length, Nero returning from Achaia, he entered Rome in triumph; and, soon after his arrival, resolved that the apostles should fall as victims and sacrifices to his cruelty and revenge. While the fatal stroke was daily expected, the Christians in Rome were continually offering up their prayers to heaven, to protect those two holy persons: but the Almighty was now willing to put an end to their sorrows; and after sealing the truth they had preached, with their own blood, to receive them into the regions of eternal bliss and happiness, and exchange their crowns of martyrdom for crowns of glory.... Accordingly, they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome; and St. Peter having taken his farewell of the brethren, especially of St. Paul, was taken from the prison, and led to the top of the Vatican mount, near the Tiber, where he was sentenced to surrender up his life by crucifixion.

Coming to the place of execution, he begged the favour of the officers, that he might not be crucified in the common manner, but with his head downwards; affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture, in which his Lord had suffered before him. This request was accordingly complied with, and the great apostle, St. Peter, surrendered up his soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Master, who came down from heaven to ransom man-

kind from destruction, and to open the gates of the heavenly Canaan, to all believers.

The body of St. Peter being taken down from the cross, is said to have been embalmed by Mercelinus, the Presbyter, after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian Way, two miles from Rome. Here it remained till the time of pope Cornelius, who conveyed it to the Vatican at Rome, where it rested in an obscure place, till the reign of Constantine, who, from the great reverence he entertained for the Christian religion, erected many churches at Rome, and re-built, and vastly enlarged the Vatican, in honour of St. Peter.

If we consider St. Peter as a man, there will seem to have been a natural eagerness predominant in his temper, which animated his soul to the most bold and generous undertakings: but if we consider him as a disciple of the blessed JESUS, we shall find him exemplary in the great duties of religion.

To conclude....if we consider him as an apostle, as a pastor, or a shepherd of the souls of men, we shall find him faithful and diligent in his office, zealously endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, strengthen the weak, confirm the strong, reclaim the vicious, and turn the children of men into the paths of righteousness. He never omitted any opportunity of preaching to the people, and spreading the glad tidings of the gospel amongst the human race: and so powerful were his

discourses, that he converted many thousands at one time. How many painful journies and dangerous voyages did he undertake! With what unconquerable patience did he endure the greatest trials, surmount every difficulty, and remove every obstacle, that he might plant the gospel of his beloved Master! Never refusing even to lay down his life to promote it: nor was he only assiduous to perform these duties himself; he was also careful to animate others to do the like, earnestly pressing and persuading the pastors and governors of the church, to feed the flock of God, to labour freely for the good of the souls of men, and not undertake those offices to acquire advantages to themselves; beseeching them to treat the flock committed to their care, with lenity and gentleness, and to be themselves shining examples of piety and religion, the surest method of rendering their ministry successful: and because it was impossible for him to be always present, to teach and warn the children of men, he endeavoured by letters, to imprint in their minds, the practice of what they had been taught: a method, he tells us, he was resolved to pursue, as long as he continued an inhabitant of this world; thinking it meet, while he was in this tabernacle, to stir up the professors of the gospel, by putting them in mind of these things; that so they might be able, after his decease, to have them always in remembrance, and not let them slip out of their minds.

ST. JUDE, THE APOSTLE.

ST. JUDE is mentioned by three several names in the evangelical history, namely, Jude or Judas, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. The first he had in common with the other Jews, and in the honour of one of the twelve patriarchs; the other two might be added to the former, partly to distinguish him from Judas the traitor, who had rendered the name odious to the Christians, and partly as a commendation of his wisdom and zeal: for Lebbeus, according to St. Jerom, signifies a man of understanding, and Thaddeus imports divine fervour, and hence some of the fathers call him Zelotes, or Zealous.

This apostle was brother to St. James the Less, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, being the son of Joseph, the reputed father of CHRIST, by a former wife. It is not known when, or by what means, he became a disciple of our blessed Saviour, nothing being said of him, till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve apostles; nor afterwards till CHRIST'S last supper, when discoursing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promise, that he would return to them again, meaning after his resurrection, and that the world should see him no more, though they should see him; our apostle said to his Master, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* It seems from this question, that St. Jude expected that the Messiah would establish a secular kingdom; and therefore could not reconcile the solemnity and grandeur of it, with the private manifestations of CHRIST, to his disciples only.

It is affirmed by St. Jerom, that St. Thomas sent St. Jude the apostle, soon after our Lord's ascension, to Edessa, to heal Abagarus: but this is a mistake, it being Thaddeus, one of the seventy disciples, and not Judas Thaddeus the apostle, who was sent to Abagarus.

We are told by Paulinus, that the province which fell to the share of St. Jude in the apostolic division of the provinces, was Lybia; but

he does not tell us, whether it was the Cyrenean Lybia, which is thought to have received the gospel from St. Mark, or the more southern part of Africa: but however that be, in his first setting out to preach the gospel, he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia, and the neighbouring countries, and afterwards to Syria and Mesopotamia. Nicephorus adds, that he came at last to Edessa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddeus, one of the seventy, had already sown the seeds of the gospel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having by his sermons and miracles established the religion of JESUS, he died in peace; but others say, that he was slain at Berytes, and honourably buried there.

The writers of the Latin church are unanimous in declaring, that St. Jude travelled into Persia, where, after great success in his apostolical ministry for many years, he was at last, for his free and open reproving the superstitious rites and customs of the Magi, cruelly put to death by the enemies of the gospel.

We do not find that St. Jude left more than one epistle, which is placed the last of those seven, styled catholic, in the sacred canon. It hath no particular inscription, as the other six have, but is thought to have been primarily intended for the Christian Jews, in their several dispersions, as St. Peter's epistles were. In it he tells them, "That he at first intended to write to them in general, of the common salvation, and establish and confirm them in it: but seeing the doctrine of CHRIST attacked on every side by Heretics, he conceived it more necessary to spend his time in exhorting them to fight manfully in defence of *the faith once delivered to the saints*, and oppose the false teachers who laboured so indefatigably to corrupt the truth."

It is generally understood, the Heretics meant in this epistle, were the Nicolaitians, the Gnos-

tics, the followers of Simon Magus, and others of the same kind, whose morals were as corrupt as their doctrine, trusting to a faith without works, as sufficient to their salvation : so that the subject of St. Jude's epistle is nearly the same with that of the second of St. Peter, whose sense he generally follows, and often uses the very same expressions : only as the infection had spread itself further, and had gotten more ground, he seems to oppose those Heretics with more zeal and sharpness than St. Peter had done : but because true Christian charity, though it be zealous, yet is without bitterness and hatred, he exhorts the Christians to use gentle methods with those deluded people, and to pluck them as brands out of the fire ; meaning, by fire, their impious principles and practices, which, if continued in, would certainly consume them. He seems expressly to cite St. Peter's second epistle, and to intimate plainly that most of the apostles were dead ; so that his epistle seems not to have been written till after Nero's reign and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

This epistle was not at first generally received in the church : the author indeed, like St. James, St. John, and sometimes St Paul himself, does not call himself an apostle, styling

himself only *the servant of Christ* : but he has added what is equivalent, *Jude the brother of James*, a character that can belong to none but our apostle : and surely the humility of a follower of Jesus should be no objection against his writings, but rather be a recommendation of them.

One great objection against this epistle, was, the apostle's mentioning the tradition of Michael the archangel, contending with the Devil about the body of Moses, but he has done no more than St. Paul in naming Jannes and Jambres ; namely, alleging a story which was then current and acknowledged by the Jews, though nothing of it was inserted in the sacred writings : so that St. Jude reasons with the Jews from their own authors and concessions, the more easily to convince and confute them.

We have now, we trust, obviated the difficulties that have arisen concerning the epistle of St. Jude ; and Eusebius tells us, that in his time most churches read it publicly : it is indeed evident, that before the close of the fourth age, it was acknowledged as canonical Scripture, in the councils of Laodicea and Chathage, by general consent.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. THOMAS, THE APOSTLE.

THE Jews, when they travelled into foreign countries, or familiarly conversed with the Greeks and Romans, were wont to assume a Latin name of the same signification, or at least that bore some affinity with that by which they were known in their own country. Thus our blessed Saviour was called CHRIST, answering to his Hebrew title *Messiah*, the anointed : Simon, who was called *Cephas* in Hebrew, was styled *Petros* in Greek, both signifying a rock : *Tabitha* was called *Dorcas*, both signifying a goat : and thus *Thomas*, according to the Syriac import of his name, was called *Didy-*

mus, a twin, which is the meaning of both appellations.

There is no mention in the evangelical history either of the country or kindred of St. Thomas : it is however certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean. Metaphrastes tells us, that he was descended from very mean parents, who brought him up to the trade of fishing ; but at the same time, took care to give him a more useful education, instructing him in the knowledge of the Scriptures, whereby he learned wisely to regulate his conduct.

This apostle was, together with the rest, called to the apostleship, and not long after, gave an eminent instance of his being ready to undergo the most melancholy fate that might attend him: for when the rest of the apostles were dissuading their Master from going into Judea, at the time of Lazarus' death, because the Jews lately endeavoured to stone him, Thomas desired them not to hinder his journey thither, though it might cost them all their lives: *Let us go*, said he, *that we may die with him*; concluding, that instead of Lazarus being raised from the dead, they should all, like him, be placed in the chambers of the dust.

The holy JESUS, a little before his sufferings, had been speaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them, that he was going to prepare mansions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going, and the way thither: on hearing this, our apostle replied, that they knew not whither he was going, much less, the way that would lead them thither. To which our Lord returned this short but satisfactory answer; *I am the way*; I am the person whom the Father hath sent into the world, to shew mankind the paths that lead to eternal life, and therefore, you cannot miss the way, if you follow my example, and obey my precepts:

The minds of the disciples, who had seen their great Master expire on the cross, were distracted by hopes and fears, concerning his resurrection, about which they were not then fully satisfied, which engaged him the sooner to hasten his appearance, that by the sensible manifestations of himself, he might put the matter beyond all possibility of dispute. Accordingly, the very day on which he arose from the dead, he came into the house where they were assembled, while, for fear of the Jews, the doors were close shut, and gave them sufficient assurance that he was risen from the dead. Thomas was not present at this meeting, having probably never rejoined their company, since their dispersion in the garden, when every one's fears prompted him to consult his own safety. At his return, they told him, that the Lord had appeared to them, but he obstinately refused to give credit to what they said, or to believe that it was really he, presuming it rather a spectre or apparition, unless he might

see the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and side: a strange piece of infidelity! Was it any thing more than what Moses and the prophets had long since foretold? Had not our Lord frequently declared, in plain terms, that he must rise from the dead the third day? And could they question the possibility of what he told them, when they had so often seen him work the greatest miracles.

The stubbornness of Thomas, on this occasion, might have betrayed him into an eternal infidelity; but our compassionate Saviour would not take the advantage of his perverse obstinacy; for, on that day seven-night, he came again to them, as they were solemnly met at their devotions, and, calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, to satisfy his faith by a demonstration from the senses. Thomas was soon convinced of his error and obstinacy, confessing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Master; a God omnipotent, as he was thus able to rescue himself from the power of death. Our Lord answered, that it was happy for him that he believed the testimony of his own senses; but that it was a more noble and commendable act of faith, to acquiesce in a rational evidence, and to receive the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, upon such testimonies and assurances, as will satisfy a wise and sober man, though he did not himself behold them.

After the blessed JESUS had left this vale of misery, and bestowed eminent gifts and miraculous powers on the apostles, St. Thomas, as well as the rest, preached the gospel in several parts of Judea; and, after the dispersion of the Christian Church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia, the province assigned him for his ministry. After which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the gospel to the Medes, Persians, Caramanians, Hyrcani, Bactarians, and the neighbouring nations.

Departing from Persia, he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing their sick, and working other miracles, to prove he had his commission from on high. And after travelling through these countries, he entered the Indian territories.

We are told by Nicephorus, that he was at first unwilling to enter these countries, fearing

he should find their manners as rude and intractable as their faces were black and deformed, till encouraged by a vision, wherein he was assured of the Divine presence to assist him. He travelled a great way into these eastern countries, and even visited the island Taprobane, since called Sumatra, and the country of the Brachmans, preaching every where with the greatest gentleness, and using the most persuasive discourses, not flying out into invectives against their idolatrous practices, but calmly instructing them in the doctrines of Christianity, persuading them by degrees, to renounce their follies, well knowing that confirmed habits must be cured by patience and forbearance, by slow and gentle methods; and by these means he reclaimed the people, from the grossest errors and superstitions, to an hearty belief and reception of Christianity.

The Portuguese, when they first visited these countries, after their discovery of a passage by the Cape of Good Hope, received the following particulars, partly from ancient monuments, and partly from constant and uncontroverted traditions, preserved by the Christians in those parts; namely, that St. Thomas came first to Socotora, an island in the Arabian sea, and thence to Cranganor, where, having converted many from the error of their ways, he travelled further into the East: and having successfully preached the gospel, returned back to the kingdom of Coromandel, where, at Malipur, the metropolis of the kingdom, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began

to erect a place for divine worship, till prohibited by the idolatrous priests, as well as by Sagamo, prince of that country: but after performing several miracles, the work was suffered to proceed, and Sagamo himself embraced the Christian faith, whose example was soon followed by great numbers of his subjects and attendants.

The Brachmans were greatly alarmed at this remarkable success, as they plainly perceived that their religion would be soon extirpated, unless some method could be found of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity; and therefore, resolved to put the apostle to death. At a small distance from the city was a tomb, whither St. Thomas often retired for private devotions. Hither the Brachmans and their armed followers pursued him, and while he was intent at prayer, they first shot at him a shower of darts, after which, one of the priests run him through with a lance. His body was taken up by his disciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a stately and magnificent fabric.

According to St. Chrysostom, St. Thomas, who at first was the weakest and most incredulous of all the apostles, became, through CHRIST's condescension to satisfy his scruples, and the power of the divine grace, the most active and invincible of them all; travelling over most parts of the world, and living without fear in the midst of barbarous nations, for the propagation of the Christian faith.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. ANDREW, THE APOSTLE.

ALTHOUGH the sacred historians have largely described the transactions of St. Peter and St. Paul, yet we find they have been sparing in their accounts of the other apostles, giving us only now and then a few oblique strokes and accidental remarks, concerning them. Why no more of their respective actions were recorded by the penmen of the holy Scriptures, is to us unknown: perhaps the Divine Providence thought it convenient that no further account should be given of the first planting of Christianity in the world, than what concerned Judea and the neighbouring countries, at least, the most eminent places in the Roman empire, that the truth of the prophetic predictions might appear, which had foretold, That *the law of the Messiah should come forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Besides, a particular relation of the acts of so many apostles, performed in so many countries, must have swelled the sacred volumes to an enormous bulk, and consequently rendered them less serviceable to the use of Christians in general.

The apostle St. Andrew, was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, and was son to John or Jonas, a fisherman of that town. He was brother to Simon Peter, but whether elder or younger, is not certainly known, though the generality of the ancients intimate, that he was the younger. But however that be, he was brought up to his father's trade, at which he laboured till our blessed Saviour called him to be a fisher of men, for which he was, by some preparatory institutions, qualified, even before the appearance of the Messiah, in his public character.

We are told by the evangelist, John the Baptist had lately preached the doctrine of repentance; and was, by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his precepts, and the remarkable strictness and austerity of his life, held in great veneration. He trained up his

proselytes under the discipline of repentance, and, by urging on them a severe change, and reformation of life, prepared them to entertain the doctrine of the Messiah, whose approach, he told them, was now near at hand; representing to them the greatness of his person, and the importance of the design for which he came into the world.

Besides the multitudes that flocked to the Baptist's discourses, he, according to the custom of the Jewish masters, had some peculiar and select disciples, who more constantly attended on his lectures, and generally waited upon his person. In the number of these followers, was our apostle; who was with him beyond Jordan, when the Messiah, who had some time before been baptized, came that way.... Upon his approach, the Baptist pointed him out as the Messiah, styling him *the Lamb of God*, the true sacrifice, that was to expiate the sins of the world.

As soon as the Baptist had given this character of JESUS, Andrew, and another disciple, probably St. John, followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode, from whence, after some conversation with him, Andrew departed, and having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had discovered the great Messiah, so long expected by the house of Jacob: and accordingly, brought him to JESUS. They did not, however, stay long with their Master, but returned to their occupation.

Upwards of a year afterwards, JESUS, passing through Galilee, found Andrew and Peter fishing on the sea of Galilee, where he fully satisfied them of the greatness and divinity of his person, by a miraculous draught of fishes, which they took at his command. He now told them, that they should enter on a different series of labours, and, instead of fish, they should, by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine, catch men; commanding them to follow him, as his immediate disciples and at-

tendants ; and they accordingly left all and followed him immediately.

Andrew, together with the rest, was shortly after called to the office and honour of the apostolate, and made choice of to be one of CHRIST'S immediate vicegerents for planting and propagating the Christian church.

We learn from the sacred historian, that after the ascension of the blessed JESUS into heaven, and the Holy Ghost had descended in a visible manner on the apostles, St. Andrew was chosen to preach the gospel in Scythia, and the countries adjacent. He accordingly departed from Jerusalem, and first travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, instructing the inhabitants in the faith of CHRIST, and continued his journey along the Euxine sea into the solitudes of Scythia.

St. Andrew afterwards arrived at Sinope, a city situated on the same sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of king Mithridates : here he met with his brother Peter, and staid with him a considerable time at this place. The inhabitants of Sinope were mostly Jews, who, partly from a zeal for their religion, and partly from their barbarous manners, were exasperated against St. Andrew, and entered into a confederacy to burn the house in which he lodged : but being disappointed in their design, they treated him with the most savage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, stamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place ; some beating him with clubs, some pelting him with stones, and others, to satisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his flesh with their teeth ; till apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they cast him out into the fields : but he miraculously recovered, and returned publicly into the city ; by which, and other miracles he wrought amongst them, he converted many from the error of their ways, and induced them to become disciples of the Son of God.

After departing from Sinope, he returned to Amynsus, passed from thence through Trapezus, and Neocæsarea to Samosata, where he silenced the acutest and wisest philosophers of that country : and, having spent some time there in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, he returned to Jerusalem : but he did not continue long in his native country, returning again to

the province allotted him for the exercise of his ministry, travelling first into the country of the Abasgi, and had great success in preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of the city of Sebastopolc, situated on the eastern shore of the Euxine sea, between the rivers Phasias and Apsarus : from thence he removed into the country of the Zecchi, and the Bosphorani ; but finding the people remarkably barbarous and intractable, he did not stay long amongst them, except at Cherson, a large and populous city within the Bosphorus, where he had great success in his ministry ; and therefore continued some time with the new converts, to instruct and confirm them in the faith. From this city he passed by sea to Sinope, the royal seat of Mithridates, to encourage and confirm the churches he had planted in those parts ; and here he ordained Philologos, formerly one of St. Paul's disciples, bishop thereof.

St. Andrew, after leaving Sinope, came to Byzantium, since called Constantinople, where he instructed the inhabitants in the Christian religion, founded a church for divine worship, and ordained Stachys, first bishop of that place : but being banished from the city, he fled to Argypolis, where he preached the gospel for two years together with remarkable success, converting great numbers to the Christian faith.... He next travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus, preaching the gospel, propagating Christianity, and confirming the doctrine he taught with signs and miracles. At last he came to Petræa, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony to the gospel of his Divine Master ; we mean, he sealed it with his blood, and received the crown of martyrdom by the following means.

Ægeas, who was proconsul of Achaia, came at this time to Petræa, where, observing that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion, and embraced Christianity, he had recourse to every method both of favour and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The apostle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his ministry, addressed himself to the proconsul, and calmly put him in mind, that being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the supreme and impartial Judge of all, pay him the

divine honours due to his exalted Majesty, and abandoned the impieties of his idolatrous worship. The proconsul, instead of assenting to these arguments of the apostle, ridiculed him as an innovator in religion, and a propagator of that superstition, whose author the Jews had put to the infamous death of the cross. On his mentioning the cross, our apostle took the opportunity of representing to him the infinite love and kindness of our great Redeemer, who came down from heaven to purchase the salvation of mankind; and to obtain it, did not disdain to die upon the cross. The proconsul answered, that he might hope to persuade the credulous multitude of the truth of what he said; but for his part, he would not listen to such a legendary tale: and if he did not comply with him, in doing sacrifice to the gods, he would cause him to suffer upon that cross he had so highly magnified. St. Andrew replied, that he sacrificed every day to God, the only true and omnipotent Being, not with fumes and bloody offerings, but in the sacrifice of the immaculate Lamb of God. This answer provoked the proconsul, and he committed the apostle to prison; which so exasperated the people, that a mutiny would have ensued, had not St. Andrew restrained them, persuading them to imitate the mildness and patience of the meek and humble JESUS, and not hinder him from receiving the crown of martyrdom, which he was now going to receive.

He was brought again the next day before the proconsul, who persuaded him not foolishly to throw away his life, but preserve it, and enjoy the pleasures of the world. The apostle told him, that if he would renounce his idolatries, and heartily embrace the Christian faith, he should, with him and the members who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal happiness in the Messiah's kingdom. The proconsul answered, that he himself should never embrace the religion he mentioned; and that the only reason why he was so earnest with him to sacrifice to the gods was, that those whom he had every where seduced, might, by his example, be brought back to the ancient religion they had forsaken. To which the apostle replied, that he saw it was in vain to endeavour to persuade a person incapable of sober counsels, and hardened in his own blindness and folly;

that with regard to himself, he might act as he pleased, and if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him; as the greater constancy he shewed in his sufferings for CHRIST, the more acceptable he should be to his Lord and Master. Ægeas, upon this, immediately passed sentence of death upon him, not being able to restrain his rage any longer.

The proconsul first ordered St. Andrew to be scourged, seven lictors successively whipping his naked body; and, seeing his invincible patience and constancy, commanded him to be crucified; but to be fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious. As he was led to the place of execution, walking with a cheerful and composed mind, the people cried out, that a good and innocent man was unjustly condemned to die. On his coming near the cross he saluted it in the following manner: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour.... The cross has been consecrated by the body of CHRIST hanging on it, and adorned with his members as with so many inestimable jewels: I therefore come joyfully and triumphing to it, that it may receive me as a disciple and follower of him who once hung upon it, and be the means of carrying me safe to my Master, being the instrument on which he redeemed me and all his people from everlasting misery."

Having offered up his prayers to the throne of grace, and exhorted the people to constancy and perseverance in the religion he had delivered to them, he was fastened to the cross, on which he hung two whole days, teaching and instructing the people. In the mean time, great interest was made to the proconsul to spare his life; but the apostle earnestly begged of the Almighty, that he might now depart, and seal the truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he immediately expired on the last day of November, but in what year is not recorded by historians.

The cross on which he suffered, appears to have had something peculiar in the form of it, and is commonly thought to have been a cross decussate, or two pieces of timber crossing each other in the centre, in the form of the letter X, hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross: though some affirm that

he suffered death on an olive tree, and not on a cross.

After his body was taken from the cross, it was decently and honourably interred by Maximilla, a lady of great quality and estate, and who, Nicephorus tells us, was wife to the proconsul. Constantine the Great afterwards removed his body to Constantinople, and buried it in the great church he had built to the honour of the apostles : but this structure being taken down some hundred of years after, in order to rebuild it by Justinian the emperor, the body of St. Andrew was found in a wooden coffin, and again deposited in the place where it was at first interred.

We have the following encomiastic character of St. Andrew, from Hesychius, presbyter of Jerusalem, with which we shall conclude this account of his life. " St. Andrew was the first born of the apostolic choir, the principal and first pillar of the church, *a rock before the rock*, the foundation of that foundation, the first fruits

of the beginning, a caller before he was called himself ; he preached that gospel which was not yet revealed or entertained ; he revealed and made known that life to his brother, which he had not yet perfectly learned himself : so great treasures did that one question bring him, *Master, where dwellest thou ?* which he soon perceived by the answer, *Come and see.* How art thou become a prophet ? whence thus divinely skilful ? what is it that thou soundest in Peter's ears, *We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*, &c. Why dost thou attempt to compass him whom thou canst not comprehend ? how can he be found who is omnipresent ? But he well knew what he said, we have found him whom Adam lost, whom Eve injured, whom the clouds of sin have hidden from us, and to whom our transgressions had hitherto rendered us strangers. Thus had St. Andrew the honour of being the first apostle that preached the gospel of the Son of God ; as appears by his declaration recited above."

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW, THE APOSTLE.

WE learn from the evangelical history of the election of the apostles, that St. Bartholomew was one of the twelve : but because he is but just named, without any further notice taken of him, the generality of writers, ancient and modern, suppose that he lay concealed under the name of Nathanael, one of the first disciples that came to CHRIST. Accordingly, we may observe, that St. John never mentions Bartholomew in the number of the apostles, so the other evangelists take no notice of Nathaniel, probably as being the same person under two different names : and as in St. John, Philip and Nathanael are joined together in their coming to CHRIST ; so in the rest of the evangelists, Philip and Bartholomew are constantly put together ; certainly for no other reason, than because they were jointly called to the discipleship : but what renders

this opinion still more probable, is, that Nathanael is particularly mentioned amongst the other apostles, to whom our Lord appeared at the sea of Tiberias after his resurrection.

It is not reasonable to suppose that Bartholomew was the proper name of this apostle, any more than Bar-jonah was the proper name of Peter ; but given to denote his relative capacity, either as a son or a scholar. If it refers to his father, he was the son of Thalmai, a name not uncommon amongst the Jews : if to his sect as a scholar, he was of the school of the Thalmæans, so called from their founder Thalmæi, scholar to Heber, the ancient master of the Hebrews. Now it was usual for scholars, out of a great reverence to their master, or first institutor of the order, to adopt his name as Bezra, Ben-uziel, and the like : but which ever of these conjectures appears most satisfactory

to the reader, either will be sufficient for my purpose, namely, to reconcile the difference there seems to be between St. John and the other evangelists about the name of this apostle, the one calling him by his proper name, and the other by his relative or paternal appellation.

St. Augustine indeed seemed to object, that it is not probable that our blessed Saviour, who proposed to confound the wisdom of this world by the preaching of illiterate men, would choose Nathanael, a doctor of the law, to be one of his apostles : but this objection will appear to be built on a sandy foundation, if we consider, that the same argument is as strong against Philip, of whose knowledge in the law and the prophets, there is as strong evidence in the history of the gospel as for that of Nathanael ; and may be urged with still greater force against St. Paul, whose abilities in human learning were remarkably great, and few were more complete masters of the Jewish law, than that great apostle.

This difficulty being removed, we shall proceed to the history of this apostle, and consider the names of Nathanael and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the same, and not to two persons.

As to his descent and family, some are of opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was descended from the Ptolemies of Egypt ; probably for no other reason than the mere analogy and sound of the name : but it is plain from the evangelical history, that he was a Galilean, St. John having expressly told us, that Nathanael was of Cana in that part of Judea. His trade and manner of life are not mentioned in Scripture, though, from some circumstances, there is room to imagine that he was a fisherman : but however that be, he was at his first coming to CHRIST, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long-expected Messiah, so often foretold by Moses and the prophets, *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*. And when he objected that the Messiah could not be born in Nazareth, Philip desired him to come and satisfy himself of the truth.

Our blessed Saviour, on his approach, entertained him with this honourable character, that he was *an Israelite indeed*, a man of true simplicity and dignity : and indeed his simpli-

city particularly appears in this, that when he was told of JESUS, he did not object against the meanness of his original, the low condition of his parents, or the narrowness of their fortunes, but only against the place of his birth, which, as he justly observed, could not be Nazareth, the Scriptures peremptorily foretelling, that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem.

This apostle was greatly surprised at our Lord's salutation, wondering how he could know him at first sight, being certain he had never before seen his face : but he was answered, that he had seen him while he was yet under the fig tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this instance of our Lord's divinity, he presently made this confession, that he was now sure that JESUS was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, whom he had appointed to govern his church. Our blessed Saviour told him, that if, from this instance, he could believe him to be the Messiah, he should have far greater arguments to confirm his faith ; for that he should hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels visibly appearing to attend his triumphant entrance into the heaven of heavens.

After the visible descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, St. Bartholomew visited different parts of the world, to preach the gospel, and penetrated as far as the hither India. Having spent a considerable time there, and in the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to the northern and western parts : and we find him at Hierapolis in Phrygia, labouring in concert with St. Philip, to plant Christianity in those parts, and to convince the blind idolaters, of the evil of their ways, and direct them in the paths that lead to the regions of felicity. This enraged the bigotted magistrates, and he was, together with St. Philip, designed for Martyrdom ; and in order to this, fastened to a cross ; but a sudden trembling and motion of the earth, convinced the idolaters that the justice of Omnipotence would revenge their deaths ; so that they took him immediately down from the cross, and dismissed him.

St. Bartholomew passed from hence into Lyeaonia ; and St. Chrysostom assures us, that he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the christian discipline. His last remove was, to Adrianople, in Great Armenia, a place mis-

erably overrun with idolatry, from which he laboured to reclaim the people: but his endeavours to *turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, were so far from having the desired effect, that it provoked the magistrates, who prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, sealing with his blood, the truth of the doctrine he had preached.

We are told by some of the ancients, that he was crucified with his head downwards; and by others, that he was flayed alive. Perhaps he suffered both; for Plutarch records a particular instance of Mesobates, the Persian eunich, who was first flayed alive, and then crucified; and the inhabitants of Adrianople, might easily borrow this barbarous and inhuman cruelty from the Persians, who were remarkably severe in their punishments.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. BARNABAS, THE APOSTLE.

THIS apostle was at first called Joses, a softer termination generally given by the Greeks to Joseph; his fellow-disciples added the name of Barnabas, as significant of some extraordinary property in him. St. Luke interprets it, *the son of consolation*, which he was ever ready to administer to the afflicted, both by word and action; as his comfortable discourses, his selling his own estate, and collecting the benevolence of others, for the relief of the poor indigent Christians, abundantly testify. St. Jerom observes, that his name also denotes *the son of a prophet*; and in this respect likewise, it was well suited to our apostle, as being eminent for his endowments and prophetic gifts.

St. Barnabas was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and settled in the isle of Cyprus, where they had purchased an estate, as the Levites might do out of their country. His parents finding their son of a promising genius and disposition, placed him in one of the schools of Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's master; a circumstance which, in all probability, laid the first foundation for that intimacy which afterwards subsisted between these two eminent servants of JESUS CHRIST.

St. Barnabas is first mentioned in the Holy Scripture, in the record of that great and worthy service he did the church of CHRIST, by succouring it with the sale of his patrimony in

Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the apostles' feet, to be put into the common stock, and disposed of as they should think fit, amongst the indigent followers of the holy JESUS. This worthy example was followed by those who were blessed with the goods of fortune; none kept their plenty to themselves, but turned their houses and lands into money, and devoted it to the common use of the church. St. Barnabas is indeed mentioned as selling the most valuable estate on this occasion; or being the most forward and ready to begin a common stock, and set others a laudable pattern of charity and benevolence to the brethren.

Our apostle now became considerable in the ministry and government of the church; for we find that St. Paul coming to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, because he had been so grievous a persecutor of it, and might still be suspected of a design to betray it, he addressed himself to Barnabas, as a leading man amongst the Christians, and one that had personal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and satisfied them of the sincerity of his conversion, and in what a miraculous manner it was brought about.

The agreeable news was brought to Jerusalem, about four or five years afterwards, that several of their body, who had been driven out of Judea by the persecutions raised about St.

Stephen, had preached at Antioch, with such success, that a great number, both of Jews and proselytes, embraced Christianity, and were desirous that some of the superior order would come down and confirm them. This request was immediately granted; and Barnabas was deputed to settle this new plantation. Upon his arrival, he rejoiced extremely, to see what progress the gospel had made amongst them; and earnestly exhorted them to continue immovable in their profession of CHRIST JESUS. And being himself a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, his charitable deeds, accompanying his discourses, and his pious life exemplifying his sound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very large additions were made to the Christian church: but there being too large a field for one labourer, he went to fetch Paul from Tarsus, who came back with him to Antioch, and assisted him a whole year in establishing that church. Their labours prospered, their assemblies were crowded, and the disciples, who before this, were called amongst themselves *brethren, believers, elect*, and by their enemies, *Nazarenes, and Galileans*, were now called Christians first in this city.

While these apostles preached in Antioch, Agabus, a prophet, gave the church notice, that there would shortly be a great famine throughout the world, or more properly, throughout the Roman empire; especially in Judea. On hearing this prophecy, the Christians of Antioch, considering the number and necessities of their brethren at Jerusalem, and how generously the rich amongst them had exhausted their estates in maintaining the poor, determined to send them assistance against the ensuing scarcity, which they raised by contributions, according to every man's abilities, and sent it to the heads of the church, at Jerusalem, by the hands of Barnabas and Paul. This famine lay heavy on Judea, during the four years government of Caspius Fadus, and Tiberius Alexander, who under the emperor Claudius, were presidents of that province.

After the apostles had fulfilled their charitable embassy, and staid some time at Jerusalem, to see the good effect of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark, the son of Mary, sister to

Barnabas; and at whose house the disciples found both security for their persons, and convenience for the solemnities of their worship. But soon after the apostles return to Antioch, an express revelation was made to the church, by the mouth of one of the prophets, who ministered there, that Barnabas and Paul should be set apart for an extraordinary work, unto which the Holy Ghost had appointed them. Upon this declaration the church set apart a day for a solemn mission, and after devout prayer and fasting, they laid their hands upon them, and ordained them to their office; which was, to travel over certain countries, and preach the gospel to the Gentiles: from this joint commission, Barnabas obtained the name of an apostle, not only amongst later writers of the church, but with St. Paul himself, and with St. Luke, in the history of the acts of the apostles, written by him.

Being thus consecrated *the apostles of the Gentiles*, they entered upon their ministry, taking with them John Mark, for their minister or deacon, who assisted them in many ecclesiastical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor, and receiving contributions for them.

After their departure from Antioch, the first city they visited was Selucia, a city of Syria, adjoining to the sea; from whence they sailed for the island of Cyprus, the native place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the gospel, in the synagogue of the Jews; and from thence travelled to Paphos, the capital of the island. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable success; Servius Paulus, the proconsul, being, amongst others, converted to the faith of the gospel.

Having quitted Cyprus, they crossed the sea, to preach in Pamphylia, where their deacon John, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jerusalem. The apostles afterwards went to Perga, where they did not continue long, but travelled seventy or eighty miles northward, to Antioch, in Pisidia, so called, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, where the apostles received their ordination. Here they preached to the Jews in their synagogues; but meeting with blasphemous opposition, they told them plainly, that they thought

it reasonable to preach the gospel first to them; but as they had so unthankfully rejected it, they would now make the same offers of salvation to the Gentiles, according to the commandment of God, by his prophets: but the exasperated Jews stirred up some of the principal citizens to persecute them, and force them to leave the city; whereupon they departed from Antioch, and came to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, where they continued a considerable time, preaching in the synagogues with great success: but at last, the old spirit of Jewish rage and malice, prevailed against them, and obliged them, in order to avoid the madness of the multitude, to retire to Derbe, a city of Lycaonia.

They returned from Derbe to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, in Pisidia, *confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith; and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.* After a short stay, they again visited the churches of Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia, where they took ship, and sailed to Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they first set out. Presently after their arrival, they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and of the great success which had attended their preaching in the Gentile world.

They had not long continued in this city, before their assistance was required to compose a difference in this church, occasioned by some of the Jewish converts, who endeavoured to persuade the Gentiles, that they were bound to observe the law of Moses, as well as that of CHRIST; and be circumcised as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavoured to persuade the zealots, from pressing such unnecessary observations; but all his endeavours proving ineffectual, he was deputed with St. Paul and others, to go to the church at Jerusalem, to submit the question to be determined there, in a full assembly.

During their stay at Jerusalem, Mark, in all probability, reconciled himself to his uncle Barnabas, and returned with him and St. Paul to Antioch, after they had succeeded in their business at Jerusalem, and obtained a decree from the synod there, that the Gentile converts should not have circumcision and other Mosaic

rites imposed upon them, as they were now under the gospel dispensation.

The minds of the Gentiles were greatly quieted and comforted by this determination; nevertheless, it did not prevent the bigotted Jews from keeping up a separation from them; and that with so much obstinacy, that when St. Peter, some time after, came to Antioch, he, for fear of offending them, contradicted his former practice, and late speech and vote in the synod of Jerusalem, by refraining from all kind of communion with the Gentiles; and Barnabas himself, though so great and good a man, was induced, by the authority of his example, to commit the same error; though doubtless, on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more courage, and walked according to that true liberty and freedom, which the gospel imparts:

After this transaction, Paul made a proposal to Barnabas, that they should repeat their late travels amongst the Gentiles, and see how the churches they had planted, increased in their numbers, and improved in the doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the proposal, but desired they might take with them his reconciled nephew, John Mark. This Paul absolutely refused, because in their former voyage, Mark had not shewn the constancy of a faithful minister of CHRIST, but consulted his own ease, at a dangerous juncture, departed from them without leave, at Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas still insisted on taking him, and the other continuing as resolute to oppose it, a short debate arose, which terminated in a rupture; whereby these two holy men, who had for several years been companions in the ministry, and with united endeavours propagated the gospel of the Son of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas, with his kinsman, sailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul travelled to the churches of Syria, and Cilicia, taking Silas with him.

The sacred writers give us no account of St. Barnabas, after his separation from St. Paul; nor are the ecclesiastical writers agreed amongst themselves with regard to the actions of our apostle, after his sailing for Cyprus: this however seems to be certain, that he did not spend the whole remainder of his life in that island,

but visited different parts of the world, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles amongst the Gentiles; and after long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of success in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he suffered martyrdom in the following manner: certain Jews coming from Syria to Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the gospel, were highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him, as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and after the most inhuman tortures, stoned him to death. His kinsman John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave, where it remained till the time of the emperor Zeno, in the year of CHRIST 485, when it was discovered lying on his breast, with St. Matthew's gospel in Hebrew, written with his own hand.

An epistle in Greek is still extant, which bears this apostle's name: but the church has not received it into the canon of Scripture; and, for that reason, both Eusebius and St. Jerom call it apocryphal, though they do not deny its being the work of St. Barnabas. Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, often quote it as his, and Monardus, who first published the Greek with the old Latin version, sufficiently shews, that it is the same known to the ancients, be-

cause all their quotations are found in it. The style of it resembles that of the apostolic age; but it appears to have been written some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, a period which St. Barnabas may easily be supposed to survive: the beginning of it is wanting, and the inscription, if ever it had any; but the matter of it evidently shows, that it was written to such Jews as are mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of the acts, who having embraced Christianity, still held, that the observance of the ceremonial law was necessary to salvation: but this law St. Barnabas shews to be abolished by the gospel, and that the customs of it are of no consequence to the Christians. The latter part contains excellent precepts, delivered under two different similitudes, the one of light, the other of darkness; the former under the conduct of the angels of God, the latter under the influence of the angels of Satan. The way of light is a summary of what the Christian is to do, that he may attain eternal happiness; and the way of darkness represents those particular sins and vices which exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. He closes the whole with pressing Christians to live in such a manner, while they sojourn in this vale of misery, that they may, after they quit it, enjoy the pleasures of the heavenly Canaan, and inherit the kingdom of glory for ever and ever.

AN ACCOUNT OF ST. PHILIP, THE APOSTLE.

ST. PHILIP was a native of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. He had the honour of being first called to be a disciple of the great Messiah, which happened in the following manner. Our blessed Saviour, soon after his return from the wilderness, where he had been tempted by the Devil, met with Andrew and his brother Peter, and after some discourse parted from them. The next day, as he was passing through Galilee, he found Philip, whom he presently commanded to follow him,

the constant form he made use of in calling his disciples, and those that inseparably attended him: so that the prerogative of being first called, evidently belongs to St. Philip, he being the first of our Lord's disciples: for though Andrew and St. John were the first that came and conversed with the Saviour of the world, yet they immediately returned to their occupation, and were not called till a whole year afterwards.

Our apostle was not idle after the honour he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world ; he immediately imparted the glad tidings of the Messiah's appearance to his brother Nathanael, and conducted him to JESUS : so ready is a good man to conduct others in the paths that lead to happiness and peace !

We have very little recorded of St. Philip by the evangelists, after his being called to the apostleship. It was, however, to him that our Saviour proposed the question, where they should find bread sufficient to satisfy the hunger of so great a multitude ? To which Philip answered, that it was not easy to procure so large a quantity ; not considering, that it was equally easy for Almighty Power to feed double the number, when it pleased to exert itself. It was also to the same apostle, that the Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, applied, when they were desirous to see the Saviour of the world : and it was with him our Lord had the discourse a little before the paschal supper, when he was about to suffer.

While the holy and compassionate JESUS was fortifying the minds of his disciples with proper considerations against his departure from them, and had told them, that he was going to prepare for them a place in the mansions of the heavenly Canaan : that he was *the Way, the Truth, and the Life* ; that *no man could come to the Father but by him* ; and that knowing him, *they both knew and had seen the Father* : Philip, not thoroughly understanding the force of his Master's reasonings, begged of him that he would shew them the Father. We can hardly suppose that Philip should have such gross conceptions of the Deity, as to imagine the Father invested with a corporeal and visible nature ; but CHRIST having told them that they had seen him, and knowing that of old God frequently appeared in a visible shape, he only desired that he would manifest himself to them by some such appearance. Our Lord gently reproved his ignorance, that after attending so long to his instructions, he should not know, that he was the image of his Father, the express characters of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, appearing in him ; that he said and did nothing but by his Father's appointment,

which, if they did not believe, his miracles were a sufficient evidence ; that such demands were therefore unnecessary and impertinent ; and that it was an indication of great weakness in him, after three years education under his discipline and institution, to appear so ignorant with regard to these particulars.

We are told by the ancients, that in the distribution made by the apostles of the several regions of the world, the Upper Asia fell to the share of St. Philip, where he applied himself with an indefatigable diligence and industry, to turn the children of men from the paths of wickedness which lead to destruction, to ways that terminate in eternal felicity : and by the constancy and power of his preaching, and the efficacy of his miracles, he gained numerous converts, whom he baptized into the Christian faith, curing at once, their bodies of infirmities and distempers, and their souls of error and idolatry. He continued with them a considerable time, in settling churches, and appointing them spiritual guides and ministers.

Having several years successfully exercised his apostolical office in all those parts, he came at last to Hierapolis in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but at the same time overrun with the most enormous idolatry : amongst the many vain and trifling deities, to whom they paid religious adoration, was a serpent or dragon, of an enormous magnitude, which they worshipped with the most solemn reverence and devotion.

Being grieved to see the people so wretchedly enslaved by error and superstition, St. Philip continually offered his addresses to heaven, till by his prayers, and often calling upon the name of CHRIST, he procured the death, or at least, the vanishing of this famous and beloved serpent. Having thus demolished their deity, he demonstrated to them, how ridiculous and unjust it was for them to pay divine honours to such odious creatures, shewed them that God alone was to be worshipped as the great Parent of all the world, who, in the beginning, made man after his glorious image, and when fallen from that innocent and happy state, sent his own Son into the world to redeem him ; that, in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, and at the end of the world, will come

again to raise all the sons of men from the chambers of the dust, and sentence them to everlasting rewards and punishments, according to their works. This discourse roused them from their lethargy; so that great numbers were ashamed of their late idolatry, and embraced the doctrines of the gospel, with earnestness and sincerity.

The great enemy of mankind, being provoked at this success, had recourse to his old methods, cruelty and persecution. The magistrates of the city seized the apostle, and having thrown him into prison, caused him to be severely scourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and being bound, was hanged against a pillar; or according to others, crucified: but Omnipotence did not behold this scene of cruelty, without testifying his anger; for when this indefatigable apostle was expiring, the earth began suddenly to quake, and the ground whereon the people stood, to sink under them; but, on their considering it as a mark of the divine vengeance, and imploring pardon for their crime, it suddenly stopt, and returned to its former

position. The apostle being dead, his body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his fellow-labourer in the gospel, and Mariamne, St. Philip's sister, the constant companion of his travels, and decently buried; after which, they confirmed the people in the faith of CHRIST, and departed from those parts.

The ancient writers unanimously agree, that he was a married man; and Clemens, of Alexandria, that he had daughters, whom he disposed of in marriage: but he, not carefully distinguishing between Philip the deacon, who lived at Cesarea, with his three virgin daughters, as mentioned in the acts of the apostles, has caused some confusion amongst the ancient authors: nay, some have concluded, that they were one and the same person; though the one was called to the apostleship by our Lord himself, and the other only a deacon chosen by the apostles at Jerusalem, after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them.

It does not appear that St. Philip left any writings behind him, being fully employed in ministeries, more immediately useful to the happiness of mankind, as an apostle.

ST. SIMON, THE APOSTLE, *Surnamed the Zealot.*

THIS apostle was, as some think, one of the four brothers of our Saviour, sons of Joseph, by his former marriage; though the only proof of it is, that one of these was called Simon, too weak an argument to found any on, except a bare conjecture. In the catalogue of the apostles, he is styled, *Simon the Canaanite*, whence some conjecture, he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the bridegroom mentioned by St. John, at whose marriage our blessed Saviour turned the water into wine: but this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word *knah*, which signifies zeal, and denotes a warm and sprightly temper. What some of the evange-

lists, therefore, call *Canaanite*, others, rendering the Hebrew by the Greck word, style *Zealot*: not from his great zeal, his ardent affection to his Master, and a desire of advancing his religion in the world, but from his warm active temper, and zealous forwardness in some particular sect of religion, before our Saviour called him to be a disciple.

That we may understand this the better, it will be necessary to observe, that as there were several sects and parties amongst the Jews, so there was one, either a distinct sect, or at least a branch of the Pharisees, called, 'The Sect of the Zealots: they were remarkable asserters of the honour of the law, and of the strictness and purity of religion, assuming a liberty to

themselves, of questioning notorious offenders, without staying for the ordinary formalities of law; nay, they did not scruple, when they thought it necessary, to inflict capital punishments upon them: thus, when a blasphemer cursed God, by the name of an idol, the Zealot who first met him, had the liberty of killing him, without carrying him before the Sanhedrim. They considered themselves as the successors of Phineas, who, in defence of the honour of God, inflicted death on Zimri, and Cozbi: an act which was *counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore*; and God was so well pleased with it, that he made *with him and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for Israel.*

Whatever St. Simon was before, we can have no reason to suspect, but that after his conversion he was very zealous for the honour of his Master, and considered all those who were enemies to CHRIST, as enemies to himself, how near soever they might be to him in any natural relation: and as he was very exact in all the practical duties of the Christian religion, so he showed a very serious and pious indignation towards those who professed religion and a faith in CHRIST, with their mouths, but dishonoured their sacred profession, by their irregular and vicious lives, as many of the first Christians really did, and became heretics and apostates.

We are told by Theodoret, that St. Simon the Zealot, was of the tribe of Zebulun or Naphtali, and that by this particular, he was distinguished from St. Thomas, a relation of our blessed Saviour, and, after St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, who was of the tribe of Judah: but there are stronger reasons to prove this difference, the authority of Eusebius, who never calls Simon bishop of Jerusalem, an apostle, but says expressly, that the apostolic age ended with his death, who died before Simon, bishop of Jerusalem.

It appears, that St. Simon continued in communion with the rest of the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem; and, at the feast of Pentecost, received the same miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost: so that he was qualified with the rest of his brethren for the apostolic office, in propagating the gospel of the Son of God; and we cannot doubt of his exercising his gifts with the same zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the world, is uncertain. Some say he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of those remote and barbarous countries: and others add, that after he had just passed through those burning wastes, he took ship, and visited the frozen regions of the North, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of the western parts, and even in Britain itself, where having converted great multitudes, and sustained the greatest hardships and persecutions, he was at length crucified, and buried in some part of Great Britain, but the particular spot cannot be ascertained.

ST. MATTHIAS, THE APOSTLE.

ST. MATTHIAS not being an apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen by the Son of God himself, it cannot be expected that any account of him can be found in the evangelical history. He was one of our Lord's disciples, probably one of the seventy, that had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, and after his death was elected

into the apostolate, to supply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Master, laid violent hands on himself.

As the defect of Judas had made a vacancy in the apostolic college, the first thing the disciples did, after their return from Mount Olivet, when their great Master ascended to the throne of his glory, was, to fill up this vacancy

with a proper person. Accordingly, Peter acquainted them, that Judas, according to the prophetic prediction, being fallen from his ministry, it was necessary that another should be substituted in his room, and at the same time requisite, that the person elected should have been a constant attendant on the blessed JESUS, that he might be the better qualified for bearing witness to his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.

St. Peter having thus addressed the assembly, two persons were proposed, namely, Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias, both of whom were duly qualified for that important office. The method of election was by lots, a way common both amongst the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult cases, especially in choosing judges or magistrates; and this course seems to have been taken by the apostles, because the Holy Ghost was not yet given, by whose immediate dictates and inspirations they were afterwards chiefly guided.

That the business might proceed with the greater alacrity and success, they first solemnly made their addresses, to heaven, that the omniscient Being, who governed the world, and perfectly understood the tempers and dispositions of men, would immediately guide and direct the choice, and shew them which of the two he would appoint to take that part of the apostolic charge, from which Judas was so lately fallen. The prayer being ended, the lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the person, and he was numbered amongst the twelve apostles accordingly.

Soon after this election, the promised powers of the Holy Ghost were conferred upon the apostles, to qualify them for that great and arduous employment upon which they were sent, the establishing the holy religion of the Son of God amongst the children of men, in various parts of the world.

The first years of the ministry of St. Matthias, was spent in Judea, where he reaped a very considerable harvest of souls, and then travelled into different parts of the world, to publish the glad tidings of salvation, to people who had never yet heard of a Saviour; but the particular parts he visited, are not certainly known. The Greeks suppose, that he travelled eastward; St. Jerom says, his principal residence was near the influx of the river Apsus into the haven of Hyscus, in Cappadocia: but the people were remarkably rough and uncivilized, so that it is no wonder that he at last fell a victim to their ferocity; though this did not happen till after he had long indefatigably laboured in the vineyard of his great Master, and brought over vast numbers to an acknowledgment and reception of the truth.

We are not told by what kind of death this apostle left the regions of mortality, and sealed the truth of the gospel he had so assiduously preached with his blood. Dorotheus says, he finished his course at Sebastople, and was buried there near the temple of the sun. An ancient martyrologist reports him to have been seized by the Jews, and, as a blasphemer, to have been stoned, and then beheaded: but the Greek offices, supported herein by several ancient breviaries, tell us, that he was crucified. His body is by some pretended to be now at Rome, where some relics of it are shewn with great veneration; while others contend, that it is at Triers in Germany. Bollandus is of opinion, that the body of Matthias, now at Rome, is that of Matthias, who was bishop of Jerusalem, in the year 120, and whose history they have confounded with that of the apostle St. Matthias; but Popish legends and traditions are in no instance to be relied on.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS.

WE are taught by the predictions of the prophets, that a virgin was to be the mother of the promised Messiah, and we are also assured by the unanimous concurrence of the evangelists, that this virgin's name was Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, of the tribe of Judah, and married to Joseph of the same tribe. The Scripture indeed tells us no more of the blessed virgin's parents, than that she was of the family of David, and of the town of Bethlehem; not so much as their names being mentioned, unless by Heli, in St. Luke's genealogy, we understand Joachim the virgin's father. All that is said concerning the birth of Mary and her parents, is to be found only in some apocryphal writings; and which however are very ancient. St. John says, that Mary the wife of Cleophas, who was the mother of those which the gospel styles our Lord's brethren, was the virgin's sister. Mary then was of the royal race of David: she was allied likewise to the family of Aaron, since Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias, and mother of John the Baptist, was the cousin of Mary.

In conformity to the Greek church, the Latins have for some centuries past, honoured St. Joachim as the father of St. Anne, the mother of the blessed virgin: and though God hath not been pleased to acquaint us with the particulars of her birth; yet the Roman church, from a grateful sense of the infinite blessings conveyed to us by the blessed Jesus, hath long celebrated her conception on the eighth of December in the West, and on the ninth in the East, and her nativity on the eighth of September.... An anniversary festival of her presentation in the temple, is kept likewise on the twenty-first of November; and it is commonly believed, that she was consecrated to God at three years of age: but not to build upon uncertainties, thus much we are assured by the testimony of an angel, that she was happy above all other women in the divine favour; that she was full

of grace; and that the Lord was in a peculiar manner with her.

Whether the holy virgin immediately after the annunciation, went up to the passover at Jerusalem (as some have imagined, this being the season of the year for it) or not, we have no account from the evangelist St. Luke: but this he assures us, that a little while after she set out for Hebron, a city in the mountains of Judah, in order to visit her cousin Elizabeth, to congratulate her upon her pregnancy, which she had learned from the angel, at an age when such a blessing was not usually to be expected.

No sooner had Mary entered the house, and began to speak, than, upon Elizabeth's hearing the voice of her cousin's salutation, her child, young John the Baptist, transported with supernatural emotions of joy, leaped in her womb; whereupon she was filled with the Holy Ghost, and being by divine inspiration acquainted with the mystery of the incarnation, she re-saluted Mary, and cried out, *Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salvation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* Then Mary, filled with acknowledgments and supernatural light, praised God, saying, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, &c.*

Mary having continued here about three months, till Elizabeth was delivered, as St. Ambrose thinks, that she might see him on whose account she principally made that visit, returned afterwards to her own house at Nazareth, waiting for the time of her delivery: but when she was ready to be delivered, an edict was published by Cæsar Augustus, in the year of the world 4000, the first of CHRIST, and the third before the vulgar æra: which decreed

that all the subjects of the Roman empire should go to their respective cities and places ; there to have their names registered according to their families. Thus Joseph and Mary, who were both of the lineage of David, repaired to their city of Bethlehem, the original and native place of their family : but while they were in this city, the time being fulfilled in which Mary was to be delivered, she brought forth her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger of the stable, whither they had retired ; for they could find no place in the public inn, because of the great concourse of people that were then at Bethlehem on the same occasion ; or they were forced to withdraw into the stable of the inn, not being able to get a more convenient place for her to be delivered in.

The angels made the birth of CHRIST known to the shepherds, who were at this time in the fields near Bethlehem, and who came in the night to see Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger, in order to pay him their tribute of adoration. Mary took notice of all these things, and laid them up in her heart.... Some time after came the Magi, or wise men from the East, and brought to JESUS the mysterious presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, having been directed thither by a star which led the way before them to the very house where the babe lay. After this, being warned by an angel that appeared to them in a dream, they returned into their own country by a way different from that by which they came, without giving Herod the intelligence he wanted ; which he pretended was, in order to come and worship the babe, though his real design was to cut him off, from a jealousy of his rivalling that artful monarch, in his sovereignty over the Jews.

The time of Mary's purification being now come, that is, forty days after the birth of JESUS, she went to Jerusalem, to present her son, in the temple ; and there to offer the sacrifice appointed by the law, for the purification of women after childbirth. At that time there was at Jerusalem, an old man named Simeon, who was full of the Holy Ghost ; and had received a secret assurance, that he should not die till he had seen CHRIST the Lord: accordingly, he came into the temple by the impulse

of the Spirit of God, and taking the child JESUS in his arms, he blessed the Lord ; and then addressing himself to Mary, said *This child is sent for the rising and falling of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against :* even so far as that thy own soul shall be pierced as with a sword, that the secret thoughts in the hearts of many may be discovered and laid open.

When Joseph and Mary were preparing afterwards to return to their own country of Nazareth, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, bidding him retire into Egypt with Mary and the child, because Herod had a design to destroy JESUS. Joseph obeyed the admonition, and continued in Egypt till after the death of Herod ; when both he and Mary returned to Nazareth, not daring to go to Bethlehem, because it was in the jurisdiction of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great, who was a cruel prince.

Now it being the constant practice of Joseph and Mary to go every year to Jerusalem, to the feast of the passover ; and when JESUS was twelve years of age, they brought him with them to the capital. When the days of the festival were ended, they set out on their return home ; but the child JESUS continued at Jerusalem, without their perceiving it, and, thinking that he might be with some of the company, they went on a day's journey ; when not finding him amongst their acquaintance, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him : three days after, they found him in the temple, sitting amongst the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. When they saw him, they were filled with astonishment ; and Mary said to him, My son, why hast thou served us thus ? Behold thy father and myself, who have sought thee in great affliction. JESUS answered them, Why did you seek me ? Did not you know that I must be employed about my Father's business ? Afterwards he returned with them to Nazareth, and lived in filial submission to them : but his mother laid up all these things in her heart. The gospel says nothing more of the virgin Mary, till the marriage at Cana of Galilee, where she was present with JESUS her son.

The blessed JESUS, in the thirtieth year of the vulgar æra, resolved to manifest himself to

the world, and, therefore, went to be baptized by St. John, from thence into the wilderness, and thence to the above mentioned wedding, to which he, with his mother and disciples, had been invited. At this entertainment, the provision of wine being somewhat scanty (probably because the friends of the married couple were but mean) CHRIST'S mother told her son, they had no wine, not doubting of his power to supply them: to which JESUS answered in terms which had some appearance of a rebuke, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.*

Six great stone pitchers being in the room, JESUS ordered them to be filled brim full of water; and afterwards commanded the servants to fill out and carry it to the master of the feast, who, on tasting it, found it was excellent wine. This is the first miracle that JESUS wrought, at the beginning of his public ministry; and from hence our Lord went to Capernaum, with his mother and brethren.

It is true, we learn from the third chapter of St. Mark, that on a certain day in the year of CHRIST thirty-four, and vulgar æra thirty-one, that as JESUS CHRIST was teaching in a house at Capernaum, so great a crowd of people stood about him, that neither he nor his disciples had time to take any refreshment; which caused a report to be spread abroad, that he had fainted away, or was fallen into a swoon: thus Grotius interprets the word *ἐξέστη*. The virgin, and the brethren or relations of JESUS, came to see what had given occasion to this report; and when they could not get into the house, for the throngs of people, they caused a message to be conveyed, from one to another, till it was told JESUS, "That his mother and his brethren were at the door, and desired to speak with him." JESUS being accordingly informed of their coming, and that they waited to speak with him, being at that instant engaged in the work of his ministry, preaching the word of God, he made this reply, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?* And looking upon those that were round about him, he said, *these are my mother and brethren;* declaring, *That whosoever did the will of his heavenly Father, the same was his mother, and sister, and brother.* This was what CHRIST had taught in another place, that we must prefer God to all human relations, and give the pre-

ference to his service: but this saying could not reflect upon his mother, who was amongst the principal of those who did the will of his heavenly Father.

Immediately upon Mary's approach, a woman of the company said, with a loud voice, directing her words to JESUS, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.* To which he replied, *Yea, rather blessed are they, that hear the word of God, and keep it.* Not intimating hereby, that she who had the honour to bear him, did not deserve to be called blessed, throughout all generations; but that even her happiness consisted more in doing the will of CHRIST, than in giving him a human body, which was indeed not her own act, but effected by the power of God.

We have no further account of the holy virgin from this time, till we find her in Jerusalem at the last passover our Saviour celebrated there; which was in the thirty-sixth year of CHRIST, and thirty-third of the vulgar æra.... In this city she saw all that was transacted against him, followed him to Mount Calvary, and stayed at the foot of the cross during the passion of her blessed Son. We cannot doubt but her soul was at this time pierced through, as old Simeon had prophesied, with the most acute pains, for the death of such a Son. Yet her constancy was remarkable: for when the apostles were all frightened away from their Master, she, with a courage undaunted, and worthy of the mother of CHRIST, continued even in the midst of the executioners, being prepared to die with her Son, who was now become her Saviour; who being now ready to leave the world, and seeing his mother at the foot of the cross, and his beloved disciple St. John near her, he bequeathed her to him by his last will and testament, saying to his mother, *Woman, behold thy son;* and to the disciple, *Behold thy mother.* And from that hour the disciple took her home to his own house, and provided for her.

Some authors of the fifth century think the virgin Mary died and was buried at Jerusalem, or rather in her sepulchre at Gethsemane, near that city, where, to this day, it is shewn in a magnificent church dedicated to her.

The ancient fathers of the Eastern and Western churches, asserted her perpetual virginity,

and St. Augustine tells us, that this is one of those points which we ought to receive as of apostolic tradition, since the Holy Scripture gives us no more account of it, than by only remarking how fully the blessed virgin was re-

solved to serve God with an entire purity. The title which had been constantly appropriated to her in all ages, as often as she is mentioned, is a good argument to confirm our belief concerning this : See Ezek. xliv. 2.

MARY MAGDALENE.

THIS remarkable convert was a native either of Magdala, a town in Galilee, on the other side Jordan, or Magdalos, a town situated at the foot of Mount Carmel, and had her surname from the place of her birth. Some affirm, that she was the sinner mentioned by St. Luke, ch. vii. 37, &c. but this opinion is built only on conjecture. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, that JESUS had cast out of her seven devils; which some understand in a literal, and others in a figurative sense.

Mary became, however, a constant attendant on the blessed JESUS, after he had removed her

plague. She followed him to Mount Calvary, continued amidst the Roman Guards, at the foot of the cross, with the holy virgin, and saw his precious body laid in the tomb; after which, she returned to Jerusalem, in order, after the sabbath, to embalm her Lord.

She also carried the welcome tidings to Peter and John, and our blessed Lord himself appeared to her first after his resurrection.... The apostles, however, did not believe her report, till it was confirmed by others, and they themselves had seen their Saviour. After this event, she is not mentioned in sacred writ.

MARY, the Sister of Lazarus.

MARY, the sister of Lazarus, with her sister Martha, lived with their brother at Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. Our dear Redeemer had a particular affection for this family, and often retired to their house, with his disciples. One day, (and perhaps the first time that JESUS went thither) Martha received him with remarkable affection, and took abundance of pains in providing a proper entertainment for him; but Mary, her sister, continuing sitting at her Saviour's feet, listening to his words with peculiar attention. This Martha considered as an instance of disrespect, and therefore said to JESUS, *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore, that she help me.* But our Lord justified Mary, by telling her sister, that she had chosen the better part, which she should never be deprived of.

Lazarus; their brother, some time after this fell sick, and his sisters sent to acquaint JESUS of the misfortune; but he did not arrive at Bethany, till after Lazarus was dead. Martha

hearing JESUS was come into the neighbourhood, went to him, and told him, that if he had not been absent, her brother had been still alive. JESUS promised her, that her brother should rise again: to which Martha answered, *I know that he shall rise again at the last day.* JESUS replied, *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die; believest thou this?* Martha answered, *Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Having said this, she departed, and gave her sister notice privately, that JESUS was come. Mary, as soon as she heard the welcome tidings, arose and went to JESUS; and as Martha had done before her, said, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* The blessed JESUS was greatly moved at the pathetic complaints of these two worthy sisters, and on asking where they had buried him, they conducted him to the sepulchre. On his arrival at the place where the

body of Lazarus was deposited, the great Redeemer of mankind groaned deeply in his spirit; he wept, he prayed to his Father, and then cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth*. The dead obeyed the voice of the Son of God; Lazarus immediately revived, and JESUS restored him to his sisters.

During the supper at Bethany, Mary, to express her gratitude to JESUS, took a pound of spikenard, a very precious perfume, and pour-

ed it on the head and feet of JESUS, wiping his feet with the hair of her head; and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Judas Iscariot was highly offended at this generous action; but his Master vindicated Mary, and told him, that by this she had performed an act preparatory to his embalment, signifying, that his death and burial were not far off. This is the last account of her in Scripture.

MARY OF CLEOPHAS.

ST. JEROM says, that Mary had the name of Cleophas, on account of her father, her family, or some other reason not known. Others believe, with greater probability, that she was wife of Cleophas, and mother of St. James the Less. However, she was present at the last passover, just before the death of our Saviour; she followed him to Mount Calvary; and, during his passion, she was, together with the virgin, at the foot of his cross: she was also

present at his burial, and on the Friday before, had prepared the perfumes for embalming him.

The year when Mary the wife of Cleophas died, is not known; but the Greeks keep the eighth of April in memory of the holy women, who brought perfumes to embalm the body of CHRIST, and pretend to have their bodies at Constantinople in a church of the holy virgin, built by Justin II.

MARY SALOME, *an Hebrew Convert.*

THIS holy woman was the daughter of Mary of Cleophas, mentioned in the preceding article, and the sister of St. James the Less, and others, who are in Scripture called the brethren of our Lord: she was cousin german to the blessed JESUS, according to the flesh, and niece to the blessed virgin Mary. Her proper name was Salome, and was improperly called Mary, which was the name of her mother; she was the wife of Zebedee, and mother of St. James the Great, and St. John the evangelist: she was also one of those pious women

that used to attend upon our blessed Saviour in his journeys, and to minister to him. It was she that requested JESUS to place her two sons, James and John, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom.

Salome followed our Saviour to Calvary, and did not forsake him even at the cross: she was also one of his holy women who brought perfumes to embalm him, and for that purpose, came early on the Sunday morning, to the sepulchre.

TROPHIMUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

TROPHIMUS was a disciple of St. Paul, a Gentile by religion, and an Ephesian by birth. After St. Paul had converted him, he constantly adhered to him, nor did he quit him ever after. He came with the apostle from Ephesus to Corinth, and kept him company in his whole journey from Corinth to Jerusalem,

in the year of our Lord fifty-eight. The Greeks keep the fourteenth of April in honour of Trophimus; and say he was beheaded by the command of Nero, together with St. Paul. His festival is observed on the twenty-ninth of December, by those of Arles.

TYCHICUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

TYCHICUS was also a disciple of St. Paul, whom that apostle often made use of, for carrying his letters to the several churches. He was of the province of Asia, and accompanied St. Paul, when, in the year fifty-eight, he made his journey from Corinth to Jerusalem. He carried the epistle to the Colossians, written in the year sixty-one; and that

to the Ephesians, written in sixty-five; and the first to Timothy, written in sixty-four.

The Greeks celebrate the festival of Tychicus on the eighth or ninth of December, and give him the title of one of the seventy disciples, and bishop of Colophon, in the province of Asia... Other martyrologists mark his festival on the nineteenth of April.

TERTIUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

TERTIUS, called also Tirentius, was the amanuensis or scribe of St. Paul, when he wrote his epistle to the Romans, in the year of CHRIST fifty-eight, as appears in the sixteenth chapter, *I Tertius, who wrote this epis-*

tle, salute you in the Lord. The Greeks keep his festival on the tenth of November, and give him great commendations: and they make him successor to Sosipater, in the bishoprick of Iconium, in Asia.

LINUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

LINUS was one of St. Paul's disciples, who mentions him in the first chapter of his second epistle to Timothy, *Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren greet ye.* St. Irenæus, Eusebius, Optatus, Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and Theodoret, affirm, that Linus succeeded immediately to St. Peter in the see of Rome;

he governed for twelve years and some months. The destruction of Jerusalem happened during his pontificate, in the year of CHRIST seventy. His festival is kept on the fifth of November, by the Greeks, and on the twenty-third of September, by the Latins.

ONESIPHORUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

ONESIPHORUS was a disciple of St. Paul, and is mentioned by him in the first chapter of his second epistle to Timothy. He came to Rome in the year of CHRIST sixty-five, while the apostle was in prison for the faith, and at a time when almost every one had forsaken him. The Greeks place his festival on

the twenty-ninth of April and the eighth of December, and rank him in the order of the seventy disciples, and seem to ascribe martyrdom to him. The Roman martyrology on the sixteenth of December, says, that he suffered martyrdom on the Hellespont, whither he went to preach the gospel along with Porphyrius.

STEPHANUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

STEPHANUS was one of the principal Christians of Corinth, whom St. Paul baptized with all his family, as we find in the first chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians,

probably about the fifty-second year of CHRIST. Stephanus devoted himself to the service of the church; and, in the year of our Lord, fifty-six, he came to St. Paul at Ephesus, and ac-

ording to St. Chrysostom, brought him letters which the church of Corinth wrote to him, in order to consult him concerning marriage, continency, and perhaps other subjects, which St. Paul treats of in the said first epistle to the Cor-

inthians. This the apostle wrote from Ephesus, in the fifty-sixth year; and it was sent by Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, to the Corinthian church.

PHEBE, a Deaconess.

PHEBE, for whom St. Paul had a particular esteem, was a deaconess of the port of Corinth, called Cenchrea: and Theodoret thinks, that the apostle lodged at the house of this holy woman for some time, while he continued in or near Corinth. In the sixteenth chapter of the Romans, St. Paul says, *I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints; and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer*

of many, and of myself also. Some moderns have advanced a notion, that Phebe was wife to St. Paul; but none of the ancients have said any thing like it. It is thought, that in quality of deaconess, she was employed by the church, in some ministrations suitable to her sex and condition; such as visiting and instructing the Christian women, attending them in their sicknesses, and distributing alms to them.... Phebe's festival is fixed by the martyrologists, on the third of September.

SOSIPATER, a Gentile Convert.

WE think, that it may be confidently asserted, that this Sosipater, who was at Rome in the fifty-eighth year of CHRIST, when St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, cannot be, as some affirm, the Sosipater of Berea; since he accompanied St. Paul, in the same year fifty-eight, in his journey to Jerusalem; and who, probably, went with him from Corinth,

whence the epistle to the Romans was written to go by the way of Macedonia to Jerusalem; as may be seen in the twentieth chapter of the acts of the apostles.

The Latins celebrate his feast on the twenty-fifth of June, and call him a disciple of St. Paul. The Greeks honour him upon the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth of April.

DEMAS, a Gentile Professor.

THE apostle St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of the Colossians, mentions Demas as a native of Thessalonica. At first he was one of the most zealous disciples which this apostle had, and was very serviceable to him at Rome, during his imprisonment there, but some years after, about the year of CHRIST sixty-five, he forsook St. Paul, in order to follow a

more secular life, and withdrew to Thessalonica, the place of his birth.

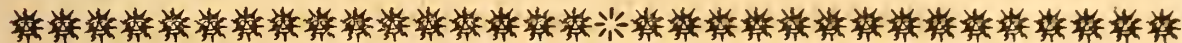
Epiphanius informs us, that he renounced the faith, and with Cerinthius, Ebion, and others, held JESUS CHRIST to be a mere man: but others affirm, that he recovered after this fall, and suffered martyrdom for the truth.

ARISTARCHUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

ARISTARCHUS was one of St. Paul's disciples, who has mentioned him in his epistles to the Colossians and Philemon : he is also often mentioned in the acts of the apostles. He was a Macedonian, and a native of Thessalonica ; he accompanied St. Paul to Ephesus, and continued with him during the two years of his abode there, partaking with him in all the dangers and labours of the apostleship....

He was very near being killed in a tumult raised by the Ephesian goldsmiths.

The Greeks say he was bishop of Apamea, in Syria, and was beheaded with St. Paul at Rome, in the reign of Nero : continuing to the very last, inviolably attached to that apostle, with whom he had laboured in the work of the ministry.

GAIUS, *a Gentile Convert.*

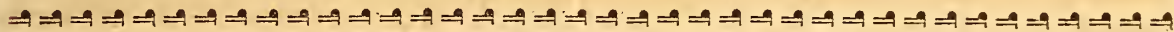
THIS person was also another of St. Paul's disciples, and mention is made of him in the acts of the apostles. He was probably a Macedonian, but was settled at Corinth, where he had the honour to lodge St. Paul, during his abode there. When the apostle went into

Asia, Gaius and Aristarchus accompanied him as far as Ephesus, where they abode for some time with St. Paul. Origen speaks of one Gaius, St. Paul's disciple, who was said to have been made bishop of Thessalonica, in Macedonia.

CLEMENT, *a Gentile convert.*

THIS disciple is mentioned by St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians, where the apostle says, that Clement's name is written in the book of life. The generality of the fathers, and other interpreters, make no question but that this is the same Clement who succeeded St. Peter, after Linus and Cletus, in the government of the church of Rome ; and this seems to be intimated, when in the office for St. Clement's day, that church appoints this part of the epistle to the Philippians to be read. On the contrary, Grotius is of opinion, that the

Clement St. Paul speaks of, was no more than a priest of the church of Philippi in Macedonia. We have no certain accounts of what happened to St. Clement during the persecution under Domitian ; but we are very well assured that he lived to the third year of Trajan, which is the hundredth of JESUS CHRIST. His festival is set down by Bede, and all the Latin martyrologists, on the twenty-third of November. The Greeks honour him on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of the same month. He is ranked amongst the martyrs.

ANANIAS, *a Jewish Convert.*

ANANIAS was a disciple of the blessed JESUS : he dwelt at Damaseus, when he was directed in a vision from the Lord, to go and find Paul, who had been lately converted, and was come to that city.

We know no other circumstances of Ananias' life, besides this now related. The mo-

dern Greeks maintain, that he was one of the seventy disciples, and made bishop of Damaseus : and that having obtained the crown of martyrdom, he was buried in the same city : and here a fine church is to be seen, in the place where he was interred.

ERASTUS, a Gentile Convert.

HE was a native of Corinth, and disciple of St. Paul; who styles him *chamberlain* of that city, where St. Paul then was; or of Jerusalem, according to the modern Greeks. He adhered to the apostle, and resigned his employment of chamberlain. He followed him to Ephesus, where he was in the year fifty-six of JESUS CHRIST; and from whence St. Paul sent him, with Timotheus, to Macedon, prob-

ably in order to prepare the alms expected from the faithful. They were both with him at Corinth, in the year fifty-eight, when he wrote his epistle to the Romans, whom he salutes in both their names; and it is likely that Erastus ever after followed St. Paul, till this apostle's last voyage from Corinth in his way to Rome, where he suffered martyrdom in the year sixty-five.

EPAPHRODITUS, a Gentile Convert.

ST. PAUL calls Epaphroditus, the bishop or the apostle of Philippi: or if we understand the word *apostolus*, in its literal signification, the *messenger* of the Philippians, as having been sent A. D. sixty-one, by the faithful of this church, to carry money to the apostle, who was then in bonds, and in their name, to

be serviceable to him with his person. The festival of Epaphroditus is observed by the Greeks, on the eighth or ninth of December, as well as on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of March; and they style him apostle, one of the seventy disciples, and bishop of Adria, or Andraca.

EPAPHRAS, a Gentile Convert.

IT is generally believed, that Epaphras was the first bishop of Colosse: he was converted by St. Paul, and very much contributed to the conversion of his fellow-citizens there. He came to Rome, while St. Paul was in bonds in that city; and was himself imprisoned with

the same apostle, for the cause of Christianity.

The festival of Epaphras, is set down in the calendars, on the nineteenth of July; and in them it is said, that he suffered Martyrdom at Colosse, in Phrygia.

JOHN MARK, THE DISCIPLE.

JOHAN MARK was the son of a Christian woman, named Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem, where the apostles and the faithful generally used to meet; he was also cousin to St. Barnabas, and a disciple of his.

In the year fifty-one, Paul and Barnabas preparing to return into Asia, in order to visit the churches which they had formed there, was of opinion, that John Mark should accompany them in this journey; but St. Paul would not consent to it: upon which occasion these two apostles separated. Paul went to Asia, and Barnabas, with John Mark, to the isle of Cyprus.

We find the apostle speaking advantageously of him, in his epistle to the Colossians..... *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, saluteth you: if he cometh unto you, receive him.* He makes mention of him again, in his epistle to Philemon, written in the year sixty-two, at which time he was with St. Paul at Rome: but in the year sixty-five, he was with Timothy in Asia. And St. Paul writing to Timothy, desires him to bring Marcus to Rome; adding, that he was useful to him, for the ministry of the gospel in those parts. The festival of John Mark is kept in the Greek and Latin Churches, on the twenty-seventh of September. Some say, that he was Bishop of Biblis, in Phœnicia.

AGABUS, the Disciple and Prophet.

THE Greeks assure us, that Agabus was one of the seventy disciples of our Saviour. He foretold that there would be a great famine over all the earth: and St. Luke, in the Acts, informs us, that it accordingly happened under the emperor Claudius, in the fourth year of his reign, and forty-fourth year of **JESUS CHRIST**.

In the year of **CHRIST** fifty-eight, which was ten years after the above event, as St. Paul was

going to Jerusalem, and had already landed at Cesarea, in Palestine, the same prophet Agabus predicted, that St. Paul should be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

The Greeks say, that he suffered martyrdom at Antioch; and they observe his festival on the eighth of March. Ever since the ninth age, it has been kept on the ninth of February, by the Latins.

MANAEN, a Disciple and Prophet.

MANAEN, or Manahem, was the foster brother of Herod Antipas, and is mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, and forty-fourth year of **CHRIST**. He was at Antioch with the other Prophets, as Simon, surnamed Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Barnabas, and Saul, when the Holy Ghost said to them, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work*

whereunto I have called them. Then after having fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them, and let them go. It is thought that Manaen was of the number of the seventy disciples.

The authors of the Latin Martyrology, put his feast on the twenty-fourth of May, and say that he died at Antioch.

LUCIUS, a Disciple and Christian Prophet.

WE find, that Lucius of Cyrene, who is mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, was one of the prophets of the Christian Church at Antioch. Some take Lucius to have been one of our Lord's seventy

disciples. Usuard and Ado assert, that the apostle ordained him first bishop of Cyrene. He is honoured on the sixth day of May, by the Latin church.

NICOLAS, a Disciple and Deacon.

NICOLAS was a proselyte at Antioch, and there converted from the Pagan, to the Jewish religion; but the time of his birth is uncertain. Afterwards he embraced Christianity, and was one of the most zealous and most holy men amongst the first Christians: so that he was chosen for one of the seven first

deacons of the church of Jerusalem. But he afterwards plunged himself into irregularities, and gave beginnings to the sect of the Nicolaitans, to that of the Gnostics, and to several others; who, following the bent of their passions, invented a thousand different sorts of crimes and excesses.

NICODEMUS, an Hebrew Convert.

THIS remarkable disciple of our blessed Saviour was a Jew by nation, and by sect a Pharisee. The gospel calls him *a ruler*

of the Jews; and **CHRIST** gives him the name of *a master of Israel*. When our Saviour began to manifest himself by his miracles at Je-

rusalem, at the first passover which he celebrated there after his baptism, Nicodemus made no doubt but that he was the Messiah, and came to him by night, that he might learn of him the way to salvation.

Nicodemus, after this conversation, became a disciple of JESUS CHRIST; and there is no doubt to be made, but he came to hear him, as often as our Saviour came to Jerusalem. It happened on a time, that the priests and Pharisees had sent officers to seize JESUS, who returned to them, and made this report, that ne-

ver man spoke as he did. Afterwards Nicodemus declared himself openly a disciple of JESUS CHRIST, when he came with Joseph of Arimathea, to pay the last duties to the body of CHRIST, crucified; which they took down from the cross, embalmed, and laid in the sepulchre, prepared for his reception.

When he died, Gamaliel buried him honourably, near St. Stephen: his body was discovered in the year 415, together with those of St. Stephen, and Gamaliel; and the Latin church pays honour on the third of August, to all the three.

JOSEPH, an Hebrew Disciple.

THIS Joseph, or Joses, was the son of Mary Cleophas, brother to St. James the Less, and a near relation to the blessed JESUS, according to the flesh; being the son of Mary, the holy virgin's sister, and of Cleophas,

who was Joseph's brother, or son to Joseph himself, by his first wife, as several of the ancients suppose. We learn nothing particular in Scripture, concerning Joseph, the brother of our Lord.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, an Hebrew Disciple.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, or of Rana-tha, Rama, or Ramula, a city between Joppa and Jerusalem, was a Jewish senator, and privately a disciple of JESUS CHRIST: he was not consenting to the designs of the rest of the Jews, particularly of the members of the Sanhedrim, who condemned and put JESUS CHRIST to death: but when our Saviour was dead, he went boldly to Pilate, and desired the body of JESUS, in order to bury it. This he obtained;

and, accordingly, he buried it after an honourable manner, in a sepulchre, newly made in a garden, which was upon the same Mount Calvary, where JESUS had been crucified. After he had placed it there, he closed the entrance of it with a stone, cut particularly for this purpose, and which exactly filled the open part.

The festival of Joseph of Arimathea, is observed by the Greek church, on the thirty-first of July.

CLEOPHAS, an Hebrew Convert.

WE are told by the ancient fathers, who mention Cleophas, that he was brother to Joseph, and both of them the sons of Jacob. He was the father of Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, of St. James the Less, of St. Jude, and of Joseph, or Joses. Cleophas married Mary, sister to the blessed virgin; so that he was uncle to JESUS CHRIST, and his sons were cousin Germans to our Saviour. Cleophas his wife, and sons, were some of the faithful disciples of JESUS CHRIST, and of the number who looked upon him as the Redeemer and

Salvation of Israel. But Cleophas did not sufficiently understand the mystery of the cross, and what JESUS had so often told his disciples, that it was expedient he should die, and return to his Father. Cleophas having beheld our Saviour expire upon the cross, lost all hopes of seeing the kingdom of God established by his means upon earth; expecting, with many of the Jews, a temporal prince and deliverer. This disciple departed from Jerusalem, two days after our Saviour's death; that is to say, on the very day of his resurrection: and as he

was going to Emmaus, with another disciple, while they were entertaining themselves with what had passed during the feast, particularly, with respect to JESUS CHRIST, our Saviour joined them in the form of a traveller.

Ecclesiastical historians do not particularly tell us, what were the actions of St. Cleophas, during the remainder of his life, after the time

our Saviour appeared to him and the rest of his disciples, after his resurrection; but Usuardus and Ado affirm, that he suffered martyrdom, and was buried in the same house, where he had received JESUS CHRIST at his table.

The Greeks, who style him an apostle, make mention of him on the thirteenth, or rather on the thirtieth of October.

PHILEMON, a Gentile Convert.

THIS eminent disciple, was a rich citizen of Colosse, and probably a native of that place. He was converted, together with his wife, to the Christian faith, by Epaphras, a disciple of St. Paul; for St. Paul himself never preached in Colosse, though he wrote an epistle to the brethren there.

We read, that Philemon had made a church

of his house; and all his domestics, as well as himself, were of the household of faith. His charity, liberality, and compassion, were a sure refuge to all who were in distress: he followed the example of that great Master, in whom he believed; and was delighted, when exercised in works of beneficence and mercy. His name is placed on the twenty-second of November, in the martyrologies.

ONESIMUS, a Gentile Convert.

ECCLESIASTICAL history relates, that Onesimus was a native of Phrygia, and for many years a slave to Philemon, but was at last converted by St. Paul, in the following manner: Onesimus was a young man, whom his companions had drawn into wicked courses; he refused to listen to the admonitions of his master: on the contrary, he robbed him, and fled to Rome about the year sixty-one, while St. Paul was there in prison the first time. As Onesimus knew the apostle by reputation, his Master Philemon being a christian, he made it his business to find him out; and being now sorry for the faults he had committed, confessed every thing to St. Paul, and did him all the service that even Philemon himself could have done, had he been at Rome. St. Paul soon

brought him to the sense of his crimes, prevailed on him to receive the gospel, instructed him, converted him, baptized him, and soon after sent him back to his master Philemon, with a letter, which we have still amongst St. Paul's epistles, and which is acknowledged as canonical by Christian churches in general

The martyrologists give him the title of apostle; and say that he ended his life by martyrdom. The Roman martyrology places his festival upon the sixteenth of February; and says, that having succeeded Timothy in the bishopric of Ephesus, and having been charged with the preaching of the gospel, he was taken into custody and sent to Rome, where he was stoned for his faith in JESUS CHRIST.

PRISCILLA, a Jewish Convert.

IN the times of the apostles, Priscilla was very famous in the church, and is often mentioned by the sacred writers, before her husband Aquila. They were both Jews; but

their country and births are uncertain. They were at Corinth when St. Paul came thither, and had the happiness of entertaining him in their house a very considerable time; the apos-

the being of the same trade with Aquila ; namely, a maker of tents of leather, for the use of the army, and at which they both wrought for some time, for their livelihood.

On St. Paul's leaving Corinth, both Aquila and Priscilla came with him to Ephesus, where they dwelt a considerable time, and preached the gospel with good success. Their house was so well regulated, that St. Paul calls it a church ; an example that should, in some measure, be followed by every one who pretends to

be a follower of the blessed JESUS, though shamefully neglected by the greatest part of Christians in the present day.

Whether they died in peace, or by the hands of those who opposed the progress of the Christian faith, is not known : but however this be, they laboured faithfully to extend the religion of JESUS ; and, therefore, have been justly placed amongst the first preachers of the gospel in the apostolic age.

APOLLOS, a Jewish Convert.

THE ancient writers give no account either of the birth or family of Apollos ; all they mention is, that he was a Jew of Alexandria, and came to Ephesus during St. Paul's absence, who was gone to Jerusalem, to visit the other apostles, and the church in that city.

This eminent person was distinguished for his eloquence, and knowledge of the Scriptures. He was instructed in the way of the Lord ; and as he spoke with zeal and fervour, taught diligently the things relating to the kingdom of heaven, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Apollos was no sooner come to Ephesus,

than he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, and to shew that JESUS was the CHRIST.... Aquila and Priscilla, having heard him, took him home with them, instructed him more fully in the ways of the Almighty, and baptized him. He was very useful at Corinth, in convincing the Jews out of the Scriptures, and demonstrating to them that JESUS was the CHRIST. Thus he watered what Paul had planted in that city.

It is allowed by all, that he was an active and powerful preacher of the gospel ; and that great numbers were, by his preaching, rendered obedient to the faith of CHRIST.

TITUS, a Gentile Convert.

THIS eminent person was a Heathen by religion and birth, but converted by St. Paul who calls him his son. Titus was sent by St. Paul to Corinth, upon occasion of some disputes which then divided the church. He was very well received by the Corinthians, and very much satisfied with their ready compliance ; but would receive nothing from them, imitating thereby the disinterestedness of his Master, who sought not theirs, but them.

He went from Corinth to St. Paul into Macedonia, and gave him an account of the state of the Corinthian church. A little while after, the apostle desired him to return again to Corinth, to set things in order against his coming. Titus readily undertook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

Titus was made bishop of the isle of Crete, about the sixty-third year of CHRIST, when St. Paul was obliged to quit this island, in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him to desire, that as soon as he should have sent Tychicus or Artemas to him for supplying his place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicepolis in Macedonia, or to Nicepolis in Epirus upon the gulf of Ambracia, where the apostle intended to pass his winter. The subject of this epistle is to represent to Titus what are the qualities that a bishop should be endued with.

St. Paul's epistle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. The Marcionites did not receive it, nor did the Basilidians, and some other Heretics ; but Tatian, the

head of the Encratites, received it, and preferred it before all the rest. It is not certainly known by whom it was sent, nor from what place it was written.

It appears, that Titus was deputed to preach the gospel in Delmatia ; and he was still there

in the year sixty-five, when the apostle wrote his second epistle to Timothy. He died at the age of ninety-four, and was buried in Crete.... His festival is kept by the Greeks on the 25th of August, and on the 4th of January by the Latin church.

TIMOTHY, a Gentile Convert.

HE was born according to some at Lystra ; or, according to others, at Derbe. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jewess, whose name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother Lais. He was a convert and disciple of St. Paul.

We take notice of these particulars, because St. Paul commends their piety, and the good education which they had given Timothy. When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra about the year of Christ fifty-one or fifty-two, the brethren gave a very advantageous testimony of the merit and good dispositions of Timothy ; and the apostle would have him along with him ; but he circumcised him at Lystra, before he received him into his company.

Timothy applied himself to labour with St. Paul in the business of the gospel ; and did him very important services, through the whole course of his preaching.

Timothy accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Berea ; and when the apostle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens, he sent to Timothy to come thither to him ; and when he

came, and had given him an account of the churches of Macedonia, St. Paul sent him back to Thessalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to St. Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the apostle mentions him with Silas at the beginning of the two epistles, which he then wrote to the church at Thessalonica. In the year sixty-three, when St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, he tells them that Timothy was come out of prison ; but he gives us no circumstances either of the imprisonment of this disciple, or of his release. In sixty-four, when St. Paul returned from Rome, he left Timothy at Ephesus to take care of that church, of which he was the first bishop, as he is recognized by the council of Chalcedon. St. Paul wrote to Timothy from Macedonia, the first of the two letters which are addressed to him.

We may safely affirm, that if he did not die before the year ninety-seven, he must be the angel of the church of Ephesus, to whom St. John writes, Rev. ii. 2—5 : though the reproaches which the Holy Ghost make to him, &c. of having left his first love, do not seem to belong to so holy a man as Timothy was.

ST. STEPHEN, the Proto-Martyr.

IN the year fifty-three, the seven deacons were chosen, and we find St. Stephen always placed at their head, as the chief and most worthy ; and it is generally believed, that he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. However, he was remarkably zealous for the cause of religion, and full of the Holy Ghost ; working many wonderful miracles before the people, and pressing them with the greatest

earnestness to embrace the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Jews were highly provoked at the zeal of Stephen, and some of the synagogue of the freed men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places, entered into dispute with him ; but being unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they suborned false witnesses against him, to testify that they heard him

blaspheme against Moses and against God. Nor did they stop here : they stirred up the people by their calumnies ; so that they dragged him before the council of the nation, or great Sanhedrim, where they produced false witnesses against him, who deposed, that they had heard him speak against the temple, and against the law, and affirm that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the holy place, and abolish the law of Moses. Stephen, supported by his own innocence and an invisible Power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midst of this assembly, and his countenance shone like that of an angel.

The Jewish council were so highly enraged at the speech of Stephen, especially the latter part of it, that they gnashed their teeth against him : but Stephen lifting up his eyes to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus stand-

ing at the right hand of Omnipotence ; upon which, he said to the council, *I see the heavens open, and the son of man standing at the right hand of God.* This so greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and stopped their ears, as if they had heard some dreadful blasphemy ; and falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

It is related in scripture, that St. Stephen, while they were mangling his body with stones, was praying to God for their pardon : *Lord, said he, lay not this sin to their charge.* And then calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his spirit, he yielded up his soul. Some pious persons who beheld the martyrdom of this good man, took care to bury his remains ; and the church attended his funeral with great lamentations.

ST. SILAS or SYLVANUS, an Hebrew Disciple.

THIS holy person was, according to St. Luke, a chief man amongst the brethren, an expression which indicates that he was one of the seventy disciples : but the first account we have of him, is in the transaction relating to the dispute between the Jewish and Christian converts, with regard to the necessity of keeping the law of Moses, when they chose Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas, to go to Jerusalem, to advise with the apostles concerning this question.

Be that as it may, when the dispute happened between Paul and Barnabas, which terminated in a rupture, Silas joined himself to Paul, and became his companion and assistant in the great work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. They first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia ; from thence they passed into Lyconia, Phrygia, and Galatia ; and, lastly, they crossed the sea, and came into Macedonia.

During their stay at Philippi, they found a young woman possessed with an unclean spirit, who followed them several days, till Paul cast

out the evil spirit, and delivered her from so dreadful a plague. This action provoked the masters of the young woman ; for she acquired considerable gains by the oracles and predictions the devil pronounced by making use of her organs : they therefore seized upon Paul and Silas, dragged them before the magistrates, and accused them of introducing customs amongst them, contrary to those of the Romans ; so that the magistrates ordered that Paul and Silas should be scourged, and committed to prison : but in the night-time there was a great earthquake, the doors of the prison opened, and the fetters of the prisoners fell off without any human assistance.

Departing from Philippi, they travelled to Thessalonica and Berea, where they preached the doctrines of the gospel ; and Paul continuing his journey to Athens, sent Silas thither, though they did not meet till they both arrived at Corinth, where St. Paul wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonian church.

ST. PHILIP, the Deacon, an Hebrew Convert.

IT is supposed that St. Philip was a native of Cæsarea, in Galilee, it being certain that his daughters lived in that city; however, he was one of the seven deacons, chosen by the apostles, soon after our Saviour's resurrection.

All the Christians, except the apostles, having, after the death of St. Stephen, left Jerusalem, and dispersed themselves in several parts, St. Philip went down to preach the gospel at Samaria, where he wrought many miracles, and converted great numbers to the faith; he also baptized them, but being only a deacon, could not administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

It is probable St. Philip was at Samaria, when the angel directed him to go towards the South, to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Old Gaza, an ancient city in the route to Egypt. Philip obeyed the summons of the heavenly messenger, and there met with an Ethiopian eunuch, belonging to Candace, queen of Ethiopia; a person who was highly esteemed by his mistress, as well as intrusted with the care of all her revenues, and who had been at Jerusalem, to worship the Almighty in that city.

When the chariot of this Ethiopian appeared in the sight of Philip, the angel bid him advance towards the stranger: he immediately obeyed, and heard the eunuch reading a passage of the

prophet Isaiah; upon which Philip asked him, if he understood what he was reading? And the eunuch answered, how should I understand, except some person should explain it to me; desiring Philip, that he would come and sit down by him in the chariot. The passage he read was this: *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* Having finished the passage, the eunuch desired to know whom the prophet intended: "Is it, says he, himself the prophet here means, or some other man?" In answer to the question proposed by the eunuch, Philip began to instruct him concerning the Redeemer of the world, the man **CHRIST JESUS**; and afterwards baptized him, and he became a member of the Church of **CHRIST**.

The sacred writers are silent, with regard to the actions of St. Philip, after the time of his baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch: but the Greek ecclesiastical writers say, that he left Palestine and travelled to Tralles, in the Lesser Asia, where he founded a church, of which he was both the bishop and apostle; and where, after long labouring in the vineyard of his Master, and working many miracles, he slept in peace, and was buried in the church he had caused to be erected.

ST. THADDEUS, THE DISCIPLE.

IT is generally supposed that St. Thaddeus was the brother of St. Thomas, and one of our Saviour's seventy disciples. He is not mentioned particularly in the evangelical history, but in common with the rest of the seventy; he constantly attended the discourses, and was an eye-witness to the miracles of his great Master, the Son of the Living God.

What the transactions of Thaddeus were, respecting the propagation of the gospel, cannot be ascertained, because he has not been well distinguished from St. Jude. The Latins honour one St. Thaddeus, on the eleventh of May, whom they seem to make a martyr in Asia: and the Greeks remember him on the twenty-first of August. They say, that he died in peace at Berytus in Phœnicia, after baptizing many persons in that city and the neighbouring parts.

Having now given the most ample account possible of the followers of the blessed **JESUS**, the persons who spread the light of the glorious gospel over the whole world, removed the veil of ignorance and superstition drawn over the kingdoms of the earth, and taught us the method of attaining eternal happiness in the courts of the new Jerusalem; may it be our highest ambition to follow their bright example, as they followed **CHRIST**; may we imitate their faith, piety, hope, and love; then shall we pass through things temporal in such a manner, that we shall finally gain the things that are eternal, and be admitted as worthy guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to adore and praise him, and live and reign with him in his heavenly kingdom for ever and ever. So be it.

A COMPLETE GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
APOSTLES AND THEIR SUCCESSORS,

IN THE FIVE GREAT CHURCHES FOUNDED BY THEM, THENCE CALLED BY THE ANCIENTS,

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES:

NAMELY,

ANTIOCH, ROME, JERUSALEM, BYZANTIUM OR CONSTANTINOPLE, AND ALEXANDRIA;
DURING THE FIRST THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE CHRISTIAN ÆRA.

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH, IN SYRIA.

WE place this first, partly because it is generally acknowledged, even by the Romish writers, that a church was founded here by St. Peter some considerable time before that at Rome; partly because here it was that the venerable name of Christians did first commence. In which respect the fathers in the council at Constantinople under Nectarius, in their synodicon to them at Rome, style the church of Antioch, *The most ancient, and truly apostolical*; and, *St. Chrysostom, the head of the whole world*. The succession of its bishops till the time of Constantine (which shall be the boundary of this account) was in the following order:

I. St. Peter the apostle, who governed this church, at least seven years: Nicephorus of Constantinople says eleven.

II. Evodius, who sat twenty-three years. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch in his time.

III. Ignatius: after near forty years presidency over this church, he was carried out of Syria to Rome, and there thrown to wild beasts in the theatre, A. D. one hundred and ten; Trajan, eleven.

IV. Heron: he was bishop twenty years. To him succeeded,

V. Cornelius, who kept the place thirteen years, dying A. D. one hundred and forty-two.

VI. Eros, twenty-six; or, as Eusebius, twenty-four years.

VII. Theophilus, thirteen: he was a man of great parts and learning; many of his works

were extant in Eusebius's time, and some of them are handed down to us.

VIII. Maximinus, thirteen: he dying, the next that was chosen, was

IX. Serapio, twenty-five: many of his works are mentioned by Eusebius and St. Jerom. To him succeeded

X. Asclepiades: he was a man of great worth and eminency, and invincible constancy in the time of persecution: he continued in this see nine years.

XI. Philetus, eight.

XII. Zebinus, or Zebennus; he sat six years.

XIII. Babylas, thirteen: after many conflicts and sufferings for the faith, he received the crown of martyrdom under Decius, who commanded his chains to be buried with him.

XIV. Fabius, or, as the patriarch Nicephorus calls him, Flavius, possessed the chair nine years. He was a little inclining towards novationism.

XV. Demetrianus: he sat bishop, according to Nicephorus, four; Eusebius says, eight years.

XVI. Paulus Samosatenus sat in the chair eight years; when, for his unepiscopal manners and practices, his unsound dogmata and principles, and especially his mean and unworthy opinions concerning our Saviour, he was condemned and deposed by a synod at Antioch, whose synodical determination is at large extant in Eusebius's history.

XVII. Domnus succeeded in the place of the deposed. He was son to Demetrian, Pau-

lus's predecessor in that see ; constituted and ordained to the place by the fathers of that synod, who further give him this honourable character, that he was a man endued with all episcopal virtues and ornaments. Eusebius makes him to have held the see six, Nicephorus but two years.

XVIII. Timæus : he sat in the chair ten years.

XIX. Cyrillus, who presided over that church, in the account of Nicephorus, fifteen ; according to Eusebius twenty-four years.

XX. Tyrannus : he sat thirteen years. In his time began the tenth persecution under

Dioclesian, which raged with great severity against the Christians.

XXI. Vitalis, six.

XXII. Philogonius, five ; he was succeeded by.

XXIII. Paulinus, or, as Nicephorus calls him, Paulus ; who, after five years, was deposed and driven out by the Arian faction, which then prevailed.

XXIV. Eustathius, formerly bishop of Beroëa, was a learned man, and of great note and eminency in the council of Nice, which was the first general council summoned by Constantine the Great, after he had restored peace and prosperity to the church in general.

THE CHURCH AT ROME, IN ITALY.

MANY of the fathers have with good reason, equally attributed the foundation of this celebrated church to Peter and Paul, the one as the apostle of the circumcision preached to the Jews, while the other, probably as the apostle of the uncircumcision preached to the Gentiles. The following is the order in which its bishops succeeded.

I. St. Peter and St. Paul, who both suffered martyrdom under Nero, the Roman emperor.

II. Linus, the son of Hereulanus, a Tuscan ; he is mentioned by St. Paul : he sat between eleven and twelve years.

III. Cletus, or Anaæletus, or Ananeletus, a Roman, the son of Æmilianus : he sat nine, though others say but two years.

IV. Clemens, a Roman, born in Mount Cælius, was the son of Faustinus, near a-kin, say some, to the emperor : he was condemned to dig in the marble quarries near the Euxine sea, and, by the command of Trajan, with an anchor about his neck, thrown into the sea. He was bishop of Rome nine years and four months.

V. Euaristus, by birth a Greek ; but his father was a Jew of Bethlehem : he is said to have been crowned with martyrdom the last year of Trajan, in the ninth of his bishopric, or the thirteenth, according to others.

VI. Alexander, a Roman, though young in years, was grave in his manners and conversa-

tion : he sat ten years and seven months, and died a martyr.

VII. Xystus, or Sixtus, a Roman : he was martyred in the tenth year of his bishopric, and buried in the Vatican at Rome.

VIII. Telesphorus, a Greek, succeeded ; Justin the martyr flourished in his time. He died a martyr, having sat eleven years and three months ; ten years and eight months, according to others ; and lies buried near St. Peter, in the Vatican.

IX. Hyginus, the son of an Athenian philosopher, was advanced to the chair under Antonius Pius : he sat four years : Eusebius says eight.

X. Pius, an Italian, was born at Aquileia : he died, having been bishop eleven years and four months ; according to Eusebius, fifteen years.

XI. Anicetus, born in Syria : he is said, after nine, or, as others, eleven years, to have suffered martyrdom, and was buried in the Via Appia, in the cemetery of Callistus. In his time Polycarp came to Rome.

XII. Soter, or, as Nicephorus calls him, Soterichus, was a Campanian, the son of Concordius. There was an intercourse of letters between him and Dionysius, bishop of Corinth. He died after he had sat nine, or, as Eusebius reckons, seven years.

XIII. Eleutherius, born at Nicopolis in

Greece. To him Lucius king of Britain sent a letter and an embassy. He sat fifteen years, died A. D. one hundred and eighty-six, and lies buried in the Vatican at Rome.

XIV. Victor, an African, the son of Felix, was a man of a furious and intemperate spirit. He was bishop ten years.

XV. Zephyrinus, a Roman, succeeded, and possessed the chair eight, or, as others, eighteen years; twenty, says Onuphrius: a pious and learned man, but a little warping towards the errors of Montanus.

XVI. Callistus, or Calixtus, the son of Domitius, a Roman; a prudent and modest man: he suffered much in the persecution under Alexander Severus, under whom he became a martyr, being thrown into a well by the procurement of Ulpian the great lawyer, but a severe enemy to Christians. He sat six years, or, as others maintain, five and one month; and though he made a cemetery, or burial place, called after his own name, yet was he buried in that of Calpodius, in the Appian Way.

XVII. Urbanus, the son of Pontianus, a Roman; after four, or, as some, six years, he suffered martyrdom for the faith: Eusebius has five, St. Jerom, in his translation, nine. He was buried in Prætextatus's cemetery in the Appian Way.

XVIII. Pontianus, the son of Calphurnius, a Roman: for his boldly reproving the Roman idolatry, he was banished into the island Sardinia, where he died; he was bishop about three or four, or, as Eusebius, five years.

XIX. Anteros, a Greek, the son of Romulus: he died, according to some, when he had kept his place only one month (though others, without reason, make him to have lived in it many years) and was buried in the cemetery of Callistus.

XX. Fabianus, a Roman; he was unexpectedly chosen bishop, while, several others being in competition, a pigeon suddenly descended, and sat upon his head, the great emblem of the Holy Spirit. He died a martyr, after fourteen years; and was buried in the same place with his predecessor.

XXI. Cornelius, a Roman; who opposed and condemned Novation: frequent letters passed between him and Cyprian. After some-

what more than two years, he was first cruelly whipped, then beheaded, and afterwards buried in a vault within the grange of Lucina, near the Appian Way.

XXII. Lucius, a Roman, sat two, or, as others, three years: he suffered martyrdom by the command of Valerian, and was buried in Callistus's cemetery.

XXIII. Stephanus, a Roman, the son of Julius: great contests were between him and Cyprian, about re-baptizing those who had been baptized by Heretics. He was beheaded after he had sat about two or three years, though others say seven; and was buried by his predecessor.

XXIV. Xystus, a Greek, formerly a philosopher of Athens. After one, or, as others compute, two years and ten months, he suffered martyrdom: Eusebius reckons it eight years.

XXV. Dionysius, of a monk made bishop: in the judgment of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, was a truly learned and admirable person. The time of his presidency is uncertainly assigned, six, nine, ten, eleven: Eusebius extends it to twelve years.

XXVI. Felix, a Roman; in his time arose the Manichæan heresy. He suffered about the fourth or fifth year of his episcopacy, and lies buried in the Aurelian Way, in a cemetery of his own, two miles from Rome.

XXVII. Eutychianus, a Tuscan, a man exceedingly careful of the burial of martyrs; after one year's space, was himself crowned with martyrdom: Eusebius allows him but eight months: Onuphrius eight years and six months.

XXVIII. Caius, or, as Eusebius calls him, Gaius, a Dalmatian, kinsman to the emperor Dioclesian, and in the persecution under him, became a martyr. He sat eleven years; some say longer: Eusebius, fifteen years. He was beheaded, and buried in Callistus's cemetery.

XXIX. Marcellinus, a Roman: through fear of torment he sacrificed to the Gods; but recovering himself, died a martyr, after he had sat eight or nine years. He was beheaded, and buried in the cemetery of Priscilla, in the Salarian Way. To him succeeded

XXX. Marcellus, a Roman; he was con-

demned by Maxentius the tyrant, to keep beasts in a stable, which he performed, yet without omitting his prayers and exercises of devotion. He died after five years and six months, and was buried in the cemetery of Priscilla.

XXXI. Eusebius, a Greek, was the son of a physician: he suffered much under the tyranny of Maxentius. He sat six years, say some; four, say others; though Eusebius allows him but seven months: Onuphrius one year and seven months. He was buried in the Appian Way, near Callistus's cemetery.

XXXII. Miltiades, an African: he might probably be a confessor under Maxentius, but could not be a martyr under Maximinus, as some report him. He sat three or four, though others assign him but two years; and was buried in the cemetery of Callistus.

XXXIII. Sylvester a Roman: he was elected into the place, A. D. three hundred and fourteen, and fetched from the mountain Soracte, whither he had fled for fear of persecution. He was highly in favour with Constantine the Great. He sat twenty-three, Nicephorus says, twenty-eight years.

THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM, IN JUDEA.

IT may with some degree of truth be affirmed, that the church of Jerusalem was founded by our Lord himself, as it was for some time cultivated and improved by the ministry of the whole college of apostles. The bishops of it succeeded in the following order:

I. St. James the Less, the brother of our Lord, by him, say some, immediately constituted bishop; but as others, more probably, by the apostles: he was thrown off the temple, and his brains beat out with a fuller's club.

II. Simeon, the son of Cleophas, brother to Joseph, our Lord's reputed father; he sat in this chair twenty-three years, and suffered martyrdom in the reign of Trajan, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age.

III. Justus succeeded in his room, and sat six years.

IV. Zacheus, or, as Nicephorus the patriarch calls him, Zacharias, four.

V. Tobias: to him, after four years, succeeded

VI. Benjamin, who sat two years.

VII. John, who continued the same space.

VIII. Matthias, or Matthæus, two years.

IX. Philippus, one year: next came

X. Seneca, who sat four years.

XI. Justus, four.

XII. Levi, or Lebes, two.

XIII. Ephrem, or Ephres, or as Epiphanius styles him, Vapres, two.

XIV. Joseph, two.

XV. Judas, two. We may observe, that most of these bishops governed the church but

a short time, following one another with a very quick succession; which, doubtless, was in a great measure owing to the turbulent and unquiet humour of the Jewish nation, frequently rebelling against the Roman powers, whereby they provoked them to fall heavy upon them, and cut off all that came in their way, making no distinction between Jews and Christians; as indeed they were all Jews, though differing in the rites of their religion: for hitherto the bishops of Jerusalem had successively been of the circumcision, the church there having been entirely made up of Jewish converts; but Jerusalem being now utterly laid waste, and the Jews dispersed into all other countries, the Gentiles were admitted not only into the body of that church, but even in the episcopal chair. They are ranged in the following order:

XVI. Marcus, who sat eight years.

XVII. Cassianus, eight.

XVIII. Publus, five.

XIX. Maximus, four.

XX. Julianus, two.

XXI. Caianus, three.

XXII. Symmachus, two.

XXIII. Caius, three.

XXIV. Julianus, four.

XXV. Elias, two. We do not find this bishop mentioned by Eusebius; but he is recorded by Nicephorus of Constantinople.

XXVI. Capito, four.

XXVII. Maximus, four.

XXVIII. Antoninus, five.

XXIX. Valens, three.

XXX. Dulichianus, two.

XXXI. Narcissus, four. He was a man of eminent piety, famous for the great miracles which he wrought; but not being able to bear the aspersions which some unjustly cast upon him (though God signally and miraculously vindicated his innocency) he left his church, and retired into deserts and solitary places. In his absence was chosen

XXXII. Dius, who sat eight years. After him,

XXXIII. Germanio, four.

XXXIV. Gordius, five. In his time Narcissus, as one from the dead, returned from his place of retirement, and was importuned by the people again to take the government of the church upon him; being highly revered by them, both for his strict and philosophical course of life, and the signal vengeance which God took of his accusers: and in this second administration he continued ten years, suffer-

ing martyrdom when he was near an hundred and twenty years old. To relieve the infirmities of his great age, they took in to be his colleague

XXXV. Alexander, formerly bishop in Cappadocia: he was an eminent confessor, and after having sat fifteen years, died in prison under the Decian persecution.

XXXVI. Mazabanes, nine years.

XXXVII. Hymenæus, twenty-three.

XXXVIII. Zabdas, ten.

XXXIX. Hermon, nine. He was, as Eusebius tells us, the last bishop of his see before that fatal persecution that raged even in his time.

XL. Macarius, ordained A. D. three hundred and fifteen: he was present in the great Nicene council. He sat, says Nicephorus of Constantinople, twenty years; but St. Jerom allows him to have continued a much longer time in the government of the church.

THE CHURCH AT CONSTANTINOPLE,

ANCIENTLY CALLED BYZANTIUM.

IT cannot be doubted that this church was first founded by St. Andrew. The succession of its bishops was as follows:

I. St. Andrew the apostle. He was crucified at Patræ in Achaia.

II. Stachys, whom St. Paul calls his beloved Stachys, ordained bishop by St. Andrew: he sat sixteen years.

III. Onesimus, fourteen.

IV. Polycarpus, seventeen.

V. Plutarchus, sixteen.

VI. Sedecio, nine.

VII. Diogenes, fifteen. Of the last three no mention is made in Nicephorus of Constantinople, but they are delivered by Nicephorus Callistus, lib. viii. c. 6. p. 540.

VIII. Eleutheris, seven.

IX. Felix, five.

X. Polycarpus, seventeen.

XI. Athenodorus, four. He erected a church called Elea, afterwards much beautified and enlarged by Constantine the Great.

XII. Euzoius, sixteen. Though Nicephorus Callistus allows but six.

XIII. Laurentius, eleven years and six months.

XIV. Alypius, thirteen.

XV. Pertinax, a man of consular dignity: he built another church near the sea-side, which he called Peace. He sat nineteen years, which Nicephorus Callistus reduces to nine.

XVI. Olympianus, eleven.

XVII. Marcus, thirteen.

XVIII. Cyriacus, or Cyrillianus, sixteen.

XIX. Constantinus, seven. In the first year of his bishopric, he built a church in the north part of the city, which he dedicated to the honour of Euphemia the martyr, who had suffered in that place. In this oratory he spent the remainder of his life, quitting his episcopal chair to

XX. Titus, who sat thirty-five years and six months; though Nicephorus Callistus makes it thirty-seven years. After him came

XXI. Dometius, brother (as they tell us) to the emperor Probus. He was bishop twenty-one years and six months.

XXII. Probus succeeded his father Dometius, and sat twelve years; as after him,

XXIII. Metrophanes his brother, who governed that church ten years. And in his time it was that Constantine translated the imperial court hither, enlarged and adorned it,

called it after his own name, and made it the seat of the empire.

XXIV. Alexander succeeded: he was a man of great piety and integrity, zealous and constant in maintaining the truth against the blasphemies of Arius. He sat twenty-three years.

THE CHURCH AT ALEXANDRIA, IN EGYPT.

ECCELESIASTICAL writers affirm, that the foundations of this church were laid, and a great part of its superstructure raised, by St. Mark; who, though not strictly and properly an apostle, yet being an apostle at large, and immediately commissioned by St. Peter, it justly obtained the honour of an apostolical church. Its bishops and governors are thus set down:

I. St. Mark the evangelist, of whose travels and martyrdom we have spoken in his life. He sat two years.

II. Anianus, characterized by Eusebius, "A man beloved of God, and admirable in all things." He sat twenty-two years.

III. Avilius, twelve; or, as Eusebius, thirteen.

IV. Cerdo, who succeeded about the first year of Trajan. He sat ten years; according to Eusebius, eleven.

V. Primus, twelve.

VI. Justus, or Justinus, ten.

VII. Eumenes, ten; or, as Eusebius, thirteen: St. Jerom, in his translation, calls him Hymenæus.

VIII. Marcus, or Marcianus, thirteen; or, as Eusebius, ten.

IX. Celadion, ten; but, in Eusebius's computation, fourteen.

X. Agrippinus, fourteen; according to Eusebius, twelve.

XI. Julianus, fifteen; though Eusebius allows but ten.

XII. Demetrius, twenty-one; according to Eusebius forty-three years.

XIII. Heraclas, a man of a philosophical

genius and way of life. He sat sixteen years; though Nicephorus of Constantinople, by a mistake, we suppose, makes it forty-three.

XIV. Dionysius, seventeen. He was one of the most eminent bishops of his time: He died in the twelfth year of the emperor Gallienus.

XV. Maximus. Of a presbyter he was made bishop of Alexandria. He sat in that chair eighteen years, according to Eusebius's computation; though Nicephorus of Constantinople assigns him but eight.

XVI. Theonas, seventeen; or, according to St. Jerom's version of Eusebius, nineteen. To him succeeded

XVII. Petrus, twelve. He began his office three years before the last persecution. A man of infinite strictness and accuracy, and of indefatigable industry for the good of the church. He suffered in the ninth year of the persecution, gaining the crown of martyrdom with the loss of his head.

XVIII. Achilles, nine; though Nicephorus of Constantinople allows him but one year. By him Arius, upon his submission, was ordained presbyter.

XIX. Alexander, twenty-three. Under him Arius began more openly to broach his heresy at Alexandria, who was thereupon justly excommunicated and thrust out by Alexander, and shortly after condemned by the fathers of the council of Nice. Nevertheless, his abominable tenets have infected the church, more or less, to the present day, and are openly avowed by the enemies of the gospel of Jesus, who is God over all, blessed for ever. AMEN.

THE
EVIDENCES
UPON WHICH
CHRISTIANITY IS FOUNDED.
INCLUDING
A COMPLETE DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY,
TOGETHER WITH
Plain and Satisfactory Answers to all objections made against our Holy Religion,
BY
JEWS, ATHEISTS, DEISTS, INFIDELS, FREE-THINKERS, &c. &c.

AMONGST other undoubted authorities concerning our Saviour and his miracles, extant amongst Pagan Writers, the particulars which follow, are all attested by some one or other of those Heathen authors, who lived in or near the age of our Saviour and his disciples.

“That Augustus Cæsar had ordered the whole empire to be censured or taxed,” which brought our Saviour’s reputed parents to Bethlehem: this is mentioned by several Roman historians, as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion. “That a great light, or a new star appeared in the East, which directed the wise men to our Saviour:” this is recorded by Chalcidius. “That Herod the king of Palestine, so often mentioned in the Roman history, made a great slaughter of innocent children,” being so jealous of his successor, that he put to death his own sons on that account; this character of him is given by several historians, and this cruel fact mentioned by Macrobius, a Heathen author, who tells it as a known thing, without any mark or doubt upon it. “That our Saviour had been in Egypt:” this Celsus, though he raises a monstrous story upon it, is so far from denying, that he tells us, our Saviour learned the arts of magic in that country. “That Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; that our Saviour was brought in judgment before him, and by him condemned and crucified:” this is recorded by Tacitus. “That many miraculous cures and works, out of the ordinary course of nature, were wrought by him:” this is confessed by Julian the apostate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, all of them not only Pagans, but professed enemies and persecutors of Christianity. “That our Saviour

foretold several things which came to pass, according to his predictions:” this was attested by Phlegon, in his annals, as we are assured by the learned Origen, against Celsus. “That at the time when our Saviour died, there was a miraculous darkness, and a great earthquake:” this is recorded by the same Phlegon, the Trallian, who was likewise a Pagan, and freeman to Adrian the emperor. We may here observe, that a native of Trallium, which was not situate at so great a distance from Palestine, might very probably be informed of such remarkable events as had passed amongst the Jews, in the age immediately preceding his own times, since several of his countrymen, with whom he had conversed, might have received a confused report of our Saviour, before his crucifixion, and probably lived within the shake of the earthquake, and the shadow of the eclipse, which are recorded by this author. “That CHRIST was worshipped as a God, amongst the Christians; that they would rather suffer death than blaspheme him: that they received a sacrament, and by it entered into a vow of abstaining from sin and wickedness,” conformable to the advice given by St. Paul: “that they had private assemblies of worship, and used to join together in hymns:” this is the account which Pliny the younger, gives of Christianity in his days, about seventy years after the death of CHRIST, and which agrees in all its circumstances, with the accounts we have in holy writ, of the first state of Christianity, after the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour. “That St. Peter, whose miracles are many of them recorded in holy writ, did many wonderful works,” is owned by Julian the apostate,

who therefore represents him as a great magician, and one who had in his possession a book of magical secrets, left him by our Saviour.... "That the devils or evil spirits were subject to them," we may learn from Porphyry, who objects to Christianity, that since JESUS had begun to be worshipped, Æsculapius and the rest of the gods did no more converse with men: nay, Celsus himself affirms the same thing in effect, when he says, that the power which seemed to reside in Christians, proceeded from the use of certain names, and the invocation of certain dæmons. Origen remarks on this passage, that the author doubtless hints at those Christians who put to flight evil spirits, and healed those who were possessed with them; a fact which had been often seen, and which he himself had seen, as he declares in another part of his discourse against Celsus. But, at the same time, he assures us, that this miraculous power was exerted by the use of no other name but that of JESUS, to which were added several passages in his history, but nothing like any invocation to dæmons.

Celsus was so hard set with the report of our Saviour's miracles, and the confident attestations concerning him, that though he often intimates he did not believe them to be true, yet knowing he might be silenced in such an answer, provides himself with another retreat, when beaten out of this, namely, that our Saviour was a magician. Thus he compares the feeding of so many thousands, at two different times, with a few loaves and fishes, to the magical feasts of those Egyptian impostors, who would present their spectators with visionary entertainments, that had in them neither substance nor reality: which, by the way, is to suppose, that an hungry and fainting multitude were filled by an apparition, or strengthened and refreshed with shadows.

The unconverted heathens, who were pressed by the many authorities that confirmed our Saviour's miracles, as well as the unbelieving Jews, who had actually seen them, were driven to account for them after the same manner; for, to work by magic, in the heathen way of speaking, was, in the language of the Jews, to cast out devils by Belzebub, the prince of the devils. Our Saviour, who knew that unbelievers in all ages, would put this perverse interpretation on his miracles, has branded the malignity of those men, who, contrary to the

dictates of their own hearts, started such an unreasonable objection, as a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and declared not only the guilt, but the punishment of so black a crime. At the same time, he condescended to shew the vanity and emptiness of this objection against his miracles, by representing, that they evidently tended to the destruction of those powers, to whose assistance the enemies of his doctrine then ascribed them. An argument, which if duly weighed, renders the objection so very frivolous and groundless, that we may venture to call it even blasphemy against common sense. It would be absurd to imagine, that evil spirits would enter into a combination with our Saviour, to cut off all their correspondence and intercourse with mankind, and to prevent any for the future from addicting themselves to those rites and ceremonies, which had done them so much honour. We see the early effect which christianity had on the minds of men in this particular, by that number of books which were filled with the secrets of magic, and made a sacrifice to Christianity, by the converts mentioned in the Acts of the apostles.

We have likewise an eminent instance of the inconsistency of our religion with magic, in the history of the famous Aquila. This person, who was a kinsman of the emperor Trajan, and likewise a man of great learning, notwithstanding he had embraced Christianity, could not be brought off from the studies of magic, by the repeated admonitions of his fellow-Christians; so that at length they expelled him their society, as rather choosing to lose the reputation of so considerable a proselyte, than communicate with one who dealt in such dark and infernal practices. Besides, we may observe, that all the favourers of magic, were the most professed and bitter enemies to the Christian religion: not to mention Simon Magus, and many others, we shall only take notice of those two great persecutors of Christianity, the emperors Adrian, and Julian the apostate, both of them initiated in the mysteries of divination, and skilled in all the depths of magic. We shall only add, that evil spirits cannot be supposed to have concurred in the establishment of a religion, which triumphed over them, drove them out of the places they possessed, and divested them of their influence on mankind; nor would we mention this particular, though it be unanimously reported by all the

ancient Christian authors, did it not appear from the authorities above cited, that this was a fact confessed by Heathens themselves.

When a man is born under Christian parents, and trained up in the profession of that religion from a child, he generally guides himself by the rules of the Christian faith, in believing what is delivered by the evangelists ; but the learned Pagans of Antiquity, before they became Christians, were only guided by the common rules of historical faith : that is, they examined the nature of the evidence which was to be met with in common fame, tradition, and the writings of those persons who related them, together with the number, concurrence, veracity, and private characters of those persons ; and being convinced upon all accounts, that they had the same reason to believe the history of our Saviour, as that of any other person to which they themselves were not actually eye-witnesses, they were bound by all the rules of historical faith, and of right reason, to give credit to this history. This they did accordingly, and, in consequence of it, published the same truths themselves, suffered many afflictions, and very often death itself, in the assertion of them. But while we affirm, an historical belief of the acts of our Saviour might induce these learned Pagans to embrace his doctrine, we do not deny that there were many other motives, which conduced to it, as the excellency of his precepts, the fulfilling of prophecies, the miracles of his disciples, the irreproachable lives and magnanimous sufferings of their followers, with other considerations of the same nature : but whatever other collateral arguments wrought more or less with philosophers of that age, it is certain, that a belief in the history of our Saviour was one motive with every new convert, and that upon which all others turned, as being the very basis and foundation of Christianity.

A learned man of our nation, who examined the writings of our most ancient fathers, refers to several passages in Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, by which he plainly shews, that each of these early writers ascribe to the four evangelists by name their respective histories ; so that there is not the least room for doubting of their belief in the history of our Saviour, as recorded in the gospels. We shall only add, that three of the five fathers here mentioned, and probably four, were Pagans converted to Christianity, as they were all of them very inquisitive

and deep in the knowledge of Heathen learning and philosophy.

It happened very providentially to the honour of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures.

Several of these therefore, when they had informed themselves of our Saviour's history, and examined with unprejudiced minds the doctrines and manners of his disciples and followers, were so struck and convinced, that they professed themselves of that sect ; notwithstanding, by this profession in that juncture of time, they bid farewell to all the pleasures of this life, renounced all the views of ambition, engaged in an uninterrupted course of severities, and exposed themselves to public hatred and contempt, to sufferings of all kinds, and to death itself. Of this sort we may reckon those three early converts to Christianity, who each of them was a member of a senate famous for its wisdom and learning. Joseph the Arimathean, was of the Jewish Sanhedrim : Dionysius, of the Athenian Areopagus ; and Flavius Clemens, of the Roman senate ; nay, at the time of his death, consul of Rome.

Tertullian tells the Roman governors, that their corporations, councils, armies, tribes, companies, the palace, senate, and courts of judicature were filled with Christians ; as Arnobius asserts, that men of the finest parts and learning, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, philosophers, despising the sentiments they had been once fond of, took up their rest in the Christian religion ; and who can imagine, that men of this character did not thoroughly inform themselves of the history of that person whose doctrines they embraced ?

Besides innumerable authors that are lost, we have the undoubted names of works, or fragments of several Pagan philosophers, which shew them to have been as learned as any unconverted Heathen authors of the age in which they lived. If we look into the greatest nurseries of learning in those ages of the world, we find in Athens, Dionysius, Quadratus, Aristides, and Athenagoras ; and in Alexandria, Dionysius, Clemens, Ammonius, and Antolius,

to whom we may add Origen; for though his father was a Christian martyr, he became, without all controversy, the most learned and able philosopher of his age, by his education at Alexandria, in that famous seminary of arts and sciences.

Heathens of every age, sex, and quality, born in the most different climates, and bred up under the most different institutions, when they saw men of plain sense, without the help of learning, armed with patience and courage, instead of wealth, pomp, or power, expressing in their lives those excellent doctrines of morality, which they taught as delivered to them from our Saviour, averring that they had seen his miracles during his life, and conversed with him after his death; when they saw no suspicion of falsehood, treachery, or worldly interest, in their behaviour and conversation, and that they submitted to the most ignominious and cruel deaths, rather than retract their testimony, or even be silent in matters which they were to publish by their Saviour's especial command, there was no reason to doubt of the veracity of those facts which they related, or of the divine mission in which they were employed.

A few persons of an odious and despised country, could not have filled the world with believers, had they not shewn undoubted credentials from the divine Person who sent them on such a message. Accordingly, we are assured, that they were invested with the power of working miracles, which was the most short and the most convincing argument that could be produced, and the only one that was adapted to the reason of all mankind, to the capacities of the wise and ignorant, and could overcome every cavil and every prejudice. Who would not believe that our Saviour healed the sick and raised the dead, when it was published by those who themselves often did the same miracles, in their presence, and in his name? Could any reasonable person imagine, that God Almighty would arm men with such powers to authorize a lie, and establish a religion in the world which was displeasing to him, or that evil spirits would lend them such an effectual assistance to beat down vice and idolatry?

When the apostles had formed many assemblies in several parts of the Pagan world, who gave credit to the glad tidings of the gospel, that upon their departure, the memory of what they had related might not perish, they appoint-

ed out of these new converts, men of the best sense, and of the most unblemished lives, to preside over these several assemblies, and to inculcate, without ceasing, what they had heard from the mouths of these eye-witnesses.

The succession of bishops was quick in the three first centuries, because the bishop very often ended in the martyr: for when a persecution arose in any place, the first fury of it fell upon this order of holy men, who abundantly testified by their deaths and sufferings, that they did not undertake these offices out of any temporal views, that they were sincere and satisfied in the belief of what they taught, and that they firmly adhered to what they had received from the apostles, as laying down their lives in the same hope, and upon the same principles. None can be supposed so utterly regardless of their own happiness, as to expire in torment, and hazard their eternity, to support any fables and inventions of their own, or any forgeries of their predecessors, who had presided in the same church, and which might have been easily detected by the tradition of that particular church, as well as by the concurring testimony of others. To this purpose, we think it is very remarkable, that there was not a single martyr amongst those many Heretics, who disagreed with the apostolical church, and introduced several wild and absurd notions into the doctrines of Christianity. They durst not stake their present and future happiness on their own chimerical imaginations, and did not only shun persecution, but affirmed that it was unnecessary for their followers to bear their religion through such fiery trials.

Amongst the accounts of those very few, out of innumerable multitudes who had embraced Christianity, we shall single out four persons, eminent for their lives, their writings and their sufferings, that were successively cotemporaries, and bring us down as far as to the year of our Lord 254. St. John, who was the beloved disciple, and conversed the most intimately with our Saviour, lived till A. D. 100. Polycarp, who was the disciple of St. John, and had conversed with others of the apostles and disciples of our Lord, lived till A. D. 167, though his life was shortened by martyrdom. Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, and had conversed with many of the immediate disciples of the apostles, lived, at the lowest computation of his age, till the year 202, when he was likewise cut off by martyrdom; in which

year the great Origen was appointed regent of the catechetical school in Alexandria, and as he was the miracle of that age, for industry, learning, and philosophy, he was looked on as the champion of Christianity, till the year 254, when, if he did not suffer martyrdom, as some think he did, he was certainly actuated by the spirit of it, as appears in the whole course of his life and writings; nay, he had often been put to the torture, and had undergone trials worse than death.

The Christians, who carried their religion through so many general and particular persecutions, were incessantly comforting and supporting one another with the example and history of our Saviour and his apostles: it was the subject not only of their solemn assemblies, but of their private visits and conversations.... "Our virgins," says Tatin, who lived in the second century, "discourse over their distaffs on divine subjects." Indeed, when religion was woven into the civil government, and flourished under the protection of the emperors, men's thoughts and discourses were, as they are now, full of secular affairs; but in the three first centuries of Christianity, men, who embraced this religion, had given up all their interests in this world, and lived in a perpetual preparation for the next, as not knowing how soon they might be called to it: so that they had little else to talk of but the life and doctrines of that divine Person, which was their hope, their encouragement, and their glory.

We cannot imagine, that there was a single person arrived at any degree of age or consideration, who had not heard and repeated above a thousand times in his life, all the particulars of our Saviour's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension; especially if we consider, that they could not then be received as Christians, till they had undergone several examinations. Persons of riper years, who flocked daily into the church during the three first centuries, were obliged to pass through many repeated instructions, and give a strict account of their proficiency, before they were admitted to baptism. And as for those who were born of Christian parents, and had been baptized in their infancy, they were, with the like care, prepared and disciplined for confirmation, which they could not arrive at, till they were found upon examination, to have made a sufficient progress in the knowledge of Christianity.

We must further observe, that there was not

only in those times this religious conversation amongst private Christians, but a constant correspondence between the churches that were established by the apostles or their successors, in the several parts of the world. If any new doctrine was started, or any fact reported of our Saviour, a strict inquiry was made amongst the churches, especially those planted by the apostles themselves, whether they had received any such doctrine or account of our Saviour, from the mouths of the apostles, or the tradition of those Christians who had preceded the present members of the churches, which were thus consulted. By this means, when any novelty was published, it was immediately detected and censured.

St. John, who lived so many years after our Saviour, was appealed to in those emergencies, as the living oracle of the church; and as his oral testimony lasted the first century, many have observed that, by a particular providence of God, several of our Saviour's disciples, and of the early converts of his religion, lived to a very great age, that they might personally convey the truth of the gospel to those times, which were very remote from the first publication of it. Of these, besides St. John, we have a remarkable instance in Simeon, who was one of the seventy sent forth by our Saviour, to publish the gospel before his crucifixion, and a near kinsman to our Lord.

This venerable person, who had probably heard with his own ears, our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, presided over the church established in that city, during the time of its memorable siege, and drew his congregation out of those dreadful and unparalleled calamities which befel his countrymen, by following the advice our Saviour had given, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and the Roman standards, or abomination of desolation, set up. He lived till the year of our Lord 107, when he was martyred under the emperor Trajan.

Irenæus very aptly remarks, that those barbarous nations, who in his time were not possessed of the written gospels, and had only learned the history of our Saviour from those who had converted them to Christianity before the gospels were written, had amongst them the same accounts of our Saviour, which are to be met with in the four evangelists; an incontestable proof of the harmony and concurrence between the Holy Scripture and the tradition of

the churches in those early times of Christianity. Thus we see what opportunities the learned and inquisitive Heathens had of informing themselves of the truth of our Saviour's history, during the three first centuries, especially as they lay nearer one than another to the fountain-head; besides which, there were many uncontroverted traditions, records of Christianity, and particular histories, that then threw light into these matters, but are now entirely lost.

We cannot omit that which appears to us a standing miracle in the three first centuries, namely, that amazing and supernatural courage or patience which was shewn by innumerable multitudes of martyrs, in those slow and painful torments that were inflicted on them. We cannot conceive a man placed in the burning iron chair at Lyons, amidst the insults and mockeries of a crowded amphitheatre, and still keeping his seat; or stretched upon a grate of iron, over coals of fire, and breathing out his soul amongst the exquisite sufferings of such a tedious execution, rather than renounce his religion, or blaspheme his Saviour. Such trials seem to us above the strength of human nature, and able to overbear duty, reason, faith, conviction, nay, and the most absolute certainty of a future state. Humanity unassisted in an extraordinary manner, must have shaken off the present pressure, and have delivered itself out of such a dreadful distress, by any means that could have been suggested to it. We can easily imagine, that many persons, in so good a cause, might have laid down their lives at the gibbet, the stake, or the block: but to expire leisurely amongst the most exquisite tortures, when they might come out of them, even by a mental reservation, or an hypocrisy, which was not without a possibility of being followed by repentance and forgiveness, has something in it so far beyond the force and natural strength of mortals, that one cannot but think there was some miraculous power to support the sufferer.

We find the church of Smyrna, in that admirable letter which gives an account of the death of Polycarp their beloved bishop, mentioning the cruel torments of other early martyrs for Christianity, are of opinion, that our Saviour stood by them in a vision, and personally conversed with them, to give them strength and comfort during the bitterness of their long-continued agonies; and we have the story of

a young man, who, having suffered many tortures, escaped with life, and told his fellow-christians, that the pain of them had been rendered tolerable, by the presence of an angel who stood by him, and wiped off the tears and sweat, which ran down his face whilst he lay under his sufferings. We are assured, at least, that the first martyr for Christianity was encouraged in his last moments, by a vision of that divine Person, for whom he suffered, and into whose presence he was then hastening.

It is certain, that the deaths and sufferings of the primitive Christians had a great share in the conversion of those learned Pagans, who lived in the ages of persecution, which, with some intervals and abatements, lasted near three hundred years after our Saviour. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius, and others, tell us, that this first of all alarmed their curiosity, roused their attention, and made them seriously inquisitive into the nature of that religion, which could endue the mind with so much strength, and overcome the fear of death, nay, raise an earnest desire of it, though it appeared in all its terrors. This they found had not been effected by all the doctrines of those philosophers, whom they had thoroughly studied, and who had been labouring at this great point. The sight of these dying and tormented martyrs, engaged them to search into the history and doctrines of him for whom they suffered. The more they searched, the more they were convinced; till their conviction grew so strong, that they themselves embraced the same truths, and either actually laid down their lives, or were always in a readiness to do it, rather than depart from them.

There are predictions of our Saviour recorded by the evangelists, which were not completed till after their deaths, and had no likelihood of being so, when they were pronounced by our blessed Saviour. Such was that wonderful notice he gave them, that they should be brought before governors and kings for his sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, Mat. x. 18. with the other like prophecies, by which he foretold that his disciples were to be persecuted.

Origen insists with great strength, on that wonderful prediction of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, pronounced at a time, as he observes, when there was no likelihood nor appearance of it. This has been taken notice of and inculcated by so many

others, that we shall refer you to what this father has said on the subject in his first book against Celsus. And as to the accomplishment of this remarkable prophecy, shall only observe, that whoever reads the account given us by Josephus, without knowing his character, and compares it with what our Saviour foretold, would think the historian had been a Christian, and that he had nothing else in view but to adjust the event to the prediction.

The ancient Christians were so entirely persuaded of the force of our Saviour's prophecies, and of the punishment which the Jews had drawn upon themselves, and upon their children, for the treatment which the Messiah had received at their hands, that they did not doubt but they would always remain an abandoned and dispersed people, an hissing and an astonishment amongst the nations, as they are to this day. In short, that they had lost their peculiarity of being God's people, which was now transferred to the body of Christians, and which preserved the church of Christ amongst all the conflicts, difficulties, and persecutions, in which it was engaged, as it had preserved the Jewish government and economy for so many ages, whilst it had the same truth and vital principle in it, notwithstanding it was so frequently in danger of being utterly abolished and destroyed. Origen, in his fourth book against Celsus, mentioning their being cast out of Jerusalem, the place to which their worship was annexed, deprived of their temple and sacrifice, their religious rites and solemnities, and scattered over the face of the earth, ventures to assure them with a face of confidence, that they would never be re-established, since they had committed that horrid crime against the Saviour of the world. This was a bold assertion in the good man, who knew how this people had been so wonderfully re-established in former times, when they were almost swallowed up, and in the most desperate state of desolation, as in their deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and the oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes: nay, he knew that within less than an hundred years before his own time, the Jews had made such a powerful effort for their re-establishment under Barchocab, in the reign of Adrian, as shook the whole Roman empire: but he founded his opinion on a sure word of prophecy, and on the punishment they had so justly incurred; and we find by a long experience of fifteen hundred years, that he was not mistaken, nay, that his opinion gathers strength daily, since the Jews are now at a greater distance from any

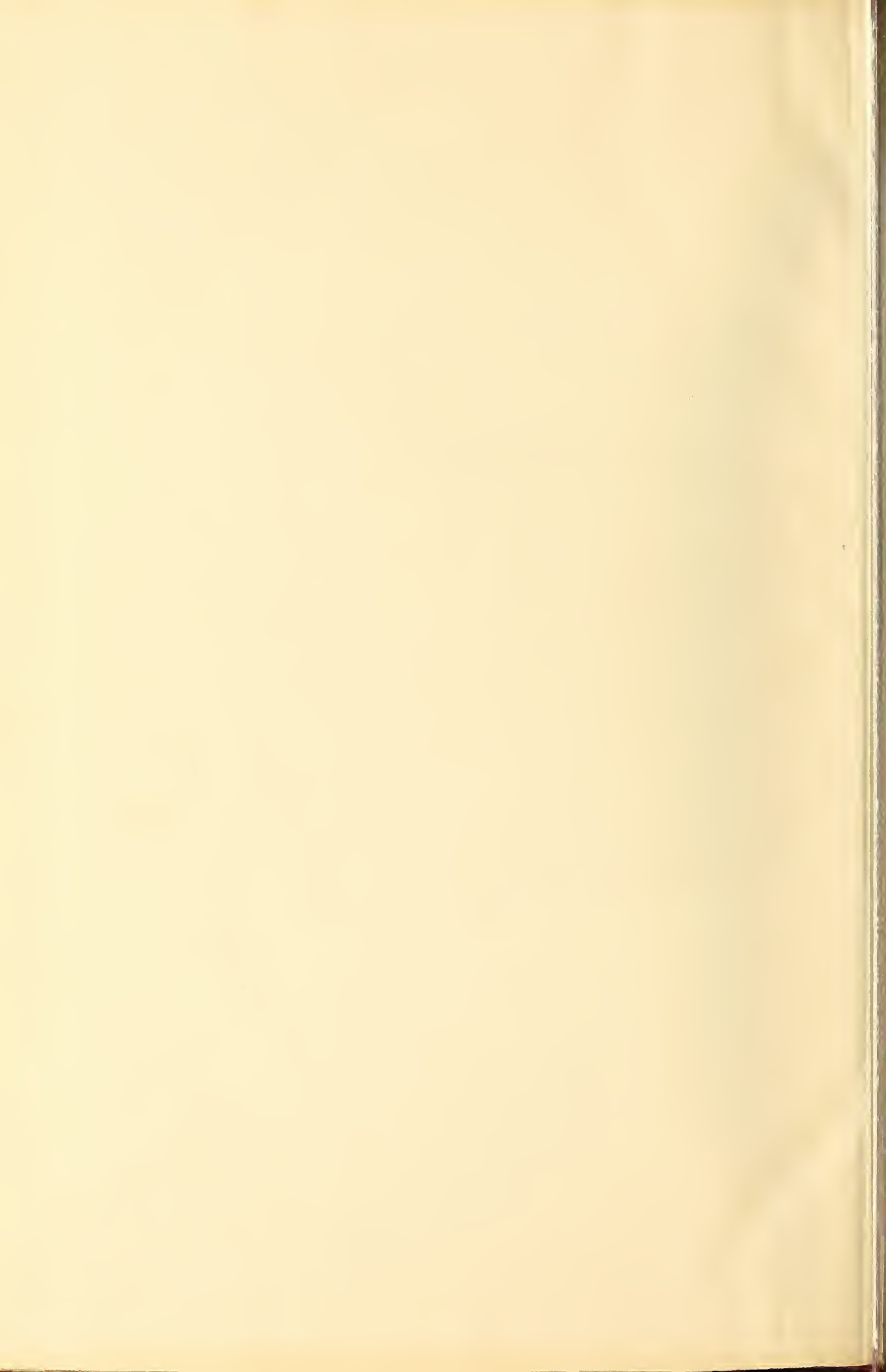
probability of such a re-establishment, than they were when Origen wrote.

In the primitive times, the Christian religion shewed its full force and efficacy on the minds of men, and by many examples demonstrated what great and generous souls it was capable of producing. It exalted and refined its proselytes to a very high degree of perfection, and set them far above the pleasures, and even the pains, of this life. It strengthened the infirmity, and broke the fierceness of human nature. It lifted up the minds of the ignorant to the knowledge and worship of him that made them, and inspired the vicious with a rational devotion, a strict purity of heart, and an unbounded love to their fellow-creatures. In proportion as it spread through the world, it seemed to change mankind into another species of beings. No sooner was a convert initiated into it, but by an easy figure he became a new man, and both acted and looked upon himself as one regenerated and born a second time into another state of existence.

But we find no argument made a stronger impression on the minds of these eminent Pagan converts, for strengthening their faith in the history of our Saviour, than the predictions relating to him in those old prophetic writings, which were deposited amongst the hands of the greatest enemies to Christianity, and owned by them to have been extant many ages before his appearance. The learned Heathen converts were astonished to see the whole history of their Saviour's life published before he was born, and to find that the evangelists and prophets, in their accounts of the Messiah, differed only in point of time, the one foretelling what should happen to him, and the other describing those very particulars as what had actually happened. This our Saviour himself was pleased to make use of as the strongest argument of his being the promised Messiah, and without it would hardly have reconciled his disciples to the ignominy of his death, as in that remarkable passage which mentions his conversation with the two disciples, on the day of his resurrection, St. Luke xxiv. 13, to the end. Besides, the Heathen converts, after having travelled through all human learning, and fortified their minds with the knowledge of arts and sciences, were particularly qualified to examine these prophecies with great care and impartiality, and without prejudice or prepossession; so as to establish in their minds the firm belief of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, beyond the least degree of a doubt concerning it.

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